

Male Speaker: Tough question first, please say your name and spell it.

Dave Arian: Yes. Dave Arian, D-A-V-E, A-R-I-A-N.

MS: Dave, what year were you born and where?

DA: I was born in 1946 at Cedars-Sinai in L.A., came down to the waterfront right before World War 2. Over here in Terminal Island, you had the shipbuilding industry. Then you had longshore. Longshore was really, at that time, a very casual industry. The shipbuilding was concentrated. The war started. They were turning out one Liberty ship a day. I mean, just amazing. They had over 100,000 workers there. The harbor area was a good area to get a job. Maybe not the best-paying job, but a job. They had the canneries. They had the shipyards. They had longshore. They have the fishing fleet. They had the development of a lot of basic industry in and around this area. So, this was a prime area for employment, and that's why people ended up here.

MS: Can you help us out and go back? I know you did not live it because you were my age. But give us a sense of what were – a little bit of the history of the labor movement here on the harbor, here on the waterfront. What were the conditions before there was a union? What were the conditions that led to the building of a union? Give us some of the timeframe for that.

DA: Well, the early turn of the century in 1900, from 1900 maybe to, say, 1919, there was a growing struggle. The main group here that was organizing, was considered to be a very radical group, was the IWW, International Workers of the World. I mean, they were an organization that really reflected the immigrant worker, the worker on the bottom, very radical, very syndicalist. That was a character of the society at the time in terms – there wasn't much permanency for workers.

MS: What were the conditions for workers in those days?

DA: Well, the primary conditions is there was no protection –

MS: Prior to getting to the workers on the waterfront was.

DA: All right. Yes. The primary conditions of workers on the waterfront were they would talk – there's a classical term, from wharf rats to lords of the dock. What they meant by wharf rats is the wharf rats had it better than the workers did. You would go to work in a shape-up system. Cinderella Man, that movie sort of gave you a reflection of somebody lining up and just hoping that they would get the job. There are stories. We've done a ton of interviews ourselves through the Harry Bridges Institute, where people around during that time would tell you very definite stories where, in order to get a job that day, you would have to bring a bottle of wine. You'd have to do some favor, paint somebody's house. In the most extreme elements, in some cases, even being able to sleep with your wife if you want to get a job. I mean, these are the kinds of interviews we've done. Naturally, I wasn't around. There was no dignity as a worker at that time. There was no protection. The health and safety were terrible. You'd work around the clock. I mean, in a real sense of the word, when you talk about longshoremen, it came from men

along the shore. There'll be men along the shore here. They'd be in the bars and other places, and they go recruit them to work. There wasn't much stability in the job. There was no dignity, and there was no future.

MS: 1934 was a critical year. Give us a sense of what happened at that strike and how that fits into the history of the union movement here.

DA: Well, in 1934, what they call the big strike, and really the foundations of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, in a sense, the first casualties took place around May 15th, 1934, where a guy named Dickie Parker and another man named Knudsen were killed. There's a monument down here on 5th Street that reflects that struggle that took place. Really, what it was is the workers had reached the end of the road. They were unwilling to go any further, the discrimination, the attacks. So, the workers rebelled. It wasn't just a few workers. It was a mass movement. It somewhat started here. But the real center of the struggle was in San Francisco, led by Harry Bridges, who became the famous labor leader of the ILWU. The most important thing about the labor struggle brought dignity to working people, total working person, that you're special. That a working person can elevate themselves beyond the lower ranks of society and move, as we call it today, into the middle class. Nobody viewed that. That you had a right to medical care, that you had a right to a pension, that you had a right to decent working conditions, but most important, you had a right to self-dignity. You had a right to organize and defend yourselves. You have to realize that before 1935, there were no labor laws protecting labor. There were only cynical laws. So, three people got together to organize against capital in their own interest was a violation of federal law. So, really, the 1934 struggle not only helped the workers here, but it sort of set the conditions for the Wagner Act. A lot of other legislation was passed during the Roosevelt there. So, the struggle is very significant.

MS: What brought the struggle to a head? What were the conditions around it that brought that strike?

DA: Well, I think the biggest thing that brought it to a head was –

MS: Was it the 1934 strike?

DA: Well, the 1934 strike, and the thing that really brought it to the head was the shape-up system where there was no permanency, where there was struggle. The workers just reached a point where they'd see their fellow worker die on the job, incredible injuries, incredible insult. How much can a human being take? What creates a boiling point? What is a specific incident? It could have been anything. But that's sort of what brought together the struggle. One of the most important parts of the [19]34 struggle was up until 1934, there had been a series of strikes that were defeated, and the victories were to the employer. In 1923, one of the bases of the victory for the employer were the employer would not allow African Americans or particularly, Hispanics, to work on the waterfront. During the strike, they went to the African American community, recruited them, and said, "We'll give you a job." Or the union had a similar position, that they didn't necessarily allow African Americans and, to some degree, Hispanics into the workforce. So, it was a natural way to divide and conquer. One thing that Harry Bridges told me early on in my own development, he says that the role of the employer is to divide, to split, to

conquer. The role of the union is to unify, to collectivize, and to fight for the good of the whole. I think that just sort of reflects what culminated in [19]34. The employers were no longer able to split. Harry and others had pulled them together. The radical elements of the union – the communist party, the socialist groups, the Wobblies, and others – were the primary influence who talked about the collectivity of humanity. It was like, "Wow, this is something really different." What Harry said was, "We're going to build a union in the image of the worker. That the guy on top isn't going to get paid any more than the guy on the bottom." That was pretty socialistic at the time. Today, that would never sell, but it sold them. I think that's what Harry brought to people. They brought more than just working conditions. They brought a philosophy that says, "Together, we can do this, and we can share, and that we got one enemy. That one enemy is that shipper and that capitalist." I guess, in talking to the old timers, that's sort of what galvanized them. Now, the question was always asked, was this a communist organization? Well, you probably were lucky out of twenty thousand people if you had two hundred people that identified and were a part of that organization, whatever the organization was at the time. But the philosophy – and you could see that today throughout the union of a low man out system and the way the union setup participatory democracy from the bottom up, that that all came out of [19]34. So, it was something very special. It wasn't just about wages. It wasn't just about meat and potatoes. It was about a future view of humanity. I think that was important.

MS: Let us go back. I am going to ask you sometimes to repeat or expand on what I have already asked you about. I mean, we need to define, what was the shapeup? Define that to us. Why was it a cause of, really, this development in the [19]34?

DA: Well, the shapeup was based on two factors. Number one, they would have steady gangs. In other words, let's take Matson company. The Matson company would have five steady gangs which would work for them all the time. They were permanent employees. But at the peak times, they would need a lot more supplementary labor. So, the supplementary labor would come outside the gate each morning on a pier. Let's just take here in San Pedro out of Harbor 55. Let's say it was 1933, and let's say that company, Matson, had three gangs. They needed six. They needed another thirty men. Two hundred people would line up outside the gate. A boss, the ship boss or hatch boss, would go out and point his finger at you, you, you, and you. You would come through the gate, and you would work that ship. You would stay on that shift for eight hours, sixteen hours, thirty-six hours until the job was done, or you couldn't work anymore. You would come back the next day when a ship came in or whenever a ship was in, and you would do it again. But there was no guarantee that the second time you would get picked. So, a real system of favoritism developed. That favoritism was based on a lot of things that I had said earlier about your relationship to the foreman and whether he would pick you or not and also if you were the best worker. I mean, if you're one of these mammoth-type people that could just pick up a ship by yourself, well, then heck, you're going to get picked that day. On the other hand, if you happen to be a leader of others and can make others and motivate others, they would pick you. But there were a lot of reasons. But a lot of the workers that were picked were the best workers and later on became the best union people. But a lot of them were picked because of special conditions and favoritism. That's what the shapeup was.

MS: As the union developed in the [19]60s and in [19]70s, there were a number of suits which really put the union in a position of being attacked for favoritism. There was the African

American suit. Women later sued. Talk about what those situations were.

DA: Yes. Well, with any organization, with any union that provides jobs, the key to 1934 was three things. One of them was registration, which secured the registered workforce at job each day rather than being a casual worker. With the registration event, some people would be registered, and some would not because there's not enough jobs for everybody. So, the registration process was the key to future employment and security. One of the first suits and successful suits in Southern California was a Phillips-Gatlin suit, who were two African Americans, along with others. That suit really developed after the war in 1948, was the origin of that suit. In 1948, during the war, they had brought in a lot of workers from the South and elsewhere to work in the shipyards and on the waterfront. Probably half of them, of the five hundred they brought in during the war, were African Americans. After the war, the people that went to war who were young people say they're going to get their jobs back. So, we don't need these five hundred. So, they deregistered five hundred people, a good percentage of them being African Americans. They then set up a system of sort of bringing in sons and brothers and others through a sponsorship system. That system lasted until 1968. In 1968, the Phillips-Gatlin suit was filed. As a result of that, what they call sponsorship disappeared on the waterfront. From that day forward, there have been some lawsuits around discrimination. But most of them have been resolved internally. The first major suit by women was called the golden suit, I think, in 1983, [19]84. We had brought in the first women in 1978 – the first five women. There was one woman who came in before that, and she was a daughter of a deceased. If you died and your spouse had kids and you needed to support them, your father's book would go to the oldest son or the oldest kid. On this particular family, they decided to give it to a woman, which broke – I mean, I was like, "Wow, there was a fight over that." I remember that distinctively because I was on the registration committee at that time. Then after that, it was inevitable that women were coming in. So, we started the process. I'm proud to say that I was part of the committee that brought in the first five women who are still working on the waterfront.

MS: Now, you were on – actually, let me go back. Again, explain the idea of passing on the book, which was – how did that work? In other words, if you were registered, you could sell your registration, could you not, in one way?

DA: No, no. The only way that you could get registered in the industry – there were two ways – that you came in through the normal registration process when they needed additions to the workforce. You start out as a casual and eventually work your way to class B or getting sponsored. The only other way was if you died and you had a family or spouse and children, that if your oldest son had to be over 18, could then assume the responsibility of a father, as long as he was supporting the family. On the other hand, if you died and you had a wife and no kids, you couldn't pass your book to your wife. You could only pass it on to a person. There was a very limited number. I mean, the number of people that die on the waterfront, you had to be active. So, the number of people that pass on their book is very, very limited.

MS: But I had heard you could sell. You cannot sell?

DA: No.

MS: It was not like a taxi medallion in New York where you could sell?

DA: No. You could never sell your book. It couldn't happen.

MS: We talked about some of the landmarks and the developments starting in the [19]20s and [19]30s and [19]60s and today. Those are big landmarks. But there was one other one to talk about, which is almost an internal landmark. That is the impact of containerization. Talk about that issue and how that was resolved and what the impact of that was.

DA: Yes. Let me just go back for a minute and talk about landmarks for the – two types of landmarks. If you want to look contractually at the landmarks that transitioned the workforce and the relationship with the employer, it was the 1934 struggle which was settled by government decree, a mediation arbitration agreement, which was the foundation. It was 1948, which was the [19]48 struggle, which was the last time the employer association at that time – which was not the Pacific Maritime Association – attempted to break the union and gain back what they had lost from [19]34 to [19]48. Went out on strike. The importance of that was, number one, we were able to appeal internationally in 50 different ports, told Truman, the president, that if he used troops against this union and he used scabs against this union, that their cargo would rot in the ports around the world. When those telegrams started coming in, the strike was over. Truman had to back down. We broke the back of the employer. A new employer association was formed, which was the Pacific Maritime Association. As a result of that, there was a relationship that developed of cooperation, what I call was an antagonistic partnership, that existed up until 1999. The next landmark contract was the M&M, which is a containerization contract, which I'll get back to. The next landmark was really [19]72, where we went out on strike and haven't been on strike since. The [19]78 contract which was a preservation of work contract which secured much of the work we had lost during M&M, and the 2002 struggle, where we were locked out in the government. The Bush administration, the military, the media, the employer could not break the back of the union, and the union was victorious. Those were the important landmark contracts. Going back to the M&M contract, the

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MS: Explain what M&M is.

DA: Yes. The M&M contract was mechanization machines, mechanization. Mainly, the concept was new machines coming in, the men would be in the workforce, so M&M. It was very clear after World War 2 that the country had changed. The position of the United States was becoming dominant in the world. Therefore international trade was expanding. As a result of that, the government was setting up a series of commissions looking into productivity and how to move cargo more effectively. At that time, we were exporting cargo rather than importing cargo. So, it was very critical to American capital and those people that were producing machine parts and farm goods to expedite their movement. The waterfront was based on what was going on in the 1920s and [19]30s in terms of the method of production. You were dealing still with steam winches. You were dealing with the ability to move 1.5 tons of cargo with one lift, and there was no longer – things were evolving beyond that. There were packaged loads. There was a larger amount of cargo that needed to be loaded. In one way, there's bigger ships being built. As a result of that, there was major pressure by the government. There was the Bonner

commission in 1957 that examined what was going on the waterfront and began to put direct pressure on the employer, on the shipper, on the carrier, and on the union, and say, "We're going to intervene and take over this waterfront if you guys don't do something. We're going to let private capital take care of it. But if it doesn't, we will, because you – this is a much bigger picture." So, Bridges could see the writing on the wall. So, we started in [19]57, with the employer, the negotiations of a new approach to productivity. The 1960 contract understood that there was going to be a new method. The new method was a container where the cargo would be stuffed in the container rather than the whole of the ship. That contract was visionary on part of the union because the union is the one that made it happen. The only person that could have sold that contract was Bridges because of his history and battle and struggle, and the men respected him. But this port rebelled against Bridges. This port refused to go along with the M&M contract. Bridges had to come down here and enforce it. A lot of people didn't like it, and it created real resentment. But Bridges gave his word. It took twenty-five years for people to see the genius of the M&M contract. Well, what was really traded off was a more efficient method of productivity with some job security for the people that were left and a guarantee of eight hours a day. Before that, you got a two-hour guarantee, a four-hour guarantee. Now, you've got an eight-hour guarantee. Really, a vision of the future of any new work that came on the waterfront, we would be able to secure. The impact of the M&M contract really wasn't realized until the second M&M. There were two M&M contracts really, two five-year contracts, [19]61 to [19]66, [19]66 to [19]71. In the first contract, it was just transitional. You didn't see any containers. You saw little van packs. You saw this, but everything was changing. By 1966, you could see the change. I came in during the second M&M contract. When I came in, I came in along with six hundred other guys. Bridges just told us, "Don't worry. You're going to be stuffing and stuffing those containers. You won't have to go down to the hole in the ship anymore." I say, "Great." They brought us in. We were lucky to get one day a week because that work that Bridges promised us never developed. It was challenged in court by the Teamsters. Cal Cartage decision on our 50-mile radius, it reversed. The legal arena reversed what we have negotiated in the contract. As a result of that, the work died in San Francisco. The work died in here for the new people. When I came in, I told my dad – 1969, [19]70, my dad was out living out in the desert by then. He retired in [19]73. My mother was out there already. I went to the house, and we'd always talk to union. I started criticizing Bridges and saying, "Hey, you sold us out. Look what he did, man. We're not even working. We can't make a living. The guys in San Francisco are the same as us. They can't make a living." My dad told me, he said, "Look, if you're going to criticize Bridges, you can't be in this house. You have to leave. So, don't come back if you're going to talk negative about Bridges. Bridges gave me everything we got, everything you got. His vision will prove to be true." Well, I didn't believe that at the time because it's like a frog in the well. The only thing you see is a little patch of blue. My little patch of blue was clouded. I mean, there was no work. There was one day a week, two days a week. It didn't make sense to me what Bridges had done because I was looking at it from my own personal perspective, along with the group I came in with. It took me many years to see. It took me at least ten years after that to see what Bridges had negotiated and really the genius of the time and how the transition took nearly ten, fifteen years. In 1993, I was the international president of the union. In 1993, we had to reach the lowest point of registration in the Longshore Division on the West Coast. 8,600 people, counting longshoremen, clerks, and foremen. 6,800 longshoremen left on the West Coast, with maybe another two thousand casuals. Today, in L.A., there's eight thousand registered members in Local 13. 1,500 registered members of Local 63, the clerk's local, and

400 registered members of the foremen local, which is nearly ten thousand with another ten thousand casuals. We have more people in this port working today than we had on the entire West Coast in 1993 and when the M&M was signed. It took a long time. So, what I always try to tell people, and particularly the younger people, is you can't just look at self-interest. You've got to look at collective interest. You've got to look at the bigger picture first. Then look at your picture and see where you fit into it. Maybe there is a future, maybe there's not. So, I think that the genius of containerization was – I mean, the genius of Bridges' concept of containerization was the concept that any work that was left – and there was a very simple phrase. If there's a button left to push on the waterfront, a longshoreman will push it again.

MS: Say that again.

DA: If there is a button –

MS: You said Bridges had a phrase, whatever.

DA: Yes. Bridges' phrase was that if there is a button left to push on the waterfront, it will be pushed by a longshoreman.

MS: Can you give me a really short capsule summary of what that agreement was?

DA: The agreement of the M&M contract on the employer side is the employer got three major things. The first thing the employer got was the question of being able to eliminate what they call the load size. In other words, in the contract, you can only lift so many sacks out of the hatch at a time. You can only lift so much cargo at a time. That was eliminated. All that was eliminated. Now, you could lift as much that was available, and you couldn't say anything about it. It wasn't honorable. That was it. The second thing they gave was – a big issue was double handling. For example, you would bring in fifty boxes on a pallet to be loaded aboard the ship. The team sort of bring it to the docking, set it on the skin, or on the ground. A longshoreman would then come and take it off then put it on a board and send it into the hatch. The employer said, "Wait a minute. Why are you unloading the board that's already ready to go in the hatch?" He says, "Because that's our jurisdiction, and that's what we're going to do." That was called double handling. Same thing happened when cargo came off the ship. It was already unitized. Why not then just put it on the Teamsters truck? We said, "No, no, no, no, no." So, we gave that up. The other significant thing in terms of work practices was the creation of what they call a swingman, where before, if you had a category of work, that's all you would do. You drive a lift. You work in the hole. You stay on the ship. You can go on the dock, restrictive work rules. The swingman and other things allowed them to use a swingman who could swing aboard the ship on the dock and do various other things. It was also the consolidation in the [19]66 contract. I was a steady man, going back to the concept of a steady gang, but for a steady man that could work for an employer, a major breakthrough for the employers. What the union got out of it was basically, like I say, long-term job security, an eight-hour guarantee, and really the consolidation of a pension plan that was started in the [19]50s and a health and welfare plan that we have to this day. So, that was sort of the balance.

MS: Talk about your first day on the job and why you wanted to get involved in the waterfront

and some of your early experiences when you got involved.

DA: Well, my first day on the waterfront was in Wilmington 160, and it was a banana ship. I was maybe 18 years old. I weighed 130 pounds. I was 5'8" and a half, still in high school. I got a call. I went down to the job. I went to walk aboard the ship. I walked up to gang, met the boss. "Hey, kid, where are you going? Are you 21?" I said, "Yes. I'm 21." He said, "Well, you're too small to work on this ship. So, you go back on the dock, and you're going to work in a boxcar." So, I go around the warehouse. I report to this guy named (Lucky Gomez?). He says, "You're working in this boxcar. These guys will show you what to do." There are four or five guys lined up in the boxcar. There's a guy lined up on a conveyor belt with the banana stalks. The banana stalk is 5 and a half, 6 feet. It's taller than I am. It weighs over 100 pounds. I see these guys. A guy loads it on his shoulder. He walks in, and he stands up. They put the first one on my shoulder. I go down to my knees. I drag it in. I stand it up. Everybody looks at me like, "Who is this kid?" I make it through the day. I'm frustrated as hell. In the middle of the day, when the sun comes out, these banana stalks are capped at 56 degrees in the ship. But now it's hot. All of the sudden, you see these tarantulas walking out of the stalks, and these little green snakes run up your arm. I went home and told my dad, "I don't want to be a longshoreman." Really, I did other work for a long time. I got married very young, had a kid by the time I was 21, 22. I saw that I needed the job. I came back to the waterfront. It was sort of like out of necessity of raising a family. Because I really don't think I wanted to be a worker and particularly, a longshoreman. Then necessity dictated what I needed to do. That was 1965. This is 2007. I've got a year and a half left before I retire. I'll retire with over forty-four years on the waterfront.

MS: When you came back, what kind of work did you –

DA: Well –

MS: Did you make a deal with those snakes, or you went with it?

DA: The bananas were put in boxes after that in 1965, [19]66 in their 40-pound boxes. It was a lot easier to work. You didn't see the snakes, and you didn't see the tarantulas very often.

MS: What are some of the characters you remember when you went back again, and some guys are memorable characters on the docks when you were starting out?

DA: Well, I mean, it's really hard to reflect. I mean, there's so many people that you run into that you think are special. There's a guy named Pete Grassi. He came out of the old school. He was a business agent. You call him out there. He'd walk up the gangway. If the employer and the superintendent are really messing with you, he'd go up and pretty much punch them out for you. That would resolve the issue. People stayed away from Pete Grassi. He was a special guy. A guy named (Bill Rivera?), he taught me to be a B.A., and he told me three things. He says, "The first day you go out on the job, give me the contract, go close this job down." So, I found a reason to close a job down. I came back. He says, "Good." The second day, he says, "Go do it again. Close two ships down today." I did that. I came back. He gave me the contract. He says, "Now, you've got the employer respect. Now, learn this contract." That's how I learned

how to be a business agent. That was sort of the philosophy that I took because the employer doesn't respect you based on how smart you are, based on how good-looking you are. They only respect you if they know you've got power behind you. With that power brings respect. It doesn't matter who you are. If that union is behind you and they know you'll take a stand against them, that you can close them down, they're going to respect you. They're going to listen to you.

MS: That was a great lesson. What are some of the other lessons you learned early on about both the union and about the job?

DA: Well, the greatest thing about the union is a person with the kind of ideas I came in with. Because I was active in the antiwar movement. I was active in the civil rights movement. I was as radical as you could get coming into the union. This union allowed me to be who I was. They didn't agree with me. Bridges said, "You've got only one right in this union, the right to get in the fight. We're going to let you get in the fight. That doesn't mean we're going to let you win the fight, but we're going to let you get in the fight." The greatest thing I learned about the ILWU is they give you the right to be in the fight. It's the most democratic union. The thing that I've learned is, in life, if you can be part of one thing that's special, it really gives you meaning in life. I've been part of something that's been so special to us, to this community, to this country, and to the world, that there could be a group of workers who could take into their hands their own future, that they could build a leadership in their own image, and they could prevail for nearly eighty years now in a society that is so self-centered, so egotistical, so selfish, and that you could have this beautiful pond in the middle of the sewer. It's sort of like something that I've been blessed with. I think that's the lesson I've learned from being part of this union. The organization, the ILWU, that I could control for 30 years, and I decided not to do it because I –

MS: It was kind of the big picture.

DA: Yes. I didn't want to follow that pattern. I felt that, "Hey, you could do more, building future leadership than building your own." I've been somewhat successful at that, I mean, not totally, but I can look at a lot of people that I've helped along the way and had some influence with.

MS: Yes. An interesting story. Again, I am going to turn to a personal view for yourself. For your own personal experience as a labor leader and as a longshoreman, what are some of the moments that really were particularly important for you where you learned or saw or changed in your years?

DA: Well, the first thing, obviously, was coming into the union and seeing the democracy and what you had a right to do. I had some very radical views. I was up on the microphone one time speaking. I was the youngest guy in our group that would ever get up and speak as a first guy. I got sworn in the union in 1969. After three meetings, I was up on the mic. These old timers looked at me and said, "Who was this saint?" I had long hair and a full beard in the [19]60s' revolution and all that stuff. People looked at me and said, "Wow, who is this guy?" I'll never forget. I'm speaking, and I'm criticizing the president of the local, right? So, he had some of his supporters. In the middle of my speech, they come up. They pull the plug out of the microphone, so I can't – nobody can hear me. My dad walks up to the mic, plugs it back. He

says, "I'd appreciate it if you allowed my son to finish his speech." Well, at that point, everybody recognized that my dad, who they called on honest Lou, who was a dispatcher and well respected in the union, this was his kid. We're going to let him speak. Now, my dad had not been there, I wouldn't be talking at that point. But that was part of the legacy of the union. So, that was the first point. From that day forward, I was never – the majority never agreed with me, but they accepted my right to be in the fight and my right to participate. Second thing was probably my criticism, as I would call it, of the M&M contract and really moving through a process in my own mind and my own leadership of realizing that I couldn't be looking at self-interest. I had to look at the collective interest of the union. I think that transition took place from about [19]70 to [19]75.

MS: What were you criticizing? What did you not like about it then?

DA: It wasn't working. No work for me, no work for my group, gave up too many work rules, gave up too much manning, gave up too much everything. Where's my job? What about me? Okay? That's how you were thinking. I was fortunate enough to be trained and be around a lot of the people who are internationalists and people who look at the big picture. I think during that period is when they got to me and said, "Hey, look, man, you've got to look at the big picture, not just in your own self-interests. This union was built on a collective concept." So, I think that's number two. Probably the biggest moment in my life is when, in 1984. I was elected president in Local 13. I never thought that could happen with my views. My dad told me something. He said, "Look, Dave, they accept Harry Bridges because he's delivered for them. They call him a communist, a radical. They don't like his ideas. But when you put out a flyer or you speak to the membership, on one side, you tell them the facts, not what you think, but what are the facts. Just put the facts down. On the backside, say anything you want about what you believe but give them the facts. That's what Harry did. He gave them the facts. Then he told them what he believed." My entire career, that's sort of what I did. It culminated. I mean, being elected president in Local 13, it was a long shot, okay? My dad swore me in at the meeting. That was a highlight of my career.

MS: Talk about your dad. I mean, what kind of man was he? What was his experience working on?

DA: Well, my dad came from a family of ten brothers and two sisters, came out of Lithuania, basically Russian Jews, came to the United States, ended up in Utah, and eventually, here in L.A. My dad went to Manual Arts High, where he played a little football, was a wrestler, really, up top, had a really big body. He was only 5'8", 5'9". But if you looked at his waist up, he looked like he was 6'5" because he was very muscular and strong. He worked very hard. He did floor covering, worked in the shipyards, worked on the waterfront all at the same time to support the family. In our family, you could talk about the rabbi, the businessman, the shyster, and the donkey. The donkey was a worker. That's how it was looked at. My dad was one of the donkeys in the family. He was the worker. But he was the one that everybody came to when they had a problem in the family. He was the one that would embrace everybody and didn't judge everybody in the family. All the brothers and sisters would be fighting. My dad would be always there consoling, bringing them in, and taking care of them when they needed to take care of. So, he had a very big heart. My mother, on the other hand, she was the political

consciousness of our family in the [19]50s. She was in the woman's auxiliary and supported the union. In the [19]50s, she went to Nevada when they were exploding the atomic bomb above ground with the women came – it became the women's strike for peace later. She was one of the women that went there and protested. So, she was a political conscience. My dad was sort of the union provider worker. That was sort of what I grew up with in my family. I had to say that my politics really came from my mother. My commitment to the union and working hard and becoming the person I was came from my dad. But my mother was the one who really said, "Hey, this is about a social thing. This is about social consciousness." That's a role she helped play in the union. So, my dad, he, like I said, started on the waterfront probably in [19]38, [19]39, working in the shipyards and on the waterfront. He didn't go into the war because they wanted to keep a certain number of people here to work in the shipyards for work production and to work on the waterfront. So, you did your time for four or five years here. That's the role he played. He finally gave up his floor covering business in the [19]60s when things got better for him on the waterfront. But he always worked two or three jobs. He worked nights on the waterfront. Then during the day, he was doing something. My dad broke me in doing floor covering with him. That's sort of what I did to make money when I was in high school. Later on, I became a journeyman as a result of that. He had a little philosophy. He says, "Shoot for the moon, but put \$1 in your pocket every day." Obviously, what he was saying is, you've got to have your view and your vision. You've got to dream. But you've got to take care of yourself. Everybody on the waterfront called him honest Lou. When he ran for office, he used to have a card that he campaigned on that says, "Honest Lou, the working girls' friend." There were no women on the waterfront at the time. So, it was just his way up a little humor. He was a dispatcher, which helped give out the jobs. He was a delegate to one or two conventions. The international executive board and Bridges sent him overseas as he did a lot of rank-and-filers to build relationship. He and three others went to the Soviet Union in 1970, [19]71. We sent delegations all over the world and will continue to do that to build relations. He retired in, I think, 1973. He lived to be 78 years old. He died of asbestos, asbestosis, which he contacted on the waterfront. They just used to work in gunny sacks. It took thirty years to kill him. But eventually it did, as it has scores of workers and particularly longshoremen. My dad's influence was a big influence on the waterfront. He was really my shield for a number of years, too. I could get my own stuff together and figure out how to maneuver through the politics of the union. If it weren't for him, I don't know if I would have survived on the job or in the union, just because you get in this fight. It's a heavy fight. I mean, you're up against really tough people. It's a day-to-day fight. I learned early from him that, "When you wake up in the morning, Dave, if you're going to go to work and you're going to get involved in politics, you better put your armor on." So, for every day, I put on my armor to even to this day. When I wake up and I go to the union, I go to work. I put on my armor to prepare to do battle. He taught me to be a working-class warrior. To some degree, my mother would say, "You can be a working-class warrior, but you better be working-class intellectual, too. You better learn something." I think the combination of the two is what gave me my ability to maneuver through this union of the balance between my mother and father.

MS: Talk about the union today and where things are going. I mean, what was happening here? I mean, the union movement, the labor movement overall has really been hammered in the last – well, union membership was going down, and union influence is decreasing. I mean, where do you see that going and changing? What is the situation now? Particularly on the waterfront,

where do you see it going?

DA: Well, if you start on the top end in terms of our influence, we've got more influence today –

MS: Say the union.

DA: The union today has more influence on the West Coast in this country and internationally today than it's ever had. The reason for that is, number one, on an international level in terms of global trade, this is the funnel. The Port of L.A. and Long Beach and the West Coast is the funnel. We can choke it off. Now, it was the employers who locked us out in 2002, but it saw what kind of power this West Coast has. So, we are strategic, and we're important. Secondly, we're in an industry that's growing. We're connected to a port that's growing. We're talking about our jobs moving from, coastwide, 8,600 twelve years, thirteen years ago. Coastwide, they're nearly 25,000, counting active registered people and active casuals. So, our industry is growing, and it will continue to grow, which gives us a lot of power. Our wages are high, which gives the union a financial base to move from. The union learned in 2002 that we couldn't stay exclusive and isolated and just take care of ourselves, that we had to go back to some of the philosophies Bridges believed in. We got passive in the [19]70s and [19]80s. We got lulled to sleep. We made a lot of money. Everybody was satisfied. We weren't as involved in political action and community building and working with the race to the labor moment. The 2002 contract, the employer did us the greatest favor. The Bush administration did us the greatest favor. It woke our membership up. Since that day, we have restructured our union so that we deal with PR. We'll deal with political action. We'll probably contribute this year, going into the presidential campaign, at least \$1 million from our membership. We will spend a lot of our money on PR. We will do a lot of coalition building, and we have done coalition building, things like the Harry Bridges Institute does, which is not the union but sort of a medium between the union and not on the ILWU but the labor movement in the community. We helped sponsor Juneteenth here in San Pedro, which is the day African Americans realized that the proclamation came from Lincoln, and they were free. They celebrate it like Fourth of July. We support Cesar Chavez's birthday and have these activities. We do food banks during – the Yes We Can group within the union does all this work in the community. We give out to nearly fifteen hundred families at Christmas and at Thanksgiving. We do a lot of support in this community. So, on an international level and a community-based level, we're back. We're building. We're organizing. Our membership is growing. Now, is that reflective in the labor movement? No. Things have to change in the American labor movement. We're trying to be part of that change by working much closer with the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, which is a new federation. We stay active in those things. The state of the mind of the membership, it's a contradiction constantly between the kind of money people make, and they want to live the good life. It should be the life that every worker lives and aspires to. We haven't reached that. So, it's hard to keep those people involved. They come in around a crisis time. We can depend on them at crisis time. In between, it's 10 percent of the workforce that contributes to the union. That's about it.

MS: Go back and give us the full story of the 2002 dragging and the lock-out. What were the situations that caused it? What happened? What were the results?

DA: Well, we had a new guy come into power in Pacific Maritime Association, and he came in

with the purpose of restructuring. His name was Joe Miniace. He began the restructuring in [19]97. [19]99 contract, he got his butt whooped by Jim Spinosa, who was our international president. We call him Spinner. Spinner kicked his butt. He got a great contract in [19]99. Their main issue was that they kept saying it was technology. So, going into 2002, it was like the second M&M, but it was for the people that were doing the paperwork, the clerking work. We went into bargaining. They had already started a campaign a year and a half before, of attacking us through the media. They helped form what was called the West Coast Waterfront Coalition, headed up by a woman named Lanier. They represented the shippers, like the Home Depots and the Targets and stuff like that, the people that ship that cargo. So, the PMA and Miniace had already set up an alter ego to attack us in public. They had a direct line through SSA to the Bush administration. Because the head of SSA, Stevedores Association, out of Seattle, the biggest stevedore operator on the West Coast, had people on the top end in the Bush administration. So, they had the Bush administration lined up. They had the media lined up. They had the shippers lined up.

MS: What were they saying? What was their message?

DA: Their message was that we were like Luddites which was destroying machines, against progress, against new technology. We were overpaid. We didn't work hard. Anything they could slander us on, they did. They did this for nearly two years. Philosophy of the union was to stay out of all that. We negotiated a contract. We got a veil over it. It's them on us. Nobody else needs to know what's going on. We weren't ready, completely, for that. Although we were getting ready. We were doing stuff coastwide, and we were preparing. The employer came in, in my opinion, with the attempt to break the union or at least weaken the union in a way so that it would lay the groundwork for later on undermining the power of the union. The employer did not come in for technology. The employer did not come in for any specific issue that they said, which was cutting our medical care, question technology, the custom, and all this. The employer was making money. It wasn't about that. It was about breaking the union. We really didn't see that in negotiations completely until in the discussion on technology, the employer presented twenty-four demands. We had a tough time. It took us two, three weeks of debate. But we said, "Hey, man, we got – just like in M&M, we've got to go along with some of this stuff." We had to make these changes. But in return, maintenance of benefits, you pay the whole load as you always have, okay? Increase the pension plan. We still push that last button, which means any job created through this new technology, through this computer, we get. If we were doing 1 percent of it or 80 percent of it, if it's combined into one operation, we do it, not an outsider does it. The main approach of the employer was to outsource the work to Nevada or to India or somewhere else. It could be done elsewhere, which was – with the internet and all this stuff, I mean, you could do most of paperwork anywhere, with cameras on the waterfront and satellites and all this. I mean, we had moved into that age. We said, "No, no, no, no. Anything that you've shipped out, you got outsourced, you've got to bring back. In return, we'll give you this." We agreed to 22 out of 24 of their demands, and they turned them down, all of them. So, then we knew we were in a war. We get a call in the middle of negotiation from – God, I can't think of his name. He's the head of Homeland Security at the time, the first guy. Anyways, he gives us a call. He says, "You guys are in the middle of negotiations. If you were to have a work stoppage, it might be considered – you might be considered the economic terrorist." The threats were made one after another. We got a call from the head of the Defense Department. He says,

"We need the West Coast to be open because we're preparing for something." This was the year before the Iraqi war, right? We get a call from the head of the Labor Department, Chao, threatening us. Then this Howard Taft, who was a representative of the president, and the Labor Department was literally on the phone to us every other day, threatening us. They started talking about training workers to run the cranes and bring in others. Well, we've done our work too. We had our people, sent out our delegates in Central America, Latin America, and Europe and Asia and had met with all the federations and the labor groups. We aligned up, as we did in [19]48, workers in our report nearly around the world that could help us, some by shutting down, others by putting pressure on the government, others by boycotting, but all of them. We opened up a broad-based media campaign. We did hire a major firm in Washington, D.C. to help us on that level. We worked with the politicians, Kennedy, and others helped in blocking and helping us in D.C. So, we really shifted from what we call the inside game of negotiations to the outside game. The AFL-CIO came in and provided incredible resources. Trumka, second in charge, came into our negotiation and sat there with us for six weeks. So, that's the most important negotiations in labor struggle in this country at this time. So, labor came together behind us. Well, now we have labor. We have international labor. We have politicians. Now, we stood on equal footing with the employer. The employer made three fundamental errors. The biggest error was to lock us out. We knew that whoever closed down the waterfront would get their butts kicked. So, we forced the employer into a position where they were basically the ones that had to close down the waterfront because we refused to go on strike. We continued to work, and it frustrated him. So, they closed down the waterfront. When they closed down the waterfront, it's the first time in history that the president ran a Taft-Hartley against – it wasn't against workers on strike. It was an employer that was locking out a union. The Taft-Hartley was applied, the first time in history that ever was done. So, everything was manipulated. It was a very tough struggle. There were times during this struggle – and I was in the center of it in negotiations and coordinating the outside game – that I thought, "Man, they just about got us here." But our membership held tight. Our membership was supported. The right people rallied behind us. That first mistake was devastating to the employer. The second mistake they made is Andrew Siff called us and said – no, we got a call from the president's office directly. He says, "Will you extend working 30 days?" We thought about it. We said, "Sure." They went to the employers. The employer said, "No. No. We're locking them out. That's it. Forget it." So, that was the second mistake the employers made, where they – I won't use the terminology. But they stepped on their own in terms of the decision that they made with the government. The third mistake they made was, when the Taft-Hartley was placed on us, they claimed that we were slowing down and in violation of the Taft-Hartley. When the mineworkers did that in [19]78, they fined them \$1 million the first day, 2 million the second for it. Mineworkers owed about \$300 million in fines before the struggle was over. It took many years to resolve that. They went in, and they made all these claims. What we have done is we, on a day-to-day basis, kept track of all the production after we came back to work. We got the logs of each job and how much production was going on in every job. I've been down the West Coast, and we centralized all the information. Every claim they made, we could show the judge a fallacy of the claim. Then we had guys like Trumka and others on the media everywhere promoting for us. The courts couldn't do anything against us. So, the Taft-Hartley, we wrote it out. Then the government came in and said, "Well, we're going to pass legislation taking over the waterfront." At that point, we knew we had tried to – even our friends in Congress said, "Hey, you've got to get this thing resolved." It was resolved. We were victorious. We had defeated the Bush

administration. We had defeated the attack by Homeland Security, by the military, by the Labor Department, by the media, by everybody. How could such a small, little union of 14,000 registered workers succeed at that level? It was only because of our history, of the inside game being very good at negotiating, and the outside game, of our international support, our political support, our community support, and the support of the rest of the labor movement, which allowed us to be victorious.

MS: Good to have a better ending for that.

DA: Yes.

MS: Anything else you want to talk about?

DA: No. I could talk forever, but I've got other things to do today. So –

MS: Good. Well, let me get a still shot of you. I want you to move over 2 feet to the left there, and I am going to –

[end of transcript]