Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project
Gretchen Tostrup Oral History
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Male Speaker: Tell me the story about your family and how it affected the bar business in San Pedro.

Gretchen Tostrup: I come from an extremely salty family. On my mother's side, my grandfather was a ship chandler in San Pedro for over 60 years. On my father's side, my grandfather was a founding member of Local 13. My stepdad was a member of ILWU for over 40 years as a marine clerk. I myself shipped out as a young person, worked casual for many years, worked in my grandfather's ship chandlery, so I've worked on all segments of the of the industry, on the sea, on the dock, behind the scenes.

MS: We're going to go back over this. But I want you to tell me that story about trainees.

GT: In the early days, the original longshore dispatch hall – which was actually a shape-up. It wasn't a real dispatch hall. It was where the employers came to pick and choose the people they wanted to work – was in the basement of original, Trani's Majestic on Seventh Street. Right next door was my grandfather's ship chandlery, for many, many years, Atlas Marine Supply. In the early [19]30s, when prohibition was over, the Trani's had only been serving beers and Boilermakers, essentially. One day, a fellow showed up and wanted a Manhattan. So, they had to come next door to the ship chandlery to get my grandfather to come over and mix the drinks. At that point, he started teaching them to make mixed drinks, and the bar became well known for its wide variety of choices. So, it was probably 1930 or 1931 that the trainees branched out from Boilermakers and beer.

MS: Tell me the story again about Tranis.

GT: In the early days, the original longshore dispatch all – which was not a dispatch, it was a shape-up – was in the basement of Trani's Majestic on Seventh Street. My grandfather's ship chandlery was directly next door. In the early [19]30s, someone came in and wanted a Manhattan. Well, previous to this time, the Tranis had only served beers and Boilermakers. So, they had to come next door to the ship chandlery to get my grandfather to come over and mix the drinks. So, from 1930 or so, Trani started offering a choice beyond the beer and Boilermaker school.

MS: Now, how did your grandfather in the chandlery know about mixed drinks and a restaurant didn't?

GT: Well, my grandfather was an immigrant from Norway and spent a lot of time on ships to and from Europe. He was sophisticate. He and my grandmother traveled extensively. For him to not know how to make a Manhattan would have been just disgraceful.

MS: Let's go back and talk about your family and its relationship with the history of the unions in town.

GT: Okay. I come from a very salty family. My grandfather on my father's side was a founding member of Local 13. He was a Norwegian and Choctaw Indian from Alabama who came out to work with Harry Bridges and was a founding member. On the other side, my grandfather was a

ship chandler for over 60 years in San Pedro, the original Atlas Marine Supply. My stepdad was a clerk with ILWU Local 63 for over 40 years. So, I come from a long family of salty people. As a college student, I was a sailor myself in the Norwegian Merchant Marine.

MS: Let's go back. First of all, I need to have you say your name and spell it.

GT: My name is Gretchen Williams Tostrup, T-O-S-T-R-U-P, is my husband's name.

MS: What year, and where were you born?

GT: I was born in San Pedro, 1955.

MS: Let's talk about your family now. What was your family life like when you were born in the [19]50s? Who were they, and what was their background?

GT: My father's still living, was a lifeguard on Cabrillo Beach, and also a schoolteacher. My mother was also a schoolteacher and taught at LA Unified for over 30 years. My dad spent the week teaching school and lifeguarded on the weekends.

MS: So, what are your early memories as a little girl growing up in San Pedro?

GT: It had to be the beach. We were at the beach every day. For me, growing up in San Pedro was the beach and the harbor. Life was instantly identified by the smell of salt and the ocean. When I was a very small child, we were at the beach virtually every day. My dad was a lifeguard, and we spent a lot of time at the beach. I learned to swim as an infant. Learned to sail as a very small child. It was so centered around the harbor that there was no other schedule besides what the ships wanted in my grandfather's family. As a chandler, you are supplying ships with virtually everything they need, from food to paint to fittings to wire to engine parts to anything. Ships don't care what day of the year it is, if it's Sunday or Christmas. They're just going underway. That's what they want. So, life centered around a shipping schedule, around responses to what was happening in the harbor on a day-by-day basis.

MS: As a little girl growing up, what do you like to do for fun? What are your memories about what you did, aside from the beach? Did you go to your grandfather's, or what was it like?

GT: I spent a great deal of time with my maternal grandparents and learned to sail from my grandfather as a very small child. I could fully operate a 36-foot sailboat by myself at nine. Because when we went sailing, if anything happened to him, he wanted the ship to be under control. So, he had to have a competent partner. So, I learned to sail as a very small kid.

MS: What was that like for you to have a boat under your command?

GT: It was pretty powerful. It was pretty powerful, a little scary, but I could, at nine, turn a 36-foot sailboat around on a diamond, pick up a bleach bottle out of the water with a boat [inaudible]. That was pretty flashy for a nine-year-old.

MS: What other things did you do for fun when you were young?

GT: Well, I traveled with my grandparents a great deal. My grandfather also had a travel agency and spent a lot of time in Europe on business trips for his ship chandlery business. So, I traveled with him quite a bit. Spent summers in Norway as a child and learned to speak Norwegian by eavesdropping. Because in my family, they spoke Norwegian when they didn't want you to know what they were talking about. So, I essentially learned by eavesdropping.

MS: My family was Finnish.

GT: Okay.

MS: So, what was San Pedro like in the [19]50s for a little girl growing up?

GT: San Pedro was interesting in that it has always been a hard-working town. The schedule in our family revolved around ships and what ships demands were and what their schedules were. Also, the holidays, because my father was a lifeguard, and they work all holidays and all weekends. Because that's where the demand is. San Pedro, I remember specifically when I was very small, smelled like fish because of the fish canneries on the island. That's one of the reasons my grandfather came to San Pedro and stayed, is because it smelled like Norway, where his father had been a sardine canner, smelled the same. He knew that was home. Whence a kid in the family would complain about how the fish smelled, my father would tell him, "Smells like people are working." That was exactly it, that working and keeping the family going and keeping the town vital was what was important.

MS: How would you describe the town? What was it like in the [19]50s?

GT: San Pedro in the [19]50s was, as now, very ethnically diverse and very ethnically identified that you were a Slav or an Italian or a Latina, or like I'm a Norwegian, part of the Norwegian community, that as time went on, especially post-[19]50s and [19]60s, these communities intermarried. So, that differential is not so noticeable anymore. But it's still very firmly identified with San Pedro as an ethnic town and different from other communities just because of that.

MS: As a little girl, did you have dreams of what you wanted to do?

GT: I dreamed, as a child, that I could fly, going up on the crane to lash containers. Sometimes that felt like it was coming true.

MS: What did you see is your future? Did you want to be a teacher like your mother? What did you think about that?

GT: Well, I always enjoyed teaching. I still tutor algebra, which is a real challenging thing to do. But I could see that my life needed to be more fully rounded than just identifying with a school district. Also, I figured out early that schoolteachers don't make much money. When I went to college, I planned to be an academic, not necessarily a lower division schoolteacher. I

was planning to go on – do my PhD. That's what I was compelled to – really compelled to do. But once I started working on the waterfront and found out how much money these people were making, my second year of college, when I started as a casual, I was making more money as a longshore casual than my college professor. That kind of changed my mind a little bit about academia.

MS: What were you going to get your PhD in?

GT: Well, I have a master's in harbor administration and a bachelor's in transportation. So, I've always been totally interested in international trade and international relations. What makes San Pedro so vital is its involvement in trade. I look at trade as being the only thing that – international trade is the only thing that makes peace more profitable than war. I think that's a very valid industry to be in, considering the state of our country.

MS: So, give you a sense of when, what year that you first got involved as a casual.

GT: I was 19. I was in my second year of college. I was a Marymount girl. I had been on the waterfront before, working in the ship chandlery and that sort of thing. But going to work on the waterfront in the midst of all these longshoremen and all this mechanization and all these incredible machines was fairly daunting. But I had to make a living. I was putting myself through college cleaning house and shampooing carpets, and I was making no money. So, when there was an opportunity to make money as a casual, I jumped on it. Because I had to pay for school. I had to buy books. I had to pay rent.

MS: Tell me how that happened. There weren't too many women out there.

GT: There were none. I was it. When I started on the waterfront, there were no women. During World War Two, women had done most of the functions on the waterfront because men were at war. Once men returned after World War Two, the women went back to what they were doing before, which was at home or in school or nursing or whatever. Then it was over thirty years before I got a casual card, which was 1974.

MS: How did you even get that? I mean, there must have been a struggle. Give me the year again, you started.

GT: 1974, November 1974, I went to the local and asked for a casual card. At that point, I couldn't tell you what it was that turned the local that made them give casual cards to women. But somehow the threat of integration was – it was looming. The threat of integration was looming, and they had just recently been through lawsuits, affirmative action lawsuits, to integrate the union for Blacks. I think that that threat is what came across. So, I got a casual card in November 1974. At the very beginning, it was me and then six other women. At that point, I started working. Though it was not an easy thing to do. Working casual means that you are entitled to one day of work, and that's it. There are no benefits. There's no job guarantee. There's nothing. You are entitled to one day of work. So, I did that for a few months. My first few days of longshoring were counting hides, cattle hides, which were being sent overseas to be made into leather. Now, these were raw, and the stench is almost unbelievable. Each cow hide

has a piece of meat left attached to it, so that the maggots will attack that meat and not the hide itself. It was late fall but very hot. Because the seasons here are completely open to suggestion. The smell and the stench was almost overwhelming to the point where I had to go home and undress in the garage. I could not wear my clothes into the house. I did that for a few days. I'm sure that they were just trying to get rid of me, that this was going to so repulse a Marymount girl that she would go away and never bother them again. But I needed to make money. I was putting myself through college. I had to pay the rent, buy the schoolbooks, and do that sort of thing. In January of 1975, I went to talk to Pacific Maritime Association officials about getting an actual job. The fellow from PMA told me that he couldn't possibly hire women because the longshoremen's wives wouldn't like it for their husbands to be working with women. Now, this was 1975 not 1775. So, it seemed like a fairly roundabout way of saying, fuck you. At that point, I went to talk to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. Because it seemed like such a specious answer. There wasn't – he didn't leave any potential for, well, sometime in the future, just I can't hire women, that that won't work. It took a further eight years for my charge to be developed into anything beyond just paperwork sitting in the EEOC office. Over eight years, I worked as a casual and put myself through college. During that time, I had 35 other jobs to stay available, to be a casual – to work casual.

MS: What were the 35 other jobs?

GT: Well, I cleaned houses. I shampooed carpets. I shampooed poodles. I was an artist model. I belly danced in a bar in Montana. I did interior decorating. I did landscaping. I tutored. I walked dogs. I did upholstery, babysitting. I painted. I sanded surfboards for a while, done a lot of different stuff, attended bar on a Norwegian cruise ship. That was probably the thing I did the longest.

MS: So, after eight years, what were you doing, your casual work? Were you always doing the hides? What was the casual job?

GT: No, no. As time went on, I at least got some better jobs as a clerk. Because most of what I did as a casual was clerk. So, as time went on, I learned more about it and things improved. Especially if you're a good worker and you're devoted and you're fairly intelligent, they get the message eventually that you do a good job, and that helps a lot.

MS: Now, I understand, until the [19]70s, maybe [19]76, is that one of the big changes, which is connected to what you were doing, is that the way you got a job was from family to family and that the union sort of opened up at that point, so you didn't – it wasn't handed down through generations of families, that the union became more open. Is that true? Did that also affect you?

GT: That's true on some levels. I have to say that I probably would never have had a casual card if my stepfather had not been a clerk already, that there is a tradition, like many industries, of families continuing in the job. It continues today that people from outside the community don't always fully conceive of what the job involves, that people who are born in it and raised in it, at least have some comprehension of how dangerous the job is and how vital safety and work ethic is to the survival of everyone, that many people look at this profession as strictly a way to make easy money. That's not necessarily true. It's not that easy. It looks easy. It's not that easy.

MS: Who are some of the other women of your generation that came through at that point? Did you sort of find yourself banding together, or you all were individuals?

GT: Well, the affirmative action lawsuit, as it evolved – the Golden case – encompassed a wide variety of people. The majority of women who got jobs out of the Golden case were women of color, which I'm particularly proud of, that this is probably the most successful affirmative action program in the country that women of all varieties are working and putting kids through college now, and many by now have retired. It's been thirty-three years. So, it was a wide diversity of people who ended up working and are working now. There are probably over a thousand women working in this port now.

MS: Talk about Deborah Taylor Golden, who she was, and what's her role in all this?

GT: I have to tell you; I'd rather not.

MS: No?

GT: You have to turn this off.

MS: Okay. Turn it off. So, when you started challenging this very old system, what kind of response did you get? Give me some stories about what you were up against?

GT: Well, like many people, trying to integrate a situation, whether they're women or Blacks or whatever other minority, people were not happy. Quite often, they're threatened when they think that their jobs are in jeopardy, or they're somehow threatened on some other level. Part of it is that many of the men working didn't want women to be making that much money. That was part of it. Also, they were looking at the industry as a guarantee for their own kids. So, at the beginning, some people were very hostile and violent. I spent a lot of time trying to stay safe.

MS: So, give me some examples where you felt under threat.

GT: Many times, I was threatened with equipment, being run down, that kind of thing. My house was broken into. My car was trashed. I was threatened a lot of times. I changed my phone number six times. There were some things that were funny about it, though. Because one fellow would call and leave a really threatening and very obscene message for me and then leave his phone number, like I was going to call him back, which seems somehow a little maladjusted to me. When I finally got registered as a longshoreman, I spent a lot of time lashing, which is tying down the containers with cables and chains. I had several of my fellow workers try to push me off, four high, which is the equivalent of a three-story building. So, there were times that people were very hostile and threatened and looked at me as being an identifiable cause of their angst.

MS: Well, I get the impression you didn't take much cuff though.

GT: I had to keep on working. I had to make a living. I didn't have any choice in the matter that

I could have probably given up at some point, but it seemed that I was too heavily invested. I had spent too much time already. It certainly looked like an important thing to do. Also, the benefit package was something worth fighting for. I'm a three-time cancer survivor. Okay? I probably would not be here without those medical benefits. People in this country don't realize how vital that can be.

MS: Was there a moment, though, when you said, "I just can't take this"?

GT: There were many nights I went home and cried in the bathtub, many nights. It was only through the support of family and friends that I was able to maintain any kind of attitude. But my first marriage was a casualty of this whole thing. It took me eight years to finish my education. I had to move many times just to keep ahead of people who obviously were lashing out when they felt threatened. Now, the whole situation has changed that it's – things mellow out completely when it's their own wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, or sister or niece who have a job now. When it was someone else, it was threatening. When it – you're keeping the jobs in the family, whether they're male or female family members, that's an important thing.

MS: Did you make any bonds with other women who were there? Do you share any kind of solidarity with other women? Or was it pretty much a lonely task?

GT: At the time, it was pretty lonely. I had many people in San Pedro would turn around, go the other way in the grocery store, or they felt that I was really threatening a way of life that they had come to depend on. At this point. I have many friends, though, of years and years duration, men and women.

MS: But in those days, there were a small coterie of women in the longshoremen. Did you get together to support each other?

GT: It was a lot more disjointed than that. I don't think that solidarity is something you could actually pin – you couldn't pin that term on it. Of those original seven, I think only two are still working. A lot of people fell by the wayside during the intervening years.

MS: In all this struggle, were there any men who took your side and were helpful?

GT: Actually, yes, very many. There were many men who were – who could identify, especially the Blacks, and who also saw the potential for their own family members to take advantage of this in the future. So, that was important.

MS: Now, what about Latinos? I mean, that's another whole group. Were there any issues with them working on the waterfront? Or how did that go?

GT: Well, it's difficult to generalize over any racial group. There were individuals in every group who were supportive, kind, helpful, and then there were – they were assholes, of all descriptions [laughter]. See, that's equal opportunity, too.

MS: So, talk about the jobs that you're working as a casual. You weren't always doing hides.

So, tell me about the different jobs.

GT: No, that was at the beginning. Well, as a clerk, the clerk is the person responsible for maintaining the flow of cargo via paper, via computer. Every move that cargo makes has to be documented. That's the role of the clerk. Longshoremen do the actual moving of the cargo. The clerk is the person responsible for every move that container makes or whatever cargo it is. It has to be documented. Because the volume is so huge that if it's not documented, you lose it immediately. Especially with the volume of cargo we're doing now, the documentation has to be absolutely accurate. That's what I did, is the documentation involved in cargo transfer, basically, ship to dock and dock to truck.

MS: What is lashing? What is that job?

GT: Okay, lashing is a longshore position that is essentially containers being lashed together, means they're connected to each other through a system of wire rope, cables, turnbuckles, and chains, so that each individual bay on the vessel, each individual hatch and bay above deck, are lashed together into a separate entity, so that that entire structure is solid. It's no longer just a jumble of containers stacked on one another. It's a solid entity.

MS: What does a lasher do?

GT: Lasher is the person who actually puts on and takes off and adjusts all that chain, wire rope, rod, and turnbuckle system.

MS: So, what was the most challenging job you did when you were starting out?

GT: I think every job was a challenge, keeping track of the cargo, trying to avoid being run down, putting up with harassment, and there was a lot of it. But it was also very interesting, meeting a lot of different kinds of people. One day, I did my usual routine. When I come to work with new people, I always introduce myself and shake everybody's hand. An older Black fellow said, "You know, in my lifetime, I've never had a White woman come up and shake my hand." I thought that, in itself, was one of those moments that's going to make the whole picture different, that there was some communication where there had never been before. That in itself, I thought, was – that was an important part of integrating the union and the workforce, was that it's not only me who was meeting new people and learning new stuff. It was them too.

MS: Bringing women into the longshore union, what did that do for the work, and what did it do for the harbor? I mean, aside from just having women in there, what are the things that had contributed to the harbor?

GT: Well, what's been very interesting about the integration, beyond the marriages and the different relationships that have evolved, the dispatch hall is different. The dispatch hall used to be kind of dirty and grimy and people gambling in the corner and maybe somebody – some homeless person walking in and out and maybe a drunk passed out in the corner, kind of thing. Now, the dispatch hall is lovely and has a cappuccino machine. The guys are not stumbling in kind of bedraggled. They're wearing a new shirt, and everybody's wearing aftershave. It has

livened up the atmosphere in the dispatch hall. But also, employers have told me that they're very happy to have women employees. They are on time. They do a good job. They have a family to take care of, so they have a vested interest in covering the job. Quite a few of the women that they've hired are much more educated than workers of past generations. Dispatch hall smells better.

MS: Was there any old-timer who you thought would never change that after a while – or maybe there's more than one – saw the light? Or were there other people who kind of expected?

GT: Oh, many. Many changed their perspective, mostly when a member of their own family started working. Many old-timers really changed their perspective when a member of their own family or acquaintance was hired or went to work. Because previous, it was okay to be rude to the women. But once more women came in, then you didn't know if you were being rude or obscene to your partner's niece or your own cousin's in-law or somebody that you knew would come back with some repercussions, or it would get back to you. It changed the atmosphere quite a bit when many women came into the workforce that there were more people related. Therefore, it became a much more even playing field. But also, it gave the old-timers more of a vested interest, and that was an important change.

MS: In this case, in the integration case, was this one of many that was going on in docks around the world? Or was this a leader? Put it in context. What was happening in New York and Tacoma and Seattle and San Diego at this time? Was San Pedro part of a trend, or was it leading the way? Or what?

GT: Before I started as a casual, women had worked on the waterfront during World War Two. That was until the war was ended. The men came back. Women went back home or whatever they were doing. Previous to [19]74, which is when I started, in the intervening years between World War Two and 1974, there were no women working on the West Coast. I had heard rumor that there were a few Black women working in the port in New Orleans. Though that's never been confirmed to me, and I've never met any of them. I know that there were no women on the East Coast, which is the ILA, different union. What was happening here in LA was pretty much the – we were the cutting edge. As a result, all of the ports on the West Coast were integrated and are now.

MS: What's your feeling about the union? I mean, obviously it's giving you the benefits that you needed. Aside from the individuals, there was an institution that had to change. I mean, what would you feel about how the union was involved through all this?

GT: Well, you have to understand that when I talked to Harry Bridges in the early [19]70s about this, he firmly supported women integrating the industry. His main goal was equal opportunity in work, that work opportunity needed to be available to anyone who was willing to do it or could do it. His philosophy was that every worker needed to start at the bottom and spend five years in the hold, which was the basic philosophy at that point. He told me, even though I was college student and knew virtually nothing as far as he was concerned, he said, "If you can do the job, you should do the job." That ultimately filtered down. As older generations are retiring and new workers come in, the whole structure of the union and the attitude changed. I think that that

has a lot to do with how women are involved now. Because they do support the union quite a bit. I'm part of the Casual Education Committee, and I'm also part of the International Public Relations Team.

MS: Talk about Harry Bridges. You met him. Who was he? Why is he an important figure in all this?

GT: Harry Bridges is the reason that my industry is organized. Harry Bridges was a driving force behind the development of the union in the early [19]30s. Came from Australia. As a seaman, jumped ship in San Francisco, and started working on the waterfront in – under the old system, which was the shape-up system, which meant that if they liked you, you got a job. Or if you paid appropriate kickback, you got a job or whatever the various ways and means were. The U.S. government tried to deport him many times, never worked. Harry Bridges was an extremely sharp and insightful fellow who also looked at the future of the industry in the big picture that no one else was looking at. His whole ideas about mechanization and modernization are still in effect today, forty years later. We're still working on Harry's philosophy, which was that equal work opportunity for all, that if you can step up and do the job, you need the opportunity to do the job. When I met Harry in the early [19]70s and talked to him about women on the waterfront, he was supportive. He thought it was just a fine idea. If you could do the job, that was his bottom line, was that no one should be carried – if they couldn't perform the job, they should step aside for somebody who could. But if you could do the job, and you were willing, that you should have that opportunity.

MS: How many women are now working in the local here?

GT: Well, there are three locals in our port, the longshore, the clerks – which I'm a member – and the foreman's union. I think, between the regular registered members, probably a thousand; among the casual workers, probably another thousand or two thousand.

MS: You have to tell me that they're women.

GT: I'm sorry. Okay. There are three union locals in this port, Longshore 13, Clerks 63, of which I'm a member, and Foreman's Union Local 94. Of the registered workers in the port, probably there are about a thousand women now. Among unregistered workers, which are the casual force, there are probably 6500 casuals right now. Maybe 1500 of those are women.

MS: What's the percentage?

GT: I'm going to say, well, in the union itself, as overall, Local 13, Local 63, and Local 94, of registered workers, probably between 25 and 30 percent now are women. I'm sorry. Between the three locals, Local 13, longshore; Local 63, clerks – which I'm a member – and Local 94, the foremen, there are probably over a thousand women working, which is maybe 25 to 30 percent of the population. Among the casual workers, who are another 6500 to 7000, there are probably 1500 to 2000 women, so another, probably, third.

MS: [19]73, as we all know, isn't that long ago. But there are generations of women who are

working there now. Do they have any idea what it was like before? Do they appreciate what you and others did? Or is it often taken for granted?

GT: Most of them are oblivious. Most women today are – I don't want to say oblivious, but most women today are not aware of what went before to put them in that position of either longshore, clerk, or foreman. As time goes on, the older people usually will figure it out. But there are many, many young women who have no idea what came before.

MS: What would you say to that generation if you wanted to get something across to them? What would you want to say to them about what you experienced and the importance of it all?

GT: What I would say to women coming up in the industry? It's important to support the union. Absolutely. Because of the amount of discrimination that we have been subject to, to take that as a message and to provide support and help to those coming after and to take that message to not discriminate against younger and more vulnerable workers.

MS: That's a good point. Do you think your grandfather would have been supportive or understood what you went through?

GT: No, he hated it. My grandfather hated it. He didn't think women belonged on the waterfront. That's why I went longshoring is because he didn't want me working in the ship chandlery. That was basically it, that if –

MS: Can you give me a story that illustrates that?

GT: My grandfather always felt that women had no place on the waterfront. Though he didn't mind that I went sailing with him, that I was a sailing partner. He didn't mind that I worked in the ship chandlery driving a truck. He didn't mind women doing subordinate positions. He really thought that business was for men. But he was from the old country. He didn't come to the U.S. until 1921. He was a very staunch old country chauvinist. No question in my mind. Probably, I never would have gone longshoring if I had been given a job in the ship chandlery. I certainly had the education and the background for it. But he felt that it was inappropriate for women.

MS: Directly, he gave you your career.

GT: Right.

MS: What about your father?

GT: My stepfather was supportive. He was against me suing the union. He definitely thought that was the wrong way to go. But there was no other choice at that point. My natural father, the lifeguard, never thought I could do it, even though it had been his father who was a longshoreman. He'd never gone longshoring because he wanted to be a teacher and wanted to do something with his education. He felt that I should be doing something more important with my education. I think that was a lot of it. It wasn't that he thought I couldn't perform the job. He

thought that I wouldn't be able to integrate the union. He also thought that I ought to have continued in academia, which is where I was originally going to go.

MS: What about your stepfather?

GT: Oh, my stepfather, who was a clerk for over forty years, was very supportive, except that I was, as a casual, and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and I were actively suing his union, which he was very unhappy about. I can understand that. But he was supportive of me as a worker, absolutely.

MS: What about your mother?

GT: My mother was a schoolteacher for all her life, and she taught handicapped kids. She has always felt that because her child was obviously not handicapped, that I should do anything I set my mind to. That's what was important. She was – I think part of it, she was very invested in you should do what you need to be doing, not what society says you ought to be doing, being married, and having children or whatever your story happens to be. She knew, because I could never have kids, that that was not going to be an option for me. She never put any kind of pressure on – in terms of societal expectations, all right? That, I hand her tremendous credit for that she was supportive of whatever it was I wanted to do.

MS: So, her position in the union, unlike your stepfather's, she just wanted the best for you and didn't feel that personal connection to what you were doing?

GT: Well, she also thought that I should be doing something academic, I mean, if it had been her choice. She was very concerned that people were trying to hurt me. I think that was important.

MS: Now, after the years have gone by – we're talking thirty years now.

GT: Thirty-three.

MS: Yes. How have the conditions changed from those first years to now? What is it like now for you and for other women on the docks?

GT: Well, the entire union is integrated now, which makes women normalcy not an exception. That makes a difference. Women have worked up the ladder. There are women bosses now. I'm a planner. I'm the person who does the computer work involved in where all that cargo goes on and off the vessel. So, I'm at the top of the food chain also. It is vitally important that women are not only allowed to do the work but are allowed to advance. That has worked out pretty well. There are even women bosses now.

MS: Women executive directors of the harbor.

GT: Yes, Gerry Knatz, who's a friend of mine.

MS: Right. Well, any stories we missed that you wanted to share with us?

GT: I knew the union was integrated. I knew the union was integrated, and the workforce was integrated when the gear men gave a baby shower for one of the longshorewomen. The gear men are the fellows or people – but it's mostly men – who take care of all the equipment. They're the guys who come out and fix things. They jury rig things. They fit All the equipment. They set up all the Brama rigs. Anything that needs to be adjusted, the gear men are there. Usually, the gear men's hangout, the office, is a pretty greasy, grimy little spot, usually the last bastion of the centerfolds and all that sort of thing. A couple of years ago, when the gear men invited me to come to a baby shower for one of the longshorewomen that they were putting on, and I came to the gear men's room, and along with the Playboy center folds and all the turnbuckles and all the gear and the wires and the rope and all that stuff hanging around in there, were also dozens of little baby outfits hanging among the equipment. They had a cake. They barbecued. They were celebrating this woman's new child. I thought this shows how integrated we are, that the most macho of the macho, the gear men, were observing this woman's motherhood. I thought that was a fabulous thing.

MS: Great story. I'm glad I asked you. We're going to ask you to move about 2 feet over. I'm going to get a still photo of you.

[end of transcript]