Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project
John Olguin Oral History
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Male Speaker: First question, please say your name and spell it.

John Olguin: Okay. My name is John Olguin. It's spelled O-L-G-U-I-N. That's for the average person. But for old timers, I was born and raised as John Olguin. My father came from Mexico. When he came here, well, he anglicized the name. It was spelled with an H. He dropped the H because everyone would call him Holguin. He says, "It's not Holguin. It's Olguin." So, as far as I know, I was John Olguin all my life until my brother got a doctorate degree and became an educator at Cal State Long Beach at the university. He had to go back to the original pronunciation. So, he went back to Olguin. I changed it too, eventually.

MS: John, what year were you born, and where were you born on?

JO: I was born on 24th in Cabrillo in San Pedro in 1921, February the 18th.

MS: You've been here, obviously, at your age, a long, long, long, long time. What are your earliest memories of San Pedro and the harbor?

JO: Well, my earliest memory was building Cabrillo Beach. It's not [inaudible] in 1925. I was just 5 years old at the time. I remember Juan Sepulveda, John Sepulveda, was a border at our home. His job was to hitch up the mules that were in a corral on the corner of 36th and Pacific. Then he'd take the mules down the dirt road to Cabrillo Beach. There they pumped the water in, and the foals stayed. His job was to go back and forth with the mules and flatten out the sand. As a 5-year-old, he would allow me to sit on the back of the frame and go back and forth. To me, that was a big thrill. As a 5-year-old, I remember that quite well.

MS: Explain that. Basically, people don't know what Cabrillo Beach is, the fact that it was built. Gives us some background about that, how that beach was developed and built and when.

JO: Okay. They built the breakwater in 1898. It did not come all the way to the cliff. Consequently, all the garbage in Los Angeles harbor gathered in the middle of the breakwater. So, as an afterthought, they put in rocks from the breakwater to the cliff. When they did that, this was an area where all the squatters, where all the little shacks, were. I have photographs of these. So, they moved them all out. They began to drag the harbor to put the bottom of the side of the harbor right on the cliff, and it made Cabrillo Beach, 1925. Soon after that, they built the bathhouse and the boathouse, Cabrillo Beach began to develop the recreational area by Recreation and Parks.

MS: It's unusual in a working harbor to actually have a bathing beach, isn't it? What's unusual about Cabrillo Beach?

JO: Cabrillo Beach, well, first of all, it's very unique in the fact that we have all these different areas. We have mudflats and all the animals that are found in the mudflats, clams and worms and et cetera. Then we have a place where you can walk out into the ocean for a mile and three-quarters. You can't do that anywhere else. Okay? So, then you have an outside beach which is like a desert compared to the inside beach. Here is where the waves come in. Then you have a rocky shoreline from there around the lighthouse, which gives us the tidepool areas. So, you

have all these different environments. So, we're lucky. It's like an outdoor park.

MS: So, 1925, you were riding around as that was being built. First of all, the name Sepulveda is well known to people as a street. But tell us, who were the Sepulvedas? What's the story of that man you worked with?

JO: Well, actually, he was a border in our house, Juan Sepulveda. John Sepulveda belonged to the Sepulveda family. In fact, my uncle married one of the Sepulveda sisters. The right to San Pedro was divided up, with Sepulvedas were relatives of the Dominguez family. They were given an area where they could raise cattle in San Pedro hills. Eventually, they were allowed to keep some of the acreage. But the Sepulvedas were the earliest families in San Pedro. Go ahead.

MS: So, that's good. Let's go back and talk a little bit about your family, your father, and your mother. Tell us about them. When did they come to San Pedro? Why did they come to San Pedro? Who were they?

JO: Okay. First of all, my mother was born right here in Long Beach. She spent her whole life in Wilmington and San Pedro and coming from Long Beach. My father was born in Mexico. He came here in 1910, didn't have a burro. He had to walk through the highways, from Mazatlan to San Pedro. So, he came here. He was quite bright because when he got here, he started studying and learning English. He got the American citizenship papers. Of course, my mother wanted to have a family. She had five boys in a row. She didn't want a boy. She wanted a girl to begin with. But she kept having boys. So, she evidently had six boys in a row, but she had one girl in between. At that time, my grandmother had a stroke. So, we moved to Wilmington to take care of my grandmother. She lived across the tracks. This was [inaudible] near Pacific Coast Highway. The only daughter that we had was named Lucille. At that time, she was only 2 years old. What she did is she walked out the gate, walked across the track to Grandma's house, and the Pacific Electric hit her and killed her. This was a bad experience for us because – as soon as that happened, then we moved to Terminal Island. We lived over on Terminal Island. In fact, I started kindergarten at Terminal Island and went to grammar school there. So, that's the story on my mother's side of the family. My father's side of the family, my father was a cook, a (fry cook?). He wanted to be a chef, and he kept working in restaurants in San Pedro. But he never could stay in one job. He kept jumping from job to job. He tried everything. He tried being a butcher with a truck. Evidently, Pacific Electric gave us the money after my little sister was killed. With that money, he tried the produce business. That didn't work out. All these kids ate all the food. [laughter] So, he tried the meat business, but we ate all the meat. He tried a variety of jobs. But he never could stay in one job. He always kept jumping from job to job. I remember that as a child.

MS: So, you moved to Terminal Island. You're about 5 or 6 years old?

JO: No. I was 4 years old. Because I remember I started kindergarten there.

MS: For people who don't know Terminal Island, what is Terminal Island? Who are the people who lived there? What was it like there?

JO: Okay. Terminal Island had a Japanese colony on one side. Then on the other side were all Hispanic people. It was a very elite area for people from Bel Air and Beverly Hills had summer homes there. Because Brighton Beach was right across the street. But when they enlarged the harbor, they took all the sand from the channel and put it on the beach. The next thing you know, the beach was a quarter of a mile away. Consequently, all the people left their homes and went to Corona down in San Diego. The poor people moved in, with large families, and that's us. So, we moved in, had a two-story home with a fireplace on the first floor; and second floor, many bedrooms. Our elementary school was just across the alley. There was a sandy alley. There's only one street, one main street, Seaside Avenue. The interesting thing is that my principal was Mrs. (Mar?), and my children had the same principle that I had. She was young and beautiful when she was my principal. She was old and beautiful when she retired at the White Point School Elementary in San Pedro. But we all had the same principal.

MS: I'm going to ask you to repeat some things to clarify things.

JO: Sure.

MS: Tell me again about how Terminal Island developed. Describe how it changed and how you got to the house you're in.

JO: Okay. First of all, Terminal Island was known as Rattlesnake Island. Because when the river flows out into the harbor, rattlesnakes ended up on the sandbar. When they began to develop the port, they took the stand from the bottom of the bay, and they put it out on Brighton Beach, which was a very popular beach. What happened was all the people that were wealthy, had beautiful homes along Brighton Beach, but when they put the sand in front of their homes and the beach was now a quarter of a mile away and had to go over sand dunes to get to it, they moved out. They were no longer attractive. Consequently, people that could not afford large homes moved in there at a really reasonable price. Our family was one of the families that were homed right across from the school. It was called Seaside Elementary School. On one end of the (colony?) were the Japanese people, and right next door to us were Japanese people. Consequently, we were familiar with the Japanese language. We began to learn, first of all, all the swear words. Then we began to learn to say, "Hello, how are you," and things like that. So, today, I'm not fluent in Japanese, but I can do enough to carry my own in casual.

MS: You loved to swear, right?

JO: No, just, "How are you? What do you know? How have you been," things like that.

MS: Do you still do it today?

JO: Oh, yes.

MS: If you met a Japanese person, from your experience, what would you be saying?

JO: [foreign language] I just said, "May I speak to you? I speak just a little bit of Japanese."

[foreign language] "Do you speak English?" So, I can carry a conversation along, just for the fun of it.

MS: Tell me a bit as you were growing up, did all the kids play together? What was it like growing up on Terminal Island?

JO: Well, in Terminal Island, well, first of all, we didn't wear shoes. There was only one paved street, and that was Seaside. Our alley was sandy. The school was sandy. So, we went to school barefooted. We went through our gate and then through a hole that's a path to school. So, kindergarten to me was like going to another country. My father came from Mexico. He would not allow us to speak English in the home. He said, "I will not hear one word of English because you learn it when you go to school." Well, when I went to school, it was like a foreign country. I didn't know what the teacher was talking about. I didn't understand one word. So, they thought I was retarded. My problem is that I lisp. My mother used to say, "Wipe your mouth. You're lisping. You're slobbering." So, I would wipe my mouth. I think I was 5 years old that I realized my name was Johnny and not *baboso*. *Baboso* in Spanish means slobber. Because I would have had to wipe my mouth. So, when I did try to speak in kindergarten, all the kids laughed at me, not only did I slobber, but I was speaking Spanish. They were speaking English. So, they thought I was retarded. Consequently, I said, "I will never say one word as long as I live. People laugh at me." Consequently, I didn't say anything. I flunked the first grade. I think I flunked the second grade. Because about that time, my father had a bright idea that he would get a better job in San Francisco. So, he took the whole family. We went on the *Yale*. There were two ships, the *Yale* and the *Harvard*. They went between here and San Francisco. One left at 6:00, San Pedro. One left at 6:00, San Francisco. They met at Halfmoon Bay. What an exciting thing that was to go down the main channel and out to the breakwater, past the lighthouse, and onto San Francisco, at the age of 6 years old, between five and six. Anyway –

MS: Well, let's go back again and talk about the kids that you were playing with. Describe what the Japanese community looked like. The Latino community, Mexican community, what did it look like? Imagine it for us.

JO: Okay. Our neighbor was the (Carreon?) family. The Carreon family, there were two boys and three girls. To this day, we're still friends, the Carreon family. In fact, my wife went to Banning High School. (Hortencia Carreon?) went to Banning High School. They were good friends. I didn't know that they knew each other until after we were married. She said, "Oh, yes, Hortencia and I used to play soccer together." So, we're still friends to this very same day. It was a close community. We used to visit the families, and they visit our family. My mother would call them our *comadre*. So, they were real close friends. The families were close. It was that way through our whole life to this very day. So, the interesting thing is that we had to take the ferry to go get a haircut. We had to take the ferry to get to San Pedro to do our big shopping. There were two ferries, one that went across that we had to walk all the way down to where we live near the playground. The other ferry went from First Street. That was run by Captain Duffy. Captain Duffy was a brother of (LT?) Duffy who taught high school at the Imperial High School, taught Spanish, and later became my Spanish teacher. I met her. But we used to ride that little ferry, which was our favorite one. It let off at (Hammond?) Lumber Company. There was simply one or two blocks to our home. So, it was a nice community.

MS: The activities in the community, there was a fishing community, right? There were canneries there. Describe what went on there.

JO: Okay. My mother worked in the cannery. My father, at one time, worked in the cannery also. Well, we would hear in the middle of the night the whistle. Each one had a different whistle French Sardine had a specific whistle, Star-Kist Tuna, and so on. They'd get up at 3:00 a.m. and say, "They're calling us to work." So, they'd get up and get dressed. My mother and father would be gone. So, we'd have to get us out to school. We were only in kindergarten and first grade. So, most of the people that lived there worked in the canneries. In fact, right now at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, they have a display of the cannery workers. My mother is right there. She was the forelady. So, her picture was right in the front there. I took my wife down. I said, "There's your mother-in-law. There's my mother right there in the foreground in this display of the cannery workers." Yes.

MS: So, it must have had a distinctive smell, Terminal Island.

JO: Yes. It smelled like fish. When the wind blew in this direction, San Pedro smelled like fish also. But you get used to it. That's all part of San Pedro.

MS: You were young, but did you explore the Japanese community and see what was that like?

JO: Yes. As an 8-, 9-year-old, I was a shoeshine boy. So, I would go into the Japanese community, and I would shine their shoes. I remember the Hashimoto family. The Hashimoto family ran a hardware store. Right among the fish cannery, they had a hardware store. On Saturdays, I would shine the shoes of Mr. Hashimoto and Mrs. Hashimoto also. So, I knew that the kids, Haruko and (Taizo?). We were about the same age. So, we got to be friends as we went through junior high in high school.

MS: What did it look like? Did it look like a section of Japan? Or what was it like?

JO: Oh, well, the community where the Japanese lived, yes, they had a temple. They had all these houses. Later on, when I was in Japan, I realized that the community looked like a lot of little communities in Japan also and that it was very Japanese all the way through. We used to enjoy going out and watching them with a bamboo practicing their tradition of fighting with bamboo sticks, that sort of thing.

MS: What about the fishing community? What was going on there? What did you see? Well, the fishing community was – it was a great place. I used to go down and watch them take the tuna. I couldn't believe how big they were. They'd take these big tunas out of the fishing boat. Then they'd go up the conveyor belt into the factory. So, that was interesting. It was a lot of activity, a lot of things happening. Of course, at the end of the Depression, we'd go down there and stand around. When a fishing boat would come in, "Can we have a fish for our family?" Many times, they'd always give us fish. We'd take a fish net with enough for my mother to make albondigas. Albondigas, you take the tuna and tear it apart and mix it with rice and then make meatballs out of it and then make meatball soup. That was my favorite.

MS: This is great. This is really good. You tell good stories. You want to tell me about your family?

JO: I do. Okay. There are six boys in our family. There were six boys in our family and two girls. To begin with, my mother wanted a girl. She didn't even want a boy. But she had the [inaudible], three were boys. I'm the youngest of the three oldest ones. Well, what happened is after she lost Lucille, why the next one was born was my brother Alfonso. He doesn't like that name Alfonso. We call him Pancho. If you want to get ahead, just call him Pancho. Okay? He will go by Al. But my mother wanted a girl. So, she let his hair grow long. She dressed him in petticoats and dresses and had little slippers on just like a girl. In fact, he looked like a girl. He said, "When do I get to put on my work clothes, Mom?" "Not until you go to kindergarten. So, when he got to be 5 years old, we had a party. My mother cried. They cut off his beautiful long hair. He put on a pair of overalls and took off those slippers and put on shoes and took off his panties and put underwear on. He became a boy. Well, and we have pictures of him. He looked beautiful. When my brother Leonard was born, the same thing happened to him. He had long beautiful hair and curled. She'd dress him up with petticoats just like a little girl, until he was 5 years old. Then we had a party. We cut his hair off. My mother cried. He became a boy at 5 years old. When my brother Albert was born. He was the most beautiful girl of us all. Well, he had long curly hair. He was a gorgeous little girl with all these clothes leftover. I remember taking him swimming at the Anderson Memorial swimming pool. I had him by the hand because he was only about 4 years old. We were walking into this pool, the lifeguard, Director Jack Cheney said, "Hey, wait a minute. You can't take her in there. That's for boys only. She's got to go in this pool." I said, "But she's a boy." He says, "No, he's not. She's a girl." So, he said, "No, I'm not. I'm a boy." He pulled up his dress and pulled out his pants. He said, "See?" "Oh, no. What's he doing dressed like a girl?" I said, "My mother didn't want a boy. She wanted a girl. So, she dresses him like that until he's 5. He's got to be a girl until he's 5." So, he couldn't understand that. Well, finally, after all these boys, six boys – by the way, out of these six boys, five of us turned out to be lifeguards. I was a lifeguard captain. All my brothers worked with me. Even my older brother worked with me. He said, "I'm the older brother." He said, "At home, I'm the boss. You've got to do what I tell you. At work, I'll do anything you say." I said, "It's a deal. We get along. We're good. No problem." But I'll never forget – the youngest one was Albert. He was a lifeguard also. Stop for a second.

MS: Sure.

JO: I lost my train of thought about the story I wanted to develop here for a minute. Yes, here we go. I just got it back again. So, after they have five boys, the sixth boy was born. Well, lo and behold, my mother came home from the county hospital, and she brought a girl home. All the neighbors came in to meet the brand-new little baby. We were living on 8th Street below Pacific Avenue in San Pedro 455 8th Street. We were all gathered around her. We're watching the baby. My mother was changing the diaper. She had to go into the room next door. Here with my brother Roy and Gus and Panch, all of were there. All of a sudden, we lifted the baby, and we started screaming. My mother came running out. "What's wrong? What's wrong?" She run from the other room. "What's wrong? What happened?" I said, "Take this baby back. She's missing something, gone." We'd never seen a baby girl before. All we had were boys in our

family. She says, "Oh, silly, that's a girl." "Oh. We didn't know what girls look like. How were we going to know? We've never had one before." So, we never forget that little story of how we find out what a girl looked like. Then after that, we always said that she never touched the ground until she was 12,13 years old. We carried her around and babied her. Then the next baby, the last one, her name was Belia. She still lives in town. Well, she was a girl too. We spoiled them. We spoiled them both rotten. We carried them around and treated them like dolls instead of little girls. To this day, they're still spoiled. But that's the story of my family very briefly.

MS: That's terrific. So, you moved eventually over to San Pedro. Tell us about that. When did you do that? What was San Pedro like in those days?

JO: Well, actually, like I said, my father was always bouncing around from one job to the other during the Depression. I was a shoeshine boy. They wouldn't allow me to sell papers until I was 10 years old. So, prior to that, I shined shoes on Beacon Street. I never forget, Beacon Street was -- like in Los Angeles right now. If you're in Los Angeles, 12:00 a.m., you'd see the stores are open. People are walking up and down. They're shopping. It's 12:00 a.m. It's a busy city in Los Angeles right downtown. It was the same thing on Beacon Street. Beacon Street had all these restaurants. There was Shanghai Red, the Beacon Light Mission, the Salvation Army playing, and there were all of these barbershops, were open at night. The ladies of the night were walking. This was a sailor town. The YMCA was in full swing. The Navy landed right here below 6th Street. The sailors would run off their boats and run up to the – change their clothes at the YMCA and get the big red car and either go to Long Beach or to go to Hollywood in Los Angeles. It was a busy place. I was a shoeshine boy. I would shine shoes of all the sailors. I'd never forget that I was a steady customer of this hotel, where later, I realized that these were the ladies of the night that would be in the sailors' -- in bars and so on. I would shine their issues. After a while, they got to know me. They would call me, "Johnny, come and shine my shoes." "Johnny, over here." So, I would go in. They wouldn't allow me in the bar. They'd have to come outside of the bar, and I would shine their shoes. So, I was glad when I grew up to be 10 years old and become a paperboy. Then I could sell paper. So, I was selling at that time, the *San Pedro News Pilot*. Anyway, I was selling the papers right down on 5th Street. They wouldn't allow me on 6th Street because that was the hub of the town. The old-timers got that, the bigger ones. I had to go to the outskirts. They will run me off of their corner with our papers. Then the big paper boys would catch the boat and go out on the ships and then sell paper aboard the ship. They wouldn't allow me to do that. I was too young for that. I didn't have priority. So, I remember Beacon Street. In fact, there's one story that I tell from time to time when I go to a funeral and some dear friend has passed away. [inaudible] your friend that passed away all the time. I went to four funerals in one week. There's one today that I got to attend. But anyway, the story that I like to tell is that near Shanghai Red's on Beacon Street, I'll never forget, at that time, I was the shoeshine boy. I was about 10 years old. The Salvation Army was playing, and I went to listen to them. [inaudible], they found it good. The trumpets were loud and the trombones. All of the [inaudible] and all the people on Beacon Street were gathered around listening to them. There were some sailors, but most of them were [inaudible], people who hung around. I was one of them. I was standing right in the middle of the crowd. But I don't forget that. It impressed me for the rest of my life. Because when the music stopped, the captain [inaudible], he took a match. He lit it. He said, "Look, this match can do good. This match can

do harm. It's like your life. You can do good, or you can do harm. This match has a beginning, and it has an end. It has color. Look at it. It has heat. It could warm your heart. It can cook your food." He gave a regular talk about what the match can do and how our life compared to that. I thought, "Gee, this is so interesting." I was fascinated. Then as the match burned, he waved his fingertips. It turned black. He reached over and took the other end of the match. He held it up, and he allowed it to burn to the very tip. Then he said, "It has a beginning, and it has an end like your life." Then he took the match which was left over. He rubbed them between his hands. Then he showed it up. He held it up to the crowd. Then he said, "Dust are and to dust returneth." He said, "This is like your life." He said, "You have a beginning, and you have an end. What are you going to do with your life? Are you going to stay down here and just drink? Or are you going to accept Christ in your life? What do you want to do with your life? Because you have a beginning, and you have an end." I said, "Oh, gosh. That means I have to die. I never thought about it before. Someday I have to die." I said, "I better do something with my life. I better work hard. I better become something because I have a beginning, and I have an end." I'd never thought of that before. You don't think of dying. You think of living. So, I was so impressed and why when I'm asked to speak at their funeral, I use this illustration. I point out the good things that person has done in their life and in our community. I just thought that was interesting.

MS: That's a great story.

JO: Yes.

MS: You got involved with the sea, the water, very early on. Tell us about that attraction and your early activities with the water and the port.

JO: Yes. I'll start it like you didn't ask the question. To begin with, I would never say a word. Like I said, first, second, third grade, I failed. They flunked me in the second grade because I wouldn't speak English. They flunked me in the third grade because I wouldn't talk. I would not talk. I slobbered. But I love to swim. So, every time I had a chance, I went to Anderson Memorial. It was a swimming pool on the corner of 8th and 9th Street in San Pedro and Mesa. The lifeguard was Jack Cheney. He was there for years. Every time I had a chance, I went swimming. I went swimming. Well, there were a swim meet. It happened that I could beat everybody. That came out in the paper. "John Olguin, the human fish." They called me the human fish because I swam for my life to beat everybody else. The art teacher at Cabrillo Elementary School clipped it out and brought it to class. She says, "Johnny, we read in the paper where they called you the human fish. You won a race at Anderson Memorial playground. Would you mind telling the class about it?" I said, "Yes." I jumped up. I began to tell them about the swim meet. I tell her. Then she caught me lisping. She said, "Oh, I can see why you don't talk." She sent me to speech school. They gave me a little mirror, and I learned how to count sixty-one, sixty-two, and sixty-three, putting your tongue out. I learned to keep my tongue behind my teeth. Well, that changed my whole life. It changed my whole life because from that moment on, I became a different person. Prior to that time, I was embarrassed to talk. I wouldn't say a word. The teacher would have me get up in front of the class to say something. I would stand there and just perspire. I could not talk. After that, my wife and I haven't stopped talking since then. [laughter] That's another way to look at it. But that's just a little story I thought I

would add.

MS: That's a great story. Again, talk about your loving the water and of swimming and how it connected you to the harbor and the beach.

JO: Okay The main person in my life was Jack Cheney because he started a club. In fact, he taught the Polar Bear club that's still going today. But he started a club called the San Pedro Swim Club. He developed all these athletes, for example, Art Lindegren. We're now trying to get his footprint or rather his name on this ports walk here in San Pedro. He was one of his swimmers. He went to the Olympics in 1936. But he developed all these swimmers. He had a swim club. I went to the swim club. We met on Tuesday nights. They were young, all teenagers. They had different areas for high school, seniors, and then teenagers. We owned a paddleboard. We owned a canoe. We owned a sailboat called the *Cutty Sark*. The sailboat would only sail when there was wind. There were so many of us wanted to use the sailboat, they went, "You can have it for two hours a piece, and you have to give it to somebody else." So, whoever got it in the morning didn't want it in the morning because there's no wind in the morning. So, I would get up in the club. I'd say, "Who wants to meet me at Cabrillo Beach at 7:00 a.m. and take the *Cutty Sark* out to the lighthouse? Then when the wind comes up, we'll sail back." Nobody wanted to do it but this 12-year-old girl. She'd raise up her hand. I'd say, "Muriel." I said, "You went last week. You don't want to go this week again. Let's give somebody else a chance. Anybody else?" Nobody wanted to go except Muriel. I didn't want her. She was the last one in the world I wanted. Because the father brought her down, and her father carried a great big gun underneath that armpit. He was the captain of the California State Fish and Game. He was the nicest man I'd ever met. But I was 14 years old. I was scared of his gun. I knew he was going to shoot me. I was just sure that he was going to shoot me. I didn't want any part of Muriel. Well, he brought her every Saturday. She would be there. Every Saturday, we went out. Well, after one whole summer of rowing every weekend, why we became quite friendly. She was really very beautiful. So, I said, "Would you like to go to the movies with me?" I figured I'd put her on my balloon tire bike, and I'd take her to the movie on my handlebars. She said, "I'd love to go, but you have to ask my mother." So, I called up her mother. I said, "Mrs. Groat, may I take Muriel to a movie?" She said, "I'm sorry. My daughter can't go out with older men." I was 14 years old. She was 12 years old. So, I said, "I understand." I said, "We'll wait." Well, what happened is after the war, I came back from the war, and here she was on the beach, tall and slim and beautiful, gorgeous. I said, "Muriel, for heaven's sake, let's go rowing." Well, she never had a chance. I took her rowing and canoeing and sailing. I said, "You can always find a lover. They're easy to find. But where are you going to find a woman that can row?" So, we have spent a lifetime rowing. We'll be talking more about that a little bit later. But I made the right choice. Okay. We'll stop for a second.

MS: Good. Now, go back again from your early days, becoming a lifeguard and your connection to the water.

JO: Okay. It started with San Pedro Swim Club at Anderson Memorial.

MS; Wait a second. Before you do this, you mentioned the Polar Bear Club.

JO: I'm going to just talk about that now.

MS: Good. Because I want to know what that is. Explain everything. Go ahead.

JO: Well, we were all members of the San Pedro Swim Club. Some of the people are still living in town that are members. But they just don't come down to the beach. Jack Cheney said, "We're all going to meet at Cabrillo Beach." This is 1936. Okay. "We're all going to meet at Cabrillo Beach." In 1936, I was 15 years old. At the time, I was 15 or 14 or 15. "We're all going to go swimming or New Year's Day. We're going to make a great big pot of nice hot chocolate. We'll have cookies. Then we'll all go swimming and become polar bears." So, we all met. There were, I would say around twenty, maybe twenty-five of us young people. My wife at that time was 12. I was 14. We all went in the water at 12:00 a.m. on New Year's Day. We screamed and yelled and stayed in the water for five minutes then came out and dried up, had a hot cup of cocoa. "What a wonderful idea. Let's do it every New Year." So, the next year, in 1937, we did the same thing. That's the year I went to work as a lifeguard at Cabrillo Beach. Okay. Thanks to Jack Cheney. What happened is he liked my burritos. I would bring bean burritos. There's no such thing as Taco Bell. There was no place where you could buy bean burritos. But my mother used to pack these up, and I would take them to the swimming pool. I would have them for lunch. He said, "What are you eating?" I said, "A burrito." So, he says, "Do you have an extra one?" "Yes, I have two." So, I gave him one. He said, "Oh, these are delicious." I said, "You had to get them while they're hot." He said, "I'll give you a quarter if you bring me a hot one." So, I went home and got him a hot one – my mother made them – came back. He liked it so well; he came to my house. My mother made him hot tortillas with that bean burrito and cheese and refried beans. Anyway, because of that – let's stop again.

MS: I want to go back. You still haven't finished explaining what the Polar Bear Club is.

JO: I'm coming to that.

MS: Okay. Good.

JO: Okay. Well, because Jack took an interest in the fact that I was trying to support our family. I was going to school, and I was earning money. In fact, I had a route. As a shoeshine boy, I was going through the business area. I would go to certain stores. I was shining shoes on Saturdays, shining shoes on – I was 10 years old. I'm going back a little bit. But the businesspeople knew me. When I grew up and became a Presbyterian, some of the people I was shining shoes were members of the church. They remembered when I was a shoeshine boy. Anyway, one of them, Mr. (Bowden Button?), who owned a store here on Pacific Avenue, and we still corresponded until he passed away. He moved back to Germany, but he was still writing to me. But the point was that Jack Cheney knew that I was trying to help our family. So, he said, "You ought to be a lifeguard. You'll make enough money so that you can help your family out." So, he helped me out. I was scared to death. I was 14 years old. I was taking this senior (life aide?), which I wasn't old enough to do. I was taking standard first aid, which I wasn't qualified to do. So, I became a Los Angeles City lifeguard at the age of 15, which I was supposed to be 18. I lied. I told them I was 18. Well, he helped me through the whole thing. He encouraged me. He said, "You can do it. You're big. You're strong." He said, "Shave." I

said, "I don't have anything to shave." He said, "Well, you want to look good when you go up before the Civil Service." Anyway, he helped me. So, when we became Polar Bears, we continued to do this every year until the war started. During the war, I was gone. When I came back, well, by then I was a lifeguard of course. I started in 1937. I came back after the war. We picked up and started the Polar Bears again. That time, I was doing it every day. My wife made the banners. I used the equipment from the museum, the aquarium, which were the PA system and so on. This went on. I realized, after we did this in 1946, [19]47, [19]48, [19]49, [19]50, when it got to the [19]50s and [19]60s, I realized, if I don't include other people then this is going to die when I die. Because at that time, my wife designed – the Polar Bears that they wear today, my wife designed that. But what we did, we designed a new one every year. Then we sold them. The money we made, we bought coffee and cupcakes. No dues. Nobody paid anything. Everything was free. So, what happened is that I thought, if I don't turn it over to a new generation, it's going to die. Part of that whole thing was a fellow by the name of Ray Falk. So, Ray Falk said, "Sure," He took it over. But then he organized it and started charging dues and started putting it on a paying basis. But they still have free coffee and free cupcakes every year. They still do that. But meantime, we have been designing new patches. Because each patch was a fundraiser. What happened, Muriel designed a polar bear, a female with a bra on it. We [inaudible], but they all resented that. So, what they did, they went back to the one that she designed the year before, a polar bear without a bra They made that a permanent. They put it on their t-shirt and their hats. They put it on everything. To this day, that's what they're using. But the original one was a variety of different kinds of things, polar bears in different areas. So, that's the story of the polar bears.

MS: I still need a definition. You have to tell me, "The Polar Bear Club is," so I know exactly what it is.

JO: Okay. The Polar Bear Club is a group of citizens – anyone can become a Polar Bear – that will go swimming at 12:00 a.m. New Year's Day. They meet there at 11:00 p.m. They register. Then we give them a certificate. The original certificate was designed by (Sam Arnold?), a local person. It had a polar bear on it and the temperature of the water and the date, the time, and then the president of the club. Anyone who went swimming got a certificate plus a cup of coffee and a free cupcake. It's been going since 1936 continuously. We average between three hundred and five hundred people. It depends on the weather. In fact, I just found out that a fellow who had historical ties in San Pedro, started it. The San Pedro Bay Historical Society started in my front room. It was our idea to start it. Carlin Soule was the first president. He was there when we decided to start it. Well, he moved to Cayucos, California. Then he came back. He said, "John, I'd like to start a Polar Bear in Cayucos." He says, "How do I go about it?" I said, "This is what you do." So, I outlined what we did here. He did the same thing there. I just found out that they had three thousand people this last year, the from all over middle part of California, went to Cayucos on Polar Bear Day. I go, "Three thousand." I said, "We still have three hundred, four hundred, and you have three thousand." I couldn't believe it. Okay. Somebody told me that it got to three thousand at the end of that.

MS: This is crazy. This is January. It's cold. What are these people going in the water for? What's the attraction in doing that?

JO: The attraction is that regardless of the weather, rain or shine, you go in to show that Southern California is so different from the rest of the United States. You don't realize that. When you're born and raised in San Pedro, you live here all your life. You think that it never rained in the summertime. But when I went back to the East Coast, I was surprised that it rained. When I went up north, there was snow all over the place. I come back to Southern California, people were still walking in their t-shirts and their shorts. I thought, "Wow, we live in a great place. It's like going to Hawaii. You can go there anytime. It's always nice." Southern California is very similar to that. So, the fact that we go in – the Chamber of Commerce Los Angeles contacted me when we first started it, and we were getting a lot of nice publicity. Why don't we just change it to the penguin club? I said, "Why?" They said, "Because it's not going to advertise for Southern California to have a Polar Bear Club. We decided to have a Penguin Club." I said, "I'm sorry, we're not changing anything. We're going to stay like we are." So, this was started in Venice. Today they have the Penguin Club in Venice that they go swimming too, in Santa Monica. They call it the Penguin Club. I think they still do. But there's still the Polar Bear Club. This is not [inaudible]. But I found in Vancouver that they have a big Polar Bear Club. Detroit, they break the ice and go swimming. But there's only a half a dozen people that do that back in Detroit, Chicago, and so on. It's almost nationwide. So, that's the attraction. One more thing, and that is that of all the places to go swimming in the wintertime, Cabrillo Beach is the only one that I know of that has free hot showers for both men and women. So, the idea is that you go in, you take a swim, you don't stay in too long, and when you get out, you don't stand around the bay. You run to the hot shower, take a hot shower, get out of your wetsuit, put on warm clothes, so you do not catch cold. The first elected official was Janice Hahn. When she was elected here, three, four years ago, she went right in with us, and she's been doing it ever since. So, we're real proud of her.

MS: Great. So, you're a lifeguard for a long time. Then you got involved with teaching and the kids and the history of this place. Talk about how that evolved.

JO: I started working as a lifeguard in 1937. But prior to that, 1935 – first of all, I remember that the lifeguards were organized about 1926. The first lifeguard came from Venice. That was George Wolf. He worked along with a fellow by the name of Bob Foster. He was a lieutenant in the lifeguard service in 1927. He was the first one that took a card table, put some shelves on it, and then – in 1935 – and put that in the bathhouse at the Sunset Pier in Venice. Well, that was 1935. That was in the summer. In the wintertime, here it was in the hallway because there was no place for it. Meantime, Cabrillo Beach had built a beautiful bathhouse, and the streetcar that will take people down to the shore on weekends were not using this bathhouse at Cabrillo Beach. The streetcar came to 6th Street. Then we got on the trolley. The trolley went to Point Fermin Park. Then there was touring going down to Cabrillo Beach. The bathhouse was there, where you would walk in, and for 10 cents, you got a bathing suit and a towel. You changed your clothes, checked them in, and went swimming. Then you get the red car back down to 6th Street and back up to Los Angeles and to Cucamonga, wherever you were going. But it failed because Henry Ford invented the Model T. At that time, he said, "Anyone can afford it. $400 for a Model T is as America is going to change." They no longer went down and rented a bathing suit. Now, they put a bathrobe on at home. They drove to the beach, went swimming, and then went home and took a shower at home. So, our bathhouse was empty. It wasn't being used. So, it's a logical place to move the museum, so to speak. The museum was just a card table and a few

things. They had to have somebody run it. The [inaudible] wer'e working out a classification. They could run a museum. So, through the WPA, we hired Dr. William L. Lloyd, who are the retired dentist. He moved out here from the middle west of San Diego, bought a condominium, and lost everything. So, he didn't have a penny. He moved to San Pedro. Through the WPA, he was hired as a director to develop this museum. No money, just his wages. They had to use the community as a resource. He did a wonderful job. Next door was a restaurant. So, he got mayonnaise jars and mustard jars. In it, he would put fish. Put glass in there. He learned how to cut glass. He put fish and then shelved them. He mounted them in alcohol. He mounted them in formaldehyde. He went downtown. He got shrimp boxes. They cut the tops off, put glass in there, and he would put the crabs in there and lobsters and shrimp and shells and made (rocker mounts?) free. He painted them and made them on display. This is how the Cabrillo Marine Museum started, called Cabrillo Beach Marine Museum. As a young man, I was interested. So, I would go in and help, especially if it was a cloudy, rainy day. There was no one on the beach. He had caught a live [inaudible] and said, "Can I have somebody help me clean the glass?" They'd send me in there. I have pictures of me cleaning the glass in my bathing suit and that sort of thing. Well, what happened, I became interested because I realized I knew nothing about what I was doing. I had no courses in this area. So, I was only reading the labels, and I was interested. Well, what happened, he became 70 years old. In the city at that time, at 70, you had to retire. You couldn't work one day past 30 – 70. He came out to the lifeguard station. By then I was a lifeguard captain, 1949. He gave me the key. He says, "Here, John, here are the keys. Open the door and lock them until they hire another director. They should be hiring somebody in about a week or so. So, I said, "I'd be glad to." Well, I tried opening the doors, and the teacher walked in with the children. "Can you tell us about the turtle that's here?" I said, "Yes. I can tell you how to catch abalone and how to cook them. I'll tell you what I know." So, I talked to the children about the things that I knew. I realized how little I knew. I said, "Boy, I better start reading these labels. I better start reading." Well, I got hooked. I started getting up at 3:00 a.m. every single morning, seven days a week, to study about what's on display. Then I thought, "I better qualify myself if I'm interested in it." I thought that ideal. In the summertime, I'm very important. I'm a lifeguard captain. I run the beach, a lot of people, a lot of responsibility. In the wintertime, I run the museum. Hey, nobody on the beach, now I have something to do. I don't know if you realize, but being a lifeguard is a very difficult job. Difficult because you see thousands of people. You say, "How can you watch thousands of people, thousands of them?" You don't see anyone unless they're drowning. You don't see anyone unless they're doing something that is not normal. Then you learn to recognize that person. But you're not born that way. You have to learn, and it takes time. So, becoming a lifeguard sometimes can be very boring. You're not getting paid for what you do. You're getting paid for what you can do in an emergency. In the minute, your adrenaline has to flow. You have to be able to perform and save somebody's life so that others may live. Consequently, your time is spent on looking, always looking. You never turn your back to the water. You're always vigilant. You realize that people [inaudible] in the middle of the day because there's a lot of people there. They all see them. They're drawn between the hours of 5:00 and 7:00, when there's only a few people, and there's no lifeguard on duty. They're drawn between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. when nobody is working. There's only one or two people in the water. So, you learn all the different things. So, being in the lifeguard tower, like I was during my early years, and having nothing there but a few pelicans, is the hardest job in the world, to do nothing. I used to wash the lifeguard truck. I'd scrub the floor and wash the windows. I'd do anything. So, [inaudible] to clean glass, I was

delighted. I went in, and I worked. Because it kept me busy. I was young and energetic. So, they thought I was really interested. What it was is I was interested in staying alive and doing something. Then when I realized I didn't know anything about it, I thought I'd better go to school. So, I went to UCLA, took a course in oceanography. I went to Cal State Long Beach. I went to Harbor College. I went to LA State, you name it. I went to any college. They said, "Do you want a degree?" "No, I don't. I want to learn. I already got the job of a museum director, but I don't know what I'm doing. I want to know what courses do you have that can teach me about my work?" So, I took all these courses. Eventually, I qualified myself, so I knew what I was talking about. But it's kind of interesting.

MS: It's a great story. Tell me, how did the museum begin?

JO: In 1935, the Cabrillo Marine Museum started in Venice, California by a lieutenant in the lifeguard service named Bob Foster. He put a card table on the beach, put some seashells in it, and then put it in the bathtub in the winter of 1935. It was crowded. So, that was moved to the empty bathhouse at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro. They had to have someone to run it. A lifeguard couldn't run it because were working another classification.

MS: Let's go back. Table with seashells, how is that a museum? Describe what he was trying to do by doing that. The card table with the seashells on it, what was he trying to do by doing that?

JO: Oh, okay.

MS: He's building a display right?

JO: Yeah. Okay. The Cabrillo Marine Museum was started in the bathhouse in Venice, California. Bob Foster was a lieutenant in the lifeguard service. He took a card table, put some seashells on it. I remember there was a dead pelican also. He put this in the bathhouse in Venice, California in 1935. It was crowded in the hallway. So, it was moved to an empty bathhouse at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro in order to develop a marine museum. But since the lifeguards were working out this classification, the city, through the WPA, hired Dr. William L. Lloyd. He was a retired dentist. They told him, they said, "We don't have a budget. But we'll pay you through the WPA and make a playground director out of you as a classification." So, he began to develop it. What he did, he went next door and took jars, empty mayonnaise jars. In fact, the nickname was not the Cabrillo Marine Museum, but the Cabrillo mayonnaise jar museum. Because everything was in mayonnaise jars and mustard jars. He would cut the glass and mount fish and seashells and crab and put them in formaldehyde and put them on the shelf. He would take shrimp boxes and cut them out, paint them black, and put glass and put seashells in them and crabs and so on. So, he made his own rocker mounts. So, he was developing, without a budget, a marine museum. I became interested just by helping him out. Then I finally learned the business. In 1949, when he retired, well, I began – I did three jobs. I became the playground director, the museum director, and the lifeguard captain and then all three things. I did it. I had plenty of energy. I learned to get volunteers. I will go out in the beach and pick up volunteers, say, "How are you doing it? Can you help me out for a minute or five minutes? I have a school, and I need to do this." But it evolved and evolved. I always took care of my basic job with a lifeguard because I was working on a classification. But I would not allow anyone to

drown. Luckily, I had four brothers that were lifeguards. There were five. I said, "I don't care what you do, just don't let anyone drown. Otherwise, I'm going to lose my job." Basically, that's the story.

MS: So, this museum, it's really pretty elaborate today, started as a card table with some displays of shells on it. So, that's what I want you to tell me, how it started with this little simple display to today.

JO: The Cabrillo Marine Museum started with a card table. Bob Foster picked up from shells on the beach, and then I remember one dead pelican. This is how it started. I remember one child came into the museum in Cabrillo, and he said, "Everyone has a name on shells. How do I get my name?" I said, "Go and pick up a shell that we don't have." He did. He went out and found a shell, brought it back. I looked around. I said, "We don't have it. Your name goes in it." So, I typed it right up. Put it on display. Boy, this little boy was proud. That's how it started. It started with a whole community participating and giving us things. Our job, when we finally decided that we had to become professional, we had to get rid of something. That was very hard. Like we had to give back the goat head that was shot in Catalina Island. We had to give back the tarantulas, the iguanas. We had to give the black widow spiders, the snakes that we had. I said they have no business in the marine museum, so we had to give them back. But it was very difficult to go deliver them to their home and say, "I have to give you back your tarantula." "Don't you want it anymore?" "We're making a marine museum. We've got to give anything that's not marine." So, that meant I [inaudible], managed to do a job that's in the backyard of Southern California, and we could do a better job than anyone else because we live in it. It's all part of our area.

MS: How did the collection grow, of the museum?

JO: Okay. First of all, the Cabrillo Marine Museum grew in various ways. The California State Fish and Game was responsible in helping us out in many ways. John Fitch, who was head of the Fish and Head, the library, was my neighbor. I would go to his house for information. The California State Fish and Game, my father-in-law was the captain of the Enforcement. He helped us out. The fishing boat, I would go to him. I'd say, "If you pick up anything when you're out fishing in Channel Island, we'd love to have it." They brought us the ratfish, the first ratfish, the hagfish. They brought us the moonfish we have that we cut open and found another fish inside and cut that open and found another fish inside of that. So, we had three fish out of one fish when they brought the moonfish to us. They brought us a great big Mola mola that [inaudible] that weighed about 400 pounds. So, the fishermen in San Pedro will remember this, and the Fish and Game will remember this. When they went to the Channel Island, and they were dredging or confiscating, they found things that were different. They would bring it to us. So, it was a community effort.

MS: That's great. Good. How would you describe the museum today? I mean, it's now in a modern building. How did it change? Give me the more recent history.

JO: Okay. It was a museum. It had been changed three times in name. First of all, the Cabrillo Beach Museum. Then it became the Cabrillo Marine Museum. Then when we received $3

million from Tidelands Oil money and from the Peck Estate, we changed it to Cabrillo Marine Aquarium. So, that's the name of it today. We had aquarium tanks in the old museum, the building. But when we went to the new building, we built professional aquarium tanks. Today, it's Cabrillo Marine Aquarium. What we did is we started a fundraising campaign. Through the help of professional fundraisers, we raised $10 million. We went from 19,000 square feet to 41,000 square feet. The beautiful thing about that was it was designed by Frank Gehry. Frank Gehry is now a famous man. When he came to us, he said, "Generally, we design a building and then the program has the suitability." He said, "But you already have a program. I see you have children on the grass. You have children in the tidepools. There's a whaleboat right out there with all the whales and the children on the boat." He said, "We're going to design a museum for you that's going to suit your program." I said, "With that attitude, you can do anything you like." I said, "We'll will buy it." By that time, we had a co-director. Dr. Susanne Lawrenz-Miller and I worked together. I took care of the public relations and the children. She took her – making sure that all the exhibits were scientifically correct. We were a good team together. Frank Gehry did a wonderful job. What he did when he designed our aquarium, he said, "We know that you have the doors open in front of the of the museum and the back of the museum, and you're using the lawn." He said, "I'm going to design a building for you exactly like that, where you open up the back, you open up the front, and the children can go. They can wander through. The exhibit, they could go through and explore and discover things on their own." I said, "That's wonderful." He said, "Now I know you're an outdoor person. So, I'm going to design your office. You'll have an outdoor office too. You can be outside if you want to in your office." That's exactly what he did. So, Frank Gehry did a wonderful job for us.

MS: Describe the building today. What are the activities? What's it look like, and what goes on there?

JO: Okay. Well, what happened is, we began to book – well, let me start over.

MS: Sure.

JO: Let me think about it. Because you gave a question. You keep going back.

MS: Just trying to confuse you. That's my job [laughs].

JO: No, no, I'm just trying to make sense. So, I won't be repeating. Okay.

MS: You can repeat if you want, by the way. Sorry about that.

JO: Okay. Let me think about this for a second. What's going on today?

MS: Because you talked about the lawn. What are the activities that go on there?

JO: Right. Okay. Everything we've learned, we've learned from mistakes. But we don't make the same mistake twice. So, we ask our volunteers, "What can we do tomorrow better than we did today?" At first, we were trying to please everybody. I would have a talk. I will have preschool children sitting right in front of me on (cedar palms?), rugs. I would have first and

second grade behind them, maybe high school, and senior citizens. They're different languages, entirely different languages. So, if I talked to one group, I would lose the other. Finally, I finally learned. I said, "We have to separate them. We have to have certain age groups coming in at certain times." So, what I did, I said, "I would like to have all the preschool children come in the months of May and June. The rest of the year, we'll take – you can come if you want, but we're going to make a special program for you." Well, what happened is we took – I went to the fish market. I got a squid. I got a shark. I got a fish from Stanley DiMeglio. They gave it to me free. Then we put them on ice, and I have the children touch them. "Wah!" They still touch them. "Feel that shark how rough it is. Why is it rough," and et cetera, et cetera, so everything down. We took the sea otter. We made a cartoon told that we had to lay on a launcher with a sea otter up and on, with a rocket on her chest. She'd bang on her chest and say, "I'm a sea otter." I have to bang on a rock in order to break [inaudible]. So, we put it on the level of the preschool children. Consequently, if you go there in the month of May and the month of April, you'll see that we have one thousand 4-year-olds. Anyone, kindergarten, that's too old. We will not accept them. They're senior citizens. We don't allow them. We have one thousand 4-year-olds that come every single day, Tuesdays through Fridays. All our volunteers speak on their level. We learned that they don't learn by talking. They learn by doing. I have a letter that said, "Dear Mr. Olguin, we took a tour of the museum. You told us everything. After we went to school, the teacher gave us a test about everything you said. I didn't remember one thing you said, but I remember everything we did." So, I thought, "Gee, this is interesting. This kid learned by what we did not by what we said. So, from that moment on, we're going to do everything." So, preschool children, first, second, and third grade, if you go there right today, you will see all these people doing this [inaudible] like this in the moonlight. The waves coming up on the beach and laying the eggs. You'll find drilling down – what makes holes in the rocks – a piddock. You'll find everyone drilling down inside. How do they live inside of a rock? Well, put your neck out. You're a piddock. You're hungry. You want to eat. You pump the water in here, go into the stomach, and come down over here. So, we have all the children together, the adults too, and the bus driver. You pump the water in, and you pump the water out. You pump the water in, and you pump the water out. What do you eat? We all have little food in the ocean called plankton. What's plankton? Make believe; pick up a chalk. Write on the blackboard. Every time you write on the blackboard, all you're doing, you're putting little white skeletons across the blackboard that came out of the ocean. This is how we talked to preschool children. It is total participation. We find that once you get into the fourth grade, even third grade, that they say, "Ooh," like this. But if you explain to them the reason you're doing it, is so you'll remember it. If we do it, you're going to remember it. So, they used to call me the do it man. Because everything we do, we do it do it. If you go there now, you will find, every morning, one thousand children. I'm there. I'm still working there as a volunteer. I work every Wednesday. I like to keep my finger in the pie. I like to keep doing what we started. It's a lot of fun. You see all these activities going on, talking about tide pool. It's beautifully organized. The man who has organized this is Larry. Larry Fukuhara got a grant, and with a $10,000, why he got banners and flags. He got equipment to carry things out, everything mobilized. We're used to carrying out everything on our backs. Well, now, it's all mobile. It's beautifully organized. We're still part of it. It's a wonderful program. Like I say, we run a spring program. We run a thousand children, between a thousand and twelve hundred, daily.

MS: So, describe the facility. You said there's a tidepool. There's a lawn. There's a museum.

Describe the place. What does the place look like?

JO: If you go to the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, you'll find that during the school year, we have conducted tours. The tour is one-hour long. We take groups. But in the springtime, everybody wants to come to the beach. So, we take everything outdoors. If you go there now, the place with the (buzz?) is the park. Then they go from station to station to station. One station is where they get – they them what we're doing, when they can go in the aquarium and where the restrooms are and so on. The first station is the staging area. They sit on the lawn. One of the volunteers have all of these props, talks about starfish, talks about sea urchins, talks about what makes holes in the rocks and the shells, and so on. When they finish there – that only lasts about seven or eight minutes – then they move to the next station. In the next station, they talk about whales. There they have photographs of all the different kinds of whale and talk about the migration of the Great Whale. They participate. They're doing things. They're not just sitting there listening. They're doing things, okay? The volunteers are involving everybody, including the mothers, the fathers, and the bus drivers. We do not allow parents to sit at the back and talk about the card game that they're going to have this afternoon, or they're going to play tennis when get home from school. We ask them to participate and be part of the . We insist on it. The third thing is, when they finish talking about the whales, we want them to move to the next station. There, they sit down. We have a rope. They sit behind the rope. There, they talk about grunion. They show up a little grunion and formaldehyde. Then picture that the grunion later laid egg in the sand. They explain how at the light of the moon, when the waves come up, the fish come out of the ocean and might lay their eggs. Then they're fertilized. After that, we explain that they are going to be mothers and fathers. Because we're going to give them sand and a little jar. We tell them that you're not going to see the eggs. You're going to see sand. But when we pour seawater in there, you put your hand on top, and you roll them around and count to a hundred and look inside; you'll see all these little fish begin to explode like popcorn. They're all going to be mothers and fathers to the grunion. So, when we finish that talk, when they get up, they move to the next station. There, we give every other person that jar. Then we pour – put one spoonful of sand in these jars. Then we tell them, "Look, there's nothing in here but just seawater." We use that clear pitcher because one little boy said, "You're not pouring seawater, you're pouring fish into my jar." I said, "No, no, no. There's nothing swimming inside the jar. That's just seawater. You're going to hatch them out." So, then we pour the water in there. I say, "Now, roll them around for one minute." Then when they look in there, they can't believe it. "I'm a mother, I'm a mother, I'm a mother," when all the little fish begin to pop out. Then we explain to them, learn the word conservation. What are we going to do? We're going to put them in this bucket. Then before we go home, we put them in the ocean. They'll swim away, and they'll be back when they're 1 year old, to live right on the beach. So, we tell them the whole story of the grunion. Then we move on from there to another station. This is where we have all this jellyfish. We talk about the jellyfish. They come up on the beach in the summertime. There are two kinds of jellyfish. There's the purple jellyfish. Then there's the by-the-wind sailors. We have the jellyfish that we give to the adults. They make the jellyfish bounce up and down, look like jellyfish. But they have all the children doing the same thing. They're making the jellyfish. We talk about the jellyfish and how it eats like a jellyfish and how it pushes the food along. So, there's total participation and moving from station to station to station. It's a wonderful program. In fact, we were voted the most outstanding teaching aquarium in the world. I thought that was quite a compliment.

MS: Talk about the tidepools and tell me about that and –

JO: The history of it.

MS: – the history of it, and how it relates to the harbor and the relationship between the natural world here and the harbor.

JO: Right. When I became a museum director, acting museum director, I thought, "What's the potential? What can we actually do? If we had all the money in the world, what could we do to develop this area to its full capacity?" So, I sat down, and I made a list of all the different things, and one of the things was a tidepool. I said, "Tidepools are interesting. They're fascinating. This is where life began. It didn't begin in the bottom of the ocean in deep water. It's called a triple interface, where the ocean meets the land, and the land meets the sky. This is where the first animals in the world started. Some of them are very primitive animals. They're still there. In fact, one animal that live there, the chiton, is the only animal in the world that have teeth that are made out of iron. There is no other animal in the animal kingdom that have iron teeth and have a radula, an iron cap. So, this is a fascinating place to take children. But there are only so many low tides in the daytime. I thought, "We have to set this area aside and protect it." Because as an early museum director and live crowd, I will see people out there with a jug of wine and loaf of French bread and take the sea urchin, breaking them open. They were drinking the wine, eating the French bread, and then eating the raw sea urchin and scattering this. I would go out, and I'd say, "We want to make a preserve out of this. This is all part of the Cabrillo Museum. Please, you can't eat it." "Where is the law?" "Well, we haven't passed it yet." "Well, then when you have the law, arrest me. But we're going to keep eating." People come here from the Orient, which we have a big influx now. It's like a smorgasbord. They'll go out there and sit there and take the chiton, the limpets, and pluck them out alive and eat them alive. It was free. I would try to stop them. So, what I did is I trained the volunteers that will go out there and give tours at low tide, and for five years in a row, I requested the City of Los Angeles, set this area side, through the state, as a preserve. For five years, they turned me down – four years. On the fifth year, I went to my supervisor, and I said, "Why can't I set this aside?" I said, "I'm spending a lot of time, and all my volunteers are fighting all the time to keep people out of there." I said, "I need help." I said, "Why can't you set it aside? Why won't you help me?" They said, "Because you're already a playground director. You're already a lifeguard captain. You're already a museum director. We don't want to give you any more to do. We don't have a budget." I said, "Well, I'll run it with volunteers." They told me, "Well, you have to justify it. You're running tours out there, but I don't see any paperwork on it." I said, "Okay. You want facts and figures." "Yes. You have to justify the fact that you're asking for more." So, I said, "I'll do it with volunteers. I'll come back a year from now." But I went to the Sierra Club in Palos Verdes, and I spoke to them. After I gave them a one-hour tour, I said, "I don't need your money. I need your bodies. I need you to help me out." Well, two ladies answered. Diana McIntyre, which is – she's still connected with us, but while she was a schoolteacher, she answered. Another lady answered. Five people from the Sierra Club agreed to come and help me start this tidepool. But that wasn't enough. So, I went to the PTA. I spoke with the PTA at [inaudible] Elementary School and then picked up another four women. So, now, I had enough to start. I gave them a six-week training course on tidepools, what to do with sea urchins, what

to do – how to handle the whole thing. Then we took them out to the tidepools. For one year, we kept track. We did 3500 children at low tide. We even tried going out at night with flashlights, which I'll never do again. It's a failure. But with experience, everything comes out at night. In the daytime, everything's hiding. Not everything is running around, feeding and eating and so on. But it's too dangerous, too hazardous. It doesn't work, one time only. So, with these women, I kept track. Then I went back to the [inaudible]. I said, "Look. Here it is. We toured 3500 children out there at low tide. Here are the facts and figures, names and address and so on." On the strength of that, they took me to Sacramento. I appeared before Senator Richardson's committee, and I requested that the area be set aside from Cabrillo Beach to the lighthouse, Point Fermin, as a marine life refuge and call it the Cabrillo marine refuge and tie it with the museum. Well, it just so happened that Corona del Mar was pushing a bill to set their area aside as a marina life refuge. So, we put mine in with theirs, and we went right through. We got our bill. Senator Richardson was the committee chairman. But it was another senator that came out for the opening. What we did, we put seaweed across the opening. Then we put in a – for the opening – [inaudible] out on the beach. We put in a (crow's nest?) for a speaker's platform, with the city steel on there and so on. We invited the community to come down. We had the opening. We asked the Army Band to come down. They sent down a small Army band of around eight people. We made banners. We paraded around the bathhouse with the band. I had pictures of this. Then we came back. Then when we had our speeches. Senator cut the ribbon with a hacksaw – not a hacksaw, with a sawfish. We photographed that. We have that. We opened up the tidepools. But the problem was it was hazardous and dangerous to take children across the rocks. So, at that time, they were doing some building up the freeway. I approached the people. I said, "We need some rocks to save the cliff. Because we're rolling the cliff." They very kindly dumped all these huge boulders, rocks, and there was cement. That saved the cliff. Later on, we got funding, and Dr. Miller arranged it. Now, we've built a nice path out to the tidepools. That's how the tidepools developed. Today, you can take wheelchairs out there. One more thing, and that is that, again, we learned that you involve children. I developed for each animal – for example, I would say, "Here's a rock. What makes the holes in the rocks?" There are three different – depending on what age we're talking to, little children. Okay. "There are three different kinds of animals that make holes in these rocks. You're all holding a rock with a hole in it. Okay, one of them is called the piddock. So, it grabs the hole, and it goes back and forth and back and forth, gets inside. You're a piddock. You're inside of a rock. But you're hungry. You want to have your lunch. You want to eat. So, what do you eat? You put your siphon out. The water comes in here, goes down into your stomach, and comes down over here. So, eat like a piddock. We're going to do it together. Pump the water in. You pump the water out. You pump the water in. You pump the water out. You eat all the little plankton that's in the ocean. So, when you see a rock with a hole in it and a big one like that, that's made by a piddock. But one with the great big hole, that's made by a sea urchin. The sea urchin –" then they see a sea urchin with all the purple spines. "They drill back and forth and back and forth. In fact, they can even drill right into steel. When the Dominator hit the rocks that [inaudible], one year later, they were holed right through 1-inch steel of the plate of the Dominator. When [inaudible] went out to see it, they found a sea urchin had drilled right through 1-inch steel. So, sea urchins could drill right in the iron. How? Just by [inaudible] going back and forth and back and forth. So, when you see a big –" this is the type of thing that we do. What happened is my wife and I and my children – I have three children – we were on vacation. We were in Washington. Right there at the rain forest, at the tidepools, there were

signs that said, "The ranger will lead a tour into the tidepool at 6:00 a.m. If you get up early, the ranger will meet you here and take you on a tidepool tour." I told my children, "Let's get up, and let's go look what this man has to say. I think it'll be interesting." So, we all got up early. We were there at 6:00 a.m., just at daylight. We went to the tidepool. When we got there, the ranger said, "Everyone, put your hand like this." So, we did. He said, "The starfish, grab the whole of its shell. Do it. It opens it up. Do it. Then take the stomach and then push it out of his stomach, push the stomach out of its mouth, and blows it up like bubble gum. It eats and then it swallows the stomach again." Well, that's exactly the way I teach down here. I said, "This is good. These men developed the same technique." Then he went ahead and explained how – he took each animal. Each one was doing something. When we had finished, I complimented him. I said, "That was wonderful. Where did you learn all your technique?" He said, "From my friend, John Olguin, down in San Pedro." I said, "I'd like to introduce myself to you. My name is John Olguin." "Oh, I didn't recognize you." He said, "I'm a teacher." He said, "I work at Norwalk Elementary." He said, "And I got a job up here as a ranger. So, the teacher there said, 'If you're going to go, and you're going to work in the tidepools in Washington State, you'd better go to Cabrillo Beach and listen to John Olguin, what he's got to say, so you can know what to do.'" He said, "So, what I did is I went down, and I followed you around with a pen and pencil. I found out when you were going to the tides, and I followed you around. I stayed in the background, but I wrote down everything you said." He said, "And what I've done is –" I said, "It's a compliment. You complimented me. Because this is how people learn." He said, "I make adults do it. Everybody does it. No matter who they are, I make them all do it. Yes, they do." So, we had a good laugh. That was kind of an interesting side story.

MS: I want to go back. You told me about your mentor, Jack –

JO: Cheney

MS: – Cheney. Give me his background as a diver and all. That's a really interesting story. Who is Jack Cheney? Tell me a story about his background, so we get a sense of who he is and how you got involved as a lifeguard.

JO: Okay. Jack Cheney, as a young man, worked for a circus. He was in Texas at the time. He would climb a ladder 100 feet high and then with a barrel with 5 feet of water, and the crowd will gather around, and they would announce that, here, the daredevil skydiver, at night would dive from 100 feet into a barrel of water. Everybody couldn't believe it. Then he would dive – [inaudible]. He'd dive and then hit the water and then pop out of the barrel of 5 feet of water. Well, our supervisor, his name is [inaudible], happened to be at the circus that time and saw him do that. "How in the world do you do that without breaking your neck?" He said, "Well, when I hit the water, I pull my legs. That breaks my fall." He said, "Well, how did you learn?" He said, "Little by little. I just climbed the ladder and then higher and higher and higher. Finally, I could do it from 100 feet up in the air." He said, "Well, you're a good man. I'd like to pay you to come to work for me." He said, "I'm the supervisor of Aquatics for the City of Los Angeles." He says, "[inaudible] the swimming pool. I'm in charge of the beaches. I'll give you a job. You're the kind of person I want working for us." He said, "I'll go." Well, Jack Cheney came to Los Angeles. They put him in charge of – they taught him how to be a lifeguard. They went through all his routine and qualified him. Once he was qualified then he became a pool director,

swimming pool director. The only swimming pool that the city had, there were the Sutro Baths at USC. The other one was here in San Pedro. Anderson Memorial swimming pool was on the corner of 8th and 9th Street and Mesa. It's covered over now because of the [inaudible]. They made him a lifeguard there and the director. I lived right around the corner on Main Street. So, every time I had a chance, I'd go swimming. This is how I met Jack. His wife was a waitress at (Elgin's?) Restaurant. This was during the Depression. So, I would take a coaster, and I would go to all the restaurants at 9:00 p.m. when they closed. I'd get all their food that was left over, and I'd put in gallon cans, gallon cans of soup, gallon cans of rice, beans. I'd go to three different restaurants. The waitresses all knew me. Well, it so happened that the waitress was the girlfriend of Jack Cheney. She said, "Oh, that young boy Johnny who comes over here to go swimming, he's the one who comes to the restaurant every night and gets the food for his family. He's got a large family. He's a good boy. You ought to take care of him." "Yeah, he goes swimming every time he gets a chance. He swims laps back and forth." Well, one day, I'm having burritos. He said, "What are you eating?" I said, "Beans and tortillas with cheese." He said, "You've got an extra?" "Yes." I gave him an extra one. He said, "Wow, these are delicious" There were no Taco Bells then. There were no Del Tacos. So, I said, "If you think that's good, you ought to get it when it's hot." My mother made hot tortillas. At that time, we had a wooden stove. I had to go out and cut the wood and then get the fire going. My mother would cook on a wooden stove. Well, I took him to my home. My mother made some hot tortillas for him, with rice and beans, refried beans, and he said, "Whoa, what a difference. I'll give you a quarter if you bring them to me for lunch." So, I would take 25 cents for a burrito. He saw my family. He saw that I had a large family and what I was doing to help support them. He said, "You have to be a lifeguard in order to help your family." I said, "Oh, I'm only 15 years old. I'm not old enough." He said, "You are now." So, he helped me out. I got my senior lifesaving card. I got my standard first-aid card. Then he took me to Los Angeles, and I signed up with Mrs. Riley who was head of Civil Service at the time. I told them I was 18. At the time, I was 15. Then when I took the test, I was so scared that I got number one in the place. I beat everyone because I was scared to death. I didn't want to fail. Anyway, the interesting thing about this whole thing is that I wore glasses. The live crowds knew me at Cabrillo Beach since I was only about 9 years old, 10 years old, because I only went to talk to the lifeguards. They said, "You'll never be a lifeguard because you're wearing glasses." I said, "But I don't want to be a fireman. My brother wants to be a policeman, not me. I want to be a lifeguard." So, what I did, I memorized that eye test. To this day, I can go close both eyes, and I could memorize the top, second line, right down to the line you can't see. But since then, I wore glasses. But the point is that Jack Cheney started a club called the San Pedro Swim Club. This is where I met my wife, in the San Pedro Swim Club. That's the other story I picked up there. One more thing about Jack Cheney, Jack Cheney was, in the wintertime, the playground director and also the chief lifeguard at Anderson Memorial playground. At that time, it wasn't the senior citizen. The older children were there. One day, the children were playing baseball in the lot. It was windy, and the wire, electrical wire, broke down. Jack Cheney realized that it was a hot wire because it was sparking. So, he ran out there and tried to get the children away from the wire, so they wouldn't touch it. In the process, the wind whipped the wire and hit him. It knocked him down, and he was being electrocuted. In fact, if you ever look at his back, you'd see all these burns on his back, the length of his back. The children started screaming. Art Lindegren happened to be coming out of the swimming pool, and he saw him there, with a wire wrapped around him and withering and sparking. So, he ran. He got a hoe. He went, and he pulled the wire away from him with a hoe.

It had a wooden handle, so he didn't get electrocuted. But he got the wire up on him, and they called the Fire Department. They took him to the hospital. It was quite an article in the paper about Jack Cheney being electrocuted, and he was a hero for saving the children. Eventually, he recovered, and he came back to work. But I never forgot the fact that he didn't hesitate. He ran right out in the field and got the children away from it. In doing so, he almost lost his life. So, he was out here right to begin with. Later on, he grew up, became my best man when we were married.

MS: What year was that when he was –

JO: What year?

MS: Yes, roughly.

JO: Okay. Let me think.

MS: You can say early [19]30s, mid-[19]30s.

JO: Yes. Okay. It was in the early [19]30s, yes, about 1934, 1935, right along through there.

MS: Now, you just popped up with this story about swimming in the Catalina Channel. Tell me that story.

JO: Okay. I lived at 1327 Palos Verdes, which is one block from the fish harbor. I was a lifeguard at Cabrillo Beach, along with my brothers. At that time, I was not a lifeguard captain. I was a lifeguard. So, what I would do in the morning, I'd walk one block and go down the path. Right where the fishing boats are, I would dive in the water there. That went down the channel, by the fishing boat, and then all the way to Cabrillo Beach, and I'd go to work. (Martha Ferrell?) was the playground director at Cabrillo. So, she'd come by my house on her bicycle, pick up my lunch and my jacket. At Cabrillo Beach, she'd deliver it to me out in the guard basin, and I would [inaudible] lifeguard. When I got off work at 5:00 p.m., I would swing back around by the basin and down the channel and down the fish channel and down to the ladder, climb up the ladder, I'll walk one block to my house. I would do that every single day. So, I was in pretty good condition. Because I sit around all day long, lifeguarding, I wasn't doing anything, so I got to work-out. Well, King Nawahi was playing at Nick Orbes'. We only had one drive-in at the time. It was on the corner of 6th and Gaffey Street. Nick Orbes had this Hawaiian group in there, three people playing the ukulele and singing. King Nawahi – his name was Ben Nawahi – was blind. Well, they came down to the beach. They said, "We're looking for a lifeguard. He's going to swim to Catalina Channel, and we're looking for a lifeguard to escort him. Would you come along? We understand you're swimming to work every day, and you're in pretty good condition." I said, "Well, I've never done that before. But I'd be glad to go along and help." He said, "We'll have other people there too. But it's organized." So, we set the date. We got on the boat. We went to Catalina Island. We walked in the water about 8:00 p.m., just at dark. The idea was they had a pole with a bell. They were going to ring the bell. He was supposed to follow the bell. Well, I got in the water with him. When he did, he followed the bell. But the minute he put his head in the water to take a stroke, he'd start going to the left, or he'd go to the

right. It didn't work. The bell did not work. So, what I did is I swam backstroke and talked to him. We had other fellows, Bill Powell, who owned the furniture business, a lifeguard from Long Beach, with another lifeguard who also [inaudible]. Bill Powell and the two other fellows, we kept going across the channel, talking to him, swimming backstroke. Well, it took 18 and a half hours to swim the channel. What happened, he was going toward Marineland, and it was daylight. He had stopped to say, "How far are we?" "Well," I said, "we look like we're 5 miles out." So, we'd swim for another hour. "How far are we now?" "It still looks like we're 5 miles out." It didn't look like we're getting any closer. We found out we were bucking the current. Then we realized that the current really was going toward Long Beach. So, I said, "Let's change our tactic. Let's not go to Marineland. That's the nearest place. Let's not do that. Let's head to the right. Let's head towards Cabrillo Beach. Let's head towards Long Beach." So, when we started doing that, then we started making process – we started making progress. Well, finally, that night – it was nighttime – we finally got in close to shore. I was in the water with him at the time. I'd been swimming with him most of the time. We got near the kelp beds. I could look on the beach, and I could see three fires, big bonfires. I thought, how lucky, I selected the right bonfire. I thought, "What bonfire should I try to go for?" I selected this one here. I don't know why, but I selected that one. That was where my wife was. My brothers were there. Jack Cheney was there. All my friends happened to be at that one there. Now, when this happened in 1927, when George Young swam the Channel, the radio announced that this Catalina Channel swimmer was coming across. "Please go to Point Fermin. Take your cars. Turn the headlights on, because there's no light, so the swimmers could see the lights." So, I could see the lights up at the top of the hill, from the car. They were doing the same thing for this channel swimmer. Well, when we got to the kelp beds, why, I could see the fire. The boat went offshore. The rowboats couldn't get any closer than where we were in the kelp beds. We got into the kelp beds, and he was just absolutely, totally exhausted. So, we got to where I could stand up on a rock. I said, "Come on. Wake up. Wake up. We're here. We're here." Well, we took one step more. We got to where were about this deep in the water and standing on rocks. Then I started yelling. I said, "We're here, the Channel swimmers, down the shore." Well, all these cameramen came out. This fellow had a camera shop on the corner of 9th and Cabrillo. I'll think of his name in just a minute. He was a Pedro man. I thought I knew him. Well, he came out. He was trying to take our picture. He took one step forward, and he disappeared, fell into a hole. But his camera – I'll never forget. His wrist was sticking out, and his camera was above the water. He came up. The camera did not get wet. He climbed up on another rock, and he took a picture of King Nawahi and myself and another lifeguard that was with us. That picture came out in *Life* magazine. That picture came out in the 1947 yearbook of the Encyclopedia Britannica. The blind man who swam across the Catalina Channel, King Nawahi.

MS: Great story. Point Fermin, tell me about that. What's the history of that place? What's the importance of that and the port?

JO: The lighthouse.

MS: Yes.

JO: Okay. It was Phineas Banning's idea – he's the father of the port – to build a lighthouse. The money was appropriated, but it took ten years before they built the lighthouse. So, it

probably was built 1874. [inaudible] 1874. The fourth-order Fresnel lens was made in France sent to New York, brought her on the Horn, and lit on December the 15th, 1874. The first captain there was a woman, and later on, there were three women lighthouse keepers.

As a 3-year-old, we lived, at that time – or 2.5 or 3 – we lived on Cabrillo Avenue, where I was born. We were dressed like sailors. My father was walking in front of the lighthouse with three little boys all dressed like sailors, with the sailor caps on and sailor suit. The lighthouse keeper's daughter was – her name was Thelma Austin. The Austin family were the lighthouse keepers. She was washing the dishes. She looked out the window. She saw these three little boys walking in front of her lighthouse. So, she put her dishes down and grabbed her camera, ran outside, and said, "May I take a picture of your boys?" He said, "Sure." She put us three little boys and my father up against the fence of the lighthouse and took a picture. Then she gave the camera to my father and said, "Now, take my picture with them." So, she got behind the three little boys, and she took our picture. Later on, I saw this at my mother's house. I was aware of the picture there. I went to a dentist, Dr. Horn – Korn, in Wilmington. I walked in there. The lady was wearing a (mask?). She said, "My, you have a pretty good tan." I said, "Yes. I'm a lifeguard at Cabrillo Beach." She says, "Oh, you live in San Pedro." "Yes. I live on the Point. In fact, I live right on the Point." She said, "Well, you might live on the Point, but you can't live any closer than me." She said, "I was born in the lighthouse." I said, "I'm sorry, but I live on the other side of the lighthouse, on the edge of the cliff." I said, "Are you one of the Austin children?" She said, "Yes. How do you know?" I said, "[inaudible] Austin family were lighthouse keepers. Which one are you? Are you Juanita, or are you Thelma?" "You even know my name." I said, "Of course. I have a picture taken with you." She said, "All right, I've never seen you before in my life." I said, "Would you like to have me show you a picture of you and me together?" She said, "I sure do." I said, "Next time I come to the dentist, I'll bring it." So, I went to my mother's house. I said, "Mother, where's that picture that you showed me when I was a little boy about 3 years old?" She pulled it out. She said, "Here." I said, "Can I borrow it?" "Of course." So, the next time we went to the dentist in Wilmington, I walked in, and I said, "Is this you?" "Oh, yes, when I was 16 years old. I was washing the dishes, and you walked by with your father. I ran out and took your picture. Oh, my goodness, that's you." Well, what happened is I got a call from Long Beach. The fellow said, "I can't tell you my name, but I'm an employee for the United States Coast Guard, the 11th Coast Guard District." He said, "But tomorrow morning at 8:00, there will be a bulldozer, and they're quietly going to come in and bulldoze down the lighthouse." I said, "Now, wait a minute. Why?" He says, "The Navy wants to put a radar station there. It's easier to bulldoze the lighthouse and then change all the maps in the whole world." I said, "Over my dead body." I said, "That lighthouse is the most beautiful building in San Pedro." He said, "Well, I can't tell you who I am." I said, "Bill, is that you?" He said, "Yeah. How did you know?" I said, "You and I went to high school forty-seven years ago, forty-five years ago. Your voice is the same." He said, "For heaven's sake, don't tell anybody I called you." I said, "Hang up. You've done your job. Let me take care of it." He hung up. I turned right around and I called our congressman, (Glenn Anderson?). He happened to be home. He answered the phone. I said, "Glenn, John Olguin." I said, "I've got a problem. At 8:00, they're going to bulldoze that point from lighthouse without telling anybody so no one can resist it." I said, "You've got to stop them, Glenn." He said, "John, you've done your job." He said, "You can count on me, I'll top it." He picked up the vault and he stopped the bulldozer. Okay. So, meantime, the Navy had built a square chicken coop up there and instead of the round

one. And they built it just for the war. They had a radar station up there. So, I wrote an article for the paper and I said, "The Point Fermin lighthouse had to be saved. It had to be restored. The top of the lighthouse has a chicken coop. I said, [inaudible] in doing that. I think that the people ought to wake up before we lose the light. Bill Olesen who had met up to that time with a shipbuilder. He read it and he came right down to me then introduced himself. I said, "We'll form a committee, you and I. You are a shipbuilder. You can read blueprints. I'm a promoter between the two of us. Let's go to work. But we sure can, we formed the Point Fermin lighthouse committee. And good thing I did, I had a little [inaudible] so we can start to make $2 and begin to accumulate it. What we did, we went to the City of Los Angeles and we talked to the general manager, (Bill Peddleton?), we went up to City Hall. And we said, "We would like to take and restore the lighthouse." He said, "Well, you got any money?" I said "No, we don't. We'll promote everything." He said, "Okay. You can do it. Who's going to work on it?" I said, "Volunteers." He says, "All right. If you would sign the paper that you agree that you'll be responsible for all injury that will happen, you'll take full responsibility, then you can do it." Bill looked at me and I looked at Bill. We both nodded. We both signed it. They wrote it out. That we take full responsibility for any volunteer working on it. Then that'd be our permission to work in the lighthouse. And then Bill and I said no one's going to work on it but you and me. That we'll both do it alone. We don't need anybody else to help. We won't use volunteers. And so, what I did I went to the community. And I went to EK Wood Lumber Company. I said, "We need some lumber." He said, "For the lighthouse?" "Yes." "Free. Get whatever you want." So, Bill ordered the lumber and got it free. I went to San Pedro Glass and said, "We need glass." He said, "For the lighthouse?" "Yes." "Give John all the glass he wants and no charge." I couldn't believe it. San Pedro would not take my money. When I had earned a little money whale watching in order to pay for the things that we're going to buy. So, I thought "Well, you can ask [inaudible] to donate anything. So, I went into [inaudible] store and the girl would wait on me. And I did a bunch of little things for the lighthouse. The general manager came over and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Olguin. Is this for the lighthouse?" "Yes," I said. "I'm buying for the lighthouse." He said, "Give whatever he wants. Don't take his money." I couldn't believe it. [inaudible] that give me whatever I want free. The whole time, the same way. So, with that kind of an attitude, I said, "What a wonderful town San Pedro is." I wouldn't ask them for free. I was willing to pay for it. Well, what happened? Bill began to undo the top of the lighthouse and drop it down with the rope and I'm at the bottom. And we're working after work. We're on Saturday and Sunday and so on. I broke my leg. I broke my Achilles tendon so I can no longer climb up and help him out. So, he had to do most of the work himself while I'm in the calf down below. We finally got that down. We got it built. We wanted to get ready for the 100th birthday. Well, we weren't anywhere near ready and built it —like I have been ready by the 100th birthday. Got all this work to do, all the gingerbread to cut around the side. My neighbor happened to be a fireman, and he was skiing down in Lake Havasu and he got hurt. I said, "Well, do the off work." He says "No, I'm a fireman. I don't care where I get hurt. The city is taking care of me, my insurance and the city also takes care of me." I said, "You mean that if you work on a lighthouse and you get hurt, that the city will pay for it?" He said, "Yes. I'm insured." I said, "I can be a fireman and I'm insured." He said, "Absolutely." So, I called the battalion chief, (Carter?) at his home. I got his phone number. I said, "This is John Olguin. We're trying to finish that lighthouse for the March 1974 Open House 100th year birthday. I need some carpenters. Can you help me out?" "How many do you need?" "As I many as I can." He said, "I'll have them down there. When do you want them?" "Right away." He got on the

telephone and tried calling different fire stations. Next morning, here comes all these firemen with their toolboxes and so on. And then, they were up there hacking their way, working their way and we got the whole thing finished then we had the 100th birthday. Meantime, we were trying to find the light. When the war started, they took the light and put it in the cellar. After the war, it disappeared. Nobody knew where it was. So, I went and I talked to Admiral (Hill?) of the 11th Coast Guard District. I said, "I'd like to know the names of the people who worked for you in 1941 when they took the light down." So, I got the name and I wrote all over the country. I even wrote to Alaska. Nobody knew what happened to the light. It disappeared. One day, Bill and I are having breakfast at 7:00 a.m. We met once a week. We're at the cafe on Pacific Avenue and in walks the captain. I knew the commander of the Coast Guard, captain of the Coast Guard, (Fabian?). So, I said, "Hey, Captain (Fabian?). Come and sit down and have breakfast with us. We're talking about restoring the lighthouse." I said, "The Coast Guard loaned me a light temporarily to put up there." He said, "Why don't you use the original light?" I said, "I would but we couldn't find it. We've been looking for it for the last year." He says, "I know where it is. I'll deliver it." I said, "Sit down. I'm going to buy you your breakfast." So, he sat down. He said, "I lived in Malibu, and my neighbor was Captain George Watkins." Okay. I knew Captain George Washington. He was the lifeguard [inaudible]. But he was in Santa Monica. So, I met him at meetings. I knew him. He said, "He wants to start a museum just like you have at Cabrillo on the pier at Santa Monica." I told him that the light would [inaudible] in San Pedro from the lighthouse. If he wrote a letter to the 11th Coast Guard District, they would probably lend it to him. So, he wrote the letter. He said, "I picked it up, put it on a pickup truck and I drove it up to Santa Monica," and he put it in the museum on the pier. I said, "Well, then I know where the light. That is wonderful." I said, "I'll go get it." I said, "But wait a minute. I thought the pier had a storm and they demolished it." "Yeah," he said. "What happened?" He said, "They tore down the museum." So, he took the light home. He said, "But I don't know if you're going to be able to find the light because he died." I said, "Well, I'll take it from there." So, I knew he had a son named Billy. So, I began to look and I found Billy who lived at, I think, Baldwin Park or Fullerton but I found him on a phone book. I called him and I said, "Billy, this is John Olguin, a friend of your dad's. I'm sorry that he passed away. What happened to the light?" He said, "Well, after the storm, we moved the light to our home up in Malibu. From Malibu, the property was sold. [inaudible] in Malibu, here's a developer named (Louis T. Bush?)." I said, "Thank you. That's all I need. I'll follow up on that." Well, we went up to his home and we could see the light in Malibu, where he lived. Then we went to Louis T. Bush. And we walked in there and Mr. Bush was on duty. He was there. And Bill Olesen was with me. We went in there and we said, "Mr. Bush, my name is Joyn Olguin and this is Bill Olesen. We're on the lighthouse committee. We're going to celebrate the 100th Birthday here in just two weeks." I said, "We finally found the light, just in time." I said, "This light came from Point Fermin and it belongs back in the lighthouse." He says, "No, it didn't." I said, "Yes, it did." He says, "No. It just came up for lightship." I said, "No, we traced it. We talked to his son, Billy and this belongs to Point Fermin. He said, "You're wrong. It didn't belong there." And I said, "Wait a minute. We just walked in here." He said, "Yes." I said, "Let me read your sign to you. This is your sign." I didn't bring it in. I picked the sign up and I said, "This is your label, right?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Let me read it to you. It said, 'This light on the port order was built in France, shipped to New York and then brought around the [inaudible] and the fall in the Point Fermin Lighthouse and lit on December 15th, 1874.' This is your sign." He said, "I haven't noticed that before." I said, "Bill, are you documenting this? We want to document everything

that happened." He said, "John, I'm writing everything down. Everything that you're saying and he's saying." I said, "Look, Mr. Bush, I want to go to the 11th Coast Guard District. I'm going to get a letter. I'm going to come back and give you the letter. I'm going to take the light and put it up there at the lighthouse." His face got red. He just got real upset with us. We left. We went to Admiral Hill the very next day and we said, "Admiral Hill, we'd like to get a letter from your file so that we can pick up the light so we can put it back where it belongs." "No problem. Take it off, so we'll give you a copy of the letter. You can pick up the light and then [inaudible]." I said, "When will that happen?" He said, "Within a day or two." Well, I waited a week. I waited two weeks, and it was getting closer. So, I called him up and I said, "We haven't received the letter yet." He said, "Well, you have to talk to my executive officer." So, I talked to him. He said, "We're sorry, Mr. Olguin, but the Coast Guard burns on his record every ten years. We have no record of lending that light to George Watkins." He said, "You'll have to get it back on your own with diplomatic sources." I said, "Oh, no." So, I went back to our Congressman Glenn Anderson. I said, "Glenn Anderson, you're our congressman. Can't you get that light back for us?" He said, "Sure." So, he put his deputy on it. The deputy called him every day. He wouldn't lend it to it. He wouldn't sell it to it. He wouldn't give it to it. He would not relinquish the light. He kept saying, "Take me to court. If the court said that I'd have to give it to you, then take me to court." Bill Olesen said, "No. We're not going to take him to court. The light is on display. It's in his place of business. We know where it is. It's not hidden. If we take him to court, it might fall and break over and we'll lose the light totally. Or it might be moved to a warehouse, we'll never know. We'll never see it again." He said, "We'll outlive him." Well, at that time, Bill was in his eighties. I said, "Well, okay. We'll just go without the light for the 100th birthday." So, we had a 100th birthday party. We took another story [inaudible] because it was the biggest party. Our mayor showed up. We had a great big cake. We had free ice cream for the whole community. It was a big party. Okay, that's another story. I got pitched to them and made videotapes. Back to the light. So, what I did is I went at that time to (Dean Dana?). I said, Mr. Dana. I'm a lifeguard cabinet. Do you know I'd like to be on your advisory board so I can infiltrate Malibu so I can get that light back. Our light belongs to the Point." He said, "That's no problem. We'll put you on the Beach Advisory Board. We'll assign you the Malibu and you can infiltrate the community. So, I went on the Beach Advisory Board, and right away, I wanted to find somebody who played golf with Mr. Bush. I find him playing golf with a judge who also was running a historical museum. So, we're going to have lunch with him. So, we had lunch with him in Malibu. We told him, when you play golf with Mr. Bush, can you ask him if he'll donate that light or lend it so we can have it back? Do what you can do by getting the light back for it. He said, "I will." He called me up a couple of weeks later. He said, "He'll give it to the museum to the lighthouse someday. But he's not ready to relinquish it now." I said, "But we got to have it now." So, what I did next is I invited the lighthouse society from San Francisco to come out and go whale watching us and go to three lighthouses. The lighthouse at Angels Gate on the breakwater, the Point Fermin lighthouse and the lighthouse at Point Vincente. In each place, we had a salute. We have a battle aboard the ship, and we have a gun salute. We just made a program out of it with the idea that they would go to Louis T. Bush, the committee and asked him to give the light back. They did and he would not give the light back. He wouldn't do it. (Charlie Twain) is the cameraman who went [inaudible] to pet whales. I told him my story. So, he went down. He said, "Look, we'll go there and we will get fifty people." [inaudible] have a light, we want it back and so on. We'll pick at his place. He'll give us the light. I said, "No. That's not the way to do it. It might fall and break and we'll lose the light

altogether. We can't do it that. We'd rather not do it that way. And I tried everything. Finally, this friend of mine, who was a fundraiser for Stanford University, his wife was a volunteer. She said, "My husband is the fundraiser for Stanford University." I said, "Do you think I could meet your husband? Maybe you can help me out." She said, "Sure." So, I went to her house. I met her husband, nice guy. He said, "Look, you and I will go to his office with a lawyer. We'll say, 'That light belongs in San Pedro. The community wants to back. How much do you want for it?' Everything has a price." I said, "No, wait. What if he says he wants a million dollars?" He said, "John, I'll write you a check for $1 million. The lawyer will verify it. We'll give him the million dollars. Then we'll take the light and put it where it belongs." I said, "No, wait a minute. Where am I going to get the million dollars?" "I'll give it to you. Isn't that [inaudible] thing in the world? I'll give you $1 million." I said, "Then we got our light back?" He said, "You sure do." I said, "I got to check with my partner, Bill Olesen." So, I rushed back to the Maritime Museum. Bill Olesen was with a volunteer. He was on duty there working. I said, "Bill, we got our light back. My friend is going to give us a million dollars and we will take the light and put it up there where it belongs." Bill said, "No, it's not." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "It's not his light. It belongs to the government. The government does not give away properties. You can't. They'd lend it. They can take it back anytime they want, but not give it away." I said, "Then how are we going to get it back?" He said, "We'll outlive them." Bill lived to be ninety-nine years old. When Bill was at the rest center [inaudible], I visited him almost every day until they moved him to the hospital. Then I went to the hospital. For a couple of days, he wasn't talking. The day before he died, he was talking like he was a newborn boy. He said, "John, I know I'm dying. I'm ninety-nine years old. I almost made it to a hundred. I've had a good life. It's been a wonderful trip. I only made one mistake." I said, "What's that?" He said, "When you came to me and you told me you have a million dollars and I refused, I should have said yes. If I had said yes that light would be up on top of that lighthouse." "Bill, rest in peace. Go quietly. But I promise you right now, I guarantee you that I'm not going to die until the light goes up there. You and I, we're going to do a sailor's jig in front of the lighthouse when the light went up. I will do that sailor's jig for you. I'll vouch for you that light will be there, Bill." He smiled and he said, "You know, you never give up. You've always been very optimistic. I know that's going to happen." That night he died. I got a call – and we'll explain to you how we got the light back. I got a call and said the light was coming back. The minute I found out the light was coming back, I went up to our president of the Lighthouse Society, Martha McKinzie, and I got the flowers from the garden. Then my wife and I went down to Bill's grave. Bill was buried on 22nd in Grand. There's an old cemetery there. In it, there in the granite an etching of the Point Fermin lighthouse right over his grave. It said Bill Olesen, and then the lighthouse. We put flowers on his grave and my wife and I talked to his spirit. We said, "Bill Olesen, we've kept our word. I will do a jig in front of the lighthouse because the light is coming back. We want your spirit to know that it's going to happen. I know that you can hear me because we're talking to your spirit, Bill. It's going to happen we're going to have a big party – the biggest party San Pedro has ever had." We kept our word. I did a jig in front of the lighthouse. We have a big party, a big celebration and that kind of terminates the fact. Now, how did we get the light back? Okay. Well, the man will not give it to us, wouldn't lend it to us, wouldn't sell it to us and so on. The way we got the light back is interesting. I was heading up the whale watch program and meets every Tuesday night. This man come to the beach with a black suit and a white tie and a white shirt. No one comes to the beach with a black suit and a white tie and he had gray hair. A very distinguished looking man sitting in the audience with all the other college students because it's

for college and above. Then I thought this man here is an important person and maybe he cannot be with some of my problem. So, it's [inaudible] and I said, "What's your name?" He said, "My name is (Leon Doherty?)." I said, "Mr. Doherty, can I ask you a personal question?" He said, "Sure." I said, "What kind of business are you in?" He said, "I am the president of Northrop University. My students come here and they have been telling me so much about your program that I want to be part of it." He said, "They're having fun. They're going on whaleboats and talking about whales. That's the kind of thing I'd like to do with my wife." I said, "Can you step in my office for a minute?" He said, "Sure." So, I said, "I got a little problem," and I told him the whole story about the light. What I've done, and how I joined the homeowners and how I tried to get the light back and I've been working on it for ten years and so on. He said, "Have you contacted the Coast Guards boss?" I said, "You mean there's another admiral in Washington, D.C. that's head of this admiral here?" He said, "No. The Coast Guard is under the Department of Commerce." He said, "Would you want to contact the head of the Department of Commerce?" I said, "Who is that?" It's Bob's wife, what's her name? But anyway, my friend (Leon Doherty?) said, "Are you aware that (Elizabeth Dole?) is in charge of the Department of Commerce?" I said, "No." How does a lifeguard know that? A lifeguard doesn't know all these kind of stuff. He said, "Why don't you write to (Elizabeth Dole?)? She'll get the light for you." I said, "Well, will you write the letter for me?" He said, "Sure." I'll bring it tomorrow morning. Well, the next morning, he came with the most beautiful letter I have ever written. I was so excited that I made one mistake. I signed it. I mailed it before I made a copy of it. I thought, "Oh, if only I have a copy. I could write a book and put that letter in it." But two weeks later or ten days later, I got a call from Life Magazine. They said, "We have a letter here from Elizabeth Dole concerning your Point Fermin Lighthouse. We understand you want your light. What can we do to help you?" "That's wonderful. How nice of her to send you the letter." I said, "I recommend you take a picture of people on the lighthouse. Run it on the cover of Life Magazine and then take a picture of the light itself and put it in the front page and say 'The people in San Pedro want their light back. This man has it and he won't give it to us. It belonged to Point Fermin. As citizen of San Pedro, we want our light returned to us.' If you're on Life Magazine, I think it might embarrass him enough to give it back to us." He said, "Yes. I'll send a photographer out there. I'll have him give you a call and we'll arrange it and set a date. We'll be happy to do that for you." Well, eventually, I got a phone call. "I'm the photographer and also the woman with him. We're coming out to do the program for you on the lighthouse. Can you get twenty-five people on the lighthouse?" I said, "Oh, yeah, no problem. I'll get many if you want." "twenty-five will be enough. We'll put them in the windows and we'll give them torches. We'll take a picture as the sun goes down. It'll go on Life Magazine in the cover." I said, "When? We set the date." He said, "They'll be there." Well, they showed up about 3:00 p.m. one day. We went up to the lighthouse and they took a look at the lighthouse. They said, "How many did you have with you?" I said, "You asked for twenty-five, I've got twenty-five coming. They'll be here before sunset." He said, "This is a big lighthouse. I want a hundred." I said, "You want a hundred people? How much time you got?" "You got about 45 minutes." I said, "Get out of the way." I got into the telephone. I called up the boy scouts, the girl scouts, the Bluebirds, the Brownies, I call the longshoremen, the fishermen. I called my church. I called everybody in San Pedro that I could make over as fast as I could. A hundred and twenty-five people showed up, including my family. They gave them torches. They rented torches. The idea of taking pictures when the sun went down, and they had them in all the windows. Then ten minutes before, everything was ready. Bill, also the wife and I were in front by the fence and

everybody was behind us. They were up on the platform and waiting for the sun to go down. Then ten minutes before the sun was going down, he said, "Hey, John." I said, "Yeah?" He said, "Put the people on the rope." I said, "No way. They'll fall off." He said, "I got to have people on a rope. It will make a good picture with that." I said, "It's too dangerous. I can't do it." He said, "I got to have them." I said, "How much time you got?" He said, "About ten minutes before the sun goes down." I grabbed the telephone. I called Fire Chief Carter at home. Luckily, I got him. I said, "Hey, Battalion Chief Carter, this is John Olguin. We're taking the picture at the light out. We need firemen on the roof of the lighthouse. Can you help us out?" He said, "How much time you got?" "About eight minutes." This is hard for you to believe, but it actually happened. As I hung up the telephone, I heard [imitating sound of siren]. As I hung up the telephone, here comes the big fire truck that roared right into the lighthouse and the big ladder up to the top. All these firemen lined up with torches and they stood on the rope. Just when the sun went down and they took the picture. Then they call me back, the Life Magazine, "That picture will be on the cover of Life Magazine, just like you requested." What happened is San Pedro and my committee, the John Olguin committee were the first ones in America, civilians, to take a lighthouse and restore it. Because of that, Life started an article called The Great Lighthouse Giveaway. Then it says that Congress mandated that because we're the first one to do this, that no one in America could tear down the lighthouse. They had to give it to a bed and breakfast study or to the county or the state or to the National Park for anyone that would maintain it. Then there's an article in there that says the John Olguin committee were the first ones in America to do this. That picture was going to come out on front page of Life Magazine. Two weeks before they print the magazine, I got a call from Life Magazine, "Yes, it's still going to be on the front page." When it came out, it was on page 42. [inaudible] was on the front page of Time Magazine, Life Magazine, every magazine in the country [inaudible]. We were on page 42. But in it was the Great Lighthouse Giveaway, and on the back with our picture with the Point Fermin Lighthouse and the article saying that we're the ones that preserved and so on. So, that's the story of how we got the light back. But how did we get the light back? Actually, we give the credit where the credit belongs. I thought that the Harbor Department gave us the light back, gave us the money, over a million dollars to restore the lighthouse. They're going up to them we've been raising money to restore it and doing this and doing that. Well, as soon as I got the million dollars, I ran right down to the Harbor Department and I gave the general manager a little lighthouse and thanked him. He said, "Well, the money came from the Harbor Department of the Port of Los Angeles. But it was the mayor that requested it, Janice Hahn. I said, "Thanks a lot. I really appreciate getting to the facts." So, I went down about two more lighthouses and then I gave one to Jim Hahn and I gave one to Janice Han. I said, "Thank you for giving the money, for arranging for the money to come from the Port of Los Angeles to redo the lighthouse. Now, it will be restored professionally." Now, when they restored the lighthouse, they also arranged to hire a curator, a director because I've told them, we were trying to have a fence around the lighthouse. We took the fence down. Now we put the nightwatchman there, twenty-four hours there is someone there. They have a director to organize the whole thing and supervise it. She went to Washington and she located a photograph of the light taken back in 1875 of the lens. Then through the Coast Guard – and the way this came around with indirectly, my nephew was a lieutenant in the Coast Guard. He married a lieutenant in the Coast Guard and she was a lawyer. So, I went to her and I said, "You're family and you're a lieutenant in the Coast Guard." I said, "Here's everything I've done. Help me out. Take it to your admiral in San Francisco and see if you can get this light back. She took it to her admiral and the admiral

said, "That's a government property." So, instead of sending down a marshal, he sent down an officer. The officer walked in and told Louis T. Bush, "Here's all the information. That light belongs to Point Fermin. We want it back." He says, "Sure. You can have it. Just sue me, take me to court. You can have the light back but I want to go to court." If they're going to court, they thinned out a volunteer for the Coast Guard, a woman, the diplomat. But she had a photograph taken out of the original light back in 1875. She walked in and she said, " I just come to show you the DNA of the light." She says that [inaudible] has screwed all the way around it. When they tighten the screw, there are no two screws that's tighten up the same direction. He said, "I have a photograph of the original light, and you have what we think might be the original light even though it's not. My light is not the same as the lighthouse. Let's look at the DNA. Let's look at the screw. Take a look at your light. Here's my photograph. Screw number one, it's pointing to the north. Take a look at yours, is it pointing north? Take a look at screw number two. It's pointing to the south. How is yours?" "It's pointing to the south, too." "Take a look at screw number three." We went completely around the light and every single screw match the photograph taken 1875. She said, "The DNA of a light is by the way the screws are tightened. There are no two screws tightened in the same direction. Therefore, what do you think? Do you think that your light is the one that I have on my photograph? You convinced me. That belongs to Point Fermin." "You agree to give it back? You'll have to give it back." Now if he would have given it back voluntarily, he had been a hero. He could have taken it up in income tax and so on. Because he kept it all these years in good condition. But since he didn't do that and the Coast Guard said, "We are simply reclaiming our property. It is our property, so we're taking back our property," and they took their property back. Then they agree to lend it to the Point Fermin Lighthouse. So, I called Huell Howser because Huell Howser and I have done three shows. This will be the third show. I said, " Huell Howser, you owe me a cup of coffee. We're getting the light back." He says, "No, you're not." I took him out to lunch and he figured, you're never going to get your light back. So, I said, "Huell Howser, you owe me a cup of coffee. We're getting the light back. It's coming back in two weeks." He said, "I don't believe it. I want you there. I want to take a picture of me bringing the light back." I said, "I'm sorry. I'm planning to go to New Zealand." Because I have plans already, my tickets and the whole thing. He said, "I'll go photograph the light coming back –

MS: I think we're going to have to cut it short. Now that the light is back. Huell Howser has done his things so we'll end it there. We need to go and talk about some other subjects.

JO: We're going to go back and finish it. We haven't finished yet with Huell Howser.

MS: Well, the light got back.

JO: Yes. The light is back but he's going to meet me there and we're going to take a picture of me with the light and tell him the story again.

MS: Right. Okay, good.

JO: Okay. That's another story.

MS: It's another story. Whale-watching.

JO: How did it start?

MS: How did start and what's its importance again with the port in San Pedro?

JO: Okay. You ready?

MS: Yes.

JO: Okay. The way whale watching started when I read about [inaudible] with a high school teacher down in Dana Point. He taught his high school students how to give talks. He got Lions Club to sponsor him and take them tuning up to give talks. I read about it and I said, "That's a wonderful idea." We had volunteers and the volunteers were all high school students. They said, "Mr. Oguin, we'd like to volunteer for you, but we can't afford it. Can you make us [inaudible] to buy jackets, the same way to buy patches and nameplate. We can make and save earned money in order to rent a boat and whale watching and go out and do dredging." I said, "Well, I'll come up with some idea to earn money out of that." So, I went to my general manager and I said, "I'd like to start whale watch and use the money that I earn from whale watch for our volunteers so that I can build a long-term up." He said, "If you're working for the City of Los Angeles and you earned the money, it will have to go into the general fund. If you start whale watching, every penny you make has to go back to the general fund. You cannot use it for the museum or anything else." I said, "What the use to start them? I'm not going to do it." So, I didn't do it. But I thought about it all that summer. So, what I did meantime is I kind of got myself elected president of the American Cetacean Society, which is the oldest whale watching society. I was a member already, but I never wanted to be president. But now I want to be president. So, they wanted me president. Okay. So, I became the president. The minute I became president, I went back to my general manager, which was William [inaudible]. I said, "William, I've come back to you again. I'd like to start whale watch. I agree with you, every penny I make will go back to the City of Los Angeles." I said, "But what if I made some money to the Americans Cetacean Society in Hawaii?" "Well, you do what you want with that." "Or Redondo Beach." "You can do what you want." "Long Beach?" "As long as it's not in City of Los Angeles, you can do whatever you want with your money from the Americans Cetacean Society. It has nothing to do with the city." I said, "Then I'll start whale watch." Well, I didn't have a staff. But I had a woman who worked 20 hours a week. Well, I did some needling, and I let her off. Then she worked doing the whale watch team. Her name was (Charlene Arnold?). She helped start the whale watch. She was a legal secretary. So, she had the ability of organizing it. But we wanted to do whale watch without anyone getting hurt. We didn't know how to handle it. So, I went to San Pedro Sportfishing, a fellow named (Phil Gregson?). I said, "We'd like to start whale watching and charge $1 apiece and I'll furnish the volunteers." He said, "I can't make any money with $1 apiece. I said, "No, you can. But if your boats are sitting here doing nothing anyway, in the wintertime, we thought $1 apiece, they'll come on Saturday and Sunday with mothers and fathers. [inaudible] have all kinds of people on weekend. Charge whatever you want on Saturday and Sunday." He said, "Well, let's give it a try." I said, "Okay. I'll furnish the volunteers. All I have are high school kids." He said, "I'll give them $10 apiece." That didn't work. He gave ever volunteer $10 every time they went out. We did that only one year and then we quit. It doesn't work. You can't pay volunteers. They were ditching school in

order to go whale watching. I didn't want that. Anyway, so we started on San Pedro Sportfishing. That first year, we experimented. This was 1969 experiment. In 1970, we haven't learned yet. I didn't want anyone to get hurt. So, I went with them. I said, "Well, I want one adult for every five children." Then that didn't work either. Then I said, "I don't want to get running around. I want them to sit down. That didn't work. We finally learned, all you do is tell them, "Go anywhere you want, do anything you like. Well, you don't do two things. Number one, you don't run. Number two, you don't climb up on top of the seats or the life preservers or the rail. Keep your feet on the deck. If you do those two things, then you got to be safe. That's all I'm looking for. Okay. So, when we find out that that was how to do it safely. Then we began to advertise. Well, the problem we had was school. Other school said, "I'm sorry, you cannot take our students to whale watch." I said, "Wait, they're insured for $8 million." "Oh, they are?" "Yes. They're commercial, $8 million." "Okay." That part is good. That didn't take care of the insurance. But we cannot take children from a school onto a boat where they have to pay go well watching because that might eliminate them as students. You can't do that." I said, "I looked into it. I did my homework. I found out that any school can start a nature club. Everybody contributes to the nature club and not everybody gets to go on a field trip to the nature club. So, I told the teachers, all you do is formulate your club in your class or elect the president, the vice president and treasurer. Then everybody chipped in and they get to go. We got past that and we went whale watching. What happened was it was very successful. We went to school first. We did a lecture and talked. We sold some slides on whales. Then we took that same class on the boat and went whale watching. We all started with the lifeguards. That I read all the literature. I wonder what I'll talk about on whales, and I didn't know anything. So, I read everything that was found. Dr. Theodore Walker was an expert on it and another doctor in San Diego. I read everything they printed on it. They both were in conflict with each other. They said that the whales go to Mexico and have the baby. Then they come back and they're all finished here by first of April, they're done. Not true. In May, they're still going by with [inaudible]. I could see them, big spot, little spot. Anyway, I would tell the lifeguard – because I was the captain, I would work in a museum. "When you see a whale, blow the horn." They push the button, and you can hear it all over the beach. No matter where I was in the museum, when I heard that horn, I knew there was a whale out there. I would tell him, when you see the whale, just – I come up with the children point to where [inaudible] came up. Well, I'd look over and they'd be pointing that way or they'd be pointing this way. I would tell the children and I would just take them outside. I'd say, "Everybody, point in that direction. You got to look for little puff." Pretty cool, there was a puff. I said, "That's the whale. They are the whale migrating." I thought that was fantastic. Let's take it one step further. Let's take these children out there. That's where we got the idea of earning some money and they go on whale watching by taking them closer to the whales. Well, the second one that came in was 22nd Street, Landon. I went to them first. I said, "Would you like to get enough further?" They said, "No way. We can't make any money." But when they saw all these boats going by with all these kids, they said, "Well, put us in. We'll try it." So, Frank Hall was in charge – he died. But he was in charge of 22nd Street. So, he came in on the program. Then the third one was Redondo Beach, and they keep it on the program. But I wanted them because then I could keep that money. I couldn't keep the ones here. Then I went to Long Beach and I got to Queens Wharf. They got in on the program. All the money we made from sportfishing we gave to the City of Los Angeles. All the money we made Redondo Beach and Long Beach. We went to the American Cetacean Society. Then they voted to give it back to me for the volunteers. So, I got what I wanted. I bought the kids jackets.

I bought them nameplates. We paid for the boats to go out and do dredging and so on. We paid for the buses to go to San Diego, to go to the Scripps Institute and things like that. So, after two years of that, my general manager cut out what I was doing and he let us keep the money after that. What we did, we gave 10 percent to the Cetacean Society and 10 percent to the Cabrillo Aquarium for the program. One of the best things I did at that time was I went back and I asked my wife, I said, "I want you to design a whale-watch patch so I can make some money so we can use it for the volunteers." So, she designed a whale-watch patch. I invested $3,000 and we sold the patches onboard the boat. Since I paid for it, I had control of the money. We selected two students that worked the longest and put in the most hours. We sent them to Hawaii to see the humpback whale. We did that for a couple of years and it worked out very nicely. Now, we're still selling the patches but we use it for a banquet. At the end of the whale-watch season, anyone in the program gets the free banquet down at the Ports O' Call Restaurant. Well, the first year, in 1972, (Lillian Landy?), she's retired now but she was a teacher at Long Beach City College. I called her and I said, "I need some people in the whale watch. I don't have enough. My publicity hadn't brought in enough people. She brought her whole class. She called also the teacher at Pierce College and they brought the whole class. That would give us the [inaudible] to start the whale watch program with all these college students. It's been a very successful program. LA Times called San Pedro the whale watching center of the world.

M: There's so much to talk about. I'm going to go back and get to kind of a general picture. You obviously love this place. You love the environment here. You love the people here. If you can do it, how can you sum up your feelings about San Pedro and the harbor? What does it mean to you?

JO: Sure. My wife and I rode down from Juneau, Alaska in a 14-foot rowboat, which is another story. We started in Juneau. After we had made a trip, we had taken all these slides. I put a little ad in the paper that I will be speaking at the PTA at Leland Street Elementary School and the general public was invited and it's for free. I couldn't believe it. They packed the auditorium. They took every seat in the auditorium and they were all standing around the back of the wall. There were even crowd outside the door trying to get in. I was so thrilled to have that many people show up to hear a talk on rowing with my wife and I. I said, "If you were born and raised in San Pedro, would you stand up?" The whole audience stood up. Everybody stood up, maybe five or six people did not stand up. I said, "You may sit down. You are San Pedro. You're different. You don't happen to go by San Pedro. You go out of your way to go to San Pedro." When I was younger, if it rained for three days in a row, you couldn't get out of San Pedro. Only one way to get out that would be by the big red car. Because Gaffey Street was four feet underwater and they will also take it Western. Western was just a path from when I was a kid. Gaffey Street dead ended on 1st Street. If you go to 1st Street now, you will see that there is a cliff on either side. Gaffey Street is going to cut through that. But when I was a kid, Gaffey Street ended right on 2nd Street, not 1st Street. "So, you folks were born here. You live here. You work here. You die here. You love San Pedro." I said, "We're different." Two weeks later, I gave the same talk. It was over in Hawthorne [inaudible] at another school. There was a nice crowd, not a full [inaudible]. I said, "If you were born and raised in this town, will you stand up?" Four people or five people stood up. I said, "Look around, folks. Everybody from California moved in and moved out. You're on the way to Oregon, are you on the way to Arizona or you're with the airports. But you weren't born and raised here. You're moving

through this community." San Pedro is different. They live there. They're born there. They go to school there. You simply go to a football game. Win or lose, there are 3,000 or 4,000 people at the football game. They support the school. They support the sports. It's a different community. Okay. Your mother and father worked in the shipyard business. They were in the Navy and they're settled here, or they worked in the cannery. But San Pedro, they're a very unique community. We care about the community. We care about each other. So, basically, we're a very unique community.

MS: What about you personally, though? What does it mean to you personally?

JO: Okay. When I think of this, I think about Vincent Thomas. His name was [inaudible] but he changed his name to Thomas. He graduated from San Pedro High School in 1925. He was [inaudible]. They select eight people to become [inaudible]. In it, you take an oath and you say, "I promise that I will do everything in my power to leave this city a better city than I have found it." When he raised the money and worked for eighteen years and was the longest man in office in Sacramento. They named the bridge after him because he was the one who raised the money for the Vincent Thomas Bridge. When they dedicated and they cut the ribbon, he talked about graduating from San Pedro High School, and how he promised to leave the city a better city. I remember that because I was an [inaudible] also. When I graduated from San Pedro High School, I took that same oath. That I promised to leave my city, a better city than I have found it. With that in my mind, I thought, "What can I do to make it a better city?" I was a lifeguard. The first thing I did was I would run it up to Point Fermin and make cliff rescues and diving off the cliff to save fishermen. I had no car. So, I went to a supervisor and I said, "I need a truck." I said, "When somebody is drowning at Point Fermin, I stopped the person on the road and I say, 'Are you driving to Point Fermin? Somebody is drowning, I'm a lifeguard. Go.'" I said, "That's not right. I need a truck." He said, "We don't have a budget for a truck. You're not going to have a truck. You're going to have to do the best you can." Well, I promoted a broken-down jeep and I said, "I'm going to turn this in." Anyway, "So, I will overhaul it for you, but it looks awful. But if you put a paint job on it to be like a new one." So, he gave me this Jeep. He worked in San Pedro. His name was Crawford. I took about a five-day trip down to Colorado Rived and canoed and we had a wonderful time. I told him my problem. So, he gave me this Jeep. It would look horrible, but it had a brand-new engine. He overhauled it, new tires and I had a friend of mine spray it. I went to the fire department. I sent a lifeguard up there and [inaudible] and they gave me a siren. We had it chrome-free. They gave me a red light. We had a chrome free. We design the holder rack, the whole paddleboard. It looked like a brand-new Jeep when we were finished with it. My supervisor walked in and he said, "Who authorized the purchase of the Jeep?" I said, "I did." He said, "Where did you get the money?" I said, "Donated." He said, "I'll be darned." I said, "We needed the Jeep. We had to have it for lifeguard. With that in mind, I started doing and educated the program in school. I went to (Davis?) Junior High School and I put out a program for all the whole school. I went to Point Fermin School, [inaudible] School, San Pedro High School. I went to these school and I was educating the program, thinking that my career would be in the lifeguard service. Until the museum opened up, then I realized that my real career was in the museum. Because there were so many children I could reach. They were coming to me. I didn't have to go to them. I didn't have to leave the city. There was no such thing as a lifeguard going out for lunch. The lifeguard ate his lunch right on the job. No things of going downtown. Going to a school took me away

from my primary job, which was the lifeguard captain from the [inaudible]. So, I was always nervous about that. So, when I moved into the museum, I can go to [inaudible]. I can go to the pizza club during working hours. It was a big step in my life. I thought at that time, what I really can do is develop this program. When I sat down and I wrote down every single thing that I could do if I had unlimited funds, if I had unlimited budget, if I had unlimited people who'll work for me, every single thing. I thought, "Now, how am I going to get somebody to know about this? This is what I think can be done here." Everything that I wrote down happened. What I did is I would go into the museum conferences. I met that doctor who was the director of the Natural History Museum in San Diego. Then he became president of the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, which was my favorite place. I thought, "I'll send it to him." So, I wrote him a little note, and I said, "You know that I'm down here in this Cabrillo beach with a little bathhouse. We want to grow and want to develop. I did want to send this to somebody so that you'll know that if it happens that this is what I'm working for." I did a nice letter and I told him what my aims were and I sent it to him. I think indirectly, he helped me. Because good thing, after that began to happen, I begin to get the support of the city. Before that, I was a lifeguard. They said, "You're working out a classification. Keep it quiet. Don't get too much publicity, because you're a lifeguard not a museum director." I think what changed it was when the teacher came in and said, "Mr. Olguin, I'm down here and a thousand children are here already. Here is my approval. I have a tour and they won't let me in the museum." I said, "Why not?" He said, "They say I don't have an appointment." I said, "Look, when you run a thousand children every day, somebody made a mistake. Either you, your school did or we did. That's no problem. What time do you have to leave?" He said, "Well, I have to get on the bus at the same time as everybody, 1:00." I said, "What are your plans?" I said, "Well, I'm supposed to go to the museum at 11:00." I said, "Well, go have your lunch at 11:00 right now. Then at 12:00, when you had your lunch, I will take you on a tour and give you the same thing you had if you were coming in at 11:00." "You will?" I said, "Absolutely. Somebody made a mistake, we'll take care of it." I didn't ask her name, nothing. I met her at 12:00. I took her on a tour, gave her the whole tour. [inaudible] did the whole thing. I said, "I have to meet you. [inaudible] so you won't waste time because you won't have time to play it." When I came out of the museum, the bus was right there. They walked right out into the bus and they were gone. Three weeks later, we got a letter. "Dear Mr. Olguin, my daughter was down at your museum and somehow, there's a mistake. She thought she had an appointment and they wouldn't let her interview him. But you were so gracious that you took her for a tour and gave her a conducted tour and got a whole hour, did the grain, did the whole thing. I didn't want to pay you, but as museum director, [inaudible] make our profession worthwhile doing them." This was a doctor from the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, my friend. I still have that letter in my file somewhere. But I used that as a teaching aid for the rest of my [inaudible]. So, you never know who you're talking to. You want to treat everybody nice. Every time you talk to anybody, they can influence two hundred other people and reflect back on our organization. We are here to help, to teach and so on. So, we do everything we can to help people. This is unexpected. This made my day, a letter like this. I helped a teacher. I didn't even know her name.

MS: We're running out of time.

JO: Okay. I'll come back if you want me to.

MS: What other areas do we need to explore because you don't have to come back?

JO: I'm John Olguin and I'm the director emeritus of the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, and also retired lifeguard captain for the City of Los Angeles.

MS: Well, I'm going to go through some of your notes here. Talk about the squatters in Cabrillo beach.

JO: The breakwater was built in 1898. When they did that, they left an opening. There was a rocky shoreline right below the breakwater along the cliff. A fisherman would come up and put little driftwood squatting track up along the cliff on a rocky shoreline and all the sand. When they pumped the sand in 1925, and it began to be Cabrillo Beach, they actually squatter to move out. So, I have all the photographs showing the squatters below the cliff and when they moved out, Cabrillo Beach was born 1925.

MS: You have to explain to us. So, when they built these little shacks, people were squatting there. Who were the squatters and when did they come there?

JO: There were lobster fishermen. There were dory fishermen. There were people who just wanted to live away from the town because Point Fermin was out in the sticks of the town. The main town was down on 6th Street. That was way out of town. You had to get out there by horseback. So, all these folks that had little shacks up along the base of the cliff, it was rent free. It was just a little community. It was only perhaps about ten shacks all together. They're small shacks, a place to sleep.

MS: So, who had built those shacks?

JO: These shacks were built by individual fishermen, lobster fishermen and regular fishermen. They just the squatted there. They have free rent and the place to get out of the downtown area of San Pedro.

MS: So, when they reconfigured Cabrillo Beach, then the squatting shacks are all torn down.

JO: When they finished the government breakwater, they pump the sand from the harbor onto the base of the breakwater. This is how Cabrillo Beach was born. When this happened, of course, the Recreation and Park of the City of Los Angeles took over the area and the squatters had to go.

MS: Great that was good. Talk about when you were living in Terminal Island.

JO: Terminal Island called Rattlesnake Island. That is because the Los Angeles River emptied out into the sandbar and all the rattlesnake came. In the summertime, we'll walk down from the San Gabriel Mountains. They ended up on the sandbar. At the end of Terminal Island was Dead Man's Island. They removed that in 1927. It was a beautiful place with a large, beautiful surf would come in on the beach. The beach was just across the street from these homes that were built. The homes were built by people who lived in Pasadena and Los Angeles that were

wealthy. It had two storey with a fireplace. Just walk across the street, you're at the beach. But what happened is when they enlarged the harbor, they dredged the sand from the harbor and they put it in front of their homes. The next thing you know, the beach was a quarter of a mile away. So, they lost the value of their home. So, they sold their homes. The people who could afford it moved in there. So, we were large families. Altogether, we're six boys and two girls. At that time, we weren't that large but we moved in there. We had a two-storey home and there was only one street that was paved, that was Seaside Avenue. All the other streets were sand, there were two other main streets. Our elementary school, Seaside Elementary School was right across from our backyard. So, when I get up in the morning to go to kindergarten, I go through a hole in the fence in the school and walk right into the classroom. No one wore shoes because of the sandy street. So, we went to school barefoot until the sixth grade. We rode the ferry back and forth to come to San Pedro. There were two ferries. One ferry was [inaudible] watch ferry, and the other one was a small ferry they went from 1st Street over to Hammond Lumber Company, which really didn't have to walk a mile, you could ride the ferry. It was [inaudible] and Captain Duffy were the owner of the ferry. Later on, when I went to high school, our Spanish teacher was (Mrs. Elsie Duffy?). I asked her, "Are you ready to Captain Duffy?" "Yes. He's my brother. He's the captain of the ferry boat that used to run back and forth.

MS: Tell me about Mexican Hollywood. First of all, how did it get that name? What was it, where was it, and who lived there?

JO: Okay. Well, the Vincent Thomas Bridge is today, this was on a sandy spit. How was it built by the Mexican people? It was a small barrio. Their fences were made out of cactus. The streets were not paved. They're all made out of sand. Altogether, if I remember it correctly, there are about maybe fifteen houses in that area. My father, when I was a young man told me, he said, "It was my idea to name it Mexican Hollywood." I said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Just as a joke. It was funny because all the Mexican people live there." We live there but we didn't live there very long. We moved across the street on 2nd Street until we were moved out of Mexican Hollywood. But it was quite popular at one time because it had a sandy beach next to it. It was called Best American Beach, but they had another name for it. But in the polite form, they called it Best American Beach. It was really (Bare Ass Beach?). The reason they call it that because all the kids will go swimming without bathing suits. It was quite a popular place. It was sandy and the water was clean. The railroad, big red car went right next to it. I remember I was embarrassed by it because some of the boys, when red car would [inaudible] the cars. My father might be on that red car, I'll get wet not me. But these other kids would [inaudible] the red cars that went by.

MS: Talk about living on 2nd Harbor Boulevard and learning to whistle.

JO: Across the street, there was a cliff. You got to remember that this cliff at Point Fermin was the length of this whole town. It came down to the level of the harbor on 6th Street called (Stingray Gulch?) in that area. [inaudible] the cliff. In order to build the harbor, they bulldozed the cliff in the hill into the mud flat area and they made the harbor. Well, there's one area, there was the cliff right on 2nd Street and Harbor Boulevard. Below it was a small house and we lived in that small house. As a four-year-old, I used to climb that cliff and there was a pepper tree on top. I would sit under the pepper tree and watch the ships come in. When my mother was ready

for dinner, she had called, "Johnny, come on down." So, I come tumbling down this cliff for dinner. But I remember the point when my big brother could whistle. I thought, "Gosh, I have to be big and I have to learn how to whistle." So, I went up there to whistle and whistle and trying and no whistle. Finally, I heard a whistle come out. I said, "Hey, I can whistle." So, I come tumbling down. I ran [inaudible] and I said, "Mom, I can whistle. I can whistle." She said, "Let's hear it." [whistles] I couldn't whistle. I was all out of breath. I'll never forget that.

MS: Great story. Talk about Captain Duffy and the ferries of the Hammond Lumber Company.

JO: Captain Duffy has a ferry with a small boat. It only held perhaps fifteen people all together, maybe twenty. I thought it could hold that many but it was very small. It was very rocky. So, they had a rail around the back of it. We always sat in the back and held onto the rail because the waves inside the harbor was big enough to rock that little boat back and forth. We enjoyed riding the small ferry from 1st Street all the way to Hammon Lumber Company. Because we live just a block away from Hammon Lumber Company which was the length of the channel down the other side of the fire station beyond the Vincent Thomas Bridge in that area. It was a [inaudible]. We love that small ferry.

MS: So, who was Captain Duffy?

JO: He was the captain of the boat. Captain Duffy was the captain of the small ferry boat. There were two ferry boats. One will go straight across the channel. This one that starts at 1st Street and went all the way down to Hammond Lumber Company, which was maybe three quarters of a mile, maybe a mile down from the main ferry building.

MS: Talk about the big red cars. What were they and then talk about what happened with your system.

JO: Okay. The big red car is had made Southern California popular. People would come from all over from [inaudible], from Cucamonga from San Bernardino on a big red car. What they would do is they will ride the big red car to the beaches. At the end of each beach, they build a bath house. For example, Redondo Beach bath house, where the place will come in with the Sunday baths, $10, they would rent a bathing suit, promenade, take a swim and have a fish dinner and that night, catch a red car back. They booked this in Redondo Beach, also in Venice and the last one was in Long Beach. But the ultimate the red car came to San Pedro. From here, they took a small trolley car that went up 6th Street to Pacific Avenue in the later Pacific Avenue and it ended up in Point Fermin Park. This was a very popular place to go to see the lighthouse, and also the big cliffs and up and down the shoreline. Well, my grandmother lived in Wilmington and she had a stroke. So, we moved to Wilmington in order to help my grandmother out. We lived across the track. At that time, I was about not four years old. There were two boys, and I was the third one. We finally had a girl and her name was Lucia. We were in the yard playing, and I don't remember the details. All I know that grandma lived across the track and somehow the gate was open. My mother would wash some clothes. The baby walked out the gate without us noticing her. She went across the track and a big red car hit her. Of course, it killed her. What happened is I don't know how much money we received, but my father received some money for that. With that money, we were able to move to Terminal Island

into this beautiful home. From there, he decided that he would go to San Francisco and try his luck there. So, we all went on the Yale. There were two ships at Yale and Harvard. At 5:00, one left San Francisco, at 5:00, one left Los Angeles, and they will meet at Halfmoon Bay. They would go back and forth. It was a real thrill, as a five-year-old, to be on this ship. It would go down the main channel and pass the lighthouse and on to San Francisco. It was like going around the world for a five-year-old.

MS: These were steamers.

JO: Pardon?

MS: These were steamers, the Yale and the Harvard?

JO: The Yale and the Harvard were steamers. The Yale was lost at the Point Arguello, and later on had hit the rock and it was lost.

MS: Talk about your mother working for French Sardines which became Stark-Kist. Explain that it did become Star-Kist.

JO: Yes. Okay. We live in Terminal Island and the Japanese colony was up there in the end of the island. But there was Japanese in our area too. Most of the people in the community, they worked for the different canneries. There was French Sardines and Star-Kist Tuna. Each one had a different whistle. In the middle of the night, you can hear the [imitating sound]. My mother says, "That's not ours. That's not my cannery. They're not calling me." She'd go back to sleep. Then, she'll hear the other whistle. She said, "That's my whistle." So, she jumped out of bed and get dressed. Then would be coming across the ferry. Then would be coming up Terminal Island and catching the bus. Then would all come in. No matter what time the boat came in, they will be ready to go and start packing. My mother worked there for years. In fact, she retired from Star-Kist Tuna. There is a photograph right now, the display at the Maritime Museum on the 6th Street in San Pedro. There are large photographs and right in the middle was my mother. She was the forelady. So, I told my grandson, I'm going to get you down and I'll show you a picture of your grandma in the photograph on the fishing industry down at the Maritime Museum.

MS: First flight was in 1910?

JO: No.

MS: Or part of the ocean but not across the Pacific.

JO; No. Okay. You want me to explain that?

MS: Yes.

JO: Okay. The first flight in the world, of course, was Kitty Hawk with the Wright brothers. Okay. But the airshow was in 1906, and it was in France. After the first air show, the one who

won the air show there was a fellow who had the strongest airplane. I think of the name in just a second.

MS: Louis Paulhan.

JO: The first flight in America was Kitty Hawk, of course, with the Wright brothers. But the first airshow in the world was in France in 1906. Louis Paulhan had the strongest airplane and then went the highest and the fastest. So, the United States had won the airshow. So, they were told, "You can have the airshow in January in the United States." But they couldn't have it in New York, it was too cold in January. So, the committee decided to have it in Southern California. They selected the biggest ranch because it was a flat area. They could build bleachers that will hold 50,000 people. The big red car would go right by it so they could bring people from all over Southern California. They did bring as many as 50,000 people a day by the red car. When this happened, they decided to make it International. So, they invited Louis Paulhan, the Frenchman, to bring his two airplanes to Southern California. When he arrived in New York, the Wright brothers were waiting for him. They put an injunction on his airplane because they had invented the steering mechanism. They thought they wanted to stop him from using that mechanism because he has copied them. So, they took him to court. When he went to court, the judge said, "Well, when is the airshow in California?" They said, "It's going to be on January 17th or 18th. He said, "Good, then will convene in February." He came out there and participated in this airshow, sold his airplanes, and he never did go to court. But the point was that he was the second one ever to go up in the air. When he got up in the air, he saw the railroad tracks. He could see the Pacific Ocean. No one had ever seen the Pacific Ocean from an airplane. So, he flew down the railroad track, followed them, and went around Point Fermin Lighthouse. At that time, there was a committee from the government overlooking Fort MacArthur. They thought, "We're going to buy all these acres and put fortification to protect Los Angeles for landing invasion." They looked up and here comes an airplane and they said, "Oh, no. We could be bombed if we do this." He flew around the Point Fermin Lighthouse and went over the breakwater. These fishing boats saw this airplane for the very first time, and they started pulling the horn, honking their horn. At that time, there were only lumber companies, the Hammond Lumber Company A (Kirkchoff?) Lumber Company, and so on. They all looked up and followed this airplane and they started honking their horn. The whole waterfront was honking the horn. The people run out of the houses and they could see an airplane from the very first time. So, they took their handkerchiefs and towels and started waving at them. It was quite a celebration of the first airplane ever to fly across the Pacific Ocean. For a number of years, we reenacted this. In 1995, we decided to reenact this. So, I went to the San Pedro Bay Historical Society, which I am a member. I said, "Under your auspices. We'd like to reenact the first flight over the Pacific Ocean and have it under the office of the Historical Society. They said, "Absolutely, but there's no money available." I said, "No, I'll fund it." I thought maybe I could get all the aircraft industry to be part of it because it's part of the history. But I was not very successful in doing that. So, what I did, I had my wife design the patch. She's an artist. I sold the patch and then I used that money in order to fund it. It worked out very nicely. We even had hot air balloon because they had hot air balloon going up and so on. I couldn't find a hot air balloon anywhere in Southern California except from San Diego. So, I called this fellow in San Diego and I said, "I understand you have a hot air balloon." The way it happened is I'm line at (Bonds Market?) and I was telling my friend, the clerk, I said, "I can't find a hot air balloon for

our thing that's coming up next week." The lady behind me said, "Well, my son has one in San Diego." I said, "Do you mind if I call him?" I called him up. He said, "Oh, you're that man that cliffs outside in San Pedro." I said, "Yes, that's me." He said, "Sure. You can borrow my hot air balloon. You have to come down and get it." So, we set up a committee to pick it up. We had a hot air balloon. It's very nice. We had ultralight fly over, double wingers. We had everybody in town waving Kleenex instead of towels as the airplane flew by. We made a little TV show of the thing.

MS: Good. Is that footage available?

JO: Yes, it's available. I have it at home.

MS: All right. Talk about the aircraft carrier Chaplin.

JO: The name of the ship is (USS Stennis?), the aircraft carrier. They selected eighteen civic leaders to come down to San Diego and spend a night on this aircraft carrier that was in maneuver off of Mexico. When I arrived, while they put me into a limousine, and the other people said, "I thought we were all going to get in the limousine with me." They said, "No, just follow Mr. Olguin in the limousine." So, we got down for an orientation. Then after that, we got on an airplane. We flew out 50 miles below Mexico, landed on an aircraft carrier and the cable rest came in at 130 miles an hour and in stopping a dime on that cable. Then he assigned this state room. Then everyone had two-door state room, and they gave me a special state room. When I came back down, one of the fellow who was working for Arnold Schwarzenegger in Sacramento said "Who are you? They're treating you differently than the rest of us. You got to ride the limousine. They give you a special state room. The rest of us have two-door stateroom. Who are you?" I said, "You really want to know?" "Yes. Who do you work for?" I said, "I'm a lifeguard." [laughter] So, we spent an interesting time. I didn't want to go to bed. I said, "I can always sleep but I can't be on an aircraft carrier 24 hours a day and learned about it." So, I stayed up practically all night long talking with the crew, talking with the captain and telling stories and just learning about it. I was so surprised to find on this aircraft carrier, 12 percent of the people were women. Women were everywhere. It's a different Navy altogether. Second thing is as a youngster, I used to go aboard the ships on Sunday and visit. Now, everybody had a big mug of coffee, no longer. They're all drinking Coke. They're all drinking 7 Ups and Pepsi Colas. I'm drinking coffee like they did in the old navy. So, it was rather interesting. Anyway, when we took off, they put us on the airplane. They told us, "Bring your knees up. Because if you don't, the airplane will. You're going to go 130 miles an hour in three seconds." To me, when the captain told us off that aircraft carrier, it was like being shot to the moon. You couldn't just stand still holding on to your knees and the next thing you know, bang, you're gone. You're out and flying. That was really a thrill.

MS: Going back and forth in time, we did talk about the Point Fermin Lighthouse. So, we'll skip that. What is the story of this coal ship in 1889? What's that?

JO: In 1889, [inaudible] out of Newcastle, England hit the rock below the Point Fermin Lighthouse. It hit the rocks at low tide and they couldn't get it off. So, they began to shovel the coal over the side. The lighthouse keeper at that time notified San Pedro that the ship was on the

rocks. Then they came out and salvaged the crew but the crew kept shoveling the coal over the side. It took two weeks to shovel that coal over. Two weeks later, they packed it up the best that they could. Two weeks later, the tide came in and floated the ship. They took it to San Pedro, repaired it and went about his business. After the storm, to this day, the coal still washes up on the beach. I see this postman, [inaudible] was his name, come in with a sack. I said, "What do you have in there? Lobster or crab, abalone? What are you bringing on a rainy day in the storm?" He puts the sack down at one time. I looked in there, and I said, "You got nothing but coal in there." He said, "Yes." I said, "Does it burn?" He said, "Sure. That's some [inaudible]. It burns. So, what I did after the next time, I went I collected a sack, took it to a friend of mine, and he cut it into slices. Then I glued it onto a piece of wood from the lighthouse, the way we store them. Took a picture [inaudible] I got from the Historical Society. I sold them for $2. I was selling cold cuts. We will use that money to refurbish the roof of the lighthouse. So, that was an interesting way to go about it.

MS: Talk about the 1939 storm.

JO: In the 1939, in the month of September, we had a tropical storm that hit Cabrillo Beach. The wind came up just ferociously. All of a sudden, we had boats that were trying to go back. It was on a Sunday, from Catalina. They were hitting the breakwater. The first thing we knew about it was a man struggled and he said, "My wife was out there on the breakwater. I need some help." So as lifeguards, two of us, (Kevin Martin?) and myself, we crawled along, because the waves were coming completely over the breakwater. We brought her in. Then there were some other people out on the breakwater. While we couldn't get around on the outside to get them. They finally washed up down in Huntington Beach. But the thing is that I was young lifeguard in 1939, and I was working for a (Captain George Wolfe?), who was the first city lifeguard hired by the city. He said, "Look, we're going to be here all night with the storm. We need some help. Call the fire department and see if they have any searchlights." I called the fire department. They said "No. We don't have any searchlights. I said, "Where can I get them?" "Try the army." So, I called Fort MacArthur and I talked to the man in charge. He said, "Yes. We'll send out a battery." A (Captain Black?) came out with a great big searchlight they still have today. Put it right up on top of Cabrillo beach, and they were playing up and down the breakwater. My lifeguard captain said, "That's not good enough. We can't see the other side. Cal the admiral at the Navy base." I was just a high school student at 1939. He said, "After we can get a ship over there with searchlight." I said, "Yes, sir." So, I got on the phone. I talked to the officer of the day. He said, "You mean you want us to bring over a Navy ship?" I said, "Yes. We have people that are stranded on the breakwater. We can't see them and the searchlight will help us out. They said, "Well, we'll send somebody right over." I said, "Sure." That was within 45 minutes here comes the Destroyer and came up inside. I said, "Look what I did. I moved the Destroyer. I'm a high school kid. They took the [inaudible] down the breakwater. For three days, we worked day and night, trying to save people. Eleven people are still alive in that storm. The good thing about it is that there was a fishing boat out of 22nd Street Landing at Santa Barbar Island when the storm hit. There was no radio contact, and everyone thought they were lost. But what they did, they anchored on the [inaudible] of the island. They fished and ate fish that they caught and we were there for three days. Three days later, when the storm was low, they came sailing to San Pedro. Everybody just cheered that they were alive. We thought they were gone but they weren't.

MS: Somebody described that storm as a hurricane. Was it that much?

JO: Yes. It was fantastic. In fact, I made a mistake of thinking that I could go surfing that they could the wave was so big, even inside the harbor. I would then get back. I got out there and the currents were so strong that I had an awful time trying to get back in. I would never recommend that to anyone. Anytime there's a surf that big, stay out of it.

MS: Okay. I'm going to skip some stuff because you've already gone over it before. You talked about your rowing experiences before tying up in the piling of the Maritime Museum and making a little bit for yourself and as the cruise ship coming by. What year was that first of all, roughly?

JO: Well, let me think. I think about 1977, 1978 right along into there.

MS: Okay. So, it's recent then. You want to tell that story.

JO: Yes. Okay.

MS: Go ahead.

JO: First of all, I've been married for fifty-nine years. Every year on our anniversary, which would fall in in June, I would take our canoe or rowboat. After work, if it's all during the week, my wife would meet me and we would row down the Long Beach. We would come in there and put on our clean clothes and go up and have a nice dinner. Then go back in the rowboat and drop an anchor and sleep in the rowboat that night and the row home that night or the next morning. There's one night that we came down and anchored off of the Ferry Building. They were just putting piling to build a marina next to the Ferry Building along the Ports O' Call. So, we tie it to one of the pilings and made the bed with plywood. We went to bed and it was so nice and comfortable in the middle of the harbor. About 3:00 a.m., I woke up because everything was all made up. I sat up and hear the beautiful cruise ship just coming through with all the lights on, just gliding into the harbor. We both sat there and I thought, "Why aren't we lucky to hear this beautiful. What a great experience we're having?" I'll never forget that.

MS: You had your own little, small cruise ship there. [laughter]

JO: That was a big cruise ship.

MS: No, your cruise ship.

JO: Yes. We were little, small one.

MS: Talk about your returning home after the war.

JO: Okay. I'm a sailor. I tried to join the Navy and they wouldn't take me because I wore glasses. So, I wait until they drafted me and I went in the Army. I fought in New Guinea and

the Philippines. When the war was over, we went to Seattle, in Seattle, we took a train. All the soldiers came down to be mustered out here at Fort MacArthur. On the way back, while in Washington, we were in Carson, California, and on Alameda Boulevard, our train hit a car. We were stocked all day long while they were negotiating and taking pictures and so on. Until late that afternoon, we came into the depot with a troop with all the soldiers. The fellow that I left when I used to be a paperboy on Beacon Street were still there. One was Mummy and the other fellow was named Hungry. They were hustling and I will stand on the platform with all the other soldiers and I saw him and I said, "Hey, Mummy. It's John over here." They all yell back. I said, "I'm coming home." It was a nice thing to come back and have these two figure out by where I used to sell papers. Then I went below the hill. I just lived there 1327 Palos Verdes which is just a block away from the train. While that train went below our house and around the Point and into Fort MacArthur lower reservation. Everybody had $200, $300, they go to Texas, they go to New Mexico. They pay for their bus way home and then the extra money, they gave me 10 cents because I live two blocks away. I'll never forget that 10 cents. That was a wonderful experience to come all the way home on a troop train.

MS: Talk about Mummy and Hungry, who were they?

JO: Mummy and Hungry, they were the bosses on the waterfront when it comes to selling papers. I was a little kid compared to them. They say, "Hey, you don't sell on my corner. Get over there on 5th Street with nobody over there, but that's where you belong. This is my corner." So, Mummy and Hungry had two things that they dominated, that is they went on the big ships. They went on to California they. We went on the (Medusa?) which was the repair ship, but they wouldn't go there. Therefore, we went to sell papers. But they went on to California, they went on the lightships. So, they had the best corner for selling newspapers. They were selling newspapers like even after the war, they were still there.

MS: Now where did they get their nicknames from and why did they have those nicknames?

JO: All my life, you just knew he was Mummy and to this day, I don't know his real name. I don’t really know if he's still alive. Mummy would be 100, [inaudible] with another fellow. They all have different names.

MS: Now, they would enforce their turf by beating you up if you were there. I mean, how would they take control?

JO: Oh, with their paper. If you came around with the newspaper, they would say, "What are you selling? What are you hustling?" "I'm hustling the Examiner." "Get out of here. Get on the other street. You don't belong here. This is my corner." Just like that and off we go.

MS: Talk about what you found in the Harbor department store yard that became part of history.

JO: Okay. I went looking at the store yard in Wilmington for the Harbor department and I found these huge anchors. So, I said, "Where did these come from them? They're going to melt them down. Dude, it's beautiful." They were using Catalina. They held the barges in place. When they took the rock for the quarry, put them on the barge, these anchor held the barges in place.

Those were brought to San Pedro to build the breakwater, not all of them but just to begin with. Now, they were no longer used. So, I wrote a letter to [inaudible] and said, "Can we use these anchors at Cabrillo beach? It would be just what we need above the harbor." They okayed after we took these anchors and put them right above Cabrillo beach. Today, they're down on 17th Street with Historical Society, 17th and Harbor Boulevard. They're big and they're beautiful. That was one thing. Second thing I found there was an engine. I began to ask, I said, "This is an ancient little engine. Where did it come from?" The said, "They were used for building the breakwater." I said, "That's exactly what I'm looking for. We could put them down at Cabrillo beach and paint it and restore it. Then put the story about how this little engine went out a mile and a half into the ocean and they dropped the rock into the ocean to make the breakwater. It will make a nice display of it." He said, "Well, write a little to the commission, they'll probably give it to you." So, I did. I wrote the letter. Then I asked Recreation Park to move it to Cabrillo beach for me so I could build a nice exhibit around it. Anyway, I couldn't find it. Nobody knew what happened to it. For three years I looked for it. Nobody could tell me what happened to it. One day, I'm up at Griffith Park. I'm in the Travel Town where they have all [inaudible] and there was my engine. It ended up in Travel Town. They decided that it would be rusted and it would disappear. The kid would vandalize it down here and it would be better off at Travel Town. But they didn't want to tell me that. I said, "Okay. You win some, you lose some. I lost this one."

MS: Tell me about the first man who swam the Catalina channel. What's that story?

JO: Okay. Wrigley bought Catalina Island from the Wilmington Transportation Company. In order to promote it, in 1927, on January 1st, he advertised that anyone that could swim across the channel would receive $20,000. There would only be one price, that's all 20,000, no second place, no third place. Everyone agreed they would have to get out of the water when the first person touched shore. So, they all agreed, 111 people showed up and they started from Avalon, California. George Young came from Toronto, Canada on a motorcycle. He came into San Pedro and he stopped at a bakery on 17 Pacific Avenue [inaudible]. He walked in there and said, "I'm looking for a sponsor. Will you sponsor me?" My uncle was the owner of the bakery, (Tom Enriches?) and he said, "I'm already sponsoring someone. You'll have to go somewhere else because I'm already sponsoring the person." So, he walked around and he finally found a sponsor. But he had to get someone to row the boat. He had to have a (doctor?), he had to have a boat. So, he looked around and he found out that the fellow who was available, who had been to the Olympics and one of our lifeguards for the City of Los Angeles. He agreed to row the boat for him. The fellow that he picked in 1936 carried the American flag in Berlin then became world famous. Because as a lifeguard, he's the only one that had been in four consecutive Olympic Games. He played water polo. He had arms that reached down below his knees. When he kicked his legs and spread his arms, he covered the whole goal. Nobody can get past him. That's a powerful kick and such a large benefit arms. His name was (Wally O'Connor?). Because he had been to four Olympic Games, he carried the flag and lead the people into Berlin. When it came to Hitler, everybody bowed their flag to Hitler. Movietone happened to be right there. When he got there, he turned around and he said in the Movietone camera, "The American does not bow down to anyone," and he wouldn't do it. Because of that, he became one of the more famous lifeguards in the world. Well, they asked him to row for George Young. He said, "Sure. I'll row for him." A hundred and eleven people jumped in the water on the fourth of

January and they began to swim. [inaudible] came down and said, "This water is too hot." They can't swim in hot water. One woman will start naked and she just put grease all over her body and she started in that. The first five miles, they pulled her out. The water was so cold and people just dropped out like flies right and left. But George Young, a young 21-year-old Toronto Canada swimmer just took off. Wally O' Connor was rowing. They got halfway across the channel and he's called him over and he said, "I give up. I can't take it. The water too cold." He said, "There's no such thing as giving up. If you want to give up, catch me." He rowed away. George Young got no choice but to either drown or swim after the rowboat. So, he just stayed ahead of him and George Young kept swimming and he just finally reached and came in to San Pedro below the cliff at Point Fermin. At that time in 1927, they announced, "Folks if you have a car, please go to [inaudible] and point your headlight out toward the ocean. There are no floodlights out there and these people are coming in channel [inaudible] find someplace to land. So, the people in San Pedro that had the Model T went up there and headed towards the ocean and turn on the headlights. He came in and he landed the $20,000. Two other women, they were told, "Okay. It's over with. George Young had landed out of the water." These two women said, "We don't care about the money. We want to swim. We've gone this far." So, they kept on going but they drifted down to the right of the breakwater and so they finally ended up in Long Beach. That was the story now. That was 1927. Paul Chateau have tried four times in swimming and he failed every time. He finally made it on the fifth try. But he was an overarm sidestroke swimmer, Paul Chateau. Then what happened is (Nick Ord?), they had a fellow play the ukulele was blind. It came with the name of (Ben in Hawaii?), here on Gaffey Street and Dixon Gaffey. After the war, I was swimming to work every day. I would jump into water at E.K Wood Lumber Company and I'd swim to Cabrillo beach and back again after work. So, they come in after. When I swim with him and help him out, I said, "Sure. But he's blind, how he's going to do it?" He said, "We have a long pole with a bell on the end. He's going to ring the bell and he's going to follow the bell." It didn't work because he kept swimming in circles. So, I got into water and I backstroke to him. We had other lifeguards too that swam with him. So, we relayed. It took eighteen hours to swim across the Catalina channel. But the interesting thing is that when we got near the shore, and I would lead them in, I looked up and I could see the bonfires below Point Fermin Lighthouse. I saw three bonfires and I selected one. The bonfire I selected where my wife – who's my girlfriend at that time – was. Also, my brothers were there. My supervisor from Recreation Park was there. All my friends and all my family were in the bonfire that I selected. When we came in, it was nighttime, around 10:00 p.m. It was nice and flat and calming. When we came in, we stood on a rock and I yelled, "We're here. [inaudible] are here." They couldn't see us out in the dark. All these photographers came out in the water. This fellow named (George Fisher?) who owned a photography shop on 9th Street in San Pedro, [inaudible]. He took a picture of us and then took a step forward and disappeared. He went right into a hole but his camera was sticking out of the water. He just held his camera up, it didn't get wet. He came out, climbed up in a rock, then he took another picture. That picture came out in Life Magazine. That picture won a national award. That picture came out in the Encyclopedia Britannica and The Yearbook in 1947 showing the blind Hawaiian terminating across the channel.

MS: Tell me more about him. He lived in San Pedro? Who was this guy who was a blind swimmer?

JO: Oh, okay. [inaudible] played the ukulele. He had a small trio. There were three of them. [inaudible] driving in San Pedro was on the corner on Gaffey Street, 6th and Gaffey. He loved to swim, but he was blind and he had a dream that he wanted to swim the channel. So, he began to work out and he was in good shape. The problem was he was blind. The current, we were coming in toward Marineland but we couldn't make it. He kept asking, "How far are we?" I will tell him, "We're about three miles off." We'd swim for another hour. "Now, how far are we?" 'Still three miles out?" He said, "You're lying to me." I said, "No." Then I realized, "Hey, we're fighting the current. Let's swim with it." So, we turned around. The minute we began to swim with it, we got closer and closer. Finally, instead of coming into marine land where we live today, well, we came in right below the Point Fermin Lighthouse. So, he was a local man.

MS: Tell me more about him. He lived here for a long time. More about who he was? Was he a well-known character? I mean, would he play every night? What kind of music did he play that kind of stuff.

JO: All I knew that he played at (Nick Ord?), which was the only driving restaurant. They had a nightclub attached to it. He was one of their players. When we had our luau, he came down to Cabrillo beach and he played for us in Cabrillo beach, too. So, he was known as a ukulele player and singer. He had his son played with him and then the other two or three other people that played with him. That's really all I know about him. We're quite proud of the man that could swim across town and be a blind person besides.

MS: Talk about Angels Gate. What is Angels Gate? What's the history and the story of that?

JO: Okay. During the First World War, they built lower reservation and middle reservation and then upper innovation. Upper innovation, the Army took that over during the First World War. During the Second World War, they used it also. But then the property referred back to the City of Los Angeles. The City of Los Angeles took the property, divided it in half and gave half to the Board of Education, and half to Recreation and Parks. When Recreation Parks took over the half, they gave one area to the CCC, and they moved them there. My wife, Muriel, had a master's in fine arts. So, they asked her, "Would you like to use one of our buildings? We have all these buildings empty. In return, will you teach our TC members how to do silkscreen so they can make t-shirts and posters. She said, "I'll be glad to handle the class." So, she took one building and bottle etching press and the litho press. Then she taught all of the members twice a week how to make silkscreen and how to make t-shirt. She just put the classes on. This was the beginning of the Angels Gate Park. Soon after that, Recreation and Parks, they organized a Citizens Committee and she was part of the Citizens Committee. They developed different buildings for different things. Right now, the ceramics in one building, the artwork in another building, printmaking. She finally donated the etching press and the litho press and they're both there for people to use. For 21 years, she ran a life drawing class there every Tuesday night from 7:00 to 10:00, and they had life models. She's been very active in Angels Gate Park. She was on the board of directors up to last year. Now, she's just a consultant.

MS: I guess what I was also meaning is the little lighthouse that marks the entry to the harbor at the end of the breakwater.

JO: Yes.

MS: Isn't that called Angels?

JO: Yes. It's called Angels Gate Lighthouse.

MS: That's what I meant.

JO: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS: That's the story I want.

JO: Okay. Angels Gate is a recreation area. Okay. Angels Gate Lighthouse is at the end of the breakwater, was completed in 1910, after they built the breakwater. It used to have a foghorn called Moaning Maggie. Moaning Maggie had a two-tone vibrating diaphragm. It would break from time to time. You could hear it all over the town. It made everybody laugh because it would sound like a sick cow. In fact, I can imitate it for you. It goes like Moaning Maggie. Today, it has the modern foghorn that just makes a loud noise. But the other one would go [making sounds]. When it broke and when it went off, it would make a noise that would go like this [makings sounds]. Everybody would start laughing. You can hear it in the middle of the night. In high school, my brother was a milkman, and I was his helper. We delivered milk. On Kerckhoff, above the hill, at 5:00 a.m., this lady came out. "Hey, milkman, milkman," talking to me. She says, "Can you help me out? I think there's a cow in my cellar. I just moved into town." I said, "You mean you're hearing that noise?" "Yes, I keep hearing it. I think there's a cow in my cellar. Can you please take a look?" I said, "Lady, that's the foghorn at the end of the breakwater. It sounds like a cow, but it's not a cow." That's a true story.

MS: Tell us the story of – go ahead.

JO: Okay. The lighthouse was operated by the United States Coast Guard. The men were on duty there for one week at a time. On Tuesdays, they would allow Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, public groups, to walk out to the lighthouse, where they would give a conducted tour. I remember walking after it with a group of scouts and taking them through the lighthouse and showing them the whole thing. Since then, of course, it's automated. Nobody goes after it's closed up. But it's interesting for those people that had that opportunity.

MS: You were telling me the story about the simultaneous ringing of Korean bell during the bicentennial. Tell me that story.

JO: When our country was two hundred years old, I received a call from the East Coast. They said, "We're starting a program to ring every church bell in the United States at 12:00 a.m. We're going to run the Liberty Bell here in Philadelphia. We want to know if someone will ring the Korean bell in Los Angeles. Because that's the largest bell in the United States." I said, "Well, I'm the chairman of that. I've been ringing them since they built it in 1976." I said, "I'd be happy to do it. Is there any fund for this?" "No, there's no money involved. Just ring the bell." I said, "I'll do better than that. I'll organize it." So, I asked the Polar Bear Club if they would bake

cupcakes for that event. Then I asked one of the restaurants to deliver hot chocolate and hot coffee for the event as part of their contribution. Then I advertised in the paper, "Bring your children. Bring your family. We want everybody involved in this." I thought, "How can we ring that bell and involve children and the family?" So, I took a hawser, a long hawser, about 100 feet long, tied it down to the boom that rang the bell. Then I took ribbons, and I put ribbons, extending from the hawser, and tied them on in different directions. I had all the children hold on to the ribbons. Anyone who was a child or a young adult would hold onto a ribbon. All the adults held onto the rope. Then we practiced. I said, "Now, you all have to do it at the same time, or it's not going to work." I said, "You pull on it. You pull the big log back. Then all you do is let it go." I said, "It goes back. Bong. Then you wait 20 seconds and pull again all together. Then you let it go. Bong." I said, "How many times shall we ring it?" "It's up to you. Ring it as many times as you want." I said, "Good. Then we want to ring it fifty times for every state in the union." So, we had a wonderful experience. At 12:00 a.m., all the church bells in United States rang their bells. On the East Coast, they ran the Liberty Bell and their bells in New York and Washington, D.C. Then we rang the Korean bell, which is the largest bell in the United States. We had a wonderful time. But the weather was horrible. It was raining. But the people still stayed there, umbrellas and so on, raincoats. We still rang the bell. We enjoyed the cupcake and the hot coffee and the fellowship of all the people gathering together, the family groups.

MS: So, tell me the story of the Korean bell. Where did it come from? Why did it come here? What is it?

JO: In 1976, the Korea Republic sent over a group from Korea and had brought the bell with them. They also bought the granite. The granite was not completely cut. They chipped it. Then they built the Korean bell right there. They assembled it right there. When they got it finished, I thought, "This is a wonderful thing." They [inaudible] it there because it's the nearest point to Korea. I collected all these chips, took a picture of the bell. Then what I did, I took wood, and I glued the piece of the granite that they built the Korean background for. I glued it onto the wood and then put a photograph of the bell there. Then I put the dates. I thought, "We'll sell this and use the money for some [inaudible]." I said, "No, we're not going to sell. We're going to give away." So, what we did, everyone who was there, we gave them a free sample, a memento of the opening day of the Korean bell. So, we rang it on the Fourth of July, this time, and every Fourth of July at 12:00 a.m. We yell out the thirteen colonies, and everybody helps. But we also ring it at 12:00 a.m. on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Eve, at 12:00 a.m., we all assembled at 11:30 p.m. Then at 12:00 a.m., we rang it twelve times, and everybody welcomed the new year. We've done that since 1976. We started out doing it with just twelve people. The first time was only twelve of us, with Bill Olesen. He died in [19]99. Then next year, a little more, a little more, and finally, we got maybe three- or four hundred people now that come there at 12:00 a.m. and ring in it on New Year's Eve and then on the Fourth of July.

MS: But why did the bell come here? Why did they send it here? Where did it come from?

JO: Okay. It was sent by the government of Korea. The Korean bell was a gift from the people of Korea to the people of the United States. They were trying to decide where to put it. They thought that Point Fermin was the ideal location because it was the nearest southern point to

Korea, instead of putting it in Washington, D.C., as far away as it could get. So, this place was selected. One of the things is that when we ring the bell, the last three times that we ring it is for the unification of Korea, so they're unified. It was a gift from the Korean people to the American people, commemorating 1976, two hundred years, our nation.

MS: Perfect. There's a story that we didn't get a chance to tell about your rowing with your wife from Anchorage to San Pedro. Give me that story and just talk about your relationship with your wife before that. You're rowing together.

JO: Did I already talk about her?

MS: How you met her and all that.

JO: Okay. First of all, I've been married for fifty-nine years. It'll be sixty years coming up next June. It was the right thing. Because you can find a lover, they're easy to find, but where in the world are you going to find a woman that can row? So, I had to marry her. It was the best thing I've ever done because we both love the same thing. She gets excited about the ocean. She gets excited about going swimming. She gets excited about being in a rowboat, in the canoe, and so on. So, we started out with a little small rowboat and putting it in the waters, Cabrillo Beach, and all the way to Portuguese Bend and then rowing back. In fact, it was 9:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m., we were out on the channel trying to row back. A tug came by. I waved him down, and I said, "How about a lift?" "Sure." So, they pull the boat right on top of the tug. They dropped me off about 10:00 p.m. with my wife off of Cabrillo Beach. Then we came through the surf. But we've been rowing all our life. But we started when we were kids. We learned that in a rowboat, you can't put 1,000 pounds like you can in a canoe. A canoe you can put 1,000 pounds. But rowboats, you have to be selective. So, it's like backpacking. Everything is dehydrated. All you do is heat water up. That hot water you pour into a steel thermos. With your steel thermos, you pour it into your dehydrated food. You can make potatoes. You can make what have you, oatmeal, whatever you like, just with hot water. So, putting our rowboat in the water in Monterey, California, we thought, "Wouldn't it be fun to go downhill and row from Monterey, California to San Diego? That's a nice, long row." But I didn't want to use my vacation up. Because then we'd take a big, long trip, like rowing in the Caribbean or going down to the Virgin Islands and rowing in the Virgin Island or down to Fiji Island like we did when you're rowing the outer Fiji Islands. So, we wanted to do it on weekends. So, we drove to Monterey, California. We put the boat in the water in Monterey, left our truck there. With food and sleeping bags and so on, we tried rowing down the coast for Monterey, California. We rowed on down to Point Sal. Point Sal is right where the bridge is, right where the lighthouse is. That just took one day row. The wind came up. It was just blowing a gale. So, we just stayed there. The next day, it was still blowing a gale. So, I said, "No use trying to get around this point. It's blowing too hard, and the wave is too high." I was still working, so I only had two days. So, what we did, we came through the surf. I walked up to the Coast Guard on their private property. I showed him my card and a city employee. They were very nice to me. They allowed me – I said, "Can I catch a bus here to go back up to Monterey to pick up my truck?" "No buses come to this area." So, I went to the last gas station in the town, and I waited. This fellow comes by. I showed him my credit cards. "I'll pay for your gas if we can get a ride with you up to Monterey." He said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going that far. I don't pick up –" and I said, "[foreign language] *Anong*

pangalan mo?" He was Filipino. So, I talked Tagalog because I was in the Philippines. I picked up some of the lingo. "Oh," he said, "you speak my language." I said, "Yes. I helped liberate your country." He said, "Oh, I'm going that way. Come, I'll give you a ride. Tell me about your experiences. Where did you (find?) –" I said, "In Olongapo, in Manila." We talked about the war. He gave me a ride right back to Monterey, [laughs] right to my boat. So, we had a nice experience. The next week, we came back up, put the boat in there, and we went for two more days. We slept in the kelp beds with the sea otters. We had a light. We kept doing it until we got all the way to San Diego. Finally, in San Diego, we took the boat out there. That was a nice experience. My wife, the other day, said, "Why don't we do this again?" I'm 87. I'll be 87. She's 84. I said, "Why don't we take the big cruise ship? Let's go down Acapulco. We've been there before, Acapulco. Let's go down again. Nice trip, we'll relax them. We'll watch a movie and have a nice time." She said, "You mean in one of those great big ships?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I'll go to Acapulco with you on one condition." "What's that?" "That we row." I said, "What a great attitude [laughter]." I said, "I know better at my age." We're not going to try it. But I liked the attitude.

MS: So, you row. Is it one in each oar?

JO: No. We both have oars. We'll both have oars. In fact, I think you'll see it in the movie that you –

MS: We saw it, yes.

JO: Yes, it's in there. We both row at the same time.

MS: But someone's got to be in charge. Who counts the cadence?

JO: Oh, I'm the boss, okay? At home, she can be the boss. But on the boat, there can only be one captain. You can't have two captains. I've only made one mistake with my wife, and that was when we were rowing up in Canada. We went into Ucluelet. Ucluelet is out on Vancouver Island. There's a broken island group that's now a national park. But at that time, you could camp anywhere. We started there. We rowed out into the ocean, the fog, with a compass trying to find the island. I thought we were going to end up in Hawaii because I didn't know where we were. But we did find the islands in the fog. We've spent two weeks rowing the length of these islands. When it came time to go home, I made a mistake, a basic mistake that I regret because she'd never let me forget it. What happened is at 7:00 a.m., we were finished. Now, we're going to row home. But we're about two days' row away from our car. So, she said, "Let's go home. Let's start." So, we started rowing about 7:00 a.m. We rowed until 5:00 p.m. without stopping. At 5:00 a.m., we stopped. I had a little radio that receives but doesn't send. So, I turned on the news. The news said – we were taking a break after rowing all day – the news said, "Do not stay in harbor. Put up the open ocean. Get above high ground. When the tsunami hits, it'll wipe everything out if you're in the harbor. I repeat, get out of the harbor. Get out in the open ocean or get up on high ground. This message will be repeated in 20 minutes." She said, "There's a tidal wave coming, a tsunami wave coming." She started biting her fingernails. I said, "Now, wait a minute. We didn't hear the whole message. We just heard part of it." I said, "They're going to repeat it in 20 minutes." She said, "We can't get to high ground. No high ground at

[inaudible]. It's all level. We can't get out into the ocean. It's too far away." Well, 20 minutes later, they said, "This is a test. If there is a tsunami wave, get in high ground." That's the part we had cut in. So, I'll never forget that. A mistake I made is that we rode, trying to get into the channel to get to our car. We were still a few miles away. Well, at 5:00 p.m., about 6:00 p.m., we began to row again. We rowed and rowed and rowed. Here it was 10:00 p.m. We could see at a distance, a lighthouse we were heading. So, we rowed, 1:00 a.m. We got to the lighthouse. By then, we've been rowing since 7:00 a.m. I said, "Muriel, let's take a break." She says, "No, I want to get to the car. I want to go home. Let's go." I said, "Well, I'm exhausted." She said, "That's okay. Keep going." So, we rowed down. We got to the lighthouse. We started going down the channel. I said, "Muriel, let's just take five minutes." She said, "No. Keep rowing." It's 2:00 a.m. I said, "I'm going to take a break." I laid down, but I went to sleep. I just passed out. She rowed the last, maybe 5 miles. That was a mistake. Because anytime we're at a party, we talk about rowing, "I rowed him under the table. He passed out on me." "I didn't pass out. I took a nap. But never do that again.

MS: So, when you start these adventures at 7:00 in the morning and row out until 5:00 p.m., do you talk at all, or you just row in silence for 12 hours?

JO: Well, what she does is she puts us a songbook on my back and then she sings and goes to that songbook while we're both rowing. We're both rowing at the same time, but she uses that songbook. She hooks it onto my back, ties it in there. Then she sings songs and we row along. We talk, and of course, we have dehydrated foods. We have snack foods and so on. A peanut butter, we get them for five miles, peanut butter sandwich. Peanut butter goes a long way when you're roaring because you need that energy.

MS: So, this songbook, tell me about that. What are the songs you sing?

JO: You name it. She has every conceivable song you can think of in this modern songbook. She turns the pages and then sang them. My nickname was TJ, tuneless John. I can't sing. So, I would sing songs which she would try to identify but I could only hit one or two notes that she could always identify. After that, she could identify what I was trying to do. But she had to do a lot of guessing, because I can't carry a tune.

MS: Well, we've gone through so much. I think we run out of time again. But let me see if there's anything else. Anything I didn't talk about that's on your list here.

JO: So, I gave them a talk on that.

MS: I mean, give me a shorter version of that talk, the sea captains you've met.

JO: The Los Angeles Maritime Museum was started in the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium. The director there, Dr. Pete Lee, called me the Father of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. What we did, we went around town and we collected cheap bottled nautical instrument, we put them on the second floor. This is how the museum was born, the Maritime Museum. [inaudible] will come to visit me and tell me about their ship model and tell me about what they wanted to donate and that's sort thing. I met a lot of interesting people, especially one, (Captain Joe Winston?).

His son was also named (Joe Winston?). I went to high school with him. He was a Cape Horner and he always carried a cane. I can all hear him coming up the stairs, the wooden stairs, because he would bang with his cane. One time, I lifted his cane up and it must have weighed 10 pounds. I said, "My goodness. It's a wooden cane but it weighed 10 pounds. How come your cane is so heavy? What kind of wood is it?" He said, "It's full of lead. I had the inside full of lead. This is what I carry when I was the captain aboard of sailing ships. This is how I kept my sailors. When they got on line and the mutiny [inaudible], I beat them down with my cane. I put them in iron." Here he was, eighty-eight, eighty-nine, almost ninety years old, weighed about 105 pounds, little old man and was barely walking along with that cane. We'll come up and would talk and chat about the olden days and days of sailing. He'd look at my ship and so on. Well, one day, I went home for dinner after work. I'm home at 5:30. I'm sitting down at dinner and my wife hand me the paper. I opened it up and here's the picture of Captain Winston. I read what it said, I said, Muriel, hold it. I'll be right back." "Where are you going?" "He lives on 19th Street. I'm going to go right down and talk to him. I can't believe this story." So, I rushed right down on 19th Street and I knocked on the door. He came to the door. I said, "Captain (Winston?). Here's your picture on the front page of the local paper. I want to hear it from you. What happened?" He said, "Come on in. I'll tell you the story." I went in his house and sat down. He said, "I'm walking down 22nd Street below Pacific Avenue. There's a young man put a knife in my back and he says, "Okay, old man, give me your wallet or I'll stick this knife up your ribs." I said, "You heard it, old man, would you. I'm almost ninety years old." He says "I don't care how old you are. Give me your wallet. I want your money now or you're going to get knifed. He said, "Okay. Let me get my wallet. It's in my back pocket. Get out of the way so I can get my wallet here, Step back and you can have my money, just don't hurt me, okay?" He reaches over to get his wallet. [hitting sound] He hit him on the head with his cane and knocked him down. He took him down and put it on behind his back. Nobody around. He said, "I am sitting on top of this man with his arms around the back of his head and there's nobody there. I'm waiting and about five minutes later, a man drives up, stopped his car, looked out the window and said, "What's happening here?" He said, "This young man put a knife in my ribs. Call the police." The guy says "Yes, please call the police. Get him off my back. So, he picked up his cell phone and he called the police. The police were there in five or ten minutes. They came and they said, "What's happening? what's going on?" He's still laying on his back and he said, "This young man put a knife on my back and wants my wallet. I beat him to the ground." He said, "You did? We got to get this to the paper. Hang on for a minute." He said, "No, get him off me. Take me to jail. Get him off my back." He said, "Not yet." They called the [inaudible] the publisher of [inaudible]. He's in a photographer write out and he took a picture of (Captain Joe Winston?) and on top of this man's back. That was a great story. The sea captain [inaudible] he said, "That's how I control my men, my sailors when they got out of line. I whipped them with this and put them on irons."

MS: Give me another sea captain that you remember.

JO: Okay. The Cabrillo Marine Aquarium was a bathhouse. The Maritime Museum in San Francisco was a bathhouse and (Carl Carter?) was the director. So, I went up to visit with him. I knew him. We would trade back and forth and meet at conventions. I said, "(Carl Carter?), I need to raise money to build a museum and aquarium. I understand you did pretty good with the Balclutha." He said, "Yes. If that took a while the Balclutha. I wonder the City of San

Francisco." I said, "I want to build a museum, a maritime museum and put it near fisherman's wharf so I can make the way they build a maritime museum." He said, "You can do that. As long as you use the money for a museum, there'll be no charge or any rent either. I want it in writing." So, they said, "Yes. As long as the Balclutha is making money for a maritime museum, you can have it free rent forever." He said, "John, they've been suing me and suing me and suing me. But every time I go to court, because I made so much money on the Balclutha, they said they want some of that for rent. I won't give it to them. I'll put it in the museum. So, you do that same thing. Take a maritime ship and make a museum out of it and use all the money you want." The (Captain Cleveland?) came in to visit me. He was a Pedro boy. He worked his way up to become a captain. I said, "Hey, Captain. I'm looking for a hull. We want to make a maritime museum." He says, "I'm going on to my [inaudible] and there's a bunch of hulls there in the mud flat. Maybe I can find one for you. I'll check with you in a couple of weeks." About three weeks later, he came and he said, "I found one, but they're all rotten and no good. Don't bother. I'm going to Alaska. He said I'll check there." Well, another two to three weeks came by and he came back with these photographs and said, "I found a perfect ship for you. It's called the *Falls of Clyde*. It's iron-hulled, in perfect condition. We'll throw it down here and we'll make a maritime museum out of it. You'll have your ship and [inaudible] will have a ship. I said, "Wow, thanks a million." I made a presentation. I went to the Chamber of Commerce. They said "Well, right now, we're building the San Pedro hospital. We don't have any money for this ship." So, I went to John Gibson, president of the city council. I went to the harbor department, I went to everybody. Nobody had money to build a maritime. Meantime, Hawaii bought the ship. They towed her to Hawaii and they build a maritime museum out of it. But they build it and they put it in the place where the freeway will go right over it but no off ramp. So, nobody will double back five miles to go to the ship. It was a total off. It was a beautiful ship. One of the board of directors is a friend of mine, (Nick Resnick?) who lived here in PV. His wife was one of my volunteers. I told him my problem. He said, "Look, either get Mayor Tom Bradley to write me a letter and that you'll accept the ship and put it in the port of Los Angeles. I'll give you a check for $1 million. We'll buy the ship for a million dollars. We'll tow it up here. You'll have your ship already made. I said, "Where am I going to get a million dollars?" "I'll give it to you. [inaudible] fundraise for Stanford University. No problem." I said, "You really will?" "Yes." So, I went to Tom Bradley and he wrote the letter. When the people in Hawaii found out that Los Angeles wanted to buy their ship and tow it here. They raised the money and built their own off ramp. So, now, people can go right off the off ramp to the ship and we didn't get our ship.

MS: Two parts, you started talking about (Happy Valley?0 and what was going on in Beacon Street that a lot of people haven't talked about. Talk about Beacon Street as a place of pleasures as well as drinking and rowdies.

JO: Okay. San Pedro was a busy place. At 9:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m., there are a hundred people walking up and down the street, shopping and going to the stores, all the sailors were walking up and down. I started out as a shoeshine boy. I used to shine sailor's shoes, but I also shine the girlfriend, the ladies of the night, so to speak. They knew me. They call me Johnny, the shoeshine boy. I told them every penny I make I give to my mother because my father is not working. Happy Valley was on 3rd Street. We lived on 2nd Street. So, you can always see all these faces going up in Happy Valley into the different houses and different places. We moved

to 13th Street above Palos Verdes. There was a house behind our back and my mother used to say, "I never want you to go into that house that's behind our house." I said, "I don't, Mother. I didn't go in there." So, this lady who lived there, Mary, was router stout. She would give me 50 cents and asked me to go to the store. I would go to the store a block away and buy bread or egg and in return, I'd get a quarter. But I never went in the house. Years later, I'm walking down 6th Street and the Salvation Army is playing away and the band is going. This young, beautiful, slim woman is singing. When I was listening to them, one of the [inaudible], "John, do you remember me?" I said, "No. I don't think I've ever met you before." She said, "Johnny, I'm Mary. I used to live behind your house." Well, I used to see all these men go in the back door her house. But I didn't think anything of it. I just thought you had a lot of friend soldiers and sailors and so on, longshoreman. They're all going there. I thought, well, "But I don't think I've met you before." She said, "Yes, I'm Mary. I said, "Well, I remember the Mary, she would rather heavy." She said, "That's me. But I've lost all this weight. I've accepted Christ as my personal Savior. It has made a whole difference in my life. I thank God for it." She was a converted Christian and now, she was with the Salvation Army. I think she lost about 80 pounds and 50 pounds because he was slim, and just beautiful. Absolutely a different person altogether. I was so surprised and so happy to run into her and then see the difference.

MS: Explain the term Happy Valley. What was that?

JO: Happy Valley was from the very beginning in the early days, even before Beacon Street. This was where all the ladies at night had their homes – and the sailors, when they come in, the seamen and sailors would – when they get off their ship, they would run to Happy Valley because this is a place where the music was and the dance hall. This is where the girls were. This will be one to do with Beacon Street before they tore it down was to not really have any lasers at night but have make believe lasers at night. It also has plays and takes advantage of the Barbary Coast. So, people would come from all over the world to visit the Barbary Coast and have a real good time and make believe like they did in the olden days. But anyway, we didn't get it. (Thomas Shane?) built Ports O' Call and we know now that they're having a few problems.

MS: So, tell me more about Happy Valley.

JO: Well, all I know is that Happy Valley was the place where everybody went. Not everybody, but all the sailors and all the seamen. This is where they went to have a good time. This is where the women were. This is where the houses of [inaudible] were. So, they called it Happy Valley. That's about all I can tell you about it. Because it would really before my age. As a shoeshine boy, I wasn't interested in Happy Valley. But I lived on 2nd Street and it was on 3rd Street. So, we knew what was happening but I didn't realize that it was a place for women and seamen to get together.

MS: [laughter] Okay. Great. Good, got it. Thanks.

[end of transcript]