

Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project  
George Griffith Oral History  
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Male Speaker: I'll give you the hard question first. Please say your name and spell it.

George Griffith: My name is George Durward Griffith, and the last name is G-R-I-F-F-I-T-H.

MS: George, tell us what year you were born and where you were born.

GG: I was born May 9th, 1921, Kansas City, Missouri, in the middle of the country.

MS: The heartland.

GG: Yes.

MS: Tell us, what brought you to the Harbor Area, in San Pedro area?

GG: As a little kid, I had allergies. Finally, the doctor told my dad he couldn't keep me alive in the Middle West because of allergies. He said, "Well, let's get in the car and go out and see my brother in Laguna Beach." I took one look at the Pacific Ocean, and I never went back to the heartland. So, that's how I ended up on the West Coast. But I grew up on an orange grove in Anaheim, California. What got me interested in the ocean was just I loved the ocean.

MS: What about sailing ships? What got you interested in sailing and that kind of thing?

GG: Well, first of all, I liked the beach, and I had a couple of cousins that also liked surfing and the beach. One of them helped me build a little flat iron skiff. I had very supportive parents. So, they would help me load the skiff on the side of the car and head down to the beach. That's how I got into it. Then from the rowboat, I got into sailing. Then sailing, of course, led me offshore. I started going offshore in 1939, to give you a feeling for the whole thing. My first race to Hawaii was in 1941, just before the war started.

MS: I think this is interesting stuff. We're getting ahead of ourselves. I want to take it a step at a time.

GG: All right.

MS: Okay. How old were you when you first went to sea, shall we say?

GG: Just –

MS: Do you remember the first experience that you had in a boat?

GG: I had a little flat iron skiff, and dad helped me get her down to the beach. Of course, I couldn't drive in those days. I was far too young for that. He said, "Okay, you should jump in the water and start swimming. When you break stroke, that's as far as you can go from the beach." I had a father that was very kind, thoughtful, generous, but you never argued with him.

MS: He was the captain of his ship.

GG: Well, he didn't learn to swim until just before he died. Growing up, he couldn't swim.

MS: Now, that was in Laguna area where you're [inaudible]?

GG: I grew up in Anaheim.

MS: You grew right in with water, where the ocean was there.

GG: Yes, right. Then, of course, the closest beach was Newport harbor.

MS: When you were a kid, did you dream of maybe becoming a sailor?

GG: Not particularly, no. I just fell into it. Okay. I went to Anaheim High School. Through a fluke of circumstances, a close friend of mine had a chance to take the entrance exams for Caltech. But he didn't have a car. I had a car. So, I drove him to Pasadena. You know what happened? I took the exams. He took the exams. I was accepted, and he wasn't. So, it's a classic story.

MS: What did you study at Caltech?

GG: Mechanical engineering.

MS: "At Caltech, I studied," you have to say the complete sentence.

GG: Yes.

MS: So, say that.

GG: I'm sorry. So, I went to California Institute of Technology, called Caltech. The obvious major for me was Mechanical Engineering because I had grown up building things, designing things, et cetera.

MS: Any of those things had to do with ships and boats? Did you make models?

GG: No. School nothing had to do with the marine industry or ships. But then [19]41, right after the Honolulu race, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and that was the start of our involvement in the world conflict. The first news I heard on a Sunday after the bombing involved a friend of mine that was up flying an airplane was shot down by Japanese Zeros. That really brought it home to me very fast. So, I joined the Navy. But I was very fortunate in my work experience, just being a brand-new mechanical engineer. The Navy assigned me, even though I had all kinds of small boat experience, they assigned me to the Bureau of Ships. I spent four years in Houston, Texas, building destroyer escorts, landing craft, et cetera. Then towards the end of the – I was responsible for the repair yard that worked on ships going from the European theater to the Pacific. I ended up doing that kind of work.

MS: You mentioned this Hawaii race. Tell me the story of that. How did you get involved with that? Tell me about that story.

GG: I'm member number two of the Transpacific Yacht Club merely because I joined in [19]39. My brother and I had bought a 44-foot cutter, and the idea of racing to Hawaii had appealed to both of us. So, we made the race, got a second, had a wonderful experience racing to Hawaii. Then, of course, I had to sail the boat home because there was no transport means other than your own boat.

MS: Tell me about that. Describe the race and preparing for it. How old were you? When did it happen?

GG: All right. This was [19]39. I was eighteen, and my brother was a couple of years older. My father had died when I was a lot younger. So, I was running the Orange Grove. My brother would rather fly than do anything else. So, I ended up washing out a lot of airplanes after he did stalls and spins and [laughter] that sort of thing. But we had a chance to buy this boat from Stephens Brothers in Stockton, and it was 44 feet long, a beautiful boat. A friend helped me bring it down the coast. We got down the coast. My brother said, "So long as we have an auxiliary engine, we'll never learn how to sail. Let's take the engine out." So, we did. We took the engine out and never put it back in. Had no regrets. So, we learned how to sail. By learning how to sail and running across people with larger boats, we heard about the Transpac race, the race to Hawaii, which was every two years and been going on for a long time. So, we entered and ended up with a second. A good friend of mine beat me, but he'd been racing a long time. He was the same age as my dad. Then we had about ten days, twelve days in the islands and poking around a little bit. Then we sailed the boat home. On the way home, my brother, who was helping me navigate, he said, "Right about here, halfway between Hawaii and San Francisco, we are farther from dry land than any place else in the whole world," which most people don't realize. The Pacific gets to be pretty big between here and Hawaii." We sailed home. Then, of course, not long after, the war started. The Navy Air Force picked up my brother immediately. But they let me finish school.

MS: To get you back, now you go pick up this boat.

GG: Yes.

MS: You sail it all the way back to Los Angeles.

GG: We had raced it to Hawaii.

MS: Before the Hawaii race, you bought the boat.

GG: Yes, in San Francisco.

MS: San Francisco. Now, where did you get this navigational skill? What kind of experience did you have to qualify you to go x-thousand miles across the Pacific?

GG: Well, they weren't very choosy in those days. If you wanted to go and you had a boat, you could pretty well go. You had to make sure you had certain safety devices and that sort of thing, which is just common horse sense. That didn't make any problem. The fact that we didn't have any power didn't bother the race committee a bit. Of course, in those days, you didn't have fancy radio equipment. We didn't have the ability to communicate either to the race committee or from the race committee. We just got there in fourteen days.

MS: You make it sound so easy. You're navigating the open sea. This is not so easy. All right. How did you learn to navigate, to start with, and how to sail on open sea?

GG: I taught myself. Looking around in a pawnshop in San Pedro, I bought an old French sextant. About that same time, my brother wandered into a jewelry store and bought a rebuilt chronometer. So, we had the timepiece and sunlines, and that's how we got to find out where Hawaii was. That's how we got there.

MS: You and [inaudible] right now.

GG: What?

MS: You and [inaudible] taking off across the open sea like that.

GG: Well [laughter].

MS: Now, before you did this Hawaii trip, before you acquired this boat –

GG: Yes.

MS: – what sailing experience did you have? How far did you sail?

GG: We had various yacht clubs, Los Angeles Yacht Club, Newport, California, et cetera. Had local races to Catalina, around Catalina. One of my first races was from Newport Beach around Catalina. That little trophy, number one, still lives on my desk. That's one of the first races I entered, and I won it. You just teach yourself how to sail.

MS: Tell me about the history of the Los Angeles Yacht Club, first of all.

GG: All right. When we bought the *Pajara*, I was a member of Balboa Yacht Club. But the major yacht club of Southern California putting on most of the races for the larger boats was the Los Angeles Yacht Club, which was established and had a station here in the Harbor. So, being a lot of Scotch ancestry, instead of me belonging to two yacht clubs, I got my brother to join LA, and I – but later, I joined LA. Because I realized that's where my friends were. Because they were the people who were off with the 40-footers racing around the islands.

MS: Do you know the history of the club? When did it start and any of the background of it?

GG: Not totally. It was –

MS: You have to say, "The Los Angeles Yacht Club."

GG: The Los Angeles Yacht Club had been in existence for a long time. They used the Athletic Club, downtown Los Angeles, for meetings, but they also had a station at Fish Harbor on Terminal Island and had an anchorage right near the canneries. So, that's where the facility was when I joined. But they had a hoist and some small boats and a little shack of a building where they could have meetings and lunches and that sort of thing. But the boats were all on moorings. So, behind a little hook of a breakwater in the middle of the harbor is where our station was.

MS: Now, who were the members of the yacht club? What kind of people became members of the yacht club?

GG: People would be –

MS: The members of the yacht club were.

GG: O'Melveny & Myers, a big law firm.

MS: You have to say the members.

GG: The members.

MS: Start again because I was talking too. Go ahead.

GG: All right. As I joined the yacht club, I realized that most of the members were businessmen of Los Angeles and San Pedro area. For instance, one of the members that I remember very well was Bill Stewart who was at that time, boss or head of Union Oil of California. Then there were a couple of members from the law firm, O'Melveny and Myers in downtown Los Angeles. So, that was the caliber of members when I joined. They didn't exclude women, but women never seemed to want to join. So, it was [laughter] basically a man's yacht club.

MS: Now, you were pretty young when you joined.

GG: Yes.

MS: Was that unusual to be that young? Were you among the younger members?

GG: Well, every yacht club has some younger members, but most of the younger members were children of older members. I was somewhat unique in that respect that my father, who couldn't swim, never bothered to join the yacht club. He left that problem up to me.

MS: Was he interested in boats at all?

GG: No, he was never interested in boats.

MS: You have to say, "My father."

GG: My father was never interested in boats. Being a non-swimmer, he was afraid of the water. But he was a very supportive father. He would do anything to help me in any project that I wanted to do. His brother was a plein air painter working in Laguna Beach, and he had a couple of sons that enjoyed my boats. So, that's how the family kept going along.

MS: Tell me about the Transpac Club. What is that?

GG: All right. The Transpacific Yacht Club is an organization that was put together – it was King Kamehameha of Hawaiian royalty was instrumental in attracting people to sail to the islands, to see the islands. Tourism was money in his pocket. So, that's how that got started. The Transpacific Yacht Club was organized, but you have to have sailed in the race to become eligible. So, after I sailed the race in 1941, I asked and was accepted in membership. So, that's how I got into the Transpacific Yacht Club. This summer will be another sailing of the race. Most of the boats just ahead of the race will be berthed in downtown Long Beach just as a get-together for all the entrants.

MS: To go back to that race, did you have any particular adventures in that race? Did you ever get washed overboard?

GG: No.

MS: What happened there?

GG: No, no. It was a very straightforward race. I just took sun shots and figured them out and figured out where we were. That was before the Pacific weather was well understood. Later races have had weather forecasters work on the Pacific. Because the weather is heavily dependent upon where the high-pressure system is located, which is, come to find out, is typically right between San Francisco and Hawaii. So that you head off from here and as you go offshore toward Hawaii, the course is a little South of West, and so the wind tends to work around. So, it's known as a running race. In other words, most of the time, you can head straight for the islands, and the wind will be either abeam or aft. So, it's a running race.

MS: You told us about the Los Angeles Yacht Club, being in the middle Fish Harbor, in the middle of this harbor, this working harbor with people unloading cranes and so on. You don't think of that as an environment for a yacht club.

GG: Well, it started long before the first container.

MS: You have to say, "The Los Angeles Yacht Club."

GG: The Los Angeles Yacht Club was started long before the first container had been designed. I can recall walking the docks and watching the stevedores handle cargo on pallets. A pallet would come out of the hole and then to a forklift and the forklift to a truck. So, it was a far cry from the container ships of today. Of course, most freighters were tiny compared to the big box

boats that we now see.

MS: Well, again, when you think of a yacht club, we understand from talking to other people who worked in the canneries, this was not a pleasant smell to be near those canneries.

GG: It didn't smell that bad. Of course, after I got out of the Navy, I worked an albacore boat for four or five months. It was very interesting working a small 45-foot fish boat out of the canneries and selling our – as we caught albacore, we iced them down in the hole. We didn't have refrigeration. So, we would be back into the cannery every week or ten days and to sell our fish.

MS: Go back again. I want to understand, talk about what the "facilities" of the LA Yacht Club were and describe them.

GG: When I joined the Los Angeles Yacht Club, it had a small anchorage protected by a small inner breakwater right next to the line of canneries, Star-Kist, et cetera, and where the fish boats brought their fish catch in. But in those days, they didn't just fish tuna. Albacore was the prime fish market, but there was also other kinds of tuna. There were mackerel, and there were little bait fish that were processed at the canneries for fish oil, which was used in many coating preparations, commercially.

MS: Did you have a clubhouse there where you met? Talk about that.

GG: Yes. We had a clubhouse that was a little barn. It didn't amount to much. I think the main meeting room was 20 feet wide and 50 feet long. We had a caretaker with a back closet that was his bedroom. So, (Shorty?) watched the anchorage. The boats had no slips. They were all on moorings. The moorings were, of course, protected by this little inner breakwater.

MS: So, tell me about the caretaker. What kind of character was he? What was his name again? You have to start with the caretaker.

GG: Okay, the caretaker was an interesting guy. He was born as a German in the islands off the North Coast of Germany. Now, he spoke English, but he also hadn't forgotten his German. He had worked as a hand on yachts in the South Pacific for many years. I'm trying to think of – Shorty Heidelberg or something. That's not quite right.

MS: So, what were the activities in the clubhouse [talking simultaneously]? What would be the activities?

GG: Occasionally, we'd have a party, and the Star boats had an old white bathtub where they would mix the gin. [laughter] It wasn't a very fancy yacht club. In fact, when I joined it, the 2-by-4s on the walls were still exposed on the inside. It took one of the wives, many years later, to bother to bring in a load of plywood to sheet the inner walls of the clubhouse. But as I say, the anchorage merely had individual moorings for the boats to tie to.

MS: So, I'm intrigued by this bathtub gin. That's a new phenomenon. This was not a fancy bar



or restaurant start.

GG: Oh, no.

MS: Describe it again to me.

GG: No, no. This was in the early to mid-[19]30s. There was a very active segment of the membership that owned Star boats, 6 meters, and boats that were typically used in the Olympic racing. That was the active group in that respect when it came to parties at the yacht club.

MS: Describe those parties. Give me a sample of what went on in those parties.

GG: There was an open bar. So, people would socialize and have a drink. Some would play cards. But it was not a very upscale sort of a party. That was in the [19]30s.

MS: Now, there are a lot of movie stars who had yachts and boats. Were they associated with the Los Angeles Yacht Club? Did they join?

GG: There were a few movie stars that we saw. Humphrey Bogart comes to mind as an obvious one. Humphrey was a good sailor, very competitive, but also very capable. For many years, he had a boat called the *Santana* and was very successful in local island racing and around the buoys. Most of boats of that type that were 50-feet, 60-feet long, the races would be to Catalina, around Catalina, around Santa Barbara Island, things of that type. The day racing around marks typically was done in 6 meters or Star boats, the Olympic type of small boat sailing.

MS: Now, I understand you had a boat named the *Howdy*? Tell me about that.

GG: Oh, I had a couple of *Howdys*. As I was growing up, I had a series of small sailboats. One was what you would call a frostbite dinghy, and that was only 12-feet long or actually 11.5 feet long. It was a type of boat that was very popular on the East Coast of the US, the Boston area, New England. They called it a frostbite dinghy because they would use the little tenders for winter-type racing when it was ice and snowy on the shore. They didn't want to take their big boats out sailing. Then I had another *Howdy* that I bought later that was 20 feet long. But that had a deck on it, and not infrequently, I would sail to Avalon for the Saturday night dance at the Pavilion. So, I was familiar with the Pavilion and that sort of thing.

MS: So, you could make that trip to the Pavilion and back the same day, or you stayed overnight?

GG: No, no, no. We would stay overnight at Avalon. So, we would sail over, get dressed up in something clean and dry, and go to the dance. Then after the dance, get a bite to eat and maybe some fresh donuts at the bakery and back for a bit of sleep on the boat and then sail home Sunday.

MS: Tell me about Avalon as a place for both boaters and as a destination.

GG: Well, Avalon, even though it has a breakwater now, it was somewhat of a natural harbor. It was early on, the Wrigleys used it as, shall we say, a civilized town with hotels. Then early in the [19]30s, they built the Pavilion, which is a theater with – the roof terrace is a dance hall and so, beautiful location. The big-name bands, the Crosbys and whatever, the big-name band era, frequently used that for a stop.

MS: So, describe one of your trips over there for a dance. You remember a particular dance and a particular band that was there?

GG: No, not particularly. I was in high school at the time. So, a friend of mine and I would put some clean dress clothes in a bunk and sailed to the island. We didn't have any power. So, if you couldn't sail, you didn't get there. When it came to returning to Newport beach or someplace like that, you had to sail or row the boat. So, that's the way –

MS: Talk about the ferry. I hear some stories about the ferry.

GG: Well, when I first got acquainted with the Los Angeles Yacht Club, this was in the early periods when The Great White Fleet used San Pedro Harbor for their home base. So, from the west end of the island – well, Henry Ford Bridge had been built, so you could go across the bridge to Terminal Island. But normally, the easiest way to get there was to use a ferry, which right now, one end of the ferry ride is now the Marine Museum right near where the Fire Department used to be. So, I made many trips across on the car ferry from there to Terminal Island.

MS: In the war, you were not in the San Pedro harbor area.

GG: No, no. All right. I was able to talk the US Navy into letting me finish and get my degree at Caltech. So, I was sent to indoctrination school in Arizona for a month to learn how to wear the uniform. Then I was attached to the Bureau of Ships and sent to a navy shipyard in Houston, Texas, which had been built by Brown & Root construction company and was still being run by them. But we had a nucleus of Navy officers that inspected their work. When I reported in, they were building destroyer escorts, which are small, low-powered destroyers used for shipping patrol for anti-submarine work.

MS: Tell me, what was Hurricane Gulch?

GG: Hurricane Gulch was never an official name, but Cabrillo Beach, the corner of the San Pedro Harbor, was commonly referred to as Hurricane Gulch. Because if you wanted wind, that's where the most wind would be. The wind would tend to concentrate as it came around the bluffs at the end of the harbor. So, the best sailing was – if you wanted wind – was always between the lighthouse and the corner of the harbor, which was known as Hurricane Gulch.

MS: Talk about when you lived in Portuguese Bend, and you would go over to San Pedro every Friday. Talk about that story.

GG: All right. When I was out of the Navy and figured out that a fishboat life was not a life I

wanted to live, I called up a professor that was in placement work at Caltech. He said, "There's aircraft industry, but the war has just finished. So, they've got all kinds of extra people, so forget that. There's pot-and-pan industry in Southern California." But he said, "There are also a couple of big refineries." He said, "I would strongly recommend Standard Oil of California as being employee-oriented, a good place to work." He says, "Don't think they won't get their ounce of flesh every week." So, I went to work for the refinery in El Segundo. I ended up working for Standard Oil and retired after thirty-three years. So, I can tell you all about Standard Oil and how they work. That included a stint in Livermore, where I did atomic energy research for three and a half years.

MS: Talk about those trips now, those Friday trips from Portuguese Bend.

GG: All right. The fish harbor facility didn't have any slips. All the boats were on moorings, and I ended up with a little 36-footer that – well, it had an auxiliary engine, but it was a hand crank start, magneto make-and-break ignition, single cylinder. So, the wife would typically take a long, like an anchor line or a hand line from the boat and pull it into the dock, so that when I got down to the anchorage after work, we could load stores and water, wash her off, and we'd take off for the island for the weekend. So, that was a common thing as we had a young family, a boy and a girl. Millie would just shop at Jimmy's right here on San Pedro. Jimmy Nobile was the butcher, and his typical customers were fish boats. So, that's how we got acquainted with Jimmy. On her way from Portuguese Bend, she stopped at Jimmy's and pick up weekend food. We'd meet at the yacht club and pull the boat in, wash it off, load stores, and head for Catalina. Normally, at Catalina, we would go toward the west end, the Isthmus, or a place we dearly love, Howland's Cove. Many, many years ago, I was fortunate to be able to buy a mooring in Howlands Cove. There were only two others in the cove at that time. It's quite a change from the sixty to seventy moorings that are there now. But it's essentially, every morning is owned by a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club.

MS: Where is the yacht club now?

GG: All right. The yacht club and Fish Harbor became untenable. In fact, they didn't want us there at all. But the refineries had gotten into coking. Now, coking is when you take typically, high sulfur, thick crude oil and process it with heat, pressure, temperature, to where it will crack for gasoline products and that sort of thing, and the residual is coke. So, coke drove us out of Fish Harbor. So, we were able to buy an old defunct restaurant building that's – all right, it's west of where the Navy used to have their storage tanks for products. Of course, the Navy with carriers needed everything from jet fuel to gasoline to bunkers, et cetera. So, the west part of San Pedro Harbor used to be heavily used by the U.S. Navy as a fuel depot. Right now, most of those tanks have been removed. There is a marina there at Cabrillo Beach, and there is another yacht club there. We have right near the – I think it's the Hyatt Hotel, we have, as I say, a defunct restaurant building which is our clubhouse. Over the years, I have enjoyed designing sailboats building. I've had quite a few. I started a little dinghy as a shore boat, dinghy for the larger sailboats, and we built 260, for instance. There used to be a rent boat in Avalon Harbor that was 20 feet long. A young couple, one night, had rented the boat. They were built like a canoe, and the sparking couple drowned. That's not good for tourism in Avalon. So, it had been decreed by the Harbor Council that they couldn't rent canoes in Avalon. But I was able to buy

one of these old boats, and it had canoe ancestry. It's beautifully built, little fingerling frames, and planked and covered with canvas like a classic old town canoe. I modified it a little bit with a transom and a slightly different bow. I was familiar with fiberglass work at the time. My brother and I built, I think, 120. I know it was spliced by several other builders. So, I have no idea how many Catalina wherries were actually built. Then after that was going for a while, a friend of mine talked me into building a 20-foot rowboat. Well, a 20-foot rowboat is a lot of boat. I set it up to where we could pull three pairs of 9-foot oars on sliding competition seats, et cetera. So, one year, two of us took two of these 20-footers and spent three days and rode around Catalina Island. We just packed water and food and sleeping bags. We'd row for a couple hours and go ashore and eat lunch and then roll for a couple hours and go ashore and have dinner and sleep and fend off the pigs [laughter] and the next day, another little stretch. We had a wonderful experience, three days circumnavigating Catalina, started in Howland's cove and ended up in Howland's cove.

MS: What year was that? Roughly, a decade.

GG: Anyway, it was in the [19]40s.

MS: Well, tell me about the difference between the facilities of the Los Angeles Yacht Club today and the facilities back in the Fish Harbor days.

GG: In the Fish Harbor days, it was making use of a piece of harbor that really didn't have heavy economic use for the Harbor Department. This was before the days of containers. There was no real need for it. In fact, they hadn't even extended the breakwater from the original lighthouse. That came later, after the Los Angeles Yacht Club was using this, shall we say, idle piece of harbor next to the canneries. Of course, the canneries no longer exist. It's all part of the container operation.

MS: So, how do the facilities compare today with them?

GG: Of course, today, we don't even have the ability to be on Terminal Island. As I say, we were able to buy a restaurant that had gone through chapter eleven in Cabrillo Beach. So, that's where we are right now. Our problem is that we don't have a facility for small boats. The 1930 Olympics couldn't happen right now in San Pedro Harbor because there are no facilities for Star boats, Solings, 6 meters, 8 meters, et cetera.

MS: Any bathtub gin going on in the new facility? [inaudible]

GG: [laughter] Well, we do have a bar. Yes. So, that when we have a party, yes, you can buy a drink at the bar.

MS: Let me ask you, you go around as you're involved with yachts and yachting and people. I'm sure you hear the Newport Yacht Club, or you hear the yacht club in Boston, the New York Yacht Club.

GG: Yes.

MS: As a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club, what do you say to people who say, "Come on, Los Angeles"? What makes you proud about being a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club compared to yacht clubs around the world?

GG: I'm a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club. I used to be a member of the Balboa Yacht Club. I'm a member of Transpacific Yacht Club. I'm also a member of the Cruising Club of America, which has stations in different harbors around the U.S., Canada, and also Great Britain. The clubs are all very different in character. The character of a yacht club tends to be molded by its facility, its location, and the type of sailing that is being done in that area. Of course, yacht clubs change over the years, in character.

MS: What's special about the Los Angeles Yacht Club that if you got into a meeting with somebody and they said, "Oh, I'm from Newport," you would defend, and you would be a cheerleader for the Los Angeles Yacht Club?

GG: Well, yacht clubs tend not to be competitive. They tend to be cooperative in nature. So, that kind of a question doesn't really come into effect. The San Diego Yacht Club is an excellent yacht club. They are blessed with a facility that's highly supported by the Harbor Department. The Newport was able to buy a piece of real estate many, many, many years ago now.

MS: So, what's special about the Los Angeles Yacht Club?

GG: People. People are what make the different yacht clubs. The people that are members of that yacht club form the yacht club. Of course, some are more fortunate in facilities. Living where I do, there's no reason to belong to San Diego Yacht Club, but it's an excellent club, San Francisco, the same way, St. Francis. So, it's the people that tend to develop the character of the club. When I first joined the Los Angeles Yacht Club, with its facility, it had the ability to run island races from San Pedro around Santa Barbara Island, from San Pedro around San Nicolas Island, from San Pedro around Catalina, San Clemente. That was the kind of racing that appealed to me at my time of life when I joined the yacht club. Does that help you understand it?

MS: Are you proud to be a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club?

GG: Oh, sure.

MS: Tell me why you're proud of it.

GG: What?

MS: Why are you proud being a member of Los Angeles Yacht Club? I am proud of –

GG: I'm proud of being a member of the Los Angeles Yacht Club because over the years, they have done an outstanding job in providing events for sailors. They were heavily involved in the [19]30s Olympics. They were heavily involved in the Transpacific racing, heavily involved in

local island racing. As such, it attracted people that I enjoyed socializing with.

MS: I think also the idea, what is special about San Pedro as a location? Is there anything that, again, makes it stand out from other yacht clubs in your mind?

GG: Well, [laughter] I live in the area. Of course, I live closer to the Los Angeles Yacht Club than I do the California Yacht Club. Now, there are some very close friends that are in the California Yacht Club, and Santa Barbara, the same way, or Ventura. But I live here. This is home.

MS: Great. Any stories you want to tell me that you didn't get a chance to tell me? Any particular adventures in the high seas or particular characters that you remember from your days in yachting?

GG: Well, as I say, there's only one guy in Transpac that's been in the member longer than I have. That means by having a low seniority number, I've lost a lot of friends.

MS: Any particular character that you met over the years that really stands out in your mind?

GG: Bill Stewart of Union Oil was a very interesting character. Come to find out, we were cousins because a cousin of mine married a cousin of his. That makes us cousins.

MS: Over the years, you've owned many, many, many boats. Do you have a favorite that's sort of your darling of the ones?

GG: A close friend of mine who was also in the Navy, got out about the same time I did, Bill Lapworth. I got acquainted with Bill when we were both members of Balboa Yacht Club. He sketched out a boat for me, and I didn't build it. But a very close friendship developed. Later, I commissioned him to design a boat, a 36-foot sloop. I went to a Newport builder at the time, Chapman and (Collagian?) were partners. They used a strip plank system of building which had been used by Dick Stewart and Porter Sinclair for the *Flying Scotchman*, which was a little boat I sailed on from Newport to the island of Bermuda in 1950. We set about to build two boats, flipped a quarter to see who owned which boat. I had number one because I had started it. We built, I think it was eighty-eight boats. Lapworth was upset because he said, "I designed it as a custom boat for you. I didn't design it for a production boat." So, we built eighty-eight boats, and that wasn't a bad production. Then I went to him for a larger boat because I had two kids and a growing family. I wanted a little more space and room. I was fortunate to have a couple of bucks to put together. So, Lapworth designed what turned out to become the Cal 40, and of course, a very, very famous, a very innovative boat in the sailing world at the time. We built, I think, 160. A friend of mine built the plug. Another friend of mine was (Jensen's?) landlord. Then the builder didn't want to build the boat. He said, "My biggest boat right now I'm building is a 30-footer, and I'm losing money on everyone." I said, "You don't know your ass from first base about woodwork. You understand it's a fiberglass boat, but it involves woodwork, the accommodation." So, I worked through with him, how to build that size of fiberglass boat with pieces made from a cabinet shop that would glue in place. By the time we built number three Cal 40, it came out for fewer man-hours than his 30-footer. So, in a way, I was able to put

Jensen up on his feet, Cal yachts. But that was just fun for me. Yes, we did build a lot of Cal 40s. I had the number one. It became a standout, a breakthrough boat in the yachting world, won the Bermuda Race and all kinds of other things.

MS: Your working profession, you're doing this while you're working at Standard Oil?

GG: No, it's just as a hobby.

MS: You're making some money off the hobby, I would expect, buying and selling.

GG: No, not really. It was just a hobby. You do hobby work for hobby funds. [laughter] I had enough hours of work in the refinery. I didn't try to parlay the hobby into income.

MS: What was your longest sailing trip?

GG: The longest sailing trip was across the Atlantic, I guess. No, probably, Hawaii is longer.

MS: Well, we ran out of time.

GG: Okay.

[end of transcript]