

Male Speaker: We are going to start with the hard questions. Please say your name and spell it.

Manny Aschemeyer: Oh, Captain Manny Aschemeyer, A-S-C-H-E-M-E-Y-E-R.

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

MA: August 12, 1941 in Baltimore, Maryland.

MS: I am going to sort of start at the end and sort of work backwards. I mean, I have got some things here. First of all, what is the Marine Exchange? Give a sense of its history. What is the function of the Marine Exchange here in the harbor?

MA: I'm executive director for the Marine Exchange of Southern California. It was founded in 1923. We are a nonprofit maritime trade corporation serving about three hundred constituents on a direct subscription basis. But indirectly, we're serving thousands of maritime related entities, individuals, companies, businesses throughout the Southern California area, as well as across the state and across the country. We are a maritime information clearinghouse. We keep track of all vessel movements, all vessel positions. We can answer any ship, any question about any vessel that you would need to know.

MS: I want you to start again. We can answer any question –

MA: Yes. We can answer any question about any vessel at any time. Specifically, we answer the age-old question, "Has my ship come in?" We cannot only tell you that, yes, it's come in, but we can tell you where it is. We can tell you what flag it flies. We can tell you what kind of cargo it has. We can tell you what its last port of call is, what its next port of call will be, and many other segments of information.

MS: I mean I am going to ask some dumb questions, sometimes because I am dumb and sometimes, I want to get good answers.

MA: Yes. [laughter]

MS: Why is this important for a place like the Port of Los Angeles?

MA: The Marine Exchanges have proven their viability in any number of ports – by the way, there are thirteen of them across the country – by providing this information that people need to know to do their business, whether it's the florist delivering flowers to a passenger vessel, whether it's a Maritime Union trying to get people aboard this ship, tugs, pilots, linesmen, customhouse brokers, freight forwarders, port authorities. They all need this information as to operating vessels and port. We are the glue that holds the whole system together.

MS: So, to go back in its history, you said it was founded in 1923, right?

MA: Yes.

MS: How was this done before and why was it founded and why was this sort of [inaudible] started?

MA: Our founding father is Mr. Bill Wickersham who operated a large steamship agency and customhouse brokerage back in 1920. Back then, there was no method of keeping track of these vessels. So, what would happen, the companies would send what they called runners down to Point Fermin Lighthouse with telescopes and signal flags and what have you, trying to catch view of these ships as they came by. On the Long Beach side, they would do it up on Signal Hill. But in any case, it was a very chaotic, non-reliable way. A guy would get on horseback and run back into town. He said, "I think the (Lucky Lady Lou?) was coming around the corner." But if he was wrong, then they had all the paperwork wrong for the customs, the health officials, the immigration and what have you. It was very chaotic. So, Mr. Wickersham started what was originally called the Los Angeles Shipping Club, which was a forerunner of the Marine Exchange. He hired signalmen out of the U.S. Navy principally. They stood watch atop of shack on Old Warehouse 1 at the end of L.A. Harbor. They would use signal flags, signal lights to positively identify the vessels, and then begin sending information back to those who needed to know that, yes, that ship is arriving.

MS: What years were those that he was doing that?

MA: He did that from 1920 to 1923. He actually ran it as a for-profit segment of his business. However, around 1923, through the [inaudible] because it was not profitable, he was having difficulty keeping it going. So, he announced that he was going to quit. At that time, the maritime community had gotten so wrapped up in this reporting service. They said, "Wait a minute. You can't let it go." So, they went to the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. The L.A. Chamber actually adopted the service, called it the Marine Exchange. They ran it for about seventy some years until we finally got our independence in 1995 as a standalone nonprofit entity. So, for many, many years, we were an affiliate of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

MS: That is interesting. Describe how the technology from flags and lights has changed since 1923 to the present in doing this job.

MA: Our evolution has become really something of wonder when you think about it. Indeed, back in 1923 where we're using telescopes, signal lights, and signal flags to communicate with vessels, even a bullhorn – we will yell at them as they went by to tell them what berth they were going to be at – to an ultra-modern technology system of computers and display screens and other devices for tracking vessels. Plus we have a computerized database now that we keep track of all vessels. Back in the old days, we had little three by five cards with a ship's name on it. The entire history of that ship was kept on that card, when it entered, when it departed, who the captain was, who the agent was, what berth it went to, how many times to spin it. If it came in quite a few times, we had several three by five cards stapled together. That was our software if you will. The hardware was a rotating carousel we called it where those cards would go into when they were in port, keeping track of them where they were. Then when they departed, the card would go back into the file. So, we've come a long, long way. We are totally digitized on all of our equipment for tracking vessels. We're using transponders. We can intercept the

vessels out as far as a hundred miles now. In fact, we're working on a new system called ASVTS, which is Automated Secure Vessel Tracking System, which uses satellites. Soon, hopefully, we're going to be able to track vessels across the entire ocean coming our way. That's good for both a port security standpoint, but also from a commercial standpoint that people can know, is my vessel on time, is she on track, is she going to get here when she says she's going to get here. Indeed, we can answer that question.

MS: Now, you talked about the evolution of this in the Port of Los Angeles. Was this the first port to do this, or were there other ports that were doing it before or after?

MA: Actually, we're a middle-aged group by comparison.

MS: Wait. You have to say the Port of Los Angeles is a middle-aged –

MA: Oh, yes. Actually, the Marine Exchange in LA/LB Harbor is middle aged by comparison to some of the other marine exchanges. The oldest one is actually up in San Francisco. It came about during 1849. It was founded as a marine exchange. It's the longest, most senior operating marine exchange. The one in New York has been operating for 125 years. The one in Portland, Oregon, I believe, is over one hundred. So, we're at [19]84. So, we're kind of not the new kid on the block, but we're certainly not the oldest. There are a few younger ones than us. There was one in Puget, Sound formed in 1980. There's one back in Tampa Bay. Also, in Jacksonville that are only a few years old.

MS: So, what is the earliest ever?

MA: For the marine exchanges?

MS: Yes.

MA: Yes. The oldest one is the one in San Francisco.

MS: In the world?

MA: That I couldn't answer. I'll be honest with you. I don't know –

MS: Are the (Greeks?) doing something like this maybe?

MA: Well, I'm sure there is a ship reporting agency group in North Europe, for example, that we're affiliated with now. You're right. They've been around for a couple of hundred years in one form or another. In America, the oldest one goes back at 1849.

MS: So, at this time, how many ships on an average are you keeping track of?

MA: We are tabulating and tracking upwards of 27,000 vessel transits per year into Los Angeles Long Beach Harbor. That's a physical traffic control entity. Of those 27,000, about 12,000, almost 13,000 are deep sea cargo vessels coming and going in and out of port. The rest are a

hodgepodge of all other kinds of vessels. The ferryboats going to Catalina, the tugs, and tows barges in and out, construction vessels, certain size of fishing vessels, and any vessel that's carrying passengers for hire regardless of size, we are keeping track of. We do not keep track of all of the thousands of recreational craft that are out there. That is a bit of a concern for us from both a safety and a security standpoint. It's being addressed by the Coast Guard and by DHS for the future.

MS: So, how do you interrelate with the other elements? You mentioned the Coast Guard. How does the Exchange connect with the Coast Guard with the various lessees the operators on the port, the container facilities in the long term? How do you coordinate with all those folks?

MA: Let me tell you a bit about our vessel traffic system at LA/LB Harbor that we run. It is a unique partnership between the federal government, the state government, the local entities which are the two port authorities, and the private sector which is us. We are the only privately run vessel traffic system in the United States. As such, we have a partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard. We are their eyes and ears. In fact, they assigned me six to eight blue suitors, as we call them, up at the Marine Exchange who work for me. So, that's another novel thing. I have six or seven military guys working for a nonprofit private entity. We also have a partnership with the two port authorities, very strong partnership to the point where they are our biggest customer in terms of subscriptions that they get from us. They're also our biggest benefactors. Between the two ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, we have gotten upwards of close to \$2 million in grant money to do our building, to buy supplies, upgrade our equipment, and other things over the years. As far as our relationship with all the other entities, again, we are the maritime information clearinghouse, the maritime and labor unions, the tugs, the linesmen, the two pilot organizations that bring ships in and out. All of the entities that do business in the harbor, indeed, use us as their maritime information clearinghouse. They need our information. They want our information. We supply that 24/7 for them to do business.

MS: Now, how do they get that information? They call you up in the phone? Is it on a computer? How do they get the information they need?

MA: Our information is available by a variety of methods. The old method was a printed sheet, which went out daily, sometimes in the U.S. Mail, which took a couple days to get there. So, by the time they got it, it was already obsolete. But in any case, that's the way it was handled. Nowadays, of course, we're totally electronic. We're on the internet. We have an internet website that offers real-time reporting 24/7. You can go at 3:00 a.m. and punch in your code and get all the vessel arrival information and what have you. We still print out reports, but we send them out electronically by fax and email. They go out immediately several times a day. We have about twelve standard reports that are sent out that way. We also have what's called a telephone subscription service where people can call in 24/7 and ask specifically about the ships that they're dealing with. In other words, they can call at 3:00 a.m., "Hey, has the Lucky Lady Lou shown up in your system yet? Is she out there?" But more importantly, we call them under the subscription service to notify them that, yes, the LUCKY LADY II is in town and she's about to arrive.

MS: Now, I would assume like everything else in this job and the importance in the way you do

it has changed since 9/11. Is this not part of a security, as well as simply an efficiency in tracking system for commerce? Is there more to it now because of the heightened interest in security?

MA: Actually, we have reinvented ourselves several times since I came aboard in 1993. We went from being a sleepy kind of stagnant reporting service to a very dynamic multifaceted service organization that provides information to a host of people who need it. More importantly, after 9/11, we again had to reinvent ourselves because of port security. Our relationship between the two port authorities and especially with the Coast Guard were dramatically enhanced and strengthened. The Coast Guard now depends on us to be their first line of defense for all maritime domain awareness issues. That is, it is our responsibility that when a ship comes over the horizon and says, "I'm coming in," we have to know who is she, who she says she is, has she been where she said she's been, has she been vetted and cleared by the Coast Guard's ninety-six hour notice of arrival process, and where she's going to be going. So, all those things have to be cleared now four days in advance before that ship even comes over the horizon. We report into the port authorities, all of the agencies, customs, immigration, Coast Guard, and now even ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence. We have connections to the CIA, FBI, and other law enforcement groups who all want to know our information.

MS: Now, how do you confirm that she is who she says she is, that she is coming from what she came from? How did you come up with that information?

MA: That's all done through a link to the Coast Guard for their ninety-six-hour NOA, notice of arrival. That ninety-six-hour NOAA has to have a series of informational blocks filled out. In there, they vet themselves, what are your last four ports of call. Then the Coast Guard spends that four days checking all that. Then it goes on a computerized list for us to look at. As that ship comes over, if that ship is not on that computerized clearance list, they have a problem. In fact, on several occasions, if ships failed to file their NOA in a timely way, we have two penalty boxes as we call them. Then they're twelve miles offshore from any nearest part of land. They have to go to those penalty boxes and wait until the Coast Guard verifies and finally clears them. That can be quite expensive. We had a large container ship that fell into that situation. She was put in the penalty box for three days. But on her arrival, she had five gangs waiting on the dock of longshoremen, fifteen hundred bucks an hour per gang. They had to pay them a minimum of four hours each and send them home. So, it can be very expensive. Not to mention that just in time, delivery, goods movement chain that got disrupted. So, that affects a factory back east or a store in Houston or whatever that didn't get their goods.

MS: That captain is now commanding a robot, I would say. [laughter]

MA: [laughter] Probably so.

MS: Well, I may have some more questions I am going on. But I want to go back to the beginning and talk a little bit about yourself. What were your earliest contacts with the harbor at San Pedro? Any stories connected with that and maybe a description to what the port was like in those early contacts you had with it.

MA: I first came in contact with the ports when I was a midshipman at the California Maritime Academy. Our vessel came into port on a couple of occasions during the training cruise. Back then, of course, it was basically a break-bulk dock. In other words, we were handling cargo by piecemeal and by nets and cargo nets, the old films that you've seen of cargo handling. Their containers weren't even a glint in the eye of Malcolm Maclean back in those days. So, I had some early contacts there. It was a pretty standard operation. Years later when I began sailing, I brought ships into San Pedro Bay for both fuel and cargo. Again, this was in the late [19]60s, early [19]70s and the vessels were pretty much break-bulk. I'll take a break here. [laughter]

MS: Yes.

MA: I came ashore in 1971 to begin working as a port captain and a manager for a shipping line in Los Angeles and Long Beach. At that time, the ports were in a shift away from break-bulk and piecemeal cargo and into containerization. Most of us, frankly, in the field thought the containerization was a bit of a novelty, if not a flash in the pan that probably would go away. It seemed, at the time, very impractical to load a truck and then take it off and stick it on a ship and not make every use of every nook and cranny on the ship for stowage and that sort of thing. But, indeed, we were proved wrong. In the [19]60s, it began to dramatically take off, particularly in the late [19]60s and into the early [19]70s. I first came ashore in 1971 for a company called Prudential and Grace Lines who are no longer here. [laughter] But we served the Latin American trade from L.A. We had vessels running along the west coast of Mexico and South America and also through the Panama Canal along the Caribbean and east coast of South America. Again, when we started, we had vessels that were particularly just break-bulk. Later, we had a combination passenger cargo service. We had vessels that carried 110 passengers, 8,000 tons of cargo, and 275 20-foot containers. That was a humongous number back then. We thought we were just the cat's meow by having that many containers. As a matter of comparison, today's largest ship is carrying 15,000 containers, compared to our 275. So, you can see the dramatic evolution of the business since the early [19]70s.

MS: Now, was there anything, among your travels, distinctive about the Port of Los Angeles, positive, negative, whatever that made it stand out to you as a person involved in the port?

MA: Well, during my sailing days when we came in here, Los Angeles was a very convenient port for the cargos coming in. It had a very large, even back then, community base of consumers and businesses that needed those cargoes. It was also one of the most popular gas stations, if you will. Fuel was very cheap here. So, vessels literally would make a fueling stop. It was called a bunker only call. They weren't coming here to do cargo. They weren't coming here to do anything else but to pick up a load of fuel. They would do so from the Panama Canal and the great circle run to the Far East. They would swing right and come into L.A., particularly San Pedro Bay and stop and pick up fuel. I did that many things on runs that I was on where the vessel would come down and they'd say, "Hang a left into San Pedro Bay, pick up a load of fuel because you didn't get it at such a reasonable price."

MS: Now, why was that?

MA: Well back then, of course, we had the refineries operating pretty much full bore here in

Southern California. We were also getting a lot of local crude oil out of Bakersfield and other areas. So, oil was plentiful. Believe it or not, it was \$2.75 a barrel to purchase it back then. As opposed to what is it that today, seventy bucks a barrel? So, a lot has changed.

MS: One of the things that you and I were a witness to – we have talked to many people about it and give us your story, the Sansinena. Tell us the story about it.

MA: Yes. I was on the dock in December of 1976 when the tanker, Sansinena, blew up. It was a very dramatic moment. We were working down on our passenger and cargo terminal at Berth 154 in Wilmington, decorating a Christmas tree for the Christmas travelers who would be coming through on the passenger ships. We had a little potluck thing going on and decorating the Christmas tree. Suddenly, this terrible explosion took place. What saved us was the fact that our building ran north south on the line. Of course, the shockwave was coming from the south and it hit the end of the building. That took most of the blow. So, the shockwave ran parallel to where we were. Although we had these big glass doors, I'll never forget. I think they were one-inch glass doors to the passenger terminal that literally began to flop open and back and forth. Our ears all popped with the percussive of the shockwave. None of us really knew what had happened. We heard sirens going off. I ran out to look down to the south. I did see a glow, so I assumed there was a fire. It had assumed it was one of the tank farms that had blown up because there were several tank farms in the area. Then someone got a radio right away and turned it on. That's when we discovered it was the Sansinena that blew up. Interestingly enough, coming out of that disaster was a set of regulations and systems that are required on all tankers, now called inert gas systems. What really blew the tanker up, everybody thought she was loaded with fuel or gas or something. She was empty and she was taking ballast water. By taking ballast water, she was pushing up the gases in the tanks out of the vessel through vents. It was a very calm day. In fact, it was a misty day, a little bit of a fog there. Heavier than air fumes were lying on the deck. One of the hypotheses is that the gas is built up to a certain level, crept into the forward deckhouse, and there was a coffee pot with an open flame. Again, speculative, but they think that something like that could have set it off.

MS: Now, after you find out what it is, did you go over to see what was going on or –

MA: Oh, we all took a look at it. Yes. Of course, you couldn't get to the scene immediately because it was treated as a disaster site, and they had it all taped off. But you could climb up on the hills in San Pedro and look down on it. Then when they finally began clearing the vessel out, then it was safe to go, they allowed people to go in.

MS: What did you see when you looked at it?

MA: It was remarkable. Here was this six-hundred-foot tanker. The whole section in the middle was gone. So, there was about a ninety-foot section of the bow sticking out of the water. There was about a ninety-foot section of the stern sticking out of the water and nothing in between. It was totally gone. In fact, the midship house had been blown off and transferred about a hundred yards to the shore where it landed on a guard shack. In fact, the guard was killed. That's where one of the deaths occurred. Of course, several other deaths occurred in that midship house.

MS: Another story, which I am not sure of what the date is – but Nancy informs me it is quite amusing – is the turning of Port of Los Angeles into New York for a movie.

MA: [laughter]

MS: Why do you not tell me that story?

MA: We had a rather bizarre situation in providing a location site for Hollywood to do a movie. This particular movie was *Baretta* about the New York cop who did whatever it was he did. They had come to me and said, "Can we use your dock at Berth 154 for the site?" I said, "Fine." So, they had agreed to come in on a Thursday and a Friday before a weekend. I had a ship coming in on a Monday. So, I told them everything had to be finished up by Sunday morning. I wanted everything out of there, including a small ship that they had brought alongside as part of the shot. So, they came to our terminal, and they put up a Port of New York signs all on our buildings. So, it said Port of New York Berth 154 and covered up the Port of L.A. signs. But more importantly, they brought in about twenty-five dump trucks of snow because it was a winter scene. So, they began piling the snow all over the docks and shoveling it to make it look like it had been used. Then they had this little cargo ship working with netted cargo and that sort of thing. So, they did their scenes. I went down Sunday morning, and the ship still was here. By the way, when they do bring films and they have semi-trucks, for every one person in front of the camera, there's probably two hundred people behind the camera. I mean, the dock was just in shambles. I literally had to kick them off. I said, "You've got to get out of here." "Well, we've got one more day. Can we stay until Monday?" I said, "No, you can't stay until Monday. I've got a ship coming in." So, I forced them off. But they left behind all the signs, all the snow, everything else. So, here comes my ship on Monday morning under the Vincent Thomas Bridge. It makes it turn because it used to back into Berth 154. I had my radio on. The captain on the ship says, "Captain Manny, what is going on here?" He said, "I think we just went into the twilight zone." He said, "Port of New York?" He said, "Am I in Los Angeles or what? What's the snow on the dock?"

MS: [laughter]

MA: So, I said, "I'll tell you about it when we get in." But the passengers got a real kick out of that, coming in, 110 passengers, and watching all the snow on the dock and the Port of New York signs. That was quite humorous, but it didn't happen again. I was very careful about leasing our space out to Hollywood after that.

MS: How are we on time?

Male Speaker: We are twenty-five minutes in.

MS: Okay.

MA: What I'd like to talk about, too, a little bit is how the ports improved on its environmental –



MS: Oh, we have plenty of time because I am on the tape.

MA: Oh, I see. [laughter]

MS: We are going to change tapes. Sorry about that.

MA: Okay.

MS: But if you want to make your point, go ahead and make your point.

MA: One thing about the evolution of the harbor has been its approach to environmental responsibilities. I can tell you that when I first came ashore in 1971, the Inner Harbor was in pretty sad shape. You saw oil slicks on the water. You saw dead fish, dead birds. You certainly wouldn't want to swim in that water and put a foot into it because of its murkiness. That was back in [19]71. I can tell you today that you go into the Inner Harbor, you see fishermen fishing off some of the docks. You can look down and see the pilings through the water. It's clear. You can certainly see a lot of different fish varieties that are in there. Certainly, the seals even come in. The birds are thriving. So, the port has been very responsible. It was a slow progress up until just a few years ago when the community activist and the environmentalist really began to voice their concerns. I have to say I congratulate the Port of Los Angeles for their Clean Air Action Plan and for many of the other water clarity enhancements that they've put into effect over the years.

MS: Now, in addition to that, people complain about the changes that have taken place on the land side with traffic jams and standstill traffic. Is that an issue for you as well? As the port becomes bigger and more trade comes through here, are we dealing with traffic problems that you have to face, too?

MA: We, indeed, get calls about traffic congestion on the 710 freeway and elsewhere. We get calls about congestion at the terminal gates. We get calls about the trains that are not leaving on time and what have you. What we're trying to do now, we need a massive educational campaign. It has been launched, but there needs to be much more done to inform the public of how important these two ports are, and L.A. in particular. If they can only connect the dots between the ships and the store shelves, they need to do that. Without these ships, Walmart has empty shelves, Target has empty shelves, Sears, Home Depot, name it. Everything that you use in your daily life, whether you drive it or wear it or walk in it or eat it or use it or play with it, it's coming in on ships. We're no longer a manufacturing nation. We are a consuming nation. That could be good or bad depending on how you look at it. But nonetheless, the reality is that 90 percent of what we have in our lives comes in on ships. We have to inform the public about that because indeed, the ports are expanding. They're growing. We handled fifteen million TEUs, twenty-foot containers this year. That's going to jump to twenty million in the next few years. We need enhancements on the highways, the bridges, the rail connections, and the terminals to make that all happen. But the public has got to understand that you can't make these ports go away. If you were to shut these two ports down – and we did have a couple of incidences where we did do that for a brief period because of labor situations and other things that came up – it sends a shockwave throughout our entire economy. I would predict that if the two ports suffered a

catastrophic terrorist attack or a tsunami or an earthquake situation that shut us down, it would have a tremendous negative impact on the entire American economy.

MS: You want to change tapes or –

MS: We still have about five minutes.

MS: Oh, I thought you said twenty-four – yes.

MS: We are thirty-two minutes.

MS: When I say traffic, I also mean ship traffic. I mean, you get traffic jams involved inside the harbor with ships.

MA: Generally speaking, our traffic flow has been pretty good except for 2004 when we suffered a tremendous backlog that resulted from lack of preparation and prediction and planning. What happened, there was a combination – I call it the perfect storm. There was a truck problem with a number of drivers. There were equipment failures for the railroad. The terminal operators did not get their computerized systems up and running. There was a labor with the longshoremen. All of those conspired together to create a tremendous delay. We ended up with vessels backing up as many as fifty-eight anchor waiting to get in. Not enough labor download and not enough trains to take the stuff of, not enough trucks. The computerized system also on the docks was not responding the way they should have. So, that year, we suffered a pretty dramatic decline. For example, an average containership took ten days to turn around here when it should be forty-eight hours or perhaps maybe one day more. So, that sent a shockwave, not only throughout America, but across the seas because cargo was piling up at the loading ports. They couldn't get out because the ships were all here. People were saying, "Well, just send it somewhere else." But within a week of that, red flags went up on the East Coast, Charleston and Baltimore and New York and Jacksonville saying, "We can't handle it anymore. Don't send it here." Canada, Vancouver and elsewhere and said, "Look, don't send them up here. We're full." So, they literally had no place to go. That created a big logjam. However, we learned from that. Then in 2005, things began to improve, although there was what I called the congestion myth for all of 2005 saying there's still congestion and people were withholding cargo and ships. But in 2006, we proved our own. Certainly, this year, for example, 2007, we are well above the average. We will probably be going to get seven thousand ship arrivals, which is a high number. We have no congestion whatsoever. The ships are coming in. They're flowing well, even though the numbers are far above what they were. The ships are much larger as well.

MS: Now, we change tapes.

MS: Talk about some of the physical changes in the ports that you remember. In particular, what you know about the Vincent Thomas Bridge and any experiences you had before and after that.

MA: Well, before 1963, there was no Vincent Thomas Bridge. That was built during the early

[19]60s as a means to go to and from Terminal Island from San Pedro. Prior to that, there was a ferryboat, car, and passenger that ran at the Foot of 6th Street, which is now the Maritime Museum, but that was the ferry terminal. Then across in the other side was the other terminal, which is no longer there because it's part of the Evergreen Terminal. But in any case, that's how we got around and we saw that bridge being developed. It's still in use today, of course. In fact, I think they're talking about trying to expand it because there's only two lanes in each direction. They probably need three lanes in each direction now. So, there is some talk about doing that. But also, the depth of the harbors changed. When I first came in here, I was driving ships that had depths of thirty-two feet max. Now, we have a channel that will be down to minus fifty-two feet because indeed, the big containerships coming in are drawing forty-nine to fifty feet. You do need a safety Under Keel Clearance of a couple of feet as you bring them in. But L.A. also has a minus eighty-one-foot channel coming in from the deep side. That was to have handled large dry bulk carriers for the coal dock. Well, that business has since suffered a relapse. But the channel is still there, and the terminal is still there, should that ever come back. But right now, L.A. can handle the deepest, longest, tallest ships around for the foreseeable future.

MS: Did you watch the Vincent Thomas Bridge as it went up?

MA: Actually, I wasn't here during that time. I was sailing elsewhere, but I was aware. When I first came in, it was not here in 1960. It was built in 1963. So, I was aware of it going up then, but I didn't witness the actual construction.

MS: I didn't mean to be a little off base for you. But what do you know about the coal situation? How did that come and go?

MA: Back in the 1980s, there was a big movement to get coal from Montana, Wyoming, and some of the other states and the planes and export it to Japan. There was a great demand for it. Japan was using it for their utilities and other needs. The problem that I saw with it was that they created this consortium of forty-nine different partners. It included everything from the mines that produced the coal, to the trucks that hauled it, the railroads that brought it in, the port authorities that dealt with it, the shipping lines, the brokers, the purchasers, the end users in Japan. Anyway, forty-nine partners, that was a recipe for disaster. I mean, it just was too complex. Adding to that problem was the fact that Australia suddenly hit a big vein of coal and began selling it at a very cheap price. They didn't have forty-nine partners to deal with. So, indeed, all of the coal began flowing out of the South Pacific. The market simply dried up. So, it was a real tragedy. I think they only loaded one real big vessel there that it was designed to handle one ship a month, for example. I'm talking about 375,000 deadweight tons. These were behemoths coming in, but it simply went away. Now, it's not there anymore.

MS: Why the forty-nine partners?

MA: That baffled a lot of us. It was far too complex. But they thought, at the time, I think that bringing all of the entities that had a stake in this traffic and trade would work together. It worked for a while to develop the terminal, to get it actually developed and built. They all pulled together. But then there were arguments about the trade, who was getting a share of what, the revenues. It just ended up in a real mess. So, it was destined to fail, I believe, because of the

way it was established.

MS: Talk about some of the major areas of growth in the port and what effects they have had, Pier 300, Pier 400. Talk about that and how that really had a major impact on the changes in the port.

MA: When I first came into San Pedro aboard ships and particularly when I took fuel on, I would come through the Angels Gate entrance. I could anchor anywhere to the right or left of the breakwater entrance because that was all open water, anchorage designated spaces. Nowadays, of course, that has been gobbled up by Pier 400, which is the largest manmade dredge and fill complex in the world. It's almost six hundred acres. That was done to develop the port. When I first came into San Pedro Bay, the method of handling ships was called finger piers. In other words, piers that would come out at a right angle, the ship would go in between, and you'd work the cargo. That was totally unsatisfactory for container ships. They need a berth that's called a quay, Q-U-A-Y, which was where you lay it flat to the vessel. You have all this massive acreage and cranes that can handle the cargo quite differently. So, I watched the finger piers go away. I watched the areas being filled in. I watched the harbor being dredged. So, I've witnessed a complete transformation, particularly on Terminal Island where all the finger piers are gone. There, you have several major multi hundred acre terminals now serving the industry.

MS: Are you familiar with the 2020 Plan?

MA: Oh, yes. [laughter]

MS: Tell me, what are the origins of that and what is it 2020 Plan? What effect has it had, and will it continue to have?

MA: Both ports at Los Angeles and Long Beach were very foresighted back in the 1980s. They created what was called what 2020 Plan, 2020 being the year 2020 as a destination for these projects. Some of which have come to fruition, others which have not. Pier 400 and Pier 300 were part of the 2020 Plan. They came in fruition. There were several other entities there that have not because of environmental concerns. But the port very early on in the [19]80s were able to get permits in place to do all of these massive dredge and fill that was required for Pier 300, Pier 400, and all the dredging throughout the entire channel of L.A. Harbor. You could not get those permits today. If you tried to do a Pier 400 today or a Pier 200 today, forget it. You would never get it done. So, I give the ports credit for the foresight they had. Because back then when they got the permits, everybody looked at them and said, "Are you nuts? What are you putting in five, six hundred acres for? Nobody will ever use that." Yes, right. I mean, they are using it today. In fact, they could probably use more room. But both ports, Los Angeles and Long Beach, are now maxed out on any future landfill development. There are a few projects where they're going to be filling in some areas that are left remaining. But even that takes quite an extensive EIR system and community approval and environmental tests to get it done. But the 2020 program was a bold, very innovative, very full of foresight project that has really helped the Port of L.A. become the number one port today.

MS: If we are out of land here at the port, what is the future then? I mean, obviously, trade is

going to increase. What do you do?

MA: What has to happen now in the future, we cannot do any more landfill. We cannot get any more land from water, so to speak. So, we have to be more efficient. If you look at what's happening overseas at places like Singapore and China and Korea and Japan, Taiwan, they are making maximum utilization of existing acreage. We need to do that here. Many of the big mega terminals you'll find that there are only three to five ships a week coming in, moving cargo about that way. There's going to have to be a system where when a ship comes in, it doesn't necessarily go to its home base, if you will. It'll go to the first available berth. In that terminal, through computerization, all must keep track of the cargo and be able to ship it out in an expeditious way. You look at the per acreage utilization in Singapore. It's probably running four times what we have here in L.A. What I mean by that is that they count how many containers per acre, per day, or per year, or per month they can handle. They're doing four times that in Singapore as compared to L.A. So, we have to do that. One of the things I've seen happen is that we used to have a lot of wheeled operations. That's where the container was put on a chassis, left on a chassis to be picked up, or delivered and what have you. Now, we're seeing much more of a grounded operation. That's where long rows of containers are set on the ground. They have straddle cranes that will pick them up and put them on the chassis when it's time to move them. The problem with that is that when you go grounded, it does delay the process somewhat because it depends on where that box is when the truck comes in. Although, through computerization, they're trying to be a little more planned out that way to know where the container block should be, when it's to be picked up. But more utilization of existing land, existing berths, existing waterways has to be looked at for the future because we cannot add more land.

MS: So, looking down the road, what is our biggest obstacle or danger ahead for the port?

MA: Right now, the obstacles for us developing and becoming more utilization weary are the environmental concerns and the community concerns, I believe. Again, we have to educate the community. We have to become team players with the environmentalists on how to expand the ports in a healthy and intelligent manner. We can't just be helter-skelter to go and do this. We can't be adding berths. We can't be adding roads without looking at the total impact. One of the biggest things right now, for example, is air pollution. It was discovered that the ships with their high-powered, low speed diesels gave off more NOx and SOx than any other source. The trains and trucks moving in and out of harbors and by the thousands are also contributing to this. So, we have to look at all elements of how to manage the port in a responsible way from both an environmental, as well as a commercial aspect. Again, I would accent, you can't simply shut these ports now because you don't like them, because they create congestion, because there might be an environmental concern. We have to work together to resolve those problems to keep these ports functioning or our entire American lifestyle will go away.

MS: Now, something else that is unique – maybe not unique but special about San Pedro is there is this community of San Pedro right up next to the port. Normally, I guess ports are in semi-industrial areas and that kind of thing. What is special about that relationship between the town of San Pedro and the Port of Los Angeles, that close proximity? What are the components of that relationship?

MA: Well, the Port of L.A. has always been counter – or I shouldn't counter. Let me start that over again. The Port of Los Angeles is always abutted up against the community from day one. You can't tell where the port ends and the city begin, quite frankly, if you look at it that way. Although, there are fences and gates and what have you. But it is, indeed, butted up together. That includes the San Pedro, Wilmington, Terminal Island, although Wilmington and San Pedro are the residential areas. In years passed, it was just a given conclusion that the port was there, that it was part of the lifeblood of the city. Everybody was simply accepted. Most work there, frankly. Many work there. Nowadays, though, with the concerns of air pollution and the noise congestion, highway congestion, the community is now saying, "Wait a minute. Before you develop, let's talk about what you're going to do for the community and help us." Again, the Port of L.A. has risen dramatically, I believe, over the past five years or so, to address those needs. In the past, perhaps it wasn't as proactively pursued. But certainly, they had a wakeup call at the Port of L.A. and they've addressed it responsibly.

MS: This is from repeated succession as movements of San Pedro wanting to leave and I assume take the port with them, which would be, I guess, difficult to do. Anyway, we have sort of gone over that. We have gone through everything already. This is really pretty efficient here. We are pretty much done. Is there anything else that you want to talk about or tell me about?

MA: Yes. I'll make a comment about the future. Looking toward the future, it is imperative that these ports, and Los Angeles in particular, be allowed to develop itself in a responsible and meaningful way to address the needs of this country for our consumer goods or products that we need to maintain our economy and our lifestyle. So, I'm hopeful that, in the future, we're going to see a much more cooperative, collaborative effort between the port community of San Pedro, Wilmington, Los Angeles, the environmentalist, certainly the business side of it with the shipping lines, the terminal operators, and organized labor to work uniformly together to make these ports as efficient as possible, as environmentally responsible as possible, and yet keeping the river of commerce flowing that we desperately need to maintain our economy. So, I'm hopeful for the future.

MS: One more question about the future of the Exchange. We got more computers. We got more satellites. Is this going to become an automated process after a while? What is the distant future, even the near future for the Maritime Exchange?

MA: The Marine Exchange, I feel, has a bright, enviable future. We're continually reinventing ourselves to meet the needs of our customers, constituents, and users. As technology changes, we're embracing it. In fact, I believe we're ahead of the curve in many areas of technology for tracking vessels and reporting on them. We're reaching now into San Diego and into Port Hueneme to address their needs. That's why we changed our name, frankly, from Marine Exchange of Los Angeles-Long Beach to Marine Exchange of Southern California several years ago to address the entire Southern California Maritime Community and Waterfront Business Group. So, we have a bright future. We're just tapping the tip of the iceberg, I believe. We've got a lot more opportunity, a lot more possibilities lying ahead for us.

MS: Is it science fiction to say that one day the whole maritime transportation and exchange

system will be totally computerized, the ships would be under control, the computers, and the amount of men input is going to be to the minimum?

MA: Looking ahead with technology, of course, we can only do a Buck Rogers scenario here and try to be science fiction in our approach. But I have seen things on paper, at least, that show vessels transiting the Pacific unmanned. With a mother ship that is out there, kind of making the transit with manpower aboard, which is controlling any number of other vessels through a computerized link. Indeed, the terminal operators are looking at computerization and reducing manning, although, of course, labor is looking at it a little differently. The Marine Exchange, we have computerized significantly. I believe we still need the manpower that we have. We're small. We only have twenty employees to interact with all of the elements that are still out there. You still want a human voice to tell you, "Has the ship come in?" We can do it, indeed, electronically, and we are doing it that way. But there are many occasions when things are not normal, when things are not following the way they should that we address those in a very personal and prompt way.

MS: So, we are not talking to (Mumbai?) when we –

MA: Right. Yes. [laughter]

MS: [laughter] You had a question, go ahead.

MS: Yes. Maybe this is inappropriate.

MS: Go ahead. Yes.

MA: In addition to the vast changes we've seen in the harbor, ships have changed dramatically. When I first went to see it professionally, I was aboard a vessel that was about 460 feet long. It had a crew of fifty, five zero, and carried about seven thousand tons of cargo. You look at today's ships that are 1,200 feet long, 200 feet wide, carrying 100,000 tons of cargo and with a crew of 13. So, it's dramatically changed. People ask me often, "Would you go back to sea today?" I would have to say no. Because when I went to sea, there was some real romance to it. There was some real excitement to it. There was some real sense of accomplishment, I feel, that you may not necessarily get today on today's ships. What I mean by that is we navigated the ships. We got out there with our [inaudible] and we shot the stars and the moon and the sun. I put the lines on the paper. I knew we were there because I did it. Nowadays, they push a button, and they get latitude, longitude out to three decimal places. We had to plan and store our cargo on the ship completely ourselves with calculator slide rules and what have you. Now, that's all done ashore. The chief mate gets a cargo plant. Here's what you have, here's your stability factors, et cetera. But more importantly, no time in port. When I went to sea, we averaged six, seven, ten days in port. We could swap our watches around. We could go ashore and do exciting things. I can recall my ship being in Mombasa, Kenya on a run. We were going to be there for seven days. I swapped my watches out with a couple of mates. I took a safari around Mount Kilimanjaro. I mean, I was 22 years old. I mean, how great is that? But you can't do that today. These ships come in. They're in for forty-eight hours. You're working around the clock with the cargo. You barely have time to go ashore for a haircut and shave as we used to say. So,

it's changed dramatically, and I would miss that. But life aboard ship is still the same in many ways with the seafarers driving the vessels to and from. They have the same skills, a little more skills electronically perhaps. But it has changed dramatically from when I went to sea. That's just an interesting factor.

MS: What about coming into the Port of Los Angeles and from point of view of a seaman aboard a ship? What life has been? Has it changed? What was it like for what it is like now?

MA: Well, when I brought ships in and out of San Pedro Bay, of course, there was no vessel traffic control system, and you were on your own. Then the ports were still pretty busy back then. So, you had to negotiate with all these other vessels making their approaches into Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbor. There were many close calls that we seldom talked about but did occur. There were communication problems with foreign vessels that didn't speak English. The radio communications were not what they are today. So, it's a bit of a challenge bringing a vessel in. We still had the pilots. You would pick a pilot up about a mile, mile and a half, two miles off the breakwaters, and they would bring you in. Pilots were that comforting assurance that you had a local expert come aboard. He knew where all the buoys were, and he knew where everything was. He knew that there was a high spot in the channel. So, you felt a high degree of comfort having those pilots bring you in. That still occurs today, except the skills of the pilot are much more dramatic today. I can't imagine these guys bringing in these twelve hundred foot long ships, two hundred foot beam. You can hardly see over the bow. They take four tugs to help maneuver them. They park them like they're parking their car at a store. It's amazing, so my hats off to the pilots. They, indeed, have risen dramatically in their skills and ability in handling ships since I went to sea.

MS: Now, we have talked to pilots and maybe some you know, (Jackson Pearson?). He had some good stories.

MA: Oh, great guy.

MS: We also talked to guys who are on tugs. They talked of an era when everything was a little more loosey-goosey and they could have some fun. Do you remember any of that pre-high to regulated days when there were stories of tug captains who would be in costume and wearing gorilla suits and stuff like that?

MA: [laughter]

MS: There was one story of a tug guy who got a tug. He was fast enough that they could waterski behind it.

MA: Oh. [laughter]

MS: I mean, did you see any of that change? Was it more of a looser environment and becoming more of a regulated environment over time?

MA: Yes. Life at sea and life aboard boats in general, I think, were much more relaxed back in



the [19]70s and even into the [19]80s. For example, alcohol aboard in cargo vessels was common. I could recall I was a chief mate at the time, sailing with an old captain out of Pennsylvania, and we were on an intercostal run. He would drink a case of Beck's beer between each port. It was not thought anything about it. In fact, I know he was on the bridge under the influence on many times bringing the ship in. That's all changed. You now can get a DUI big time for any alcohol. That, of course, came about after the Exxon Valdez. After that incident, alcohol aboard ship, particularly the American flag vessels was scrutinized very carefully by the Coast Guard and by others. So, that evening cocktail before going down to dinner aboard a ship is something of the past. I'm sure there's still alcohol aboard ship, but it's very tightly controlled. Indeed, if you're caught being over a certain percentage, you're going to get busted.

MS: What about some characters that you would have run into coming into the Port of Los Angeles, maybe pilots or tug operators?

MA: [laughter]

MS: Any particular characters stand in your mind?

MA: Yes. I could remember an old captain with Grace Line or Prudential Line. His name was Howard Halterman. They call him Hollering Howard. Because from the time the ship came in, he was hollering at somebody, the pilot, his mates, even the passengers aboard his ship. Certainly, a guy like me, who I was a port captain at the time on the dock, he'd be hollering at me. He was just a very colorful character. He had been around since the [19]34 strike and had lots of stories to tell. He was not a very educated man. He hadn't completed high school. But in those days, they went to sea and worked their way up through the ranks. We called them hose pipers, coming up through the hose pipe, whereas I was an academy graduate. So, I was looked down upon because I was a schoolboy as opposed to coming up the hard way. But in any case, Hollering Howard had a real reputation on the waterfront. Yet, I went to visit at his home. He lived up in Napa. I went to visit him. He had a little petite wife, Gladys. At home, he was the most quiet, reclusive type guy. I could not believe it was the same fellow because his wife ruled that roost. Yes, dear. Yes, ma'am, everything is all right, I'll be fine, I'll be good. He never raised his voice. So, that was kind of a unique comparison.

MS: Any other characters that you would associate with the Port of Los Angeles?

MA: I can remember one tug operator. I think we were referring to him that used to, on occasion – I guess it was Halloween, but he would dress up in various costumes. He came out on the deck and wave up to the bridge, to the pilot, and to the captain. Of course, we didn't know, is that boat really under a good command with that guy dressed up that way or what? But they used to get by with that. But again, I think there's been a high degree of control over that now because of professionalism. You can have distractive things aboard ship, and certainly, no longer alcohol anymore.

MS: What is the closest call or – maybe not the closest call – that you think has occurred in your memory in the Port of Los Angeles?

MA: I have one incident that I recall on a close call right after our VTS went online in March of 1994. We had been online only a couple of weeks. So, people were getting used to it, particularly the foreign vessels coming in. They had a language problem. They had a regulation problem. They weren't aware of what was going on. So, that was cropping up. What happened one night, we had an American flag containership departing Los Angeles. They were ramping up to their sea speed of twenty-two knots. Just as they got to sea speed at twenty-two knots, the captain called me and said, "I've lost my plant." It was his engine. He was a steam vessel. So, whatever happened, the fires went out and he lost his plant. But he had just given a ten-degree right rudder command, and they couldn't take it off. Everything was dead. So, the vessel was at twenty-two knots, making this lazy starboard turn. Really, he was heading south. He was turning into the northbound sea lanes. Coming down the northbound sea lanes at twenty some knots was a Russian freighter who was not responding to any of our radio calls, who was not responding to any of our request for his intentions, and who happened to be with this lazy turn. We've computerized it. He was on a collision course with this American vessel. So, the American vessel was helpless. I mean, he could just stand there because the engineers were working feverishly to get the plant back up, which they couldn't do right away. The vessel was just making this lazy turn, coming right in front of the Russian vessel. So, we began just literally calling them every conceivable radio frequency we could gin up. The Russian finally heard something about, "You are standing into danger. The vessel ahead is not under command," which means it cannot control its movements. "Please take evasive action." Well, he did, but it was at the very last moment. He was only a quarter mile away when this happened. When you got two vessels at twenty knots, that's a pretty high closing rate. He came hard to starboard. The other vessel was already in the starboard turn. But on the radar scope, the two blips came together. So, we were unsure. But I called the American captain, and he came back. He said, "Yeah, we passed. We passed. We're okay. We're okay." We sent starboard or port-to-port on a starboard turn. That guy, by the way, the captain on the ship was a classmate of mine from Cal Maritime Academy. On his return trip, he came back up. I invited him up because we did a replay on the controlling device. That's when he shared with me just how close it was. He said, "I didn't want to say anything on the radio when we left." I just said, "Yeah. We cleared. We're okay." But that vessel missed them by less than six feet, two massive ships passing. He said, "I could have reached out." He said, "I saw [inaudible] on the bridge." We both kind of stared at each other as we went by. He said, "I felt the wind of the ship." Because the ship creates its own wind as it went by. He said, "I was just an absolute nervous wreck." But that could have been a terrible disaster. Because our VTS had only been up and running for several weeks. If that had been a collision with us just getting started, I mean the condemnation, the challenges, it would have been absolutely catastrophic. But thank God, they passed, and we survived.

MS: What about some actual collisions?

MA: Fortunately, we have not had any major collisions between large vessels. We have had several collisions between smaller vessels and larger vessels. It's usually because of the incompetence or inattention by the smaller vessel. I recall one vividly where an American flag container vessel was coming in. They called us at the vessel traffic control center and said, "Hey, I got this guy on a collision course. It's a fishing boat. I can't reach with him on Channel 16," which is the frequency to hail. "I couldn't get him on Channel 13," which is bridge to bridge. They couldn't get him on Channel 14, which is the vessel traffic. So, we kept trying to

hail him, nothing. So, the containership literally tried to avoid him, but it's pretty tough to stop a ship. I mean, a large ship going at any speed is going to take a mile or two miles to stop. So, he tried to evade him by turning away, but the fishing vessel literally ran right into the side of this boat and smashed his bow up pretty badly. Then the guy comes back up from below. Well, he had checked out of San Pedro, left the Angels Gate, put it on automatic pilot, and went down below and took a nap, right in the middle of the precautionary zone where all the traffic is. He turned his radio off. So, he literally went to sleep and sent his boat right into the side of this containership. So, he was found at fault. He was cited by the Coast Guard. I think he got a \$25,000 fine and lost his license to operate for a while. So, that's the kind of things we have. We also had one other tragic thing that happened. Off of one of the oil platforms to the south of LA/LB Harbor were found the remains of a fishing boat. It was just literally rubble and about four bodies. It was Vietnamese fishermen. We suspect that the boat was in the traffic lanes and a large containership just came down and hit them, not even knowing they hit them because they were not on radar. They couldn't spot them. They couldn't see them. It was nighttime. With the amount of damage to that ship, we suspect he was hit by a very large vessel going about twenty knots. But the investigation really didn't produce anything because there was no way to determine when it happened, but we know it did happen. So, that was the other thing. But it was all tabulated and investigated to the best we could, but with no solution.

MS: This is way out of your area, but you are answering so many good questions and so many areas and I will ask you about it. There was a personal tragedy here in the port. A port commissioner, well, I guess, committed suicide in the [19]70s. Did you know about that?

MA: I don't recall that one, no.

MS: [inaudible] amazing.

MA: Yes, yes. I don't recall that one. It might have been –

MS: His body was found in the harbor.

MA: Oh, that might have been right before my time. Yes. I don't recall that.

MS: Anything else you knew you want to add?

MS: No. We are right at the end of the tape.

MA: Oh, great.

MS: Great stories.

MS: Take care.

[end of transcript]