

**Tape 1 Side A**

Interview 4/20/2007

RC: Three 50-pound sacks, \_\_\_\_\_ in one, and you carried them that way. I wish I would have brought that picture.

PG: Oh you have a picture?

RC: Well, what was given to me, uh, for Christmas, I am not sure when it was taken. I think it was in the early fifties, and it showed guys down in the hole with flour sacks and stuff like that and how the flour came into the hatch and that. And this, was it Ron Honey? Uhh... Honey

PG: Michael Honey?

RC: Michael Honey. He did an article, I don't know if you have it or not, on John Alexander?

PG: I actually do. I think I have it with me as a matter of fact.

RC: Yeah, I brought it and I forgot it. In a hurry to get here.

PG: So you have it too? Because I believe I have an extra copy.

RC: Oh yes.

PG: Yeah, he gave me that and an article on Ike. Ike uh Morrow

RC: Ike Morrow.

PG: Of course I don't have that with me today.

RC: Yeah, I was in a hurry to catch that, uh, trolley type thing.

PG: Oh, the Link?

RC: Yeah, and I left it sitting there on the front seat of my truck.

PG: No, I have that.

RC: That's all right.

PG: I just don't have it with me.

RC: When you mentioned that, I thought, well maybe she might be interested in this, and I took it down and I started looking at it and reading it. I looked at the cover and Michael Honey is the one that wrote it. So, yeah.

PG: When he gave it to me I didn't know he had wrote it either [laughs], until I started reading it.

RC: I just thought it was so funny that I never even looked at the name before or who wrote it before, and I never heard of him before until he called me up.

PG: Oh.

RC: On the phone. I guess he must have gotten my name from Ron Magden.

PG: He went to the ILWU meeting on...

RC: Okay.

PG: Thursday, I want to say, of last week.

RC: Thursday is when they have their meetings, yeah.

PG: And he got it from somebody there, but he didn't tell me who it was.

RC: Yeah, that is their new hall down there at the waterfront. I haven't, um, the hall used to be, well, have to take a look here, 17<sup>th</sup> and Market.

PG: Yeah, UW actually purchased it and that's their fun house.

RC: And my name was on the check.

PG: Really?

RC: I was the trustee at that time, yeah.

PG: Really? Wow.

RC: So my name was on the corner of it.

PG: Did not know that.

RC: They started to hand me the check down on, let's see, it was 11<sup>th</sup> and Pacific where they closed the uh real estate contract.

PG: Oh, I didn't know that.

RC: And I was the last one to sign and everybody else was gone so I went in there and I signed it and they took the check and handed it to me and I said no, no, [laughs] oh no, I don't want that money.

PG: Exactly, [laughs] I wouldn't want the responsibility for that either.

RC: Not in my hand, no you give it to somebody else, yeah. (**Microphone turned off**)

PG: Anything else... So, pretty much they are almost like Walmart then in that case?

RC: Mmhmm.

PG: Because I know Walmart...

RC: Walmart is bad.

PG: Yes, yes, very, very, very bad and notorious for that. Um, are your parents from Tacoma also?

RC: They were born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I am not exactly sure what year they came here. They came to Walla Walla first, Washington, and then to Tacoma.

PG: Do you have any idea how long they lived in Walla Walla before coming to Tacoma?

RC: Not very long, uh, I think it was like four or five years, something like that, and then they came here.

PG: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

RC: One sister.

PG: Oh, small family.

RC: Yes, and she is eight years older than I am, so...

PG: Does she live in this area?

RC: She still lives here, yes.

PG: Okay. And are you uncertain as to why they relocated from Walla Walla to Tacoma?

RC: I imagine it was because of work, I imagine. I don't know that for a fact but...

PG: Okay. And what was Tacoma like during your youth?

RC: Well, we lived in the south end of Tacoma. One of the few black families that lived in the south end.

PG: Oh.

RC: Most of them stayed in town here. In fact, not too far from here, actually up 23<sup>rd</sup>.

PG: Okay, up on the hill?

RC: 21<sup>st</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Yeah. From Fawcett on up.

PG: So was Tacoma kind of segregated?

RC: Well, segregated as far as economic, uh. Well if you had money you would move out away from town into the suburbs. If you didn't have money you lived in town where, you know, everything was cheaper. So, that's the way it went.

PG: Almost like today then.

RC: Yeah, more or less. Except people are starting to come back to town now and fixing up all these buildings that are run down and.... But we lived in the south end and, in fact, my sister and I were the only two black kids that went to grade school at our grade school and very few to the middle school, well, junior high then it was called. Then, of course, Lincoln High School was the only... Lincoln, Stadium, and Bellarmine were the only three schools that were in the city of Tacoma.

PG: Oh.

RC: At that time, and you went to the school that was in your district. You didn't have a choice of going to one or the other. **(Microphone turned off)** It was funneled into, well, the ones in the south end all funneled into, uh, uh, Lincoln, and the other ones went to Stadium, and then Catholic kids all went to Bellarmine.

PG: [Laughs]

RC: [Laughs] So, that was it.

PG: Did you go to Lincoln?

RC: Yes.

PG: How were you treated by the other kids? Same, was there any...?

RC: Once we got to Lincoln, there was, uh, four other junior highs that all went in, and they all had black students in them. The one on the east side is where most of the black families lived, and that was Gault Junior High, so they all came into Lincoln, so then it was more of a melting pot of everybody then. It was kind of strange, though, because when I was growing up even though there were a lot of white families around, everybody was in the same economic situation. We all didn't have anything, so it wasn't one against the other, more or less. So, it was, nobody had anything, so there was no use fighting over, nothing to fight over, you know, or that, so it, um, made it a lot easier for me, I thought. I thought, because I never thought really thought about any discrimination and never was any until I started looking back, um, maybe four or five years ago, it came to me and so I got out my annuals and stuff and, like I say, I was the only black kid in the grade school, very few in the middle school, and I started looking at, I played a lot of sports, so I looked in the football pictures and I was the only black kid there and I was wondering. I thought that's different, so then I looked at the basketball and I was the only black kid on the basketball team. I was wondering, well, where were all the other blacks that were there. I mean, we had 3300 kids in high school, and I was the only black kid on the basketball team? It didn't seem... So maybe there was and I just didn't notice it because I was there. Maybe there was. Maybe... I... You know, I don't know how you figure it out, but it just was that way. [Laughs] It didn't even dawn on me that it was... like I say, I grew up with the white kids in that area and so it didn't dawn on me, that's the reason it didn't really dawn on me, until I started thinking about it and started looking at the pictures from graduating classes and I was the only black kid around.

PG: That does, that does.

RC: So, I don't know what that proves, but....

PG: Well, no, it actually makes sense I think. I grew up under similar circumstances. I was the only black person at my school until I was in high school and then in high school there were six of us altogether. Well, my, my sophomore year there were six of us [laughs], and then there was another change and then I was by myself again with one other person. But, I thought the same thing too because I thought, well, I never really experienced racism. And then I look back now as an adult about certain aspects and I think well....

RC: Maybe.

PG: Yeah, was this, or...

RC: But it didn't occur to you at the time.

PG: No, it never did.

RC: Yeah.

PG: It never did.

PG: Because all of us class wise, we were all in the same situation I guess, so we didn't really notice the differences. It was also the eighties though, where you think you are a little bit better.

RC: [Laughs]

PG: I don't know. Yeah, I don't know. Um, why did you decide to enlist in the Coast Guard?

RC: That was strange too. After high school, I, um, didn't know what I was going to do. There wasn't any money for college, so... I went to Boeing. They had a school in there and so I started into school into riveting, and after about three months I figured this wasn't for me. So, a friend of mine came by and he says you want to come with me? He was going to go down and join the Coast Guard. I said I don't really want to join. He said well, no, just come with me and I just don't want to drive down by myself. I said okay. So I went down there. So while he was sitting at the desk talking to the recruiter, I was sitting there and I was kind of looking around the room at the pictures he had on the wall. I could see them fishing at Westport and fishing at Neah Bay off their boats and the hydroplane races in Seattle and boats were out there and I said well wait a minute, I can't see myself marching around in mud and stuff in the army, and I thought well, I can get my service out of the way, because then there wasn't a draft but we just went and enlisted. And he said well sure. I said well sign me up too then. And he said well you guys can go in on a buddy situation where you guys would be guaranteed to go to boot camp together and all through boot camp together. I said well sure, let's go. So, that was in September and we left in November to boot camp, so... We got down there and I said what am I doing, or what did I do? I signed up for four years of this. Well, it started raining in California and ... Oh well, nothing you can do then, so...

PG: After basic training did the [laughs] Coast Guard get better? Or...

RC: It got better. [Laughs] It got better. Supposedly they gave you your choice of where you wanted to go. They said, well, you got a choice of Hawaii or California or back to Washington. I said well, okay, first choice Hawaii, second choice California and third choice Seattle. [Laughs] Seattle.

PG: Oh.

RC: I got Seattle.

PG: Your last choice. [Laughs]

RC: The last choice. [Laughs]

RC: And then these small boats that are in the Gold Cup and all that, no. I got on a weather patrol ship. Yeah. 255 feet and they took on these weather men and they take them out for a month at a time. We were in the air lines between LA and Hawaii, there is always a ship out there in case something happens to these commercial planes and they have to go down, there is a ship always out there. So, that's what we went out there, and they took their weather balloons and they did all this other stuff and we sat out there and just kind of rocked around for a month and...

PG: Doesn't sound fun. [Laughs]

RC: [Laughs] And did maintenance on the ship. And then they would come back into port and that was it for a couple more months and then back out we would go again.

PG: Were you married during this time period?

RC: No. No, no. I was 20, 21. Yeah, I got out when I was 21.

PG: Yeah, I was just thinking it would be hard to be out at sea that long and have a family too.

RC: Well, a lot of them did.

PG: Wow.

RC: A lot of the ones that were going to be career Coast Guard and they were on the ships and that.

PG: Earlier when we spoke, you said that you had come back to Tacoma retired, or ETS'd from the Coast Guard, in '61 was that?

RC: That's when I got out, in '61, yes.

PG: What was the employment situation in Tacoma like, in '61?

RC: I really don't know about the employment because I got out and I was going to college at Olympic College in Bremerton, Olympic Community College it was called, and, then I would longshore on the weekends because my stepfather and my uncle were down there.

PG: Oh.

RC: So that's how I started, um... **[Microphone turned off]**

Opened my mind when a friend of mine asked me to be in his wedding, and he was, he was a schoolteacher already because **I was with him** in the service and he went into college and he come out and he was a teacher, so he teaches up at Issaquah and so he asked me to be in his wedding and I said well sure, and I had this little envelope in the mail saying there was going to be a cocktail party at this place called Windermere in Seattle, never heard of it before, so I got out the map and I found out where it was and it was up there near the University of Washington, Lake Washington. So I drove up there and went in and there were these rolling lawns and lakes there and these houses are million dollar houses and I figured hmm, what am I doing here? [Laughs] So, I pulled up and I parked and I see the house number and I went up there and knocked on the door and the door opens up. It was the first time I had ever seen a butler [laughs]. I thought [laughs] wow, he's got the white gloves on, and wow. So I showed him my car and he said okay, well they are out on the veranda, and I didn't know what the veranda was either, so I went out there and here they all were sitting around there, I was the last one to get there because I had worked that day, and the friend of mine comes up and he introduces me to his fiancée and everybody that was there and there was one seat left sitting next to this woman, and I didn't know who she was, in fact, I didn't know anybody there. And she was talking away and I had a drink and um, I find, just listening, found out that everybody was a schoolteacher that's there. And she was mentioning how she just signed her new contract and was going to be making \$8500 next year, the next year, and so she turns to me and she says, your name was Roger? And I said yes. And she said well, where do you teach school? And I figured, oh, here we go. Because longshoremen at that time had a bad reputation of being drunks and always in fights.

PG: Really?

RC: That was their reputation. So, I figured oh, here we go. So I said I'm a longshoreman in Tacoma. And she goes oh. And she kind of turned her back to me and started talking to the rest of the people. I didn't even say anything, I just kind of looked up and I looked over at my friend. And he is sitting over there and he started to smile and so he gets up and he walks over and he starts talking to her and he said I understand you got a new contract next year. And she said yeah, \$8500 I'll be making next year. He said oh, that's great. He looks at me and he said Roger, he says, how is longshoring? And I said well, it's been kind of slow, this was in July, I said it is kind of slow but the Christmas stuff ought to be coming in soon, so, from the Far East, so, you know, it should pick up. And he said, well, how much are you making now? Because he knew. And he said, I said well, I got just a little over \$12,000 made so far this year. And she looks at me and she said \$12,000? I says, \$8500 next year?

PG: [Laughs]

RC: I turned my back on her. And when I turned my back I faced the bartender and the waiter and the waiter, he turned his back, and you could see his whole body starting to shake because he wanted to laugh but he didn't because he didn't want to get fired and it was, that just stopped everything. I didn't find out until later that they had a dinner also,



and there was an older woman that was there and I noticed she was kind of smiling too, but she never said anything. So, at the dinner this woman comes in and she said okay, dinner is almost ready so we can be seated now, and you sit here and grandma you sit here, and I find out this is grandma, and you sit here, you sit here, over here, over here, and Roger you sit over there. And the woman said, no, Roger's going to sit next to me, that's what grandma says. And she said, well, no grandma, we've got to have... she said, no, Roger is sitting next to me. She said okay, Roger, you sit next to grandma. So, I sat down and I kind of looked at grandma, grandma looked at me, and so I says you must be kind of powerful or something and she said "I got the money".

PG: [Laughs]

RC: I said oh, okay, so grandma and I become pretty good friends. [Laughs] She says "I got the money".

PG: I, I have never heard that reputation of longshoremen.

RC: Oh yes. It was true. It was true. There was a lot of guys that drank a lot down there, but while you were working you worked it out. Some guys got drunk, of course, but they didn't pass out or nothing, but just told them go over here and sit down then. We'll take care of your work for you.

PG: Was it from the stress of the work that...

RC: That they drank?

PG: Yeah, maybe difficult. It seems like there would be a lot of on the job injuries, or ....

RC: Well, there could have been but most guys just let it go and just kept on working because you needed the money. If you're off hurt you don't get as much money as if you were working, so, you just let it go and it will heal itself or whatever. Have you ever seen those white caps that the longshoremen used to wear?

PG: I haven't.

RC: Probably not. Well, these were white caps and they were kind of angled to the side, but when you carried a sack it would always, on your shoulder, it would always rub against your ear and that made like cauliflower ear like the boxer's would get.

PG: Really?

RC: So the hats, you would tip the hat to the side and it would come down and cover your ear, so it would stop the sack from rubbing on your ear, so no matter which side you carried it on, you would move the side of the hat over to this side, so the first part of the

day before lunch you would carry on your left and the next you'd carry it on your right so you were, you know, it wouldn't be all on one side. But there are a lot of old timers that have bad backs because of that.

PG: Yeah, that is what I was thinking.

RC: You got an extra hundred pounds on this side all the time, well, that happens.

PG: To heck with flour.

RC: Oh, yeah. But there are a lot of things that were a lot heavier than the flour that we were carrying though. At Simpson's they had what they call pulp. It was strips of paper, um, that was big brown paper, and they had been compressed, and then they had bands around them, and they weighed like 450 pounds a piece.

PG: How many people carried?

RC: [Laughs] Oh, two. You had a two-wheeled cart and you put one bale on it, one person would move the bale over to the corner, and then there would be one person on each side of the bale would lift it and stack it up.

PG: Wow.

RC: Yeah. Do that all day and you would switch around, there would be four guys to each site, and between the four they would move around and do different jobs on that one site. **(Microphone turned off)**

PG: ...Definitely sounds like hard work. Um, I did want to ask you, you mentioned again that your uncle and stepfather were longshoremen. **(Interruption)** Were you influenced to become a longshoreman on the weekends because of your father, uh, stepfather and your uncle?

RC: Well, I wanted to get some money too, because I needed it, you know, for school. I saved some in the Coast Guard, but not enough. So, in fact, Tacoma used to be at that time, what they called the weekend port. Uh, we would get most of our work coming down from Canada and Canada didn't work on the weekends. Vancouver didn't work the weekends. So the ship would leave there Friday night and be down here for Saturday morning pick. So, we would work Saturday and Sunday here, and Sunday night it would leave again and go up to Vancouver and they would start working again on Monday. So, when I came home for the weekends, I had those two days to try to get a job, usually could get one of those two days that you could work, and then I would go back Sunday night back to school. And that is how I got started working one day a week.

PG: So, you kind of knew the work was going to be hard, you were somewhat familiar with the work because of your family members?

RC: Right, right.

PG: Did you think that the hiring practices were fair during that time?

RC: Um, no. [Laughs] No. There was, there were gangs that they used to have. There was 21 working gangs in the Port of Tacoma. But there was only, I think there was only 4 black gangs, out of those 21.

PG: They were all black? The entire gang? Or just ....

RC: Well, more or less they were all black because usually the blacks didn't work in the white gangs and the whites didn't work in the black gangs. So, you [laughs], let's see, how do I say this? (**Microphone turned off**) ... The guys that were in charge of the black gangs, the hatch tenders that were in charge, you had certain men that were in your gang already, it was the hatch tender, the woods driver, the men who has the gang is the hatch tender, and then he has his woods driver, then he has his four hole men, then he has his two dock men. So, those five guys, let's see, four, six, seven guys were considered a gang. Then, if you needed extra men, which you normally did need four more, well then they would go and pick their other four men. Well, how it worked was you had the casuals, which aren't longshoremen, they would be upstairs in the hall. Downstairs on one corner would be the B-men, and then they stayed in their corner, and the rest of them were A-men. Those guys who had the gang were A-men. So after they got picked, of course, the white guys wouldn't work with the black gang, so they would go by them and go down to the white gang. So then the black guys, after all the A and B were done, then the black longshoremen that had the gangs would go upstairs. Of course, then they would go around and then they would pick all their black friends that were upstairs in those four gangs. Now, if there was any left, any black men that were left, that didn't get a job, then the dispatcher had the rest of the picks. So, you could almost tell that you were going to be near the end when everybody else ran out before you could get another job if you were still up there. Because he would come up there and he would look around and he said I will pick you and I will take you and you and sign this and you and you and you. \_\_\_\_ And you would be sitting right next to the guy near a guy that would be getting work and you would be trying to get around and make sure he sees you and that to get a job. But [laughs], usually, that didn't happen. What, what saved me was that I played sports in high school, so when the longshoremen had a team, there was a softball team, well I played. So, I got to know all the rest of them [**white co-workers**]. Well, then, their fathers would come, which are the A men, they would come and they would see me out there playing ball and interacting with the rest of them, well then, you know, maybe, or course you know how racism starts, it starts with the parents and then, then, moves down to the kids. Well, if the parents, you know, didn't teach the kids that, well then, you know, they wouldn't, they would all play together.

PG: Exactly.

RC: Well, I was playing together with them, well then, the dads would work to reverse and say okay maybe he's not that bad or whatever and we'll try him at work too then. And so, then, I got to that one, he said oh, you, Roger, come on over here and work with me. So then I get down on the job and I work with that gang. Well, then, okay, then I see another, some more and then I get another job in another gang. And then finally I made it from casual to B, then, when you got to B, I thought I got it made. Well, that's not the case. Not back then. Back then after you made B and they decide they are going to take some more longshoremen, they were taking like three a month. Well, [laughs], that's not exactly taking me. They were going to vote on you. They voted on you to become an A. And you had to get, um, two-thirds vote in order to become an A-man. Now, this could be after four years as a casual, and four years as a B man. You got eight years in already, but yet they're still going to vote on you to see if you will become an A. Well, you had certain people that were going to vote no on everybody. Because the more people that became an A would be taking their job is what they figured. So then you got the ones that are prejudiced that are going to be voting against you too, because they don't want you neither. Well, you better make sure that you got everybody that you know that's A to come to that meeting when you are coming up for a vote because you had to have two-thirds vote. Well, there were out of the 50 guys that were on the bench at the same time I was, there was three of them that got voted no, not to come in. That meant you were gone. You were just gone. You didn't come back the next day, nothing. You were out of the industry. Don't go to work anymore. You were just done.

PG: I did not know that. I assumed that you just stayed in your B category and worked hard and.... Wow.

RC: You were gone. They used to go to a certain bar, Marilyn's it used to be, it's gone now, but you'd go down there and you'd wait. And then your name would come up and they would vote, then they would call down there and say this one made it and that one made it, he didn't make it. The next day you were gone somewhere else and doing another job or trying to find another job or whatever because there were two guys that were A's the next week. So, my uncle happened to be on the executive board at the time and I come up for, I come up for a vote, and so I was waiting to see, oh God, if I'm going to make it or not. What if I don't make it, what am I going to do? Because I had all this time in. He comes out and he starts writing on the board. Made it by one vote. [Laughs]

PG: [Laughs]

RC: Oh, Oh, God, what a relief.

PG: So there was, um, would you say there was equal black representation on the union board?

RC: Oh, no. Well, the people, the, uh, body of all the longshoremen would vote. Of course there was more white than there were black, so they had control of it. They didn't

want, if they would have got together and said we don't want anymore blacks, well they could have voted no, no on everybody.

PG: Did they do that often?

RC: Uh, no, for some reason, maybe they didn't think about it. I don't know. But all the blacks that were there at the time, we all made it.

PG: Would you say it was because you guys were hard workers?

RC: I would like to think that. I have no idea. I got no idea why those other three didn't make it. I have no idea there either.

PG: Had you worked with the other three?

RC: Yeah, well, eight years, you must have worked with them.

PG: Were they good workers when you worked with them?

RC: They seemed to be. Whether they did something else, maybe there was a problem somewhere else, I don't know.

PG: Were there like politics when you are a B person that you didn't have to follow but maybe in an unspoken rule about behavior as a B, to ensure that you got voted into an A position.

RC: Oh, well, all the longshoremen were watching all these guys because they knew they would have to vote on them sooner or later, and maybe it was the attitude or maybe, see I didn't work with all the white gangs, so they didn't work in the black gangs, so I don't know what was happening in their gangs. Maybe they weren't good workers, I don't know. Because I wasn't working with them, so I don't really know. Most of my jobs came with the blacks gangs up until the time I made it in to the A. Then, three guys came to me and asked me if I wanted to come into their gang, three white guys did. They asked me if I wanted to come and work with their gang and make their fourth member. I wondered, hmm, should I or shouldn't I? So, I was wondering, wow, well, the black gangs are already filled up, so I said, yeah, I will.

PG: For work...

RC: It's work, I needed money. That's what my uncle and my stepfather told me. He said there is only one reason you are down here. He says, and that's to make money. If you want to make friends along the way, that's fine. But you are down here to make the money first.

PG: Exactly.

RC: That's what you need. And when I started I made \$2.13 ½ cents an hour.

PG: That was pretty good money back then wasn't that?

RC: I guess. It must have been. Which now when you start looking at it...

PG: 40 years ago, 35 years ago, \$2.00 per hour...

RC: How long? '61?

PG: 40 years?

RC: 45? 46 years? I think I have my 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion coming up this summer.

PG: Oh, congratulations.

RC: [Laughs]

PG: Are you excited?

RC: Well, yeah. I don't know how many is left. [Laughs]

PG: [Laughs]

RC: Well, I made it so far. I don't know about the rest of them.

PG: No, you're in great shape. I... You'll make it. You will.

RC: Got body parts all over.

PG: Um, we talked about containers before and after. Was there a fear when the containerization [mechanization] process was being talked about that maybe some of you would lose your jobs due to going with the cranes or....

RC: Not a fear of losing our jobs, but as far as manpower, you don't use nearly as many men as you used to use. So, once you're A though, you were all right, you just didn't advance any more because of that. But now they are advancing more and more all the time now. Right now, they are taking six a month I understand. So, from being A.

PG: Wow.

RC: So they are moving everybody around up, so there must be more work coming from somewhere.

PG: I wonder if it is the, uh, I keep reading in the paper out there, that the Port of Tacoma is bringing in weapons that used to go through Olympia. And there was a protest about it.

RC: Oh, oh, those Strikers Divisions.

PG: Yes, yes.

RC: Well, see, it used to be in Tacoma first. Olympia doesn't have any work, so the Fort is closer to Olympia than Tacoma. They said okay, we'll let Olympia have the work because it is not much anyways, every now and then, when those ships come in or go out.

PG: Oh, so it's not...

RC: It's not, nothing really steady. But, um, longshoring has a pay guarantee, so longshoremen in Olympia are getting paid so much each week whether they work or not. So, \_\_\_\_\_

PG: That's, that's in the contract then?

RC: Yes.

PG: Fantastic. That's \_\_\_\_\_. And that is probably why the ILWU is such a strong union. Because everything that I read it just seems like, um, well probably because they are rank and file too, but they are just one of the strongest unions around and historically, um, as \_\_\_\_\_ it seems like.

RC: Well, the thing is, the union runs from Alaska to San Diego and Hawaii. So, it is all one union. Different locals, but all one union, so when we go on strike, the whole coast goes on strike. It's not like Boeing where the machinists go on strike but everybody else keeps working. Well...

PG: You guys shut everything down.

RC: You have to shut everything down to have the impact and that's what happens. That is why the union is as strong as it is. Because everybody goes on strike at one time, not like one port closes and this other port closes, everybody has to fold.

PG: As the longshoremen come in, do they understand the importance of the union have you found, or....

RC: No, no they don't. They have no history of the union. They started it, uh, was it two years ago or last year, because they asked me to come down and give, not just me, but quite a few of the guys that have already been retired to come down and talk to the new ones that are coming in because they haven't a clue as to what happened. All they

know is the last three or four years that they are associated with it as, you know, what's going on. As far as history, no. Because I asked the question if anybody knew where the longshoremen started and not a clue.

PG: Why do you think it is important for them to know the history of the union?

RC: So they have a little pride in what's going on, or what people had to go through to get to the point they are at now. Some of them have no idea. Some of them never used their hands before [laughs]. I mean as far as picking up a sack or...

PG: No, I understand.

RC: Or picking up something. Because I remember when they brought the first lift, you know what a forklift is, when they brought the first forklift into the hatch everybody looked at it and said what is this? What are you supposed to do with it? So they unhooked it and they picked, somebody drove it over and parked it, and we went ahead and kept doing it by hand because that is all we ever done is by hand.

PG: Oh, wow.

RC: Until somebody looked over there and said well, wait a minute, if this lifts 3 tons, you know, [laughs] ...

PG: [Laughs]

RC: Let's use this. Let's try this thing. And so we started using the forklift. But before that, everybody was doing it by hand. People didn't want to use the lift. Because they knew it was going to cut out, that lift took away probably two men out of each gang.

PG: Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely. Um, we pretty much touched on the subject of discrimination on the job, um, in the hiring practices, were there other forms of discrimination?

RC: Other than the name calling and stuff...

PG: Was that typical? Was it a typical day, or... just in anger?

RC: Just, yeah, whatever reason. I was coming out of the hatch, we had worked all day down there and we were getting ready to go home, I was climbing up and there was a guy standing there and he took a jug of water, not a jug but a cup of water, and he threw it in my face. He didn't say anything, just threw it in my face. I kind of wiped it off and said thanks I needed some water. Because there were other 6 other guys [white co-workers] standing around there, I knew I couldn't fight them all, so I just said well thanks I needed some water, I was kind of hot anyway. And I just walked away. [Laughs] But a couple



months later, things got reversed. So, I.... uh... [laughs] So, it gets back. (**Microphone turned off**)

Um, like I say I think a lot of the racism didn't affect me as much because I was playing sports with them, whether it was softball or bowling or basketball. We had teams and I was playing with them, and I was the only, again, the only black that was, so maybe I didn't see it as much as some of the others did.

PG: Do you think it was harder for the others that you worked with?

RC: It could have been. They never said anything. But like I say, most of us worked with the black gangs most of the time.

PG: When something did come up, was a grievance filed, or was it I don't want to say a fist fight...

RC: There wasn't any grievances back then. Grievances didn't really start until I don't know, I would say probably mid-eighties that people were actually filing grievances. In fact, I think that probably the first grievances that were filed was when the women started working down there. (**Microphone turned off**) You had mentioned that you probably couldn't have carried the sacks and things like that.

PG: I know I couldn't. I'm soft. [Laughs]

RC: There was a couple women that were down there, they couldn't carry them either, but they were giving them different jobs, different kinds of jobs. And I figured well....

PG: Not fair?

RC: Right. Not exactly fair. Says well you can do the job, so I will give you the job, but you can't do it, okay, well we will give you an easier one. We will let you do the checking and going around counting the sacks and marking it on your paper as to how many sacks went in, but Roger you can carry the sacks, so we will put you in the hole, where you can carry the sack. I'm well, what, you know, why can't I have one of these sometimes that I can count and you know, everyone is supposed to be equal, right, so why can't she do that? Well, she can't do it though. What am I supposed to do, carry them all the time? You know. You get tired of that.

PG: Did having women on the dock slow the work flow down any?

RC: No, they just kind of moved them around to wherever.

PG: They made sure that they wouldn't. And they were paid the same?

RC: Sometimes some jobs they got paid more.

PG: Were women like peeved about that, is that what their grievances came from usually?

RC: Uh, that and things said. And then diversity training started because of some of the things that were said. Um, the employer got the, the employer and the union both got together and started a diversity training program.

PG: There were none during any of the other...

RC: Times before? Not until the women came down. Started working down there and I am sure the reason was because the union and the ...

**Tape 1 Side B**

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RC: ...And I'm pretty sure it was because they were getting sued by the women because of what some guys have said or done or whatever, so I think the diversity training started then so that, um, the women had to sue the person that said it because they've already been trained not to say it. I guess that...

PG: No, that makes sense. That absolutely makes sense to me. They have the diversity training so that way the union and the company could say you trained this individual and this is just the way that he is so she has to sue him.

RC: Right, because he has been trained not to say it and told not to say it, so, you know, I think that is how it all got started, because there was so much grievances.

PG: When the women started being hired, did you notice if it was, um, equal black, white, or was it just like it was with the men with mostly white women and a few black women?

RC: No, there were mostly white women that were brought down. There were, are a few black women, but I don't know if that's because only the white woman wanted to work, the black women didn't. I have no idea. I just know that there was probably only about four or five black women that I can think of that are there and a whole lot of white women I know that are there, so I don't....

PG: Did most of them end up staying on?

RC: End up staying there?

PG: Yes.

RC: Yeah, well two, at least one of them retired, of the women. I don't know if the other one did or not. Since I retired, I don't hardly ever go to the hall anymore. I think that's

strange too. Um, maybe some of the guys that are retired or some of the older longshoremen, I have never been to a ,uh, Pensioner's meeting and I don't know if very many blacks have. Now, whether it is because of the fathers that were the, um, if there was any racism, like I said before, it came from the parents, fathers, I don't know if that's the reason that they don't want to associate with them again now they are retired, since they don't have to anymore.

PG: Exactly. I can understand that.

RC: Maybe, maybe that is why we don't go to the meetings. I don't, I don't....

PG: Do you go to, in one of the articles I read, I think it was the African American Longshoremen Association, with Ike Morrow, are you familiar with that? No? I read something about an African American Longshoremen Committee and it seems, um, more like a fraternity, um, and as alternative to going to like the Pensioner's meetings, the retirement meeting, but I am not sure if it is still active.

RC: Didn't know anything about it.

PG: I will look that up. I didn't bring it with me today, but I will definitely look that up.

RC: Did you have an interview with Ike Morrow too?

PG: I have not. I just read his interview and the John Alexander interview from the Dispatcher.

RC: Who did Ike have the interview with?

PG: I believe Ike interviewed with another student ten years ago and I can't remember what her name is.

RC: Oh, it has been some time then.

PG: I can actually get that, probably someone can pull the Ike interview. It's downstairs.

RC: Oh, that's, that's okay.

PG: Are you sure?

RC: Yeah, that's fine. I thought maybe it was recent. That was ten years ago though.

PG: Yeah, ten years ago. There is a transcription too of their conversation, just like ours. Well, it's open to the public. I, I've read over it and that is where I got a lot of information, so if, I mean, I just ask them and they can pull it right up. Next time we meet, what I will do is I will actually...

RC: Have it, okay.

PG: Order it before so that way it will be up here in its entirety and then that will kind of give you more of an idea of what I am doing because I am going to do the exact same thing.

RC: Hmm...

PG: As far as turn everything in and have it sent down there to our project rooms and other students that, um, are interested, they'll be able to listen to our conversation, read the transcript, and it will help them research. Maybe other ideas, follow up on my research, or maybe just do more on the same subject.

RC: Yeah, when you mentioned Ike, I thought maybe it was something recent because I know he just retired.

PG: Yeah, I am pretty sure it was about ten years ago, I am pretty sure it was. I want to say the date on it was '96 or '97, somewhere around there.

RC: He was still working then.

PG: He is definitely a character, definitely a character.

RC: We used to work a lot together. A lot. When I was mentioning about the, uh, pulp, picking up pulp, that was my partner. **(Microphone turned off)**

PG: Oh. Did you get a chance to work with Mr. Alexander too, or...

RC: John?

PG: Yes.

RC: Okay, well see there was two of them. John and Bill. They're brothers. I'm pretty sure it was John. John, the one that was in the article that was written?

PG: Yes.

RC: Yeah, John. He was a foreman. He had his own gang. He was one of the ones that had a gang. So, yes, he was also a foreman, just like Ike was. **(Microphone turned off)**

PG: Done for today.

RC: ...aboard the ship. They had, uh, you took your own water jug with you and your own cups because whites wouldn't drink out of the black, you can't, couldn't drink out of the same bottle of water. You had to take your own.

PG: Yeah, and there weren't segregated water fount, fountains even, in Washington.

RC: No. And each stevedore company had these one-gallon jugs that you would fill with water out of the tap and then they had their cone-shaped cups that you would take with you and you'd take it down in the hatch with you, so that you could drink out of your own, you know, of course the whites would take one or two and then the blacks would have one. You'd be dying of thirst down there, because you couldn't drink out of theirs.

PG: So, even when they picked you to work in the white gangs you had to take your own water, they still didn't....

RC: If you wanted to drink water, you take your own, yes. (**Microphone turned off**)

RC: Just like you say, you're 40 some years ago, 45, 46 years ago.

PG: Yeah. Some things have changed, but....

RC: Yeah, some things have changed, yeah.