

Albert Green: My name is Albert Green, A-L-B-E-R-T. I got to see if I can spell this right. [laughter] G-R-E-E-N is Green, my last name.

Male Speaker: Okay, how do you like to be called Al Albert?

AG: Al Green is what I'm known of.

MS: Al when were you born and where?

AG: I was born in May 1951 in Topeka, Kansas.

MS: What brought you to California, aside from your family bringing you there? What circumstances?

AG: My father was looking for work and he came out, I don't know, 1952 or something, like 1953, [19]52 maybe. Then, sent for me and my sister when he got settled and situated. Then we came out and moved to Pacoima. Stayed there for three years or so, started Vaughn Street Elementary School, and then went to San Fernando.

MS: How did you get to San Pedro?

AG: San Pedro, 1972.

MS: Tell me the circumstances of that.

AG: How I actually got to San Pedro was, they have a two-day karate tournament in August. I met a young lady and got her phone number. I was working with a couple of kids in karate. We had actually gone to Long Beach where Martin Luther King Park is and parked in my van. Police came, stopped me, says, "You can't stay here, it is dangerous." I called her up and asked her if I could bring these kids by and stay. Two weeks later, I told my mom, I said, "I am moving to San Pedro." I moved to San Pedro and lived with her for about six, seven years. So, it was a good choice, I didn't know it was a good choice.

MS: What did you know about San Pedro before?

AG: I didn't know nothing about San Pedro. I knew her, so I kind of expanded my world with people that she knew. But no, I didn't know anything about San Pedro. It was just a city that I knew the name, didn't know anything about it.

MS: Had you spent much time around harbors? Did you get a sense of what makes it unique, really, is the harbor?

AG: No, the big thing in my family, when I was growing up, was packing all the kids into the station wagon and going to the beach. But that was Malibu and Santa Monica and that was the big thing. All right, "We're all going to the beach." And we'd take neighbor's kids and go to the beach and spend the day and that was my extent of water. Because in the valley it is very hot

summer, hundred ten, hundred fifteen. The beach was like a big— we're ready to go. So, my dad liked to go, and my mom, so we would take that trip.

MS: The only beach was Hanson Dam, right?

AG: Hanson Dam, yes. that is right. That was...

MS: Hit the surf at Hanson.

AG: Yes [laughter] it was Dry Gully. But me and my friends, we used to actually run there, three or four times a week, run those little horse trails. We had the horses up against there. We'd run the horse trails and that was a Hanson dam.

MS: What was your take on San Pedro? It is a small town. It is really a different community than any other community in LA?

AG: It is. The thing for me — my girlfriend at that time had great friends. So, for me, it was a nice entry into San Pedro because I met nothing but good people. I knew that for most people coming to San Pedro. If you live in LA, you're passing through LA you can do all that. But for San Pedro, if you're heading this way to the end of San Pedro, you're coming here to be in San Pedro. I started learning about the little places, Cabrilla Beach, and the museums, and she liked to do those things. My impression of San Pedro was that it was a nice little town. The friends that I meet kind of welcomed me into the town. Of course, you probably know that if you're not born in San Pedro, you can never say you are from San Pedro. But I've been here thirty years now, thirty-something years and so I'm here to stay.

MS: You are on trial status.

AG: Yes, when they ask you know they're asking, were you born here or not, if you're from San Pedro.

MS: That is the first question I always get here. How do you ask any of these questions? You were not born here,

AG: But I had a view of the port and I just learned as I went along, learned about Terminal Island, learned where things were.

MS: So, did you explore around? Were you interested with the activities of the port? I mean how did you relate to the port or did you just look at it from afar?

AG: I looked at it from afar. I lived up on channel in Western, if you know there used to be housing projects there. They tore them down in about the late [19]70s or early [19]80s, and she stayed there. So, you could see it when you look down over the houses there and say, okay. But I really did not know too much about it, — and I accumulated friends who worked down there. I used to go and work all day, pounding nails, building houses in Calabasas, and Thousand Oaks, and driving two hours of work, two hours home, and come back. My friends, they would be

ready to go, "Let's go out and party." So, that was kind of a lesson in that there was a lot of opportunity down there for easy work on some levels. It was a lot of hard work, but my best friend was a crane operator. So, he had his situation that was set. So, I learned through him and his family, and that is what it is. But I was happy with what I did, I was happy pounding nails. I really liked construction and building houses.

MS: Now there is so many communities that we are learning about, men were talking about the Japanese community on the terminal island, the Slavic community, the Italians, the Croatians, the Mexicans. There was not a particularly big Black community here was there?

AG: No, there was two or three families that moved here in 1945, [19]46.

MS: I think want to explain to you, they are not going to hear my question. So, you have to say there were two or three Black families, so we know who you are talking about.

AG: Yes. There was two or three Black families that here since the [19]40s that I know of. Then as I lived here, I met them. But the way I was brought up, I mixed with everybody and it was a mixture of people. But there wasn't a large community, per se of Blacks in San Pedro. Back at that time that I know and that I experienced is everyone got along very well. It was a different energy than maybe say today's time. But back then there was only one school to go to, and they all went to school together and proms and graduated and did what they had to do and experienced a lot of good times.

MS: But you did not go to school here, so...

AG: No.

MS: How did you start getting involved with the port working?

AG: A friend of mine had told me when they were taking applications, and that's how when they did it in the [19]70s, I kind of go, "Yes, I'm making good money in construction." Then by [19]80, [19]81 when they took in the next registration, he says, "You know they're taking registration again." I go – and I was looking at my time, because at that point, at [19]79, [19]80, [19]81 was when I was driving to Calabasas from San Pedro. So, I had to get up at 4:00 am, and I'd drive to Calabasas, Thousand Oaks West Lake. We're building homes back in there. We'd get off at 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m., and then it would take me two hours or more because everyone's coming home to get back home. That was when I really started seeing the port's over there. It sure looks good now. Because after two years of that, I was running through cars and energy and that whole thing. So, that's when I began to really, seriously look about what he was telling me. He says, "Why do you not try and get down here." I go –that is when I seriously made an effort to say, "All right, I think I want to do this." And it worked out well.

MS: How did you start? What was your first job? How did you get that job and what were you doing?

AG: My first job was bananas. That was a job at that time I came into the industry in [19]82,

January 17th. At that time, the job that would keep you give you three days work was bananas. They hire 150, 200 people, and you would go to the banana's docks in Long Beach and you'd work. At that time, it was not like stalks, which before my time. They're in boxes, but the ship would be full of boxes, twelve high as big as this building. You would just work through it and little gravity belts, hour on, hour off. That was my first experience. Luckily at that time, I was in good shape, so it helped to make it a smooth transition, in terms of, " Okay, I can do this."

MS: When you say gravity belt, what was the job? You got these boxes. What was your job then, at that point? Describe the job.

AG: The job you had was they would open up the hatch, and then there would just be, a flat, tier of boxes. You would start pulling the boxes out. They had a little belt that was spaced about two or three feet, big old arm that would go down and it would start running. While they run you had to put two boxes in each pocket, and that was how they did. So, what they would do is they would hold it over and a couple of guys or women, because we took in the first group of women in our group. You would start putting two in the thing as they are rolling. As you dug down to the deck then you would start expanding. You'd clear out enough space. You have this room where you can put a four-foot gravity. Then you two would go that way and me and my partner would go this way and you start fanning out. Then as you got wider and wider, then you, [laughter] "Come on down here. You're working too," and the belts would get longer. Actually, gravity belts about eight feet, and the short one was just to get you going. You would just keep throwing and it was the best workout, in terms of exercise and sweat and people testing each other's body odor. So, it was all good, that is how we became close.

MS: Once it got out of the hole, where was the gravity belt taking it?

AG: The gravity belt would put them in the pockets and it would drop it these conveyor belts. The conveyor belts would take it to the trucks. Then the trucks, they were lined up maybe ten on one side, then the other. Then you had longshoremen that would – if there were ten trucks every tenth, one, you turn it into your truck, ten every ninth, one the next guy and they just fill up the trucks that way until they are full.

MS: How many were on a team with you doing this?

AG: I would say, six I believe.

MS: So, you mean there were six men on team.

AG: There was six men on the team and there might be two or three teams in each hold. Once you got going, basically one team would head into one corner and one team would head into another corner. Because the hold of the ship was probably, maybe a hundred by eighty. So, it was twelve boxes high and that was just the top tier. You had the tween deck, and then you had the bottom deck. So, as you went deeper and deeper, things get colder and colder. You'd just keep working till you cleared out the ship. But that kept us there for three days.

MS: That was my next question. You would take you three days to Colorado and then another

one would come the next day.

AG: Another Dole ship would come in the next week. There was a period of time when we're only making one day a week before we actually got our book. It went from one day a week to all a sudden all you had to do was wait and get something that would last three days. Now, people who didn't like to work, I want to work hard, would take something that maybe last one day that was their prerogative, "No, I am not doing bananas." There were some people who just did not want to sweat or just did not want to get physical with it.

MS: Let us step back. How did you get that job? How did they you choose them to work in the— you had to join the union?

AG: Yes.

MS: So, go through that whole process of how you got eventually got the job and then how do you get the specific job of that specific ship?

AG: Well, to get the job, you'd go into the hall, and you have your A book, you registered union member of...

MS: Explain all these terms because in A book, we do not know what it means. Start from the beginning.

AG: Well, you start out generally as a casual. They do not pay you as much as a B or an A book. So, casual would get the work that was left over that the A and B men did not want. That tended to be the harder work, working on the [inaudible] facilities and things. But then as you got elevated and moved up the ranks to a B, then all of a sudden you would go to the hall and they would have a list of jobs hanging on the back wall of what was available. You could basically go up and say, "Okay, I want that." As your number you are called an order of hours worked. So, the low man would go out first, meaning if I'm on eight hours and the guys on nine hours would be behind me, and the guys on twelve hours would be behind him. I would have first pick and generally for me, during that period of my time, I'd pick bananas and they took 200 men and women. That was a job that a lot of us took because I would go up to the window when he called my work number, and I would say, I went to Banana Docs, Long Beach two eight. And they'd say, "Okay, here." They stamp it and say, "Okay have a nice day." Call the next number. Then the process of going to the job was that generally what you would do is you'd find somebody that you like to work with. I tend to be a workhorse, so it's not good for me to have somebody who doesn't want to work. So, if I saw one of you and said, "Hey, you and I partnered." You nod, I'd say, "Okay, I'll see you there." We drive to the facility and we turned in our tickets, we turned them in as a pair. It was six-man gang. So, the other four, a lot of times you get to job and you see other people be there and you say, "Hey, come on let's get together." That was how you got your teams. The good thing about that at that time, I think was that guys would get together based upon how you worked more so than if you were a slab or if you were Mexican or if you were Black. I've seen guys tell their brother, "No, no, get out of the way." "Al, come here, Molly, come here, come here." Because they knew that you're going to be keeping up with the cargo. That was a good thing because it allowed you to get time to throw

and talk. "So, how things going?" They would tell you about their world, you'd tell them about yours and what you work. The guys and women that wanted to work a little slower, they would be where they were at. That was what was what was good about the spirits, it was good because it really was equal thing even on the job at that time.

MS: How long a day? When did you arrive? When did you quit?

AG: You'd arrive in the morning, get dispatched around, I would say probably around 6:30 a.m. Then we do the whole dispatch process, take an hour. You'd get to the job at 7:30 a.m. They would call out, there'll be two hundred people. They would just start calling you together and saying, "Hey, get together with who you want to be with together in the different groups get different gangs." Then they would just start assigning you. After you would been down there for a while if they knew that you could work, if they had a hatch of a ship that was particularly difficult, they might say, "You six, we want you over here". Because it's the heavy hatch, it's got more cargo or something. So, you got to know who you were and get to know what you can do.

MS: What was the process of moving up [inaudible] change tape? This is great.

AG: Thanks. Bananas?

MS: We were talking about how you go up the ranks. So, how do you get from the bottom of the hole doing bananas to moving up to out of casual into the different A and B levels?

AG: There's a relationship between us and the Pacific Maritime Association. As workers are needed, they're drawn from the next level as people take elevations to other things or whatever they do, then they're drawn from below. There's just a conveyor belt, and it is all done through seniority. So, the thing is that when my time came and they needed two or 300 people to be elevated, they started with the work number and you kind of know where you are at. Because we are going from 4,500 to 6,000 and my work number is 4815. So, you know you're in there and you'll be moved up the ranks. One thing about this union is that it is always been equal about training and seniority and giving you that opportunity to see if there's something that you can do.

MS: Again, from the casual days, what are the different cargoes you worked on and the difficulties and the challenges, and what makes it easy and what makes it hard for the things you do?

AG: Everyone's got a different preference of what they like. I worked for about four or five years, I worked steel lumber. Those were the ships, where it would just be loaded with steel pipe or flat steel or slabs or lumber. You would have two individuals driving the forklift. You would have two individuals swinging and two-hole bin. You'd go down there and it was like a cargo that a lot of people did not feel comfortable working with. So, it wasn't something that everybody liked to take.

MS: Describe the job and why did not people feel. Give me the procedure. What was the procedure and why was people uncomfortable with it?

AG: When you go in the hatch, climb down the ladder, it would just be a pile of, say, pipe, eight-ten-inch pipe or something. You'd have to just find where you wanted to start picking up loads at. You had the winch driver up there and you had to kind of pick loads up according to how you could get them sometimes. But also, according to, if you pick too many from one side, there was a danger of the loads coming down on you so you could not dig too deep. So, some things, you just had to make things happen. That was what really kind of made it dangerous because I've seen fingers clipped off. I had a friend who lost a foot from a slab, because the slab is as big as this room and probably about that thick. So, when it fell, it fell and just clipped everything it touched. It wasn't a type of cargo that people tended to say, "Okay, I want to do that." But there was a core of us that said, "I like this."

MS: So, was the pipe banded together or they all individual pipes?

AG: Both. They had loose pipe and a lot of times they're banded and four or five in a bundle, and they would have a sling around three or four of them. There's always slings in there but when they load it, they just put it in the hole, let it go, put the next bundle in the hole and let it go. So, when you start picking up, sometimes you had to kind of see what they did and – don't grab that load yet. That was where you wanted people you could trust. You wanted a winch driver that was safe. You wanted those six people that you could look at them and go, "I'm looking out for you and you're looking out for me, right." Because it was that dangerous. Then once you got a group together, that could do that, then it was comfortable because you worked as a team. A lot of times it was just a look, you look and say, "Don't touch that. No, wait a minute." There was usually one that would kind of take the lead. As long as you had good ideas, you could lead.

MS: Describe the team and how did it work together? Who were on the team and what were their jobs and how did you all work together?

AG: There was an example of pipe. The team had two individuals that would drive the forklift. You had two that would work the slings, actually four. So, you'd have always one at one end, one at the other end hooking up the slings which the driver came back in with the hook and you put that in the hook. You had two that were preparing the next load. Sometimes you try to get as many loads, depending on how much weight the machinery could hold. You are trying to get the maximum load sent out. But you are also looking at, as you are pulling one load, you are looking at the next. It had to be somebody who knew how to get to that, who was not just looking around and wondering what is going on, but said, "Okay, there's a next load. There's what we are going to get next." Started the process of reaching in, trying to pull the sling out. He had canaries and pulling slings out and getting it so that when the winch driver came back in, you have that pile and the other two would start moving and that was how you worked, you kind of leapfrog. Sometimes they'd say, "Hey, stop. We need to start another side because we cannot find this."

MS: But first of all, what is a canary?

AG: A canary is just a wired hook. When you get the sling, it's got a little handle, like a branding iron handle, maybe about six feet long, and has a little hook on the end. When you had

to get the sling, you never wanted to put your hand in there. You would hook it with a canary and pull it out that way if the load collapsed, it crushed the canary so that was very valuable.

MS: Okay, take me slower. You got a bunch of pipes, let us just say it is banded together into five or six. These are very heavy things. They are all through the hole of the ship, they are not just right over the hatch.

AG: Right.

MS: You got to go. How do you get this pipe to where the winch can get it to take it out? Do you have to physically move it yourself? Or is there a way of...

AG: Well, the pipe was usually roughly forty feet long, and the hatches were eighty, probably eighty-five maybe. So, you'd have a pile here, and you would have a little gap, and you would have a pile there. It would fill up probably the height of this building.

MS: They put it in a hatch, so it was lined up with a hatch to start.

AG: Right, the hatch is just a box. So, when you went in, when you climbed down the ladder, you would step onto the pipe. Probably, the first thing you would do would be one or two. It would walk the length of all these pipes, which that was the hard part was walking on the pipe. And sometimes we all oil and grease, walk the length and then you come back and make a decision where you want to start. Like, I trust your decision, so "Hey, you go that way and I'll go this way and we'll see." "Hey, this is where we can start. This is where they left. This was the last four or five loads that they put in." Because the slings were still fresh or they were still hanging on. What do you do when you make those decisions? That's why you wanted good people with you. Because making mistakes, you can correct them, but just makes work harder. You're trying not to work.

MS: Is there a Winchell rotary hatch, or does the winch move along to different hatches?

AG: There's a winch rear every hatch. The winch is up at the top, s and usually, it's probably about eight, probably no more than that, probably about fifteen feet up in the air, which has to climb on the inside ladder and work his way up and get inside and sit down. You can see out over most things. But when he got his winch out, the loads that are closer are the heart's most difficult because he cannot really see them. So, then you need a person who knows how to signal or who's looking out for you. Because if you have him pull up at the wrong time, you got your hand in something or hand in the bite, which is called. While you are still manipulating, he's just not paying attention I've seen guys get taken up ten, fifteen, twenty feet. Because their hand got caught in the sling and the winch driver does not know and the guy is not really paying attention and says, "Take it up." Taking them up in the air and he is – and you got to really be on your toes because when the guy does come down, he's not going to be very happy, [laughter] that you put him in that position. So, you need a good crew and we have always.

MS: So, the pipe sounds like it is tough. What is easy? If you wanted to do an easy load, what would you do?



AG: Easy load would be lumber, made a little lumber in there. You put in plates as you start digging, put plates so you can put the forklift in and get in and pick up the loads and put them in the sling and you just move the plates through the wind dryer. You had little holes on each corner and you get a four-sling hook. You hook each four corners and you look and say, "I want to put it over there now." Then you lift up the forklift and put it on the plates. That he would basically drive through that to keep him falling into anything and have a smoother load surface as possible.

MS: Now in all these kinds of things, have you worked in all these job categories? Have you worked with winch? Have you worked the sling? Have you done all the different jobs that are involved in doing that?

AG: Involved in doing this? Yes. Probably the hardest is winch driver. You get up there and you drive the winch. You just realize how many people there is safety in your hands. The first thing is just calming your heart because you get up to the first time I drove, it was like, "I don't like this feeling." Because things can happen that are not your fault. Sometimes you have to take loads out of pipes that's maybe sixty feet long and you have to take it out at a slant it is called feathering it. You have to take it out. If the hatch will not allow it to come out, you have to catch the diagonal. The first thing you got to do is you got to bump it. If it is coming out like this, it will go so far to hit the bottom of combing. Then you got to pull it out and bump it so that it goes. Then pull it up right when it is at a diagonal and we have no timing. You got to know your machine and you got to have timing. I have seen loads come back in. I was on one steel job where I had already picked out if the load came down where I wanted to jump. When one of the loads came down, the very place that I thought about was where most of the pipe went into. It was like twenty pieces of pipe and they all went into four or five, went to where I was at and was going to be and luckily, I was not close enough. So, I jumped out of the way, but they just bounced. Nobody got hurt. But, sometimes you just very, very, very lucky and fortunate.

MS: Do you find yourself specializing in a certain job? Or do you rotate through these jobs?

AG: Well, any job that you take, you can either specialize in it. Get good at it, and enjoy it for a while and say, "Now I want to do something else. I want to try this. I want to go over here." That's the beauty of the harbor is that there's hundreds of places you can just say, "I want to try this." and then try it. The job only lasted the length of the ship time and the berth. So, when it sails, you cannot take that job next time, tell your partner, see you guys, I'm going to try this for a while.

MS: Well, I meant job, I did not mean cargo, I mean, task being a winch driver or working in the hole. I would think that the more difficult job you would want to specialize in them.

AG: Yes, that's true. The winch driver, there's a winch board and the guys on that are the ones who are comfortable taking winch jobs and that is what they do. When you come to facility, you usually have what is called a key hold. A key hold is a person that drives the forklift. The other two hold men they do the walking on whatever this cargo is and hooking it up. After four or five years of doing steel and lumber and coils, and I was the forklift driver. I liked the kill jobs, paid

a couple of dollars more, but I was good at driving a forklift in that kind of situation where things are all in balance. You got loads here and loads there. When you pick some loads up, you had to pick them out so that you didn't tip over. So, that is what I enjoyed doing mainly because I had a little flare for it.

MS: What do you do most often now? What is the job you prefer to do now?

AG: Well now, I work for a company. I work for a company, American President line, and I'm a hammerhead driver. Hammerheads are the big cranes you see out that go over the ship, that pull the containers off and put them on the dock or vice versa, reverse. I've been doing that for about ten maybe eleven years.

MS: That is a pretty prestigious top-of-the-line job.

AG: Right, you're pretty much at the top of the food chain in terms of the industry.

MS: Okay. Let us talk about when you were around when containers were coming in. That scared a lot of people in the docks that it was not going to be good for longshore. Tell me about that process and how was it for you? What did you think about that change?

AG: Well, for me I tend to kind of go with what's coming down the pipe. I could see containers was going to be here. They had cranes, but they did not have very many. They weren't very high, ships weren't very big. I was working mainly bulk cargo. Bulk cargo was just where you had crates and cargoes all mixed up the day when they would just put crates into the hold. Then slowly you could see them and we would pull them out and put them into the warehouse. That was what you did, have slings and you had to know how to work the cargo and get it to the center of the hatch and to be pulled out. As containers became more prevalent, you don't see warehouses anymore on the terminals. They have all been torn down to make space for containers. I think with the coming of the (M&M?) contracts, which machinery and mechanization, people began to accept that this is the next wave of the industry. Because really, the winches used to be pulled by horses and they pull everything. You see old pictures, that was the way they did it. At some point, steam replaced horses and the winches worked with steam. They still got some of those old ones around. Things just keep moving in that direction and you just have to – I'm sure the guy who cared for the horses was, upset [laughter] had to figure out, do I eat them, what I do here.

MS: Let alone the horse.

AG: Yes, let alone – [laughter] Right. I think the industry moves as technology and things advance and things get easier. You just have to see, all right, I need to be in this picture to have a job because that is the main thing in society. So, I need a job.

MS: So, how did you get up? What is the title of the job you do now?

AG: Crane operator.

MS: Crane operator. How did you get to be a crane operator? What did that take for you to get that position and what were the challenges of taking that position and doing it?

AG: Well, the good thing about the union is that everything's in seniority. When they came, every now and every few years, they will put out. Bulletins saying, "We need a couple of hundred crane operators." Everybody that wants to try it puts the number on and then they go by the lowest number, lowest number first. When the time came to put in for the training, I put my number down and I was trained for two or three weeks. Then you have to see if you have a knack, I had a knack for it. I drove well enough that it made me a trainer. So, I trained one guy and then...

MS: What is the knack and what makes a good crane operator?

AG: Well, I think a good crane operator is somebody who respects the drivers that are driving under him and has a soft touch. That's where you are heading as a driver is to not slam people, not rock them around, not lifting one up twenty feet in the air. Safety, knowing what is safe, because I lashed a lot of years, I pretty much know what the lashes are doing when they are on the ship. That can make you – sometimes for health and safety, you tell them, "Hey, get those guys back." You're not asking, you're telling them, "Get those guys back. Get them out the way." I'm not comfortable with them being there. Because I had one friend when I was lashing who we were working together and he's standing with his hand between the container. Because we were just getting done. The crane operator hit eight cans down and he hit the cans so hard that it clipped off his finger. I think it put him in shock because he walked out. I say, "Pete, are you okay?" He kept walking and then about half an hour later the supervisor comes and says, "Have you seen Pete's glove his fingers in it?" And then I see the glove, but he did not speak. There was a trail of blood leading from he walked off the ship and went over to the supervisor, the boss, and say, "Hey, I still see Pete. I saw Pete yesterday. I got him with this little nub.

MS: [inaudible]

AG: Yes

MS: Tell me the whole process of what is going on with the container. From the time they come into – you talk about you are communicating to people in the lashing. You have some kind of means of speaking to earphones or how does that whole system work that in your role in it?

AG: Well, everybody in supervision has a radio. I have in the cab that I drive in there is a foot pedal. I push it down, I speak, they can hear me and they speak. I can hear them on the speaker and we have a signal person. That is probably my main connection to the dock is that he tells me to take it up, come back. Then he works the truck to move them back so that when I'm coming down with the container. He's turned the truck back up and we meet and land and come down. My communication with people on the ship is through the hatch boss. The guy who's working them in on the ship. So, you hit the radio and say, "Hey, hatch boss going to talk to you." "Yes, what's going on?" "I need to get those men out of the way." He either tells you yes or no or hopefully, he tells you yes. So, you don't have to stand by and he will move them back. Because we have so many new people down here now that a lot of them don't know what a breast of the

gear is [inaudible] abreast gear means, containers forty feet, five feet on either side is your area. Don't be abreast of the gear because that's the place where you can get hit or get crushed. You don't want anyone to be abreast of the gear. When you have people on the ship who you are loading the ship on the deck and they are walking back and forth because they are doing what they are doing, and you got to go, "Wait a minute I want nobody there." You got to tell them, "Hey, don't let them work abreast of the gear, please." When I talk to signal people, I tell them, you got little white lines on the crane that are forty and forty feet wide for the length of the container. I say, "This is your world right here, nobody comes in it unless you say so." You have to know your responsibility to the single person. Because their responsibility is to maintain safety from the drivers to the swingman, to the trucks coming up underneath from the other lanes.

MS: The thing that would probably slow me down on the job is getting up to the control box at the top. Do I have to climb up the whole crane to get up there? Or does...

AG: [cross talk] Well, when I came in the industry in 1982, there were no elevators. One of the energies for us as swing man, because we're all pretty good shape was that we had guys – you had twenty feet a platform and it just basically went like that. We had guys who were in shape, who you would watch them, you would bet money on. I think he will make it to the second platform this time. No, I don't know and he would catch his breath and he would go to the third one, and then he would work your way up. Then maybe about ten, fifteen years ago, they started putting elevators on the side. Then that's when everybody was – and now it's just, "Hey, take me up." It was a little intimidating because when you go up and they just had a little window and you could look out and see it going up and you look down. For some guys, they said it was a little intimidating being outside of the crane lake, going up like that. But coming from construction one of the – I worked high rises and we were thirty, forty story buildings. If you've seen their elevators, which was just basically plywood, you could kick a hole in the floor and look down and see when you are thirty feet in the air. For me, I'm okay with this.

MS: You have no problem working that high off the dock?

AG: No.

MS: How many containers do you do in a shift?

AG: A good crane operator generally gets around twenty-five, or thirty. Some can do forty and fifty, but a good crane operator who's productive is twenty-five and thirty is doing good. We have always, through the union side, we have always established that if you are safe, you can do ten five if your work is safe. Obviously, that comes into conflict with other people's opinions. But that was always our opinion was that when we come to the job, the business agent company says, "Well, is he endangering anybody?" "No, but he's slow as hell." "That's all, I thought maybe he was doing something wrong here." That energy cranes are getting faster, they hoist up faster, ships are getting wider. Our cranes will not ship to sixteen containers wide. They are merged across the way, has ones that are made for twenty-two. Which is the next wave and we had a twenty-two-foot-wide container ship. They would have to turn the ship around every few hours so we can get the other side and they are not going to do that. So that that energy of the

speed and the ability, the weight, the container will hoist about fifty tons, that is supposed to be the maximum.

MS: Now a lot of what we have been talking about was unloading ships and what about the loading process?

AG: Well, the loading process is just the reverse of unloading. When the trucks pull up, each crane is probably given about seven, eight, or ten drivers. As they grab the containers on wheels and they come up you latch onto it and you take it and you stack it. Once you do the deck tier, in which you won't need cones. Everything else is going up higher than that. Will they have these specialty cones now that they've developed in the last ten years, that when you set it down on the container, it locks automatically? You usually go about six, five, six high.

MS: But you got to set it down right in the right place. You cannot put it at five or six inches away from that...

AG: No, you got to put it – excuse me. Well, the night before last night I missed the pocket and I landed half on one container and half on another. So, the lashes had to come by and unlock it so I can get off of it and then take it to the dock, have it reset, and then put it right home. But sometimes you start going too fast –

MS: Hear some chuckles in the intercom?

AG: Yes, especially for me I do that. They're going like, I was getting in too big a hurry. You have to have a touch.

MS: Have basically been in San Pedro for thirty years. You have worked the docks for twenty-seven, twenty-six.

AG: Twenty-six maybe.

MS: You obviously like it. What would about San Pedro as a town and why do you like working on the docks and doing what you do?

AG: I like San Pedro as a town because it is a nice little quaint town, really. It has not really changed much in the thirty years that I have been here. A lot of the families are still here. I think real estate is tightening up where now your kids have to move Long Beach, Lakewood, or whichever way they go, Torrance Harbor City. I guess that is a certain energy that is lost from, you would have your son, then he would move next door to you and have your grandkids. So, but it is a nice little quaint town. People tend to get along. It has just been a good place for me to be. In terms of the harbor, the harbor is a unique industry. When I talk to people about this industry, I mean, 90 percent of them will go, "I don't know what you do." I don't know what it is. Some of them have been out to Portugal and maybe looked over there, but they really do not understand the industry. You are in an industry where you can actually say most people do not know what you do or how it works, the whole working mechanism of the harbor. Being in a unique industry for me has been really kind of special. I have watched it evolve. Now it just

happens that we happen to be at the center of this whole globalization process. When I first came into the industry, you remember most stuff came from, Korea, the TVs, and things, until I was a kid. Then Taiwan, it was about twenty years where it was Taiwan, and now the last few, everything looking at says China. What we tend to do, in our industry, is take loaded cargo off and put empty containers on. That is just the nature to where, I would say 7 percent are coming here loaded. We put the same amount of containers, but majority of are empty containers, that trade deficit thing and so that is the...

MS: But you talk about the idea of a job that people do not know about, but it is really an important job in this whole country that it is not just because people do not know about it does not mean it is not important. Tell me about the importance of the harbor [cross talk]. I think we get three minutes to answer out of that.

AG: Three-minute answer. Well, I think the importance is that, when I came into this industry, it was an injury one inshore. This whole international longshore and warehouse unit, we really are international in terms of wherever there is workers that do work with a cargo of containers. They are part of us and that is what I have learned in the twenty years I have been here. I have been to other countries and interacted with other longshoremen. It is been an experience; I have been to Australia in Singapore and which is the hub. I have watched who we are, come to and affect me.

MS: When you go to all these ports, you stay with a bit of a chip on your shoulder this is a nice port, but I come from San...

AG: Until you go to Singapore, which is wall-to-wall containers, I mean wall containers and cranes. It really is a hub where ships come there and they unload their ships and they take other cargo and they go big ships with 6,000, 7,000 containers we unload into smaller ships and smaller ships unload the bigger ships that is Singapore.

MS: Where does San Pedro to you? Can you say that with pride to somebody outside...

AG: Yes. for sure

MS: Rep of San Pedro around the world?

AG: Well, around the world San Pedro is the number one port in the U.S., number three or number four in the world. Just the sheer volume of cargo that we move makes most ports envious and not envious. But they are doing what they're doing and they're happy to see that we're protecting the welfare of the working people in this country. It's really been good, anywhere we have gone, they've welcomed us and interacted and shown us whatever it had. Consequently, when they've come here, we have shown them the harbor and taken them on tours and said, "Hey, let's show you what we do."

MS: What is the future of all this?

AG: Of the port? That is really a difficult question, what the future of the port is. It's really hard to say the cargo supposed to increase by nine percent next year, which is really going to put

more of a burden on the whole infrastructure. If you go to Long Beach, when I was coming over this morning, there was trucks as far as I could see backed up not moving. Then all the emissions and exhaust, hopefully, we will green the port a little more. China shipping's the only one that has cranes where they cut down all the engines and plug it in. They have an alternate source of energy where it now works off the electricity. I think all ships at some point will need to be like that if you are going to cut down this exhaust and clean up the air and do all the things.

MS: Good, that was your warning.

AG: Man.

MS: Could you slide over about two feet to your left and I will take a picture?

[end of transcript]