

Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project  
Robert Curry Oral History  
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Interviewer: MS – Male Speaker  
Transcriber: NCC

Male Speaker: The first question, could you please just say your name and spell it for the transcriber?

Robert Curry: Robert A. Curry, C-U-R-R-Y, Robert, R-O-B-E-R-T.

MS: How would you like to be referred to? Robert? Bob?

RC: Bob.

MS: Bob, could you tell me the year you were born and where were you born?

RC: 1931, Toledo, Ohio.

MS: Okay. Tell us a little bit about what you know of the history of transportation and trucking and moving goods around the port, even before the early days. How did it work in the early days of the port?

RC: In the early days of the port, trucking was all done with manual labor. The cargo came out of the holes of the ship with longshoremen doing everything by hand, putting it on the dock, on a pallet, and then Teamsters taking it from there and hand-loading it into trailers, trailers moving them to wherever they were going to go.

MS: So, in the earliest days, it would be horsepower you are talking about.

RC: I wasn't around for horsepower.

MS: Oh, I know you were not around.

[laughter]

RC: I'm guessing that might be true, but that's way before my time.

MS: Right, right. Tell us a little bit about your background. You grew up and were born in Toledo. What brought you to the West Coast? How did you come out here?

RC: My father moved to San Francisco probably in [19]39, and we moved to Los Angeles in [19]40. I just grew up in this business. That's the only business I've ever been in.

MS: What was the business your father was in?

RC: My dad was in the oil business.

MS: That's what brought him down south to Los Angeles initially?

RC: He wildcatted in Cleveland and apparently sold out and had a noncompete clause, so he couldn't do any more work there, and that moved him to California.

MS: What were your first impressions of Los Angeles when you first came here? What was the place like? What did you see about the place when you first arrived?

RC: Oh, gosh, that's so long ago. I just remember going to grammar school. We moved to San Francisco and lived in some small apartment for a while and then moved to Los Angeles. My memories are really more of the harbor than they are of Los Angeles. I remember Alameda was the only way that you got down. Your trucks went down to Alameda, and we came back to Alameda. We didn't have any freeways.

MS: What about the port? What was it like? This is 1940. What was happening in the port? What were the activities? What did it look like?

RC: Well, I didn't see the port until after the war, really. But it was sheds. We'd call them tramper ships more than you would call them anything else. Just much different than it is today, much more labor-intensive.

MS: As far as the transportation, what kind of vehicles were being used? How did the transportation system work in that period of time, the [19]40s?

RC: We called them sets of doubles, two twenty- or twenty-four-foot trailers hooked up with a dolly, pulled by a gas tractor. We didn't even use diesel in those days.

MS: What were the companies that were involved in those days in the trucking and the transportation system? Were there a number of them or was there one big one? How did this work?

RC: No, there were many companies, and we were all regulated. In those days, you had to have operating authority to move in and out of any place, and the port was a facility where maybe thirty, forty, fifty trucking companies either applied for and got operating authority from the Interstate Commerce Commission or purchased it from someone else, and that gave them the authority to go into the harbor and work. That's how we actually – our company actually bought a company called Harbor Freight Lines, and we merged it into our company, and that gave us the authority to go into the harbor.

MS: Tell me about the birth of your company. How did that company get born? Give me the story of it.

RC: It was born in the war years.

MS: Can you say my company or the name of the company?

RC: California Cartage Company. California Cartage Company came to being in probably 1943, [19]44, and primarily was serving the area between Los Angeles and San Diego, the aircraft companies. From there, we expanded into the port area.

MS: Tell me, what were you carrying? What was the cargo that you were carrying during those years?

RC: When we were operating from the aircraft plants, we were taking parts that were being manufactured here, going down to San Diego to be assembled at Convair, Ryan, Rohr, or Solar, where they were assembled into actual aircrafts, and bringing back things from the aircraft companies there that needed to go to subcontractors here in Southern California.

MS: Those war years must have been amazing, with everything going on, the output of airplanes and ships and everything, and getting that stuff around. It must have been an exciting and maybe confusing time to be in transportation.

RC: Well, those were the days when you had many ladies working in the aircraft companies. Everybody was working. The harbor was obviously a different harbor. It was guarded. In other words, it was always a constant watch. Is a submarine coming in? Something like that. It was not like today, anyway.

MS: What were the security procedures that you had to be aware of in wartime and the special processes and procedures you had to go through?

RC: You know, I really don't remember that much about it. I just remember – because I always remember at that time, I was just a boy growing up. So, my memory of the security is too limited to even comment on.

MS: Sure. But let us go back then to the founding of the company. How was it founded?

RC: My dad founded the company. My dad founded the company, as I said, in the war years because he couldn't stay in the oil business. So, he went and got a truck from California Truck Rental and was able to secure a small contract of moving cargo from L.A., Los Angeles, to San Diego for Convair, who was a government supplier of planes. That one or two trucks then branched into a trucking company.

MS: How long did it take before those one or two trucks grew to a greater number?

RC: Oh, our company really was like two companies. We were in that type of business until the [19]60s. Maybe the late [19]50s would be a better way to word it. That's when we really became a lot more active in the harbor area and less active in the San Diego area.

MS: In those early days, what kind of trucks did you have? There were obviously limitations on – again, you were young with your father. What kind of equipment was there? What kind of trucks were there? The rationing of gasoline, it was all a different world, I am guessing.

RC: Well, but in the war years, that's true. The gasoline was rationed. But for people who did or for companies who did work for the war effort, rationing was not an issue. You got what you needed because obviously the parts had to go down if the airplanes were going to be manufactured. So, that wasn't an issue. The transportation in the harbor, again, was either forty-

foot – we didn't have forty-five-foot – forty-foot or actually thirty-five-foot. Thirty-five-foot was the biggest single trailer, and twenty-foot coupled together, we called them a set of doubles, was hauled by a gasoline tractor. We didn't really use diesel tractors in those days.

MS: What about the roadways? They are quite different. There were no freeways.

RC: No freeways. Alameda was the way to – all the way from – whatever point in the harbor we got on Alameda, we went all the way to downtown Los Angeles by private – not private street – by public street with signals and everything else. It took two and a half, three hours to make the trip. Now you make the trip without too much traffic in forty minutes.

MS: The loading and unloading process in the harbor, what was that like in those days?

RC: The longshoremen took it by hand out of the hole of the ship and put it on a big pallet. The pallet was put on the dock, and the jurisdiction was the longshoremen put it there, and that was the place of rest, and they left it. Then Teamsters removed it from there and took it into the trucks.

MS: So, when your father started the company, was it a union company at the beginning or was it an independent company?

RC: No, I'd say within a few years it was a union company. Because everybody was a union company in those days.

MS: I know this is your father we are talking about, but how did you get contracts? Was it a bid situation? How did you get a contract to do the trucking?

RC: You mean from Los Angeles to San Diego?

MS: Yes.

RC: I think he just went down and made a relationship with somebody. There was a real need in those days because, again, everything was high priority, and he probably was lucky enough to reach the right person at the right time, got the contract, and from there he was able to acquire contracts with two or three other aircraft companies.

MS: He himself had no past experience with trucking or the trucking business?

RC: Well, he was a good salesman. If you're a good salesman, you can probably go out and sell anything. He had some good people that he got behind him. They were the brains from the standpoint of trucking, and he was the good salesman.

MS: After the war years were over, how did the business change after that? Because obviously, the hectic time of transport during the war, and then things were different. How did the trucking business change after World War II?

RC: All of the work between the aircraft companies really didn't slow down that much for four or five years. That continued. The international trade just grew every year until – it stayed break-bulk until Sea-Land. That's my recollection of really – Matson and Sea-Land were really the originators of containerization. After they came and started the containerization, then you saw ship line by ship line move into that field, and then the whole international trade changed.

MS: How did that affect the trucking business?

RC: It changed it radically because you didn't need as much labor. Instead of coming down to the harbor and having to have five or six men load a thousand cartons in a trailer that were on the dock, the thousand cartons were containerized. We didn't have chassis in those original days, so we had forklifts, big giant forklifts, and we put the twenty-foot container on a flatbed, chained it down, and took the flatbed to the customer.

MS: Let us talk about yourself. When you first came here, you were young. What were your impressions of the port as a young boy or a young man coming here initially? What do you remember about the place and its activities, and what did you do when you were growing up here?

RC: Oh, I worked the docks. I actually loaded freight on the docks, drove a forklift on the docks. So, I did all of the manual labor that was done by other people. It was fascinating because, again, longshoremen were dropped into the hold of the ships. I saw the bananas unloaded prior to being boxed, where a longshoreman put them on his shoulder, a stock of bananas, and carried it out. He placed it a certain place, and then the Teamster picked it up from there and carried it into the trailer. You saw the snakes come out of the stocks of bananas. It was just much more primitive, if that's a fair way to word it.

MS: What about the town of San Pedro? What was that like?

RC: You know, I didn't really know the town of San Pedro. It was not an area that I really – I came down and I worked the docks, but I didn't go to San Pedro.

MS: Did you imagine from those early days that you were going to go into the family business?

RC: Oh, yes, I thought so all my life. Yes, I grew up in it. My dad put me to work when I was like ten or twelve years old. I was working in the summertime when school was out for three months, and even when I was in high school I worked. So, yes, it just seemed like second nature.

MS: What was he telling you about the job, to get you prepared to begin to work? Was he passing on information to you about the work and the job and the importance of the company? What was he telling you?

RC: Not really, because my dad was very much involved in the politics of the trucking industry. So, he wasn't around very much. He ended up being the president of the American Trucking Association as well as the president of the California Trucking Association. So, he spent a lot of time in Sacramento and in Washington. Then he was the first of the trucking industry leaders to

get involved in lobbying, and that was in the days when there was pretty good rivalry between the trucking industry and the railroads. So, I didn't have a lot of counsel with my dad on the things. I just learned from some of the other people.

MS: What were the issues that he was going to Sacramento about that concerned the industry in those days? What were the issues that were of concern?

RC: Money for roads, always asking the government to – because in those days, again, we didn't have the freeways, we didn't have the interstates, and the trucking industry as a whole needed that. The railroads didn't want to see us get that kind of money because they felt they were putting in private money and they felt the trucking industry should put in private money. So, mostly it was about roads.

MS: Did the company own the trucks and the drivers were employees? Or were they independents working under your contract?

RC: In those days, the trucking companies owned the tractors and the trailers, and all of the people were employees.

MS: How did the relationship with the unions evolve and change during those days? What was the relationship when the company was starting during the war, for the war years? Did it change over time or was it pretty much the same?

RC: The relationship, I think, with all of the trucking companies was pretty much the same as it related to the unions. We were all a part of a National Master Freight contract, and that meant that the wages were all the same. The Public Utilities Commission or the Interstate Commerce Commission governed our rates, so all the rates were the same. So, there really wasn't a situation where you had a low-price carrier or everything was different. You had competition, but the competition was service, and the competition wasn't rates.

MS: What was the Port of Los Angeles? Was there anything special or challenging or unique about serving that port as a transportation port in those days?

RC: I can't think of anything that was unique other than the fact that the sheds were old, built probably practically back in the [19]30s. Everything, as I said, was handled by hand. So, there was just lots and lots of labor. It was very difficult to make a shipment work out without having somebody having stolen a big portion of it, whether it was your Teamster drivers that were stealing or whether it was a longshoreman. There were always major shortages, and especially when you got into things like liquor and candy and things like that. If you had a thousand cartons, more than likely, the best that you were ever going to get was 995.

MS: Do you remember any particular cases or instances where that was a particularly memorable example of that?

RC: Just that liquor was never full. It just never worked out that the amount that you were supposed to get was the amount that was there, which means that somebody obviously

appropriated some of it. I think that there was a feeling among the ILWU people that that was a part of their pay. How much could they steal?

MS: Did you factor that in, put a ten percent shrinkage into it? Or was that your concern at all?

RC: Well, we only signed for what we got. So, we only were responsible for that. We obviously had to worry about our own drivers, but we tried to police them. But if we were five short, we were five short, and then the steamship line had to take the responsibility for that.

MS: How did the vehicles themselves evolve? You described the early vehicles that were there. How did the equipment change as you went into the postwar years in the [19]40s and [19]50s? What kind of vehicles were you using?

RC: The tractors got bigger from a horsepower standpoint. The engines got better. There was a movement from gasoline to diesel probably in the [19]70s. Again, the diesel had a greater horsepower and would allow you to pull more weight.

MS: So, starting with those two trucks, by the time you were in the 1950s and the mid-[19]50s, when you get directly involved with the company, how had the company grown over that period of time?

RC: Well, the company changed drastically in the [19]60s. Someone from the Port of Los Angeles in the Trade Development Department came to me and said, you know, there are going to be a consortium of Japanese lines who are going to build four container ships, each line four lines, and that was K Line, Mitsui O.S.K., Japan Line, and Yamashita-Shinnihon Line. Each was going to build a steamship line that was going to be a container ship to hold about 820-foot equivalents. They suggested you should go to Japan because somebody is going to need to be the LTL or small shipment devanner and revanner of containers. The word container freight station wasn't invented by then. With the port's help, I went to Japan in 1967 and met all the steamship lines. They were in the process of doing exactly that, building ships for an eventual four-ship rotation from Japan to Los Angeles. In 1968, we got the contract to be the container freight station for those four lines. We actually became a partner with the port because the port built a container freight station that turned out to be too small, and no one knew how big to make it. We had nothing to do with the design of it. It was the Japanese lines and the port. So, it was built probably in the area across from Henry Ford Avenue now where Yang Ming is. No one ever occupied it. It eventually was torn down, and our Wilmington facility that we now operate, which we were operating for the port then as a warehouse, was converted into a container freight station because the port had no other place to put them, and they were obligated to give them a facility. That's how we actually came to have the big facility that we have today, working for the port and doing the work that we do.

MS: What was your competition? Or did you have competition?

RC: Oh, yes.

MS: Tell us about your competition.

RC: I think the competition doesn't exist anymore. The competition was a company called Signal Trucking, and they're out of business. The other competition was the Southern Pacific Railroad, and the Southern Pacific Railroad is not in that type of business anymore. But both of those companies went to Japan, and both of those companies tried to secure the business. The Southern Pacific did secure the business in the Bay Area and under their trucking company name Pacific Mortar Trucking, but they didn't get it down here.

MS: What do you think was compelling about your argument to make them go with your company?

RC: I think we helped them a lot. I think we worked really hard to teach them about trucking in the United States, and they needed to buy chassis. So, we got as much information, and we just worked very hard at giving them any kind of information they want and educating them as much as we could on what it was going to be like for them to be operating over here. They just formed a really good relationship with us.

MS: Over the years, what kind of relationship have you developed with the port? What was that relationship?

RC: Oh, wonderful. Well, we ended up being a major partner with the port because the port needed us at that time to be able to satisfy the contract that they made with the Japanese consortium. Not having a place big enough, we had to get in a car and literally drive around the port and say, "Could you use this building? Could you use that building?" That's when we settled on the warehouse buildings that we were doing public warehousing, and we were a partner with the port where we shared the revenue with them. We moved all the warehousing out in order to take in the vanning and devanning of the small shipments for the Japanese lines.

MS: When you say partner, do you mean literally a business partner relationship? What kind of relationship was there between the two?

RC: We were a part of their tariff where instead of paying them rent on the building, they received 60 percent of all the storage revenue, and we kept forty percent of the storage revenue. So, a partnership, I think, was a pretty good way to word it.

MS: What kind of impact? You must have had impact on the redesigning of the port to make it efficient to move trucks and vehicles around. Did you have any impact on that?

RC: No, not really. I'd be exaggerating if I said that we had anything to do with that. We had a great relationship with the port and the engineering people, and certainly we talked about a lot of things, but the advent of containerization and the development of the actual piers was really between the steamship lines and the port.

MS: You officially joined the company in [19]54?

RC: Yes, you can say that. Actually, [19]50, and then I went in the service and came back out.

MS: So, how would you describe what the company was like in [19]54 when you came back to it?

RC: Well, it was much smaller. The company was a very small company in 1954, strictly serving the San Diego area on an overnight basis. We had acquired Harbor Freight Lines, which was the rights to go into the harbor. There was a lot of intercoastal work at that time. There was a steamship line called Luckenbach that competed with the railroads, and they brought the cargo from New York to Los Angeles by ship, which a lot of people really never realized. It was a competition with the railroads. So, you had a lot of the cosmetics and the products that were made on the East Coast were brought to the West Coast by line, and again, all break-bulk. We would go down to the port and just load up the trailers and take them to where they were going. That all, again, stayed that way until about 1965, maybe 1966, when some of the lines started bringing containers on deck. Not container ships but still bringing break-bulk and then maybe making fifty or forty containers and putting them on deck, using the ship's gear to take them off and then cranes or forklifts to put them on flatbeds. You didn't see a chassis until about 1967.

MS: Going back to this competition between the trains and the boats, it obviously must have taken longer for a ship to get here than by a train, but it was cheaper?

RC: Yes.

MS: That was the nature of the competition. So, if you did not mind the slower delivery, you would take the cheaper cost.

RC: Many customers elected to buy the steamship line from New York, New Jersey, to L.A., strictly because of cost.

MS: So, when you returned in [19]54, what were your responsibilities? What were your jobs?

RC: I was just a guy that was put to work doing paperwork and doing every kind of job that you can have, and then eventually became a salesman, and from a salesman moved into an area of management.

MS: As a salesman, who were you trying to sell and what were you pitching to them to get them to agree to your sale?

RC: Most of the time in those days, you were trying to sell the customers who were shipping intercoastal because that was the big volume. The big volume really was not from the Orient. The big volume was the movement that came from New York to here. The biggest volume cargo that I remember coming in by steamship line would be plywood, matting that would be used to make rugs, things like that. More in the category of raw materials really than in finished product.

MS: That was coming in. What was going out of the Port of Los Angeles?

RC: Pretty much the same thing that's going out today, scrap metal, raw materials, things that

were needed to be used in the manufacture, but not a great deal of export was going out in those days.

MS: As you began your sales career, did you have one particular successful client that you hooked and that you were particularly proud of in those early days?

RC: Oh, I can't think of anything in particular. I think the biggest client that we hooked would be the Japanese lines because then we became partners with them, and that partnership still exists today.

MS: When you went over, describe that trip. Was there some kind of culture shock of dealing with the Japanese method and then dealing with you? Talk about those exchanges.

RC: It was very difficult for me because in [19]67 there wasn't the amount of English spoken in Japan that there is today. I certainly had no experience in dealing with the Japanese. The Japanese, as courteous and nice as they are, would ask you a question, you'd answer it, and then they might speak among themselves for four or five minutes in Japanese, and you didn't know what was happening and then another question would come up. You had to learn to be very patient. They were always very good to us, but you were afraid to travel by yourself over there because you didn't know whether you could get back because you didn't have the ability to speak.

MS: What about other customs, business customs and cultural differences? Did you run into those too?

RC: Not as much as I did the food. I think the food situation, especially if you went to the interior of Japan, we developed a wonderful relationship with the Suzuki Japanese motorcycle company. We did a lot of work in the interior in showing them, when containerization came in, how to put more crates in a container by making the crate size a little smaller. So, I had to go to the factories. When you went to the factories, all you had was what they ate. If you weren't accustomed to eating something like that, it was not just a cultural shock but a stomach shock.

MS: Did you ever get accustomed to sushi?

RC: No. I didn't like it. I don't like it. No. I'm more for tempura or chicken or beef or something like that, but I was not a big sushi eater.

MS: When you began this first relationship with the Japanese shipping companies, what were they shipping in those first containers?

RC: The first containers that came in by the Japanese lines had electronics, as limited as electronics were in those days, clothing, fabrics, many small shipments. Many small shipments compared to today. The exports, and you might be interested that the biggest single export was cattle hides, and probably the next single biggest export would have been citrus, lemons, oranges, grapefruits. The cattle hides were a real shock to us because they came in from the slaughterhouses in railcars, and they were bundled in fifty- to sixty-pound bundles. We had a

very difficult time finding people who would handle them because they were raw. The smell was terrible, and they created an infestation problem of flies that was just something we never saw before. So, we had to isolate them to a certain area in the building, a 40,000-square-foot area, and at night we had to literally debug the place because it was the only way we could survive. But we were able to actually secure Hispanic people from Mexico who were thrilled to have a job, and they became the people that did the unloading of the railcars and the loading of the containers of the cattle hides. We could not find anybody else that would do that kind of work.

MS: Now, is that kind of trade still going on?

RC: Today it goes on, but all of the containers for cattle hides are loaded right at the source, the rail sidings probably. If they don't go right to the plant, they go very near the plant, and they're put on a chassis, taken to the plant, and then put right on the railcar there. So, we don't see any of that today.

MS: We talked with Mr. Pasha in the auto industry. Were autos part of the early trade that you were involved with too or is that something [inaudible]?

RC: We never saw any autos in those days. Never saw any autos.

MS: We want to clarify, this company is more than just trucks. We are talking about California Cartage. Talk about the elements of California Cartage. What is the makeup of this company and its activities?

RC: I would say that you could say that we're comprised of three types of operations. One is trucking. One is warehousing, contract or public warehousing. The other would be devanning and redistribution of cargo that's coming in from the Orient.

MS: We read that in the [19]80s – we found a newspaper article – in the [19]80s, that there was huge layoffs in the company, and the company was withdrawing from elements of the business. What were the circumstances of that?

RC: In the late [19]70s, deregulation came in. The Interstate Commerce Commission was basically abolished, and all of the trucking companies in the United States who had acquired operating rights either through application to the ICC or by purchasing of them, those rights became worthless. You could go into the trucking business by just having a phone number, an insurance policy that covered your liability, and a number from the Department of Transportation. So, anyone that was in the trucking business with employees and owned trucks was at a substantial disadvantage because the companies that were invented in that time used owner-operators. We were one of the ones that were terribly disadvantaged, and we were unable to get the Teamsters to give any relief that would be substantial enough for us to compete. So, we closed up our Teamster operation that was trucking in 1984 and stayed in a limbo-type operation for two or three years, and then just reinvented our operation in the trucking business probably in 1986 or 1987 while still maintaining our freight station operation during that period of time. That was a Teamster operation also, and that kind of carried us until we could get our

trucking operation back on its feet, which today is strictly all owner-operator.

MS: So, how did you reinvent yourself? What was that reinvention process?

RC: I guess you'd say that we reinvented ourselves by going out and talking to a few customers and saying, "Would you like us to get back into the business?" The customer said yes. With four or five owner-operators we started, and from there, we just grew to the point where we now have about a thousand owner-operators.

MS: So, basically, you went out of the employee union, and you began to deal with independent contractors.

RC: That is correct. We had no choice. It wasn't a matter of something that we wanted to do. It was a matter of survival.

MS: Why did the deregulation take place? What was the impetus for that?

RC: Well, the government deregulated everything. The government deregulated the airlines at that time. They deregulated the trucking industry. I think the thesis behind it was that this will bring in greater competition, lower the rates, and the consumer will eventually benefit, and probably all those things did happen.

MS: Now, there is a number of other companies you are associated with, and I want to talk about that. K&R Transportation, tell me what that is and what the relationship is with your company.

RC: K&R Transportation is just a wholly-owned subsidiary, if that's the right word, of our company. It principally brings the containers from the port to our devanning station at Wilmington, which is the facility that's owned by the port. That's the principal operation of that company.

MS: How did they become part of the company? What is their history?

RC: When the Teamster operation was eliminated for lack of our ability to make a profit, we were in limbo for a few years. We couldn't operate. The laws did not allow us to operate again. So, in the late [19]80s, somewhere along that line, we just set up another company when we could, and the name just came out of nowhere. The name means nothing. It just was a name of a couple of initials that we just used. We just decided to have several truck lines and each one specialize in a certain thing so that we would be more efficient and maybe do a better job.

MS: So, does that include the CMI?

RC: Yes, it does.

MS: Tell me what that is.

RC: CMI is California Multimodal, and its primary operation in those days was to serve San Diego, to reinvent the San Diego operation. Because the San Diego operation changed from a company or a city that was primarily involved in the aircraft industry to a city that served Tijuana and the maquiladoras. The biggest account at that time down there was Sony. We were able to reacquire the Sony business, so CMI's first account was Sony. Sony had manufacturing plants in Tijuana as well as San Diego. So, we were carrying the raw materials that were being made in Japan by container to the area and then bringing back finished products going somewhere else.

MS: Another name I have here is Cal Cartage Express.

RC: Cal Cartage Express is just another trucking name, and its principal company or principal customer is U.S. Borax. We were allowed to keep the U.S. Borax business when we terminated our Teamster contract because it was all owner-operator and never was Teamster. We still haul eighty to ninety loads a day from Boron, all export, to the port.

MS: The last name I have, F&S Distributing Company.

RC: That's just another one that just got invented out of nowhere. It has a small warehouse operation in Vernon but primarily a trucking operation that serves companies that have imports out of the harbor.

MS: So, what was the effect of deregulation on the port itself? Did that have an impact on the port in this operation?

RC: Oh, sure, absolutely. The deregulation just reduced cost overnight to customers. The advent of the owner-operator and the advent of many, many more trucking companies forced everybody to become much more efficient and much more cost-effective.

MS: So, in your case, you had to start competing all over again.

RC: That's correct.

MS: So, who were your competitors, and why did you end up becoming successful again after all that?

RC: Competitors were many. I mean people we never knew and the companies that are out there competing with us today. In many cases, we don't know them. We have Korean competitors, Chinese competitors, Mexican competitors. Some are affiliated with the steamship industry. Some are just immigrants that came over, started their business, and were successful. Our success is probably just a lot of good people that worked hard.

MS: A history with the port for some years.

RC: Yes, a history with the port and certainly the relationship. I made many trips to Japan in the Bradley era. When the mayor was going to have a party, they would generally ask me if I would

come over because I had such relationship with the lines. If the mayor and his port staff would have a function party, I was always at that party and saw a lot of the people. So, we partnered a lot as a company to the port to bring business to the port. Because in those days there was still competition – fierce competition between Long Beach and the Board of L.A.

MS: Now, the way the business works now, are you involved in the local transport, in the intermodal transfer facility? Are you connected to trucking? Are you basically still dealing with the San Diego market?

RC: Both, but we're hauling for some of the steamship lines from the dock to the intermodal transfer facility. But we're also hauling every night cargo that's going down to the maquiladoras because there probably are fifty to twenty huge maquiladoras that operate from Mexicali to Tijuana and inland. The bulk of your televisions are made there. Now you have auto parts made there. Many, many companies have subsidiaries or actual operating companies in Mexico.

MS: I think you have to explain what a maquiladora is.

RC: Maquiladora is just the name for a manufacturing company of a Japanese company in Mexico.

MS: Are there other (Native?) countries too?

RC: I guess so. I guess so. We just relate it to the – we don't know any companies down there that aren't Japanese owned. Let me rephrase that. They're Oriental owned. They're Korean companies, they're Taiwanese companies, and they're Japanese companies. The maquiladora name just came up as a name that was assigned to them, and we just referred to them as maquiladoras.

MS: Right. Maybe that is because they are exporting companies.

RC: Yes.

MS: One of the things is as the container business grew and the size of the ships coming in, the number of the containers coming in, more and more speed and efficiency is of the essence. Really for a port to compete, you've got to get the stuff out of here and in here quickly. What are the problems from your point of view that you face, as this pace picks up, of keeping pace with the trade that's coming in and the amount of containers that are coming in? Are there particular challenges for you? What can you do or do you do to respond to that?

RC: There's not much that we can do because so much of it is really controlled at the level where the steamship line and the ILWU come into play. Our drivers have the ability to move containers as fast as the traffic will allow them to move, but they really have a bigger bottleneck in the port than they do on the freeways. There is not much anybody can do about that. That's just a combination of bigger ships, more volume, the constraint of space and the gates, just the change from break-bulk to containers so that you just have a huge volume of trucks coming in, a huge volume of trucks going out.

MS: But I understand some – I forget who was making this point – was that so much of it is timing in the sense that if there was a system where you could get to make sure a truck – if you knew cargo was going to be ready at 2:00 p.m., that you would have a truck there at 2:00 p.m., and there is not a system yet to make that kind of tiny, precise kind of timing exchange. Is that the issue?

RC: That's an issue, but I don't think that will ever work. I think the best way I can describe it is that there are several terminals that have appointment systems, and we make appointments. But if you can think about the appointment system in this rationale, it's easy to make the first appointment 8:00, 8:30, 9:00. But then you have to guess on when the truck can get back. Most of the time, your guess is going to be wrong because he runs into a traffic jam, either going to the customer, coming back, or he didn't get his vehicle. Maybe he had to pick up an empty to come back. So, the 3:00 one is the one that's tough to figure out how to do, and I don't think that we'll ever get that figured out.

MS: What about the mixed results of the Alameda Corridor for trucking? Talk about the Alameda Corridor and its impact on the transportation system.

RC: It had none for trucking. The big mistake was that the original plan on the Alameda Corridor was to conduct or to construct a rail line down the middle and to construct, if you will, freeways on either side of it, one to go north and the other to go south for the truck. But the money wasn't there, so they abandoned the trucking part of it to keep the rail in line. We don't have an Alameda Corridor for the trucking.

MS: Is there any possibility of expanding the existing corridor to make up for that? Or is it pretty much a done deal at this point?

RC: No, there's no way to do it because they're boxed in.

MS: Another point that's made up is particularly the port is getting a lot of pressure from environmentalists about diesel and all of that. What are your points of view? What are your attitudes and activities? There's a question of some of these environmental pressures that are going on in the port.

RC: We support all of the community and the port's efforts to reduce diesel emission. Whatever the Air Resources Board or the port chooses or wants to do in the way of regulation, we're totally for them and want to see it done. The biggest problem that exists is that we are a transportation industry with owner-operators, and many of the owner-operators have older equipment. The rate structure, because, again, we have possibly 1,800 trucking companies operating out of both ports, their rates are depressed. There isn't enough money for them to purchase the newer, cleaner equipment. So, unless they have subsidy from the state or the port, the cleaner equipment won't come. But we are definitely for it because obviously the people need to have the air cleaned, and diesel is one of the things that makes the air dirty.

MS: What about the issues of idling trucks and things like changing the way that the trucks

operate? Is that something that's a stopgap measure?

RC: We have Air Resources Board regulations that say you can't idle a diesel over five minutes, and all of our drivers know that. Unless they are in a line at the steamship terminal, then they can maintain their motors and keep on going. But other than that, they're required to turn their engine off if they exceed five minutes.

MS: What do you see as the future of the transportation net that is built around the Port of Los Angeles? Are we facing a potential bottleneck or do you think that their expansion is going to take place easier and the speed is going to pick up? Are you optimistic or guarded? What is your feeling about that?

RC: Well, you're aware of PierPASS?

MS: Yes. Tell me about that.

RC: PierPASS was instituted maybe two years ago by the community, by the ports, by all of us, seeing that the freeways were so congested, that we need to move as much cargo at night as possible. So, a penalty was put in for people who pick up during the day, \$50 per twenty-footer, \$100 per forty-footer. If you pick up between 6:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m., no charge. So, substantial amounts of cargo have been moved from daytime pickup and delivery to nighttime, and that's helped a great deal. What I think we need is twenty-four hours a day operation seven days a week. We've got to not only do that at the port, but then we have to take the shipping and receiving public and say to them, you've got to receive and ship at night too. If you don't, then whatever the congestion is on the freeways today will only be that much worse in fifteen years.

MS: Aside from containers and the containerization, which obviously dominates the period that you have been involved in the business, is there any other big change or any other big change in the way of doing things or in the processes of what you do or with the cargo, some other big thing that has occurred in the years you have been involved in from the mid-[19]50s to the present?

RC: No, I don't think anything matches containerization. Containerization revolutionized the steamship industry, and it revolutionized the way that rates are made for the customers by the steamship lines. They used to be made on the basis of so many dollars per forty cubic feet. Today, it's so many dollars per container. No, it's probably the biggest revelation that will ever come in that industry.

MS: You have had this long-term relationship with the Port of Los Angeles, a business relationship. Your father did going back (four?) years and before. From a business point of view, what is special about the Port of Los Angeles? How does it compare to other ports or other places where some of the similar activities take place?

RC: I don't have any relationship really with any other ports. We have operations in port cities, but with the exclusion of the Port of Savannah, and we do have an operation down there, the Port of Los Angeles is really the only port that I've had a really long-term relationship with many

people. The best thing that I can say about the Port of Los Angeles or the thing that strikes me the most is that there's always been a really fine transition from one group of people who might be ready to retire. There always was somebody else in the wings that took over that you knew. So, you didn't really have to form a new relationship. You already had the relationship, and then you just met more people as those people moved up the line.

MS: Is there anything else you would like to say about the business?

RC: No, no, no.

MS: Did I intrude on you?

RC: No, no, no. The port has been wonderful to us, and we have a great relationship. I enjoyed the trips that I made with – when the port was very small, it was much easier, obviously, to do business with. We didn't have the rules and regulations that exist from an EIR standpoint. You could do things faster, easier. But times change and you need to adjust to times, and we adjusted to them. But I enjoyed going to Japan and to the Far East with the mayor and all of the port people and doing all of those kind of things in those days. That was when the port was vigorously, vigorously competing with other ports for business. Today, that isn't the case because there's only so much land left. So, it isn't like we have five extra berths out here, and they need to bring in business. They don't need any business now. They've got more business than they can handle.

MS: Terrific. That is great.

RC: I'm glad to help you.

[end of transcript]