

Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project

Juni Mori Oral History

Date of Interview: Unknown

Location: Los Angeles, California

Length of Interview: 01:11:44

Interviewer: MS – Unknown

Transcriber: NCC

Male Speaker: Tell me your name and spell it.

Jun Mori: Okay. My name is Jun Mori; Jun, J-U-N, M-O-R-I.

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

JM: I was born December 13th, 1929, in San Francisco. I'm a native Californian.

MS: When did you come to the Los Angeles area and why?

JM: I came to Los Angeles in 1953 after spending fourteen years in Japan. I actually spent fourteen years in Japan, going to school there. After finishing a course in law there, I came to Los Angeles to study at UCLA and USC.

MS: What were you studying at UCLA?

JM: I studied undergraduate or graduate at UCLA and law at USC.

MS: What did you know, when you came here in the [19]50s, about the Port of Los Angeles? Did you ever go down there? Did you ever see it? Did you know anything about it in the [19]50s and [19]60s when you came?

JM: No, no. I knew nothing about the port or even San Pedro for that matter.

MS: Had you ever come down to visit here at all?

JM: Yes. We used to come out with some friends who – Palos Verdes. They had fresh – I was going to say lobsters, but I'm not talking about –

MS: Abalone.

JM: Abalones, yes.

MS: Tell me that again. We used to come down –

JM: Yes, we used to come down to Palos Verdes to get fresh abalone. I really enjoyed that. I think I was still going to law school then.

MS: Do you have any early impressions of the port? Did you look at and see it, or you just passed by on your way to that good food?

JM: Yes, just passed by. Not much interest. San Francisco had a very nice port, and my father was in the import business. So, I knew about that.

MS: When Mayor Bradley became mayor, had you been a supporter of his? Were you involved in his election?

JM: Not so much. I knew Tom Bradley when he ran for – when he was elected to city council. One of his good friends was Yvonne Watson Brathwaite Burke, who I went to school with at UCLA and USC Law School. She introduced me to him because he wanted to meet somebody in our Asian – Japanese community to be part of his staff as a councilman.

MS: So, what were you doing at the time that you met Bradley? What was your work?

JM: Oh, I had just come out of the estate office and started a small storefront law office.

MS: Then you joined Bradley's staff?

JM: No, no, no. I was practicing law.

MS: So, how did you get involved with the Port Commission? Tell me the story of how you got involved as a port commissioner.

JM: Well, I was just asked to serve the community as a commissioner on the port. Apparently, people from my community were serving on the Port Commission. I knew Commissioner Taul Watanabe, who subsequently went on to become commissioner in Seattle. He was a friend of mine. So, I thought it was, in a way, a good way to serve the community. I really felt that it was a chance to serve the community because – well, I don't know if you are aware, but my grandfather, who was an immigrant from Japan, and my father, in San Francisco, we were not asked to be part of the community or even serve the community. There was segregation, if you will, in the early days. So, it was kind of a changing of times, and I thought was a very good way to serve.

MS: There was, as you know, a big Japanese community here in Terminal Island and White Point area. There had been a long tradition of Japanese Americans in San Pedro. Did you know about that? Did you know any people who lived here before?

JM: I knew there was a fishing community, but I had no friends. I had no interest or any connections with them.

MS: Did you get a phone call? Was there a meeting? How did you get the invitation to join? Describe that as a story to me.

JM: I really don't have any clear [laughter] recollection. I was just asked to serve, and I accepted, came down to the port. The commissioners here were very cordial, asked me to be part of the decision-making process. It was very, very friendly, cordial, I can say that. But I had no preconceived training or orientation or anything. I was at a loss really. But Commissioner – I can't think of his name now – who was on the commission representing the labor union, the longshoreman's union – DiBiase.

MS: Start again.

JM: Yes. There was a commissioner, Nate DiBiase, who was exceptional in his friendliness, I guess. He said, "I want to show you the port." Because he was a longshoreman, he kind of took me around and showed me. But everything was brand new to me.

MS: Tell us about the commission. How many commissioners are there? What is the commission? What does it do?

JM: Well, the commission, there are five citizens. My understanding was that this commission system of government was the commission was between the elected politicians or officials, if you will, and the professional civil service staff, professional staff, representing the people, to make sure that we had some input, although we had no technical or specialized knowledge, to give it the common sense overlook, and the best we can to guide its operation, according to the policy of the mayor.

MS: What were the powers of the Commission? What did you have the power to do?

JM: The Commission was empowered to – well, actually, they were the head of the department, so called, making the decisions on approving contracts, approving the budget, and I believe some of the personnel matters, so selecting the top officers, civil service, if you will.

MS: How often did the Commission meet? Where did they meet until some of the procedural things?

JM: The Commission met once a week at the harbor, in the harbor meeting room, and the staff had prepared very, very detailed, well-prepared orientation and explanation of the issues and decisions that the Commission was asked to make. So, it was – well, I shouldn't say easy, but worth spending some time to understand why and what for and what was in the best interest of all of the city.

MS: Now, when Mayor Bradley came in, there was some controversy about the Harbor Commission, I mean, the previous administration. He came in with some new ideas and new attitudes toward the harbor. I mean, could you talk about the politics of how things were when he came in and the commission that he –

JM: With me, none at all. He just asked me to do what I thought best, and that's what I tried to do.

MS: But in the broader picture, had there been difficulties with the previous commission when you came in?

JM: No, not that I know of.

MS: Right. What were the big issues when your first term came up? What were the big issues the Commission was facing, and the port was facing that you had to talk about and make some decisions about?

JM: Well, big issues, well, the port needed to be expanded. Efficiency had to be upgraded. We had to foresee the expanded need of trade with the countries in the Far East. So, that was a major problem. So, we had to depend on all kinds of experts to tell us what the traffic was going to be like, what the pollution was going to be like, what the cost is going to be like, what we had to do, dealing with the federal government, dredging the channel, what size ships had to be – harbor had to accommodate in order to do meet the challenges of the growing trade in this part of the world. It was shifting from the East Coast to the West Coast. There was a time for expansion and planning.

MS: So, it sounds to me you were jumping into pretty deep waters pretty quick. Did you find yourself having to really become – a quick study on this and really immerse yourself?

JM: Well, yes, in a sense, I think it's like any executive. You rely on the best professionals that you can. We had what I thought were the best experts to tell us what, traffic experts, shipping experts, engineers, and so on.

MS: Now, within the Commission, were there any contentious positions and argued back and forth? Were there any issues that the Commission was in fact divided on, or was it pretty much a uniform Commission as far as what they wanted to do?

JM: Well, I don't remember any issues that were really – if there were, they were minor, maybe localized kind of things. In the broad world trade, we have to meet what's coming – kind of issues. I think we all knew what had to be done. It was like local matters, who should run the slips for pleasure crafts, things like that, got into some detail arguments. But I think in the broad sense, we were all on the same page.

MS: That's something that's sort of unique about the harbor, in some ways. There's a very active community here. So, it's not just the shipping and commerce that's going on. You've got the community of San Pedro. How did the Commission relate to the community? It's been a long, contentious ride over the years.

JM: Right.

MS: Talk about that special relationship between the community and the Commission.

JM: Well, it's one of those growing pains, and I realized that. The people in the community were active. In just about every meeting, they were there, making sure that their community knew what our plans were and gave us input. Our staff, more than the Commission, the staff dealt with those kinds of problems and briefed the commissioners as to what the solutions were and the pros and cons. So, you might say the commissioners were spoon-fed [laughter] or treated with a lot of care. We were, I think, in that sense, if you can call that privileged.

MS: What was the community concerned about? What were things that they wanted to go and have happened here that they were concerned about in your days?

JM: It was growth, traffic.

MS: "San Pedro community," start with that.

JM: Well, San Pedro people didn't like all the increase in the trucking and the noise and, I guess, the dust, the fear of volatile chemicals shipping through, all of those. They're legitimate community concerns, and we had to address them. It's not for the Commission – the commissioners had no, really, knowledge or ability to deal with these things. They're very, very technical and highly regulated areas of concern. So, we had staff and experts, federal as well as local, to help us solve these problems.

MS: Is there one particular issue that was most contentious in your day between the town and the harbor that was fought over the most?

JM: Not that I know of. Everything was rather peaceful. If there was excitement, it was a fellow who wanted to have drag racing privileges and things like that, use our facilities to keep the gangs off the streets and things like that. But the community, I think, was very material about what had to be done and how we were solving it.

MS: You didn't live in San Pedro in those days.

JM: No. I never lived in San Pedro.

MS: Did you feel it was important to be here more than just for the Commission, to maybe get to know the community and have them get to know you?

JM: No. No, I don't think so. I think the mayor was very wise in that he had a community person, generally. One of the commissioners was from the community, and one of the commissioners was from the labor part of our community. So, I think every aspect, in that sense, was represented in the commission. So, I didn't feel that I had to be –

MS: We're going back to the [19]70s for a while.

JM: [19]70s.

MS: Yes, [19]70s and [19]80s.

JM: I don't remember that far back.

MS: Well, I think you can. Just think. Strain. You can do it. So, let's talk about the structure of the Commission again. There were five seats, and those seats were really to represent varied aspects of the community and of issues for the port.

JM: Well, that was my understanding. That's what I thought that there was a seat for an Asian person. My predecessor, as I said – we were an Asian there all the time. I think they called it that. I think there was a seat for a labor person and a seat for a San Pedro local person. I think Father Bartlett was one of those. I forgot the commissioner when I came. He was a lawyer and

became a judge.

MS: So, from your position, as a person who's Asian, on the Commission, what were your assignments and your roles, and what were you contributing? What did the Commission expect from you? What did you want to do for the Commission?

JM: Well, I don't think anybody expected me to be anything other than a commissioner. But because of my background – I had a dual educational background, I went to law school in Japan, I went to law school here, I'm completely bicultural, bilingual, et cetera, et cetera – I think people relied on that when we had to do business. Our big customers were the Japanese shipping lines, the Koreans, and Singapore, et cetera, the Far East. So, in that sense, I think I was a little different from – the so-called difference – the labor union representative on the Commission or the San Pedro person or the woman.

MS: In the early days, how did you get involved, knowing that Asia trade was going to be really important? Can you tell me one of the first and the earliest things you started doing that was helping the port and representing the port with the Asia market?

JM: Well, I think it's basically luck. I mean, I was born and went to school in San Francisco. At an early age, my father was determined to have me educated in Japan, like he was. He never sent me to a language school in the United States, like many of my colleagues were doing. So, I think I was lucky in that I had this dual background. First, I thought it was – what a waste of time because I spent [laughter] all the schooling in Japan. I had to come back to the United States and go through law school again. But after a few years of law practice, the Japanese businesses started to expand. I started representing them. I was telling your wife that I guess it was kind of sexy to have a dual background. I was practicing law in California, in the United States, American law in an English language. So, that's what it should be. But having the background was, I guess, desirable and comforting to clients.

MS: As trained in Japan, you knew Japanese law as well.

JM: Of course, the thinking and – yes. So, that's what I was doing. So, when the mayor asked me to help out at the harbor, because we were dealing with the Japanese companies here, I was more than happy to do what I can and be of service. But on the other hand, one of the things that I used to be attacked all the time – made my wife very uncomfortable, not that I was uncomfortable. Because I didn't care. The mayor used to criticize me that I should care more about appearance, rather than – I was just concerned with substance. I realized that being in the public eye, appearance is more important perhaps than substance many times. But I was immature in that sense.

MS: What were you getting attacked for?

JM: Because I had this dual background, the *LA Times*, a lot of the politicians, councilmen saying, "Hey, you represent Sumitomo so-and-so. Well, Sumitomo is a cartel." I happened to represent the bank. It had nothing to do with the heavy industry and the chemicals and so on and so forth, trading. It had nothing to do with it. But when the port was buying equipment and had

Sumitomo on it, immediately there was this, "Are you okay?" So, the city attorney was investigating. The DEA would investigate. I wouldn't be very cordial. As I said, the mayor was unhappy that I wasn't being cordial about it. But I was warned by some of my minority colleagues, [laughter] "If you cooperate with the press, they have a story in mind. They're just going to take what you say out of context, and their story is going to load it up." I didn't know any better. So, there's two sides to it. But I enjoyed what I was doing, and I welcomed the investigation [laughter].

MS: Let's go back to when you're talking about your father and growing up. You're old enough to remember World War Two.

JM: Sure.

MS: What was the experience of your father and your experience in World War Two?

JM: World War Two, I was in Japan. So, I was not incarcerated like my wife and my other relatives and so on, where they were all put into detention camps and under suspicion of enemy, alien, et cetera, et cetera. My father took me back to Japan and put me in school. So, there I was when the war started. So, I spent the war years in Japan. I was bullied because I was different. Meaning I didn't know the language, I didn't know the customs, I dressed different, et cetera, et cetera.

MS: So, you got it from both directions then, it seems. What was your feeling about it? You were very young, obviously.

JM: Yes.

MS: But did you feel an ambiguity about –

JM: Oh, yes, very much so.

MS: Tell me about that.

JM: Yes. Where am I, and what am I? You have those doubts. But my father was scary. Because in Japan, during the war, they had these, what they call the higher police. They control the mind and all of that. They were very powerful. But he would tell his friends who would listen that Japan had no business fighting the United States. There's no way that Japan could come out of the war [laughter] winning. The countries are too different. I recall when I went to Japan, there are hardly any sewers. There are no telephones [laughter]. There were telephones, but one telephone in between ten houses. The sewers were not installed.

MS: Where were you living in Japan?

JM: In Tokyo, Yokohama. But anyhow, after four years in Japan – I remember this vividly – I was able to speak the language, dress like the rest of the kids in school. I was a student. War ended, I was 15. So, my preteen and teenage years were horrible years. No food. Schools were



shut down. Students were asked to work on farms and factories. It was rough but not as rough as you think. Because everybody was in the same boat.

MS: Were you there for the saturation bombing in Tokyo?

JM: Yes. Oh, yes. I was there. I watched 250 B-29s come over and drop bombs all afternoon in Yokohama and wiped out the city in one afternoon, incendiary bombing. But one thing, my colleagues here, my relatives or wife's family and so on, some of them were incarcerated in camps and had racial (prison?). I didn't have that because I'm the same race [laughter]. You got the same haircut, same school uniform, speaking the same language. There was no racial discrimination.

MS: But that must have made you tough. Because clearly you have memories of living in America and being raised and being in America and then watching these same Americans level your environment. You couldn't have been cheering them on.

JM: Oh, no, no, no.

MS: You must have been pretty divided in your feelings.

JM: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I sympathize and kind of understand the war that's going on in the Middle East today because of that. It's your home. It's where you're living. People are attacking.

MS: But in a way, you were attacking yourself. I mean, you were part American.

JM: Yes. But at that time, that was my home. I was living there. I was going to school there. The enemy was coming to attack you. So, what are you going to do? When the war ended, I thought to myself, "What is all this about? Who are you? What are you going to do?"

MS: Then you went back to the United States.

JM: Right. Well, I came back.

MS: How old were you when you came back?

JM: Well, the war ended in 1945, as you know. I started college in [19]46, right after the end of the war. In [19]46, I started to work. I was an American by birth. So, I was working for the Occupation. The Japanese were starving. We were all starving. So, that was a tremendous change of situation there. So, I was living in two worlds, the American world, because my country of nationality – the Americans were there as occupiers now. The Occupation ended in [19]52. So, [19]42 to [19]52, Japan was occupied. So, everybody, including professors and teachers and students, all had to go out and work and somehow get food to survive. So, we were doing that. I was fortunate to be able to do work with the American Occupation as an American.

MS: But there must have been at least some of the occupying force who knew you had been in

Japan during the war –

JM: Oh, yes.

MS: – saw you as Japanese, and even though you're born in America – I mean, they were saying, even people who are citizens are getting problems during the war in the United States – saw you as Japanese.

JM: Oh, sure.

MS: There are Japanese who saw you going to the Occupation forces. I mean, was that ever –

JM: No. The first part you bring up, even if you're in the United States, as an American, you were looked upon as a Japanese. You were treated as an enemy alien in many respects, incarcerated in these camps.

MS: But I hear the Japanese are also very concerned about who was Japanese and who was not Japanese. They have their own high standards for this kind of stuff. I wonder whether you ever felt or were treated fully Japanese having been born and raised initially –

JM: No. I was treated a little different. I was always treated a little different. But the (process?) was not racial, is the point that I was making.

MS: It's cultural.

JM: Yes.

MS: Well, we've strayed far from the harbor [laughter].

JM: Yes.

MS: Let's get back to the harbor.

JM: Yes.

[laughter]

MS: This is all very interesting and a very unique story, obviously. So, what were some of the early missions that you undertook on behalf of the port in Asia, in Japan? What were you trying to accomplish for the harbor in some of your early activities in Asia?

JM: Well, for the harbor?

MS: [affirmative]

JM: Yes. We were going to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, to try to get them to use LA

Harbor in bringing their goods and using our harbor to export.

MS: So, what's your sales pitch? What did you tell them?

JM: Well, we'll do the best we can. We'll give them the best we know how. [laughter] Because I said that, one of the guys, well, one of the harbor general managers here – I told the Nissan importing company president, "We'll give you the best deal." Of course, I said that. He thought I was putting pressure on him [laughter]. But I said that to everybody. Long Beach was saying the same thing. Oakland was saying the same thing. We're just trying to accommodate people who use our facilities and trying to give them a better incentive, so we would have more jobs, more – what is it – prosperity for Los Angeles. I mean, you know, you get into that competition. See, Southern California, we're all Southern California, but we're very competitive. This, I guess, made it attractive to the customers too. They would come here. The shipping companies, the major shipping companies, would play LA Harbor against Long Beach Harbor. Our staff and their staff would be telling them, "We'll give you a better deal." So, it was very competitive in that sense. So, what was I trying to do? Trying to facilitate that and let them know that Los Angeles would try to meet their needs the best we knew how.

MS: Again, I think because of your experience in Japan – I mean, early on, many American business, tremendous – how difficult it was to understand, now with China, but certainly with Japan, is the cultural differences of doing business in these countries. Did you have an advantage in knowing the custom, knowing the style?

JM: I think I did.

MS: Do you know a story where you think your experience made a difference in a deal that maybe would have gone another way if it had been a non-Japanese heritage person working on the project?

JM: I don't know any very specific. But I think there was a big, big difference if – a person who didn't know what they were doing. I think I had a tremendous advantage over somebody who was not familiar with dealing with the Japanese, cultural-wise, language-wise. I think everybody understood that. As I said, maybe substantively, we're all dealing with the same commodity, the same regulations. As I said, I'm practicing American law in California in the English language. But because of the other aspects of being able to – the comfort zone was much greater.

MS: Well, give me an example. I mean, it's been studied before. Let's say you would deal with a Japanese potential customer than you would with someone from Holland or something like that. What are the things that you had to know about the Japanese way of doing business that helped you in making deals?

JM: Well, I don't think it's any different than any other business relationship. My colleagues, my friends, connections, if you will, friends were high in institutions, in government, elected office. My classmates were high government officials. So, people who dealt with me knew that I was reliable in that sense. I wasn't somebody who they didn't know, background-wise, or anything like that. So, there's a great deal of comfort, I believe. I brought that to the table. I

know that. I say that, is that going to the substance? No. You understand what I'm saying? But both sides are very comfortable if they think they understand each other. That's where I was able to – and I broke some very, very strong feelings. Like long-term contract, the shipping companies would not go more than – well, I forgot how many years it was – more than ten years. The industry changes, rates change, things change. So, they won't go out and – here, we're spending a lot of money in our facilities. We're going to spend money to build it for them. Do the best we can. I'm saying, "No, they want to go fifteen years." I'm saying, "No, thirty." They're saying, "No, absolutely not. We've never done it before," et cetera, et cetera. With the Japanese now, it was sticking point, sticking point, sticking point almost to a breaking point. But we got them to go twenty-five. Not exactly what we wanted, but a hell of a lot more than they were willing to give. I felt if I wasn't there and you gave them the comfort, knew what I was talking about, and that they trusted in my good faith and people that I brought in, made it feasible. We did that. I mean I did that for this port.

MS: Now, what about business style, is what I'm getting at?

JM: Style?

MS: I mean, American style is brusque and fast and make the deal. That doesn't work with every culture. Your knowledge of the culture made it a little bit lubricated, the exchange.

JM: Of course.

MS: Talk about that.

JM: Yes. Well, I don't know if you call it lubrication, but as I said, it's comfort. There's no nonsense is fine, but it's a big difference in cultural relationships, relationships and long term. I guess, things are changing in Japan now too, but I was able to fill that gap that weren't like – what is it? Well, one-time shopper, come in and – yes.

MS: Is there a particular deal or particular negotiations that was successful that you remember most fondly or remember in particular during your term that was particularly significant for you?

JM: [affirmative]

MS: Tell me about that.

JM: Well, let's see, what shipping company was that now? It was a Japanese shipping company. There are two major ones. I don't know which one it was now. I just mentioned that the big sticking point was they're willing to pay more if the term was less.

MS: Why don't you tell me the story from the beginning? What was one particular negotiation that was most significant? Even if you repeat yourself, tell me the story of that negotiation and that deal and why you remember that the most.

JM: I think it was the Mitsui Line.

MS: Okay. Start from the beginning.

JM: Yes. The Mitsui Line, we wanted to give them the most modern, the most efficient facilities here, so did Long Beach. I mean, they would shop around. But they had a standing custom that they wouldn't go over ten years, I believe, in leasing. Because circumstances change and, historically, that's the way it was done. We wanted them to be a permanent part of our operation. If the deal was satisfactory, there's no reason why we shouldn't. I didn't know any better. I'm not part of that industry. So, I think that that helped. I was insisting on thirty years. We'd like to not have to renegotiate. They wanted fifteen at the most. It was really brinksmanship really. The guy called me from Japan. He was taking a bath or something [laughter]. Because we were ready to break it off and finally made the deal. But I think that was, as far as I'm concerned, a big breakthrough and accomplishment for the Port of Los Angeles. I don't know if other ports were able to get long-term deals like that after that or not. But we did breakthrough there.

MS: In a competitive environment -- which is not just Long Beach, you've got San Francisco, and you've got Tacoma and San Diego and East Coast -- aside from saying to a potential client, "We're going to give you a good deal," what are the concrete things that make a successful deal with Los Angeles rather than with Long Beach or whatever? What are the selling points beyond, "Here's your good deal"? What do we have to offer in specifics than another port can?

JM: I don't know. I really don't know. I mean, what can the difference be between Long Beach and Los Angeles? That's our biggest competitor. We're wanting to all the time, competing, to take away from each other, [laughter] the biggest and the best shipping lines. What can we offer?

MS: Well, this is after your time, but I know -- because I did a documentary for the board about it -- Maersk was in Long Beach for a long, long time. They came to Los Angeles. They came to Los Angeles because Los Angeles built them, out of nothing, a terminal.

JM: Right. 400?

MS: Pier 400.

JM: Right.

MS: So, the willingness to do that certainly was pretty convincing.

JM: Oh, yes. But you're talking, what they don't have, you've got.

MS: Right.

JM: But I thought your question was, if they're equal, what have you got? Sure, if you've got something they don't got, that's easy to sell. But other than that, it's trust, I guess. Long-term businesses like that, especially in the old country, they like long-term relationships. But they

also like to make money. The shipping industry at the time – and maybe still is, I don't know – they're very, very competitive. A lot of them are going bankrupt. So, it's every day, you have to [laughter] – you have to be on your toes and be able to have them feel comfortable. I think we did that.

MS: Was there a big fish that got away? Was there a deal that you wanted that, for some reason, didn't happen? Why didn't it happen?

JM: No. The biggest regret I have is that LAXT, I think I told you.

MS: Tell me about that.

JM: Well, I was on President Carter's Export Council. I don't know if you know what that is. It's a very, very high-level advisory council to the President. We used to meet beginning, I think, twice a month or – in the White House, made up of some governors, congressmen, senators, and high-level corporate executives and a few citizens. To this day, I don't know why I got picked to serve on that council. The chairman was Reg Jones, who was chairman of General Electric. He's the man that picked the chairman of General Electric who wrote a book.

MS: Jack Welch.

JM: Yes. He picked Jack Welch. He was our chairman. He was one of us. We met from time to time and discussed – my input there was to try to give them, from my perspective – I think I was already on the Commission here – to try to help the trade imbalance. We were importing more than exporting. Our industry was not exporting except for mega deals like Boeing 747s and GE – what is it – atomic reactors. But consumer goods were all coming the other way. All we were exporting is raw material, lumber, grain, and stuff like that. So, how do we get added value exports, manufactured goods to be exported, rather than having to import all the electronics and things like that?

MS: I'm going to link this back to the board. You said that was –

JM: – basically citizens, you know that.

MS: That's interesting.

JM: I was overqualified.

MS: [laughter] Well, because you stepped up to the plate or down to the plate to do –

JM: Well, whatever. I mean, you did a job. That's all. But I was overqualified. Meaning, I had a profession. Well, so does, I guess, a baker.

MS: Sure, the (staff?) of life and everything. Okay. Let's go back to, you're talking about you're on the Carter –

JM: Yes.

MS: How did that link to the port, and why were you disappointed with that?

JM: Okay. So, while I was there, I guess I was serving on the federal level and the state level and city level [laughter]. Because Jerry Brown has asked me to do [inaudible]. But anyhow, as a member of President Carter's Export Council, I had written some articles for the journal to try to expedite the export industry in the United States and made some suggestions on how local industries and agencies and government should help out. I wrote an article about that. Are you interested in that?

MS: Sure. I mean, I'm going to stick to the port.

JM: Okay. All right. So, in the port, we established an export expert hotline. We had billboards out there hoping to call attention to the need for the United States' small manufacturers and industries to be export minded. The Port of Los Angeles participated in that. We had a hotline here, Port of Los Angeles. I think it was an 800 number, one of those numbers, to show that we could be helpful in assisting them and preparing export documents and showing them what a letter of credit was, et cetera, et cetera. It's not that hard. We should get export minded. That was one of the things. Along with that, the port being what it is and having heard that we had what they called an unlimited amount of coal – I forgot the name of it. It's not the kind of coal that you use to make steel. It's coal that you use to generate power. It's not that fine carbon coal that they used to make steel. I forgot what they called it now. But over here in Wyoming, et cetera.

MS: That's the good stuff. Anthracite coal.

MS: Anthracite is the East Coast. Bituminous is the –

JM: Bituminous? Whatever it is, it's to generate power.

MS: Let's just start again. "We had an endless amount of coal that could be used for generating power –"

JM: We have unlimited, so-called, amount of – I can't remember the name of the coal [laughter].

MS: Just say, "Coal for generating."

JM: Coal for generating.

MS: So, start again.

JM: In the United States, in Wyoming and that part of – in this part of the western part of the United States, we have a coal that's unlimited amount to be used – can be used to generate electric power. We should export that to help out in the balance of – import-export balance. So many million tons, I think, if we did a good job, would have taken care of 20 percent of the

difference. It was in those rough numbers, as I recall. I don't have the exact tonnage or anything like that. But what we had to do was to ship it to the Far East. Japan was a major market. The Japanese government, at the same time, was looking for a stable supply of energy. So, I understood from their officials that they wanted supply from China, Australia, United States, Canada, four – anyhow. So, it wasn't in one location. They were buying heavily, I believe, at the time, from Canada and Australia. The United States coal could be competitive if we could bring it out, without too much expense, to the West Coast and ship it. So, we came up with this idea of a coal chain. Later on, it became known as the Mori project [laughter]. Because I was heavily enthused about it, having been in Washington and knowing all of that, I mean, Japan. The port was interested too. All the ports up and down the coast here wanted to be able to ship coal out. Well, finally, everybody dropped out, I think. Bottom fell out. Then it came back. They were interested again. So, we got going. Port of Los Angeles then was most active and successful in putting together what I call a coal chain in order to be competitive with Australia. The Australian coal is mined right at the waterfront. Ours had to come through rail, a long, long journey to the port. We were able to solve all those problems by grade – what was it? The train – I forgot what they called them, but twenty-three carloads of train [laughter], bring it over here to the port, and dump it and put it on the ship. We ended up with the facility here, LAXT, the latest equipment, technology, no pollution, no dust. I was very enthused about it. So, it got done after I left. It wasn't done when I was here. But it was started. I laid the groundwork and made sure that there were no middlemen involved. One of the things that I started here was no middleman [laughter]. Middleman profit was something that would hurt us, cost-wise. The Japanese business was traditionally done through middlemen. The Japanese success in export, you know how the industry – world trade recovered was all through middlemen. It wasn't the industry. It was the middlemen, the trading companies that went all over the world to buy raw material, sell it to the manufacturers, pick up the manufactured goods, and sell it. They were all middlemen. They didn't manufacture anything. They financed it, and they got commissions for buying and selling. So, my idea was no middlemen. It's the only way we can compete with the low-cost Australian goal. So, the ownership of this entire thing, coal chain, the coal mine in Wyoming and so on, were investors. The rail lines were investors. The Port of Los Angeles invested. The shipping lines invested. The consumers, the power companies invested. In order to keep politics out of it, the Port of Los Angeles then was a municipal organization by our government. The Japanese exempt bank invested. So, there were no so-called commercial middlemen involved. I was out of it by then. When the first shipment went out, the new mayor was Riordan. They invited me to say this was the first shipment. The mayor came and broke the champagne bottle or whatever it was and big start. But soon thereafter, the Japanese government deregulated, I guess, buying part of the coal. So, they all bought wherever they can buy cheapest. We didn't get much business here. So, they closed it down. There's a big lawsuit. They called me up and wanted to know what the facts were and who promised whom what, [laughter] when they set up the LAXT. I think they finally settled it last year or something like that. But that was something that I if they still had it, I think, it would be a good business today. But I think it's closed down now.

MS: I needed all this information. But you took about five or six minutes to tell me. Can you give it to me in a minute, this whole story? What was the idea? How did it work? Why did it not end up being used? Give me a capsulized version of it.



JM: Meaning?

MS: From Japan needed coal, coal call was in the United States for energy, how you set the system up.

JM: The Port of Los Angeles, part of trying to alleviate the – what is it – the trade imbalance between Japan and the United States, we, the Port of Los Angeles, then invested a substantial amount, I think \$30 million or something like that, to set up this LAXT, with the mines, the shipping companies, the railroads, and the Japanese power companies. It started, but when the industry was deregulated, the supply was not needed from the United States. Because they could buy cheaper elsewhere. A stabilized source idea wasn't that important. So, it closed down. There was some conflict here. I'm sure it was a big conflict. Attorney called me up and wanted to know if I could help clarify [laughter] who promised whom what.

MS: So, the end result was the loss of that 30 million? I mean, what happened? What was the end result?

JM: I don't know. I don't know. I was out of it. It's a shame though. Because it was state of the art. I think if we had it today, it'd be really a desirable facility.

MS: You talked about the ports or the port, as far as the trade imbalance. I guess if you could sum up, what's the role of the Port of Los Angeles in America? What's its economic international significance for America and American economy? Give me that in another capsule.

JM: [laughter] What's the capsule? The port in every country is so important today because, whether you agree with it or not, the trade traffic is open. It's globalized, if you will, and we play a very, very important role for the world, not just LA, not just California, for the whole United States. It's very, very important. We're fortunate we have Los Angeles, Long Beach, Seattle, New York. We must keep these facilities as efficient and as safe as we can. That's a big problem. I know that.

MS: Specifically, about the Port of Los Angeles, what is its value in this whole big loop? Is it one of the many, or is it –

JM: Oh, no, no. To me, it's a special place.

MS: You have to say, "The Port of Los Angeles."

JM: The Port of Los Angeles is a very, very special place, to me, very, very special. As I say, our biggest and closest competitor is Long Beach. God bless us both. We both must do well for the welfare of the United States.

MS: What's the biggest problem looming over the port for the future? What could trip us all up or cause problems or what you would be beware of as this world economy continues to expand and deepen?

JM: Security. Today, the biggest problem is security, as I understand it. I'm sure the port administrators, our leaders, our government are very, very concerned. It's a serious, serious problem. Because I don't know that there's an answer.

MS: What's the impact of that security? I mean, it seems like an obvious question. But for some people, why is port security so important here in the Port of Los Angeles, specifically?

JM: Because we play such an important part.

MS: You have to say, "Port security is important."

JM: Port security is very, very important because – as important as the need for the Port of Los Angeles, for any port. The security is like shutting down LAX. It's very, very important. So, we must do our best. Well, that's all I can say.

MS: One last question, how long were you on the Port Commission? As you look back at those years, what really stands out in your mind of really representing that experience to you? What did it mean to you?

JM: Well, I was on the Port Commission – I know I hold the record, almost 15 years, 14-plus years. 15 years, I would say, generally. What did I get out of it? It was a pleasure for me to serve especially. I've been asked this time and again, why did I do this? Because my family was uncomfortable. Because I was taking, [laughter] [inaudible] many times, so much negative risk. But I thought it was a tremendous opportunity because my father and grandfather were shut out. It was time to step up to the plate. That's why I did it. Mr. Bradley was a very good friend of mine, just a fine friend. We had no other interest than friendship.

MS: When you say step up to the plate, what do you mean by that? Tell me again. Your father and his family were shut out. You stepped up to the plate. What do you mean step up to the plate?

JM: Well, to be visible, that you are a part of the community, and you can contribute and do as much as anybody else and should not be treated anything less or anything more. The reason I enjoyed working with Mr. Bradley, I understood from him that we at the port were to make it, just as I said, a place for everybody to step up and be recognized and do the best they can. We broke the color line here. I can tell you, they still talk about me. Because when we went out to get a port director and the headhunter came back and said, "Here are three candidates. They're all White male." I said, "No. Go back and get me some more." He said, "Well, there's nobody with experience." I said, "I've heard that. We're not asking for experience. We're asking for executives who can run the place. Go back and do it all over." They still talk about that, that Mr. Mori did that. We had women become – what is it – section heads or whatever it is. When the next port director – I'm not saying he was the best, but he was a minority. The number two guy was another minority. So, we opened it up. I think, when I look back, it wasn't exactly a port deal. But in serving and doing something that my father and grandfather were not able to do [laughter] was a pleasure. I treasure that.

MS: Anything else you want to add?

JM: No. My alma mater appreciated that, awarded me [laughter] Alumni of the Year or something for public service. I told them exactly the same thing.

MS: Good. I think we've done it unless you want to tell me anything else. Any more stories?

JM: No, no, no [laughter]. I talk too much.

[end of transcript]