

Male Speaker: The hard question first. Please say your name and spell it.

John Ara: My name is John Ara, spelled A-R-A.

MS: A-R-A, one R, not two.

JA: Yes.

MS: Good. John, what year were you born and where?

JA: I was born in Brooklyn in 1922.

MS: Okay. Tell me, John, how did you come to San Pedro? Tell me how you got here.

JA: Well, when I was three months old, my parents returned to Spain. So, I was raised in Spain. I lived there until I was 16 years old. Then I came to the U.S.

MS: What were the circumstances? Why did you come and how did you come to the United States?

JA: Well, I came to the U.S. because our town was taken by Franco's troops. My father was arrested, the very first man that was arrested in town. He stayed for the rest of the war. In time, the forces of the Republic took the town over. From there, I continued with them. I joined the sappers battalion before I was 16. I was in the retreat towards the French border. When I crossed the border, I was interned in France in several camps.

MS: So, was it difficult for you to get to the United States? How did you get here?

JA: It was difficult because I had no documents that I could prove that I was born in the U.S. Everything was burned and was destroyed in town because it was bombed from both sides. I had not a single paper that could say that I was born in the U.S. So, then one day, I was in the camp. The French captain that was in charge said, "I notice that you always volunteer to work." I said, "Yes, I volunteer." "From what part of Spain are you?" I said, "Well, actually, I'm not Spanish." I said, "I was born in the U.S., but I lived just across the border from here." He said, "What are you doing here if you were born in the U.S.?" I said, "Well, I have no way to prove that I'm American. I was born in Brooklyn." So, he said, "Well, do you have anybody?" I said, "Yes, I have aunts and uncles both in New York and in San Pedro, California." He said, "Well, write to them and see if they can get your birth certificate." He said, "Because war is almost imminent. You better hurry." So, I did. I wrote to my aunt and uncle here in San Pedro. They told me that, "We know that you were born in New York, but we don't know where. I don't know how we could find out. But your mother's sister, Carmen, lives in Long Island. Why don't you write to her?" So, I wrote to my aunt in Long Island. The very next day, she said, "Well, I knew –" she told me this later. "I knew that you were born in Brooklyn. I'm going to go and see if by any chance – the first hospital that I see, I'll go in and talk to them." So, she told us how she went to Franklin Avenue. She saw American Medical Association written. So, she said, "Well, this will be a good start." She went in. She said that a very handsome doctor, dressed in white, with a

very neat white beard, neatly trimmed, came out and said, "May I help you?" So, she related my situation that I was in a French camp. He said, "What was their names?" She said, "Well, the mother is Tomasa Uruburu, U-R-U-B-U-R-U." He said, "Oh, palindrome, U-R-U-B-U-R-U." She said, "Yes." "And the father?" "Juan Ara, A-R-A." "Both palindromes," he said. "You know, that gives me an idea. Come in, please." So, she went in. He pulled out a drawer and put his finger through the drawer. He said, "I took care of that lady when he had this child." I get emotional when I say this. Had it been any other doctor, probably he would not – "no, we don't have anything here." So, anyway, he said, "With this book that I'm going to give you, go to the city hall and tell them to give you his birth certificate. They will give it to you immediately." He wrote something about it. I don't know what he wrote. So, she went. They gave her the birth certificate. It's in black – I should have brought it – black and written in white ink. She sent it to me. I went with my birth certificate to the consul in Bordeaux. I said, "Sir, I do not speak English." I told him I spoke in French or Spanish." So, he told me in French that everybody wants to go to the U.S. He went in. You know, I thought he was going to look, find out something, call somebody. Fifteen minutes went by, a half hour went by, 45 minutes, and I'm still waiting. Finally, a young lady came out. She asked me in English. She spoke in English. So, I didn't know what she said. I told her in Spanish, "No hablo Inglés. Je ne parle pas anglaise." She said, "What are you waiting for?" She told me that in French. I said, "I'm waiting for the consul." She said, "Oh, he's gone. He won't be here until tomorrow at 3:00 p.m." So, I told her my situation. She said, "He did not say anything?" I said, "No. He just went in. He told me that everybody wants to go to the U.S." So, I returned back to the camp. The French captain was quite angry. In fact, he wrote to the consul. So, I went again. The second time, I told the young lady, "Here is my birth certificate. I would like to get a passport because things are bad. They say that war is going to start, and I'd like to get out. So, would it be possible to get a passport without seeing the consul?" She said, "Oh, yes. You don't have to see the consul again." "Well, thank you." So, she gave me a passport. When I came here, I went to work in the cannery.

MS: Let us go back now. When you first came to San Pedro, what were your first impressions of this place? What did it look like? What did you think about it?

JA: Well, our Navy was anchored here, the big battleships and cruisers. I thought, "This is unbelievable." I had never seen a big ship like that in my life. I was very impressed. Everything was very green really. I thought, "Beautiful town. The ship came in and tied next to where the ferry used to be, Berth 232. There was my aunt and uncle and two of my cousins waiting for me. So, it was a very pleasant arrival. Yes, very pleasant.

MS: So, when you arrived here, how old were you?

JA: Sixteen.

MS: Sixteen.

JA: Yes.

MS: You lived with your relatives?

JA: Yes.

MS: You began to learn English. How did you begin to learn English?

JA: Well, English was very easy for me, very, very easy. I have not lost my accent. But since I spoke French, not fluently, but I spoke enough to get along, and Spanish very well, I found that English was quite easy. We had the library, which is still here. But the one then was an old library. They had renewed it. I met a young lady of Japanese extraction. Her name was Mary Nakahara. She took hold of me. She said, "Every day, you've got to come here. Every evening, we will practice English." I did very well. Because my cousins, they were going to high school themselves. They didn't have any time for me. They had their own friends and what have you. So, thanks to her, I learned very quickly.

MS: So, you learned English from a Japanese?

JA: Yes.

MS: Tell me that story again so I understand.

JA: Yes. I would go to the library. One day, I met this young lady of Japanese extraction. Her name was Mary Nakahara. I told her that I came from France, that I was in Spain during the war. She took interest in me. I tried to learn English. She said, "Well, you come every evening until the library closes. We will practice English." That's what I did. It came very easily.

MS: So, she already spoke English. She was not –

JA: Oh, yes. No, no. She was born here in the U.S. She was an American born of Japanese extraction, yes.

MS: Now, what about work? Did you have to do work? What kind of jobs did you get around?

JA: Well, I worked in the fish canneries. That was my first job. I was very lucky that the man that lived across from my uncle was in charge of one of the companies, the French sardine. He found out I had arrived from Spain. He came over to meet me. He told me that he spoke Spanish very, very well because most of the employees were of Mexican extraction anyway. He told me, "Well, would you like to work?" I said, "Oh, yes." He said, "Well, come tomorrow, and you're going to work in the canneries," the very next day. So, I went to work in the canneries. I worked there for several months. Yes.

MS: What was that job like? What did you do? What were the conditions?

JA: Well, the conditions were good. The job was quite hard particularly for a newcomer. They put me to load fish meal. That's bags of fish meal. The man in charge was a gentleman by the name of (Buda Luca?). Buda Luca, I suppose, spoke Spanish. He said, "Do you mind?" I said, "No, no. Anything you want me to do, I will do it." He said, "Okay. The trains would come.

You have to load the fish meal." They put two men to each box cart. But on this occasion, I went there, and I was by myself. The conveyor belts would send the bags. I piled them up very nicely. When they got quite high, I made a step in front. Maybe a couple hours had gone by that Mr. Luca came down and said, "Oh, boy, what a beautiful job. Who's helping you?" I said, "No one." He said, "Well, I sent a guy to work with you." I said, "Well, I have not seen anybody." So, he went in the other box cart, and there were three guys loading. They were just throwing the bags in any way. So, he called to stop the conveyor belt for a second. He said, "You guys come here. Look how a box cart should be loaded. See? Perfectly straight and neat and to the top. He is only by himself. So, one of you come here to help him." So, one came and helped me.

MS: Now, you knew Mr. Bogdanovich.

JA: Bogdanovich, yes.

MS: Tell me about him.

JA: Bogdanovich, he was the owner. No, I did not meet him. I cannot say that I met him. I knew of him, but I did not know him personally. I knew of Buda Luca and Mr. (Greget?) who were in charge.

MS: So, what are the other jobs you did in the cannery? Was that the only job?

JA: No. That was the hardest one. I also worked in the machines where you would get two cans and place them, and they would go down this machine that would wrap the can and put the name and everything. So, that was a much easier job, yes.

MS: Now, you joined the Merchant Marine.

JA: Yes.

MS: How long were you with the Merchant Marine?

JA: In the Merchant Marine, I was around four years until the war started. I was in the Merchant Marine. Then I joined the Navy. I was on the USS *Albireo* (AK-90). But before that, I would like to tell you about the problem that I had with my seaman papers, if you don't mind. My uncle was a sailor himself. My aunt and uncle had a boarding house for seamen. He was a sailor. He said, "Well, John, why are you still at the cannery? You will make more money if you join the Merchant Marine." I said, "Well, I would be very happy to do it. What do I have to do?" At that time, we had a great Merchant Marine. We had many, many ships. Today, we have hardly any. "You go to the post office. They'll ask you. They'll put you through a physical exam to see that you are in good health." So, I went. They did that exactly, a physical exam. Then I went to a Coast Guard officer. He asked my name. I gave him my birth certificate. He was working, almost finished, and he said, "You have a very strange accent." I said, "Yes. I just came from France not too long ago. I've only been here nine months. I spoke no English at all when I came." He said, "What were you doing in France?" I said, "Well, I was with the forces

fighting against Franco. I was in the sappers battalion. Eventually, we held them long enough, so we could evacuate into France." He said, "Oh, so you were fighting the Reds?" I said, "Well, I suppose there might have been some Reds. No, I was with the forces of the Republic." I have never liked that name. That moniker doesn't go with me. I said, "No, I was with the forces of the Republic." He said, "How did you get here?" I said, "Well, eventually, I proved that I was born in Brooklyn, Franklin Avenue. I came on a French vessel, the *San Diego*, tied next to the Ferry Building, very convenient. Then I went to work there later." He said, "Did you have a passport?" I said, "Yes." "How did you get it?" I said, "Well, I got it in the American consulate in Bordeaux, France." He said, "You know, I have never seen a passport issued in a foreign country. Would you mind showing it to me? Would you get it?" I said, "Well, since we are almost finished, my aunt and uncle will be very pleased if they see that I have my seaman papers." "Okay." So, he signed. I came home. I told my aunt and uncle, "The Coast Guard officer wants to see the passport." "Oh, well, take it to him." We lived just three blocks from the post office. So, it was a very nice, easy walk. So, I went over. I knocked. "Come in." I said, "Here, I brought the passport, so you can see it." When I did that, he went [inaudible]. He took it, put it in his vest. He said, "You'll never see this passport again. This passport is going to headquarters." For a second, I thought maybe he was kidding. He said, "No, no, you'll never see this passport again." So, I would go every few months whenever I came off a ship. I would go and inquire to see whether my passport had been returned. No, no. Nobody knew anything about it. No. So, I joined the Navy, and I was on this ship. One morning, it was about 1:00 a.m., the captain came up and said to the mate, "Mate, I know who's on the wheel." It was all dark, just a very small light on the compass. He said, "How do you know who's on the wheel?" He said, "Because nobody handles the ship like Ara does. Ara is on the wheel, isn't he?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Nobody in this ship handles the ship as well as he does, including myself," the captain said. He came over to talk to me. He said, "John, it's amazing you anticipate –" because when you have your own mechanical steering, it changes one degree. I would anticipate. Why or how, I did not know, but I did it. I said, "Well, if I had shown my passport to the Coast Guard officer, I wouldn't be here because, you know –" I told him what he did. He said, "What? He has no right to take your passport. That is yours. I'm going to write to the Navy." The next island we were going to, I think it must have been Tulagi or – probably Tulagi in the New Guinea group. He said, "If my letter is not answered, the next one will go directly to President Roosevelt," the captain said. He said, "Nobody can take the passport from one of my men." So, the time went by. One day, here comes the letter – you can see it – from the Navy Department with my passport. It was returned to me. They had mutilated it. They had cut it. It goes all through every letter, cancel, cancel, cancel. But this is my original passport that I got here.

MS: Handsome devil, are you not?

JA: Well, they thought I was. But if I only had the height, then I would have been fine. But if you are small, people overlook you, I think.

MS: So, this is a great story. I will not grab it from you again [laughter].

JA: That's all that I got.

MS: So, he thought you were a Communist? Is that what you think?

JA: That's what I think, yes. He must have thought that if I fought with the Reds – "no, I fought with the forces of the Republic," I told him.

MS: Let us go back to San Pedro.

JA: Yes.

MS: The ferry was a very important part of the port.

JA: Yes.

MS: Tell me about any experiences you had on the ferry.

JA: Well, I was working on the ferry. So, they came, and very quickly, I – but this is not right away, not when I came to the U.S. It was after I had been discharged. I was working in the Naval shipyard in Terminal Island and working on an overhead crane. All the fumes from cutting, from welding, everything would come up. It was a very unpleasant job. I would take the ferry every day. I see how nice it would be to work on the ferry here rather than work over there on Terminal Island. It so happened that I mentioned this to a young lady that is of Basque extraction, like we are. One day, she called and said, "John, they need somebody on the ferry. Would you like to go to work there?" I said, "Oh, yes, I would." She said, "Well, go to the office. I'm sure that they will hire you." But I was working on Terminal Island. I kind of hesitated. Days went by and she called me again. She said, "John, you know, they still need people on the ferry." I said, "Well, I've been thinking of going, but I want to talk to the lead man on Terminal Island first and see what he tells me." So, time went by, a third call. When I see her – she's still alive – I always tell her, "Well, you made my life." She said, "Well, geez, John, either you want the job, or you don't." So, I talked to the lead man in the island, in the Navy base. He said, "You've only been here for a short time. There is always talk that this is going to be closed. So, if I were you, I would take the ferry job. I know if you were my son, I would advise him, you only have a few months seniority, take the job on the ferry." So, I did. I went to work on the ferry. It was a very, very nice job, many, many ladies taking the ferry every day, young ladies. They all knew me. I knew them. It was a very nice job. Eventually, I became a mate on the ferry. We had many experiences. Some of them are comical. Others are not so comical. But one in particular, you took two of those coins, those tokens to enter the ferry. Two ladies that were quite ponderous, they both got in the turnstile at the same time and stopped in the middle. They couldn't get out. They had to call the yard. Somebody came down and took the turnstile apart, so they could go. It was quite a comedy actually. I don't know if you have heard of Admiral Higbee. Have you heard anything about him?

MS: Tell me about him.

JA: Well, Admiral Higbee, an admiral, he was very strict. He liked me very much for some reason. The harbor guards, as they were then – now they are officers, but then they would call them guards – would have a boat, and they would patrol the port. Admiral Higbee put a big box,

written "dynamite", under one of the docks. So, he went, and he said, "Well, how do you guys patrol?" They said, "Well, we go up and down day and night. We use our spotlight." He said, "Well, take me to see how you do it." So, they went up. Right on the (mason?) docks under the dock, there is this big box of dynamite. He said, "See? You guys did not see that?" So, he took their gun away from them for several days. That's really bad when they take your gun. You have to carry the holster but no gun. He was very strict. One day, he came on the ferry. He said, "Hey, mate." He called me. "Yes. Yes, sir. Admiral, how are you?" "Fine." He said, "How often do you check the anchor?" I said, "Well, every time we have general quarters, we check the anchor." He said, "Are you sure that the –" I can't think of the name of the part that hooks into the anchor, the shackle.

MS: Start again. He said –

JA: He said, "How often do you check the anchor?" I said, "Well, every time we have general quarters, we pull up the chain." "Did you ever check how the shackle is, if it's in good order?" I said, "Oh, yes, we do." We got to the other side. He got off. I went and I told the captain. I told Captain Kemp. We became very good friends. I said, "Admiral Higbee was down here. He asked me if we check the – I don't remember ever checking the shackle." He said, "Well, you better do it right away. Because when he comes back, that anchor is coming out. You'll see." So, eventually, maybe an hour later, here comes Admiral Higbee. He says, "Hey mate, get somebody else and bring out the chain of the anchor." So, I had taken the shackle, taken it to the engine room, and I buffed it, cleaned, oiled it. He looked at me. He laughed. "I'm sure it wasn't like that when I asked for it the first time." I said, "Well, perhaps not quite that clean, but we do clean every trip." But we had not. He was a very fine man. He had a saying which is in the Naval books. He says that special – superior.

MS: He had a saying.

JA: Yes. He had a saying. Yes.

MS: Start again.

JA: Yes. "Superior skill and seamanship in extricating yourself from an unnecessary extremist does not justify the lowerly act of blundering into it." This is in the Naval books. So, one day, Admiral Higbee was shopping. We had a grocery called – they used to call it McCowan's. He was picking up some vegetables. I was behind. I said, "Superior skill and seamanship in extricating yourself from an unnecessary extremist does not justify the lowerly act of blundering into it." He was tense. He turned around. He said, "It had to be you that [laughter] reminded me of that." So, he liked me very much.

MS: Tell me any other stories you remember from the days of the ferry.

JA: Okay. Well, one that is almost comical is a lady that said that she was going to commit suicide and jump overboard. By the time –

MS: You have to tell me that you were talking about the ferry. So, there is a lady who was

traveling on the ferry.

JA: On the ferry, yes.

MS: Start again.

JA: We had many people traveling on the ferry. On this occasion, a lady claimed that she was going to commit suicide and jump overboard. So, naturally, we notified the captain, man overboard. The ferry does not stop like a car. You take it out of gear. You put it in reverse. But it drifts quite a while. Naturally, we lowered the lifeboat, but the ferry was drifting away from where this lady jumped. They were going to eventually row back towards her. Well, she changed her mind because she saw that we were drifting the other way. So, she started swimming. She was a very good swimmer, beautiful stroke and came back. I said, "They told us that you were going to commit suicide." She said, "Yes, but I changed my mind." So, [laughter] we picked her up on board, and we brought her in. Yes. That was another comical thing. There are others. I told you about Admiral Higbee. But there are others that are not so pleasant. Because one time – this was before I became a mate. I would handle the ramps for the people to come in and to go out. We were coming from Terminal Island. For some reason, the captain miscalculated and made it quite a hard landing. In fact, I had about six ladies on top of me. I fell, and I had all these ladies on top of me. Eventually, they got out. People moved back. Because everyone was ready to get out. A few days later, I got a call from the city attorney. He said, "John, we want you to know you are to be a witness on this landing that was the other day. I want you to think, convince yourself that it was a normal landing. Somebody is suing the city, and you know how these people are." I said, "Well, who's suing the city?" He said, "Some Black lady. So, you convince yourself that it was a normal landing." So, I said, "Sir, I will not lie. I have about eight ladies on top of me. I was at the bottom. It was a very hard landing. So, you better get somebody else." So, they never called me. They did not call me again. So, how did the jury turn out? I don't know. But I told him, "No, I would not say there was a soft landing or normal because it was not."

MS: Any other stories on the ferry? Any characters that you got to know? There were just so many people back and forth.

JA: We got to know everybody. We got to know a young man. See, I wish I could recall his name. Because he was very tall. He was taller than our entrance. Maybe 7 feet, he was. One day, he was talking to somebody, and he hit his head on the crossbeam. He started bleeding. So, we called, and they took him off. The guy came back later on with a scar on his forehead. "From now on," he said, "when I talk, I'm going to be looking down." Because he was tall, a very tall and very nice guy. So, things like that would happen very often. Also, for instance, one day, a lady wanted to use the bathroom. Well, we had one key. I gave her the key. She went in the bathroom. But she took the key with her, and somehow she could not find it. She's stuck in there. I said, "Yes? What is it?" She said, "I can't get out." I said, "Well, I gave you the key." She said, "Well, I don't see it. Maybe I lost it. Maybe it went down." I said, "Well, you will have to wait because we have to get another one. It will be two or three trips. We have to go to the city and see if they have a duplicate." Finally, on the second trip, out she comes. She said, "I put it in my purse." She thought [laughter] it was her car key or something. So, we had



incidents like that that happened very often.

MS: How long was the trip back and forth?

JA: Fifteen minutes.

MS: The trip back and forth.

JA: Yes.

MS: You have to say that.

JA: In 15 minutes, we would make a round trip. Yes, 15 minutes.

MS: How many trips a day?

JA: I never figured out – well, we would work eight hours, so it would be easy to figure out. I've never thought of counting how many trips we made. Every once in a while, we would lose a trip. Say a ship would come in or go out and we had to wait. So, every once in a while, we would lose a trip. They were not exactly 15 minutes. We tried to keep a schedule, but sometimes we could not. Other times, a car could not start once they were on the ferry. We also had to help them or pull them out. So, sometimes we would lose a trip every once in a while. But one day – this is a good one – I was working for somebody else on the small ferry. We had two ferries. We had one running during the day and one at night. It was about 12:00 p.m. The ferry stopped in the middle of the channel. The operator said, "I know what happened. Don't worry. They will be up here soon." Soon enough, two Navy sailors came up. The pilot had a – the boat operator had a nice bar in his hand. He says, "Well, I tell you what. When you guys pull that anchor up, we will continue." "Well, we have to be there – he said, "I don't care when you have to be there. Unless you pull the anchor up, we'll be here until tomorrow at 6:00 a.m. Then we get relieved." So, they went down with all their blues and everything. They got a dirty chain. They pull the chain up. Then, okay, the chain is up. So, all right, now we continue. We started and came to the side, and they got out.

MS: Now, they had let the chock and let the anchor down?

JA: Yes.

MS: Tell me that they did that.

JA: Yes. I was working on the small ferry one night, working for somebody else. Anytime anybody would be sick or wanted to go somewhere, they would not even ask me. They knew that I would work. "John, how about taking the watch on the ferry tonight?" Fine. There are no questions. So, I was working on the ferry. Maybe 12:00 or a little after, the ferry stopped midchannel. The operator tried it. He said, "I know what happened. They'll be back – they'll be up here in a minute." Sure enough, two sailors came up and said, "We have to get to the other side. We have to be on duty." I said, "Well, when you guys pull up the chain, the anchor that

you threw over, we'll continue." Meanwhile, he had a pipe in his hand. "We're going to be here until 6:00 a.m. Then we get relieved." So, the two sailors went down. They got together. They pulled up the anchor.

MS: Any other stories you remember?

JA: On the big ferry, this did not happen, but on the small ferry it happened quite often. As we were approaching the dock, somebody would say, "Jump, jump." Invariably, somebody would. We were too far. They would fall in the water. Naturally, they were always on the lookout in case somebody jumped, to throw it in reverse. Otherwise, we could catch them and keel them easily against the dock. But that would happen very often.

MS: Eventually, you became a part of the pilots.

JA: Yes.

MS: Tell me how that happened.

JA: Yes. When the ferry service was terminated because they built the Vincent Thomas Bridge, those of us who had seniority could bump somebody that was working in the pilot station. If there had been less than time that you were on the ferry, all that counted with the harbor department. It all counted as employees. I bumped somebody, but the day before I had to go to work, I called. I said, "I'm going to go to work the day after tomorrow. Tomorrow I would like to go and meet the personnel. I would like to talk to the chief pilot." He said, "Well, the chief pilot will be here until 12:00 tomorrow." "12:00 noon?" I said. "Yes." Okay. So, around 8:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., I went down. I went to the pilot station. The door was open, but I knocked. I went. I knew the two people that were in the office, but they didn't recognize me. I said, "My name is John Ara. I'm here to relieve somebody tomorrow. I would like to talk to Captain Secker if he is in." Captain Secker was in the office next door. He answered. He said, "Yes, I'm here. Come in." So, I went in. I said, "Good morning, sir. My name is John Ara." He said, "Yes, I know you. You're coming tomorrow. Sit down." I thought, "This is great." So, I sat down. He said, "Wait a few seconds. I'm writing something in the log, and I'll show you around." "Thank you." So, he did. He did write something in the log. He said, "Come on, I'll show you around." He said, "First, I'll take you to where the pilots usually have their recreation room. See, it's right here. You won't have to come here because this is for the pilots. As you see, it's very similar to what you have down below." "Yes, I see." He said, "Now, I'll show you the blackboard." The blackboard had the ships that were arriving and the ones that were sailing and the name of the captain behind. He said, "Here are the ships that we're going to move today and the ones that are sailing are on this other side. Now, I'll take you to the radar room. But remember, I'm just showing it to you. You are not going to be here at any time." I said, "Fine." So, he showed me the radar room. He said, "Now, I'll show you the dispatcher, John (Moretta?) and John (Gravendyke?), the guy that you're relieving. I said, "Well, I know both of them." "Oh, do you?" "Yes." "Well, I'll introduce you to them anyway." So, first was John Moretta. He was the one that kept the log of the pilots going in and out. He said, "John, this is John Ara. He's going to be here tomorrow." I said, "How are you? How are you, John?" I reached for him, and he would not shake hands with me. That's fine. Captain Secker did not say anything.

"This is John here. John Gravendyke is the guy that you are relieving." "John, I'm sorry that this happened." I reached for him. He said, "Well, if it were the other way around, I would not be unhappy." So, he ignored me and said, "Come on. Now, I'll show you down below." I said, "No, Captain Secker, I have already been down below. I saw how things are." He said, "Well, remember one thing. That is where you are going to be. You don't come up here unless you are called by a pilot or by myself. You are not to come up here." So, here, the guy that I was relieving was sitting up there with the dispatcher. I said, "Fine." As I came down, I thought, "I don't work in this (aspers?) nest. I thought, "This is unbelievable." Just as I was going to leave out, Captain (Wyand?), who was a prince, Captain Wyand came in. "John," he embraced me. "I'm glad that you're here. I've been trying to tell you to request to come on the pilot station for this." "I know you have. I'm thinking of not accepting the job." "What do you mean? Why?" So, I told him the incident up there. He said, "I tell you what, if you don't take the job, it will be almost an insult to me. Take the job for a week. I'm going to be working this week, and I'm going to call you to come up to the pilot station when you get through with the boat. We'll see if anybody says anything." So, I came to work. When the boat came in, I scrubbed it down. I kept the boat cleaner than anybody else. I went. "Hey, John, this is Captain Wyand. Are you doing anything?" I said, "No." He said, "Come up here. I want to talk to you and ask you some questions about the Spanish Civil War." So, I went up. "Let's go in the rec room." So, we talked. He said, "Nobody will say a word." I said, "You can see that." So, we talked for maybe a half hour. I said, "Well, I'm going down below." He said, "Very well." The very next day, he would call. "John, what are you doing? You told me that you worked on the forestry department while you were a kid in Spain." I said, "Yes." He said, "Come up here. I want to ask you some questions about the trees." Every day – I was also a good fisherman. I told him that as a kid the only thing that we had to eat was the trout that I would catch during the war. So, every day he would call me, and nobody said a word. One day, when we were talking, he asked everything that he could [laughter]. He had a Bible. There was a Bible. I didn't know it was his. Many pages were bent. So, I got a cup of water. I straightened them out. Very carefully, I straightened them out. He said, "John, that shows your character better than anything else. That's my Bible. But then now, I will have to search all my favorite passages because you straightened them out." I said, "Well, I didn't know it was yours." But he did not say I'll do it.

MS: Tell us when you became an operator.

JA: When I became an operator, there is still a captain – I don't know if he would like to be interviewed. He works for Meals on Wheels, Captain Brady. He said, "John, you don't know how glad we were, especially in bad weather, when you were working. You had a touch that nobody else had. I've been a pilot for a long time. I was a pilot for the Navy, and I'm a pilot now for the pilot station. Nobody can handle a boat like you do." I said, "Well, thank you." I had never done any damage to the boat. That's a fact, which is in my records, never any damage. He said, "Do you remember the last southeastern? We had a southeastern that tore apart the breakwater for the first time. I was working that night, and I was talking to two other pilots. I said, 'I hope John is the one that comes to work today.'" I was the one.

MS: Tell me about that. That must have been a difficult situation.

JA: Oh, yes, yes, very difficult, very rough weather. The breakwater had never been damaged.

That was the first time. There were ships coming. I said, "Well, we'll manage." As I approach the vessel, I always take the step on the upstream. When the boat goes up, get on the ladder, and I'll move out. " Because that day later – I will tell you a story that happened later. They would go aboard. They would be very, very happy. One day, good weather, I was taking the captain, Captain Patton –" I'm very bad to remember names. I remember Wyand and Patton. That's what's on my mind. When he got on the ladder, I pulled out, as I always did. The ladder broke, and he came down. Naturally, my job as operator was to get the boat out of there and very, very carefully. Because if you do it fast, you either push him against the ship, or if you reverse, you can bring him into the boat. Because I had to get the boat to the lowest possible place, which was a stern. Meanwhile, my good deckhand, Ismael Rosales, threw a float over. I approached the stern. We hooked it with a boat hook, brought in the stern, and brought Captain Patton aboard. We called the station. We told them, "We have to come and get another pilot because Captain Patton, the ladder broke, and he wants to return to the station." So, we took him back. They put somebody else. When they came back, the chief pilot then was Captain (Meyer?). I had come back. I had to put the raft that we threw over in place and this and that. So, my deckhand went in first. Captain Meyer called him and said, "Rosales, write down what happened." He said, "Well, I'll wait for –" "No, no, no, you write down what happened." So, he wrote exactly what happened. When I came back, he said, "Hey, John, come up. Read what Rosales wrote and be sure that you write something like that because Patton probably will sue the city." I said, "Captain Meyer, I don't want to even see the paper of what he wrote. I'm sure that he wrote the truth, and that's what I'm going to write, the truth." I said, "No." "Well, do you –" "No, no, I don't want to know anything. In fact, give me a piece of paper." I went down below, and I wrote what happened. I took it to him. I said, "This is what happened." A few days went by, and I was called before the city attorney. They had several people there. They had two chairs. One like this was empty and another one near the door that was ajar. So, I went to sit in the chair. They said, "No, please sit on this one here. We're saving that for the ship's captain." I thought it was a very logical answer. Well, fine. So, I changed chairs. We waited and talked about things. Eventually, they said, "Well, we better have this gathering, have the meeting that we're supposed to have because I don't see the captain coming. Something might have come up, and he can't make it. So, the first thing that we will ask you, when you took Captain Patton to the ship, did you smell anything on him?" I said, "Yes, very much." He said, "What? Liquor?" I said, "No, he must have used one of those fancy Jade East aftershave, and yes, I could smell it." "Do you have the time, the exact time when he fell down?" I said, "Well, it's in the log. But no, I don't remember the exact time. But it's logged. In fact, I could bring the log if you want me to, and you can check it." "When you guys picked him up, what did he say?" I said, "Well, he thanked us very much. He said, 'I'm sure glad that you two were here because possibly, I could have drowned.'" "So, you don't know the exact time." I said, "No." "How about the time when you guys arrived in the dock?" I said, "Well, it was a matter of minutes, but I don't know." He said, "Well, okay, that's fine. You may return. If we think of something, we'll call you." "Okay." So, I left. I opened the door. Then I thought, "Well, I'm going to bring the log back to them anyway so as to eliminate all calls and what have you. As I closed the door, behind that shut door was Captain Meyer, the chief pilot. I said, "You don't need me here. You have the chief pilot here. Ask him. He can tell you. He has a copy of the log." I went. But they wanted to catch us in some – and he did not sue anybody. No. He continued working. He was very grateful the way that we handled the boat. Because you had to approach very slowly because the screw can either throw him away or suck him in because it's a powerful boat. The

way we brought the float over, okay, one, two, three, up, we got him aboard. He was very, very happy.

MS: Well, we have just about run out of time.

JA: Oh, yes? Well, I had another story, but that's all right.

MS: Tell us one more story. You make it brief.

JA: Make it brief. Okay. One day, we were returning to the pilot station. It was early in the morning and still dark. I could see two lights. I told my deckhand Rosales, "Look at those lights. They seem like they are under the water." He said, "Let's go look." So, we went, and they were. It was a boat. It was sinking. The bow was still up, but you could see the lights. Further down, we saw a man on a little lifeboat. He was almost dead, full of oil. He had an explosion. We picked him up, covered him with blankets, and we called the station. I said, "Have an ambulance ready. We're bringing a man that's almost dead. I don't know if he's breathing." So, they did. They had an ambulance, and they took him. The next day, they told us that he was in the hospital, but he was doing well. So, I said, "Could I talk to him?" So, I talked to him. I said, "Well, I'm one of the guys that picked you up. I have your boat. I came back. We got your boat. We have it in the station." He said, "What's your name?" I said, "John." He said, "John." "Yes." He said, "Well, that's a nice name. You can keep that boat as a souvenir. It's yours." He gave me the boat, which I have at home. I have it in the garage.

MS: Okay. Let us end it here though.

JA: All right.

MS: If you could slide your chair over a couple of feet to your left.

[end of transcript]