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Regional Oral History Office  
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Berkeley, California

ON THE WATERFRONT:  
AN ORAL HISTORY OF RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Alan Clarke

RECOLLECTIONS OF POINT SAN PABLO AND SAN FRANCISCO BAY

An Interview Conducted by  
Judith K. Dunning  
in 1985 and 1986





CAPTAIN ALAN CLARKE  
1984

*Photograph by Paul Glines,  
San Francisco Examiner*



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## Alan Clarke

Captain Alan Howe Clarke, a master mariner who was a ship pilot on San Francisco Bay for 37 years, died Tuesday of heart failure at the age of 79.

Captain Clarke came from a maritime family, and the bay was both his profession and his hobby: He was a skilled small boat sailor and a multiple winner of the St. Francis Yacht Club's master's events.

His father, Captain Raymond Clarke, was one of the founders of the old Richmond-San Rafael Ferry Co. on the bay until the ferry line was replaced by a bridge in 1956.

Captain Clarke was born in San Rafael in 1918, attended Richmond High School, the College of Marin and St. Mary's College. He learned to sail on his father's sailboat and later became a tugboat officer for the old Army Transportation Service at Fort Mason in San Francisco and then a tug skipper and pilot for the U.S. Army troopships, for Red Stack tugs and the San Francisco Bar Pilots.

He knew the bay, its currents and shoals as well as any sailor and better than most. "He was an excellent pilot, one of the best we had," said Captain William Figari, who worked with him for years. P. & O., the British line, always asked for Captain Clarke to handle its large liners Canberra, Oriana,

Orsova and Arcadia when they called at San Francisco.

He passed on his knowledge as well. Many of the current ship pilots were trained by Captain Clarke.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, of Mill Valley; three sons, William Clarke of La Quinta, Riverside County, Robert Clarke of Berkeley, and Christian Clarke of Petaluma; a daughter, Susan Clarke of San Francisco; and six grandchildren. His daughter, Sheryl Clarke, predeceased him.

A celebration of Captain Clarke's life will be held starting at 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Firehouse at the Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Memorial contributions may be made to the Richmond Yacht Club Foundation, P.O. Box 70295, Point Richmond 94807.



## INTRODUCTION by Jim Quay

It is a great pleasure to introduce "On the Waterfront" to you. I myself was introduced to the project in September 1983, shortly after becoming executive director of the California Council for the Humanities. Both the Council and its mission of bringing the humanities to out-of-school adults were relatively new to me when Judith Dunning came to my office to talk about her proposal. Ms. Dunning wanted to document an important period in the life of the Richmond, California waterfront, but she didn't want to write a study for scholars. Instead, she proposed to interview most of the oldest surviving waterfront figures, collect historic photographs of the port and its workers, and to create from these an exhibit for the public. Would the Council be interested in supporting such a project?

Happily, the two dozen scholars and citizens who sat on the Council then were interested and, convinced of the project's importance, voted to fund Ms. Dunning's proposal in early 1984. Six years later, I now know what I couldn't have known then: that "On the Waterfront" had all the features of a typical public humanities project: a powerful subject, caring scholars, a resourceful and dedicated project director, and uncertain funding.

You can appreciate why even the best public humanities project--and "On the Waterfront" is one of the best--doesn't easily attract funding. In a state focused relentlessly on the future, the next quarterly statement, the next development, the value of such a project doesn't show up in a cost-benefit analysis. Who would care about the lives of Californians past? Who would care about a waterfront whose boomtime is passed?

The answer is: thousands of people, as Judith's project proved. First and foremost, Judith, who didn't just study Richmond, but moved to and lived in Richmond. Like so many project directors, she gave time and life to this project far beyond the amount budgeted. In the language of accounting this is called "in-kind contribution"; in the language of life it's called devotion. Those of us privileged to know Judith know that the project both exhausted her and enriched her, and she has won the admiration of those who supported her and the affection of those she has interviewed and worked with.



After Judith came a handful of interested scholars--historian Chuck Wollenberg, folklorist Archie Green, and oral historian Willa Baum--who gave their time and expertise to the project. Next, a handful of people at organizations like CCH, Chevron and Mechanics Bank, who thought enough of the idea to fund it. Finally, eventually, came the thousands of visitors to Richmond Festival by the Bay during 1985-87 and saw the photographs and read the excerpts from interviews and realized that they too cared about these people. And now, you, the reader of these interviews, have an opportunity to care.

In its fifteen years of supporting efforts to bring the humanities to the out-of-school public in California, the Council has seen two great themes emerge in the projects it funds: community and diversity. "On the Waterfront" embodies both. I think such projects are compelling to us because in our busy lives, we often encounter diversity more as a threat than as a blessing, and community more as an absence than a presence.

"On the Waterfront" gives us all a chance to experience the blessings of diversity. The life details that emerge from these pictures and voices make us appreciate how much the people of the Richmond waterfront are unlike us, how much attitudes, economies, and working conditions have changed. Yet because the portraits are so personal and intimate, we can also recognize the ways in which they are like us, in their struggles, their uncertainties, their pride, and their fates. What seemed like difference becomes part of a greater sense of who "we" are.

In the lives of waterfront people, we can also glimpse how a community grew and waned. Busy with our own lives, we often neglect the activities that knit communities together. Judith Dunning's project allows us to see what we are losing and how communities are created and destroyed. And so, "On the Waterfront" fulfills the oldest promise of the humanities: that in learning about others, we learn about ourselves. For the gift of these twenty-six lives, we can thank Judith Dunning.

Jim Quay  
Executive Director  
California Council for the Humanities

March 2, 1990  
San Francisco, California





## PREFACE

### ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

"On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," began in 1985. Interviews were conducted with twenty-six Bay Area residents including early Richmond families, World War II Kaiser Shipyard workers, cannery workers, fishermen, and whalers.

I was first attracted to this shoreline industrial town located sixteen miles northeast of San Francisco in 1982 while enrolled in a documentary photography class. For ten weeks I concentrated on the Richmond waterfront, often accompanying the crew of the freighter Komoku on its nightly run from Richmond to C & H Sugar in Crockett. It was then that I began to hear colorful stories of Richmond's waterfront and the City's World War II days.

The question which captivated me in 1982 and still does is--what happened to Richmond when World War II transformed this quiet working class town into a 24-hour-day industrial giant? With the entry of the Kaiser Shipyard, the number of employed industrial workers skyrocketed from 4,000 to 100,000. An unprecedented number of women entered the work force. The shipyards set speed and production records producing one-fifth of the nation's Liberty ships. By 1945 Richmond's shipyards had launched 727 ships.

There were other enormous changes. During the wartime boom, Richmond's population rose from 23,000 to 125,000. The ethnic composition of Richmond and the entire Bay Area changed dramatically with the influx of workers recruited from the South and Midwest. There was little time to provide the needed schools and community services. Housing shortages were critical. Twenty-four thousand units of war housing were built but they were soon filled to capacity. People were living in make-shift trailer camps along the roadsides and the all-night movie theaters were filled with sleeping shipyard workers.

James Leiby, professor of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, called Richmond a "spectacular" case of urban development. What happened to other communities over a period of decades occurred in Richmond in a few years.



Some of the questions I wanted to explore in the interviews were--who were these newcomers to Richmond and were there reasons, beyond the promise of a job, which brought them in steady streams by trains, buses, and automobiles hauling make-shift trailers? And was this destination of Richmond, California, all that they had imagined?

Other questions were just as compelling. After the war ended and Kaiser and fifty-five other industries moved out of Richmond, leaving this new population suddenly unemployed, what made people stay? And for those who left Richmond and returned home to their families in the South and Midwest, what made them come back to Richmond a second time, often bringing relatives with them?

As intrigued as I was by this new population, I also wanted to know how Richmond natives experienced these changes. In a sense, as others moved in to find new homes in Richmond, the longtime residents were losing their once small and familiar home town.

Initially, I tried to locate people who were living and working in Richmond before the World War II boom. They worked in the canneries, at the Chevron Refinery, or made their living fishing in San Pablo Bay. Most of these first interviewees were California natives, born and raised in Richmond. But the majority of the interviewees for this project came from other places--Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, Idaho, Utah--all to start a new life in California. Each one had a story to tell. Armed with a tape recorder, a camera, and lots of unanswered questions, I set out to record these local residents.

#### INTERVIEW SETTING

With few exceptions, the initial interview took place at the narrator's home. Because I was recording a diverse group, the interview setting varied dramatically. One day I might be in a neighborhood where residents, fearing stray bullets, keep their curtains drawn and their lights dimmed. Another day I would be in a home with a sweeping view of the bay, built by a former cannery owner during the Depression.



When possible, I recorded additional interviews and photographed at locations where the narrators had lived or worked. Some of these included the former Filice and Perrelli Canning Company, Ferry Point, Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, and the last remaining World War II shipyard structures...since torn down. I also spent many days off shore. When interviewing Dominic and Tony Ghio, fishermen for over sixty years, I accompanied them on dawn fishing trips in San Pablo Bay. However, following a turbulent twelve-hour whale watching excursion to the Farallon Islands with former whaler Pratt Peterson, I vowed to continue my research on land.

When I asked some project participants to give me a personalized tour of Richmond to see what landmarks were important to them, all too often I was shown vacant lots where a family home, church, or favorite cafe once stood. The downtown, once bustling with movie theaters, dance halls, and department stores, is eerily quiet for a city of 82,000. I found that local residents are still angry over the loss of their downtown district during the 1960s redevelopment era. Longtime residents spoke emotionally of the city losing its center. Hilltop Mall, built on the outskirts of town and accessible by automobile, was no substitute for a shopping district in the middle of town. The struggle to rebuild the downtown and to attract new businesses is an ongoing one for the City of Richmond.

After the interviewing was completed, there were photo sessions in the narrator's homes and former work places, as well as meetings in which we went through family albums and trunks. Some wonderful photographs and the stories behind them were uncovered during this process. Copies are included in the individual volumes.

## PUBLIC USES OF THE ORAL HISTORIES

From the early stages of this project, both the text from the oral histories and the collection of photographs, have been used in community events. Examples include photo panels and maritime demonstrations at Richmond's Festival by the Bay, 1985, 1986, and 1987; and Oakland's Seafest '87. An exhibition, "Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers," produced in collaboration with the Richmond Museum in 1988, was developed from the oral history interviews with Dominic and Tony Ghio.



In an effort to present the oral histories to the public in a form which retained the language, the dialects, and the flavor of the original interviews, I wrote "Boomtown," a play about the transformation of Richmond during World War II. "Boomtown" was produced by San Francisco's Tale Spinners Theater and toured Bay Area senior centers, schools, and museums in 1989.

A new direction for the oral histories is in the field of adult literacy. Nearly fifty years after the recruitment of men and women from the rural South and Midwest to work in the Kaiser shipyards, some former shipyard workers and many of their descendents are enrolled in LEAP, Richmond's adult literacy program, where the students range in ages from 16 to 85 and are 70 percent black.

Our current goal is to make a shortened, large print version of the oral history transcripts for use by adult literacy students and tutors. We think that by using the true stories of local residents as literacy text, there will be an additional incentive for adults learning to read. The characters in the oral histories are often their neighbors, friends, and families speaking in their own words on such topics as the Dust Bowl, the World War II migration of defense workers, waterfront industries, family and community life.

#### THANKS

"On the Waterfront" project has had many diverse layers, including the University of California, the advisory committee, a wide range of financial supporters, and of primary importance, a large group of interviewees. I want to thank all of the project participants who donated their time, enthusiasm, and memories to this project.

Special thanks is due Jim Quay, Executive Director of the California Council for the Humanities, who has been a source of good advice and inspiration from the beginning. The Council's grant in 1984 got the project off the ground, kicking off the campaign for matching funds. Jim Quay's counsel last summer set in motion the completion of the oral histories by introducing me to the California State Library grant programs.





Bay Area historian Chuck Wollenberg and labor folklorist Archie Green have been my primary advisors, as well as mentors, from the early planning stages. Chuck provided insight into how Richmond's transition during World War II fit into the larger picture of California history. Archie Green reinforced my belief that as chroniclers of history we must continue to document the lives of working people.

From the preliminary research to the completed project, Kathleen Rupley, curator of the Richmond Museum, has been enormously supportive. Working in collaboration with Kathleen, and Museum staff Paula Hutton and Joan Connolly on the "Fishermen by Trade" exhibition was an invigorating experience as well as an excellent example of how two organizations pooled their talents and resources to create a popular community event.

Stanley Nystrom, a Museum volunteer and lifelong Richmond resident, has been a continuing resource to me. A local history buff, with a great sense of detail, he assisted me often.

Finally, I want to thank Adelia Lines and Emma Clarke of the Richmond Public Library, Sharon Pastori of the LEAP program, and Rhonda Rios Kravitz and Gary Strong of the California State Library for their support in making possible the completion of these oral history volumes and their distribution to several Bay Area public libraries which serve minority populations.

#### CLOSING THOUGHTS

In my work I am most interested in recording the stories of people who are undocumented in history and who are unlikely to leave written records behind. For me, the strength of this project has been seeing the transformation in how the interviewees view their relationship to history. They came a long way from our first contact when a typical response to my request for an interview was, "Why do you want to interview me?" or "What's important about my life?" And "Why Richmond?" With some encouragement, many became actively involved in the research and the collection of photographs, and began recommending others to be interviewed. "On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," became their project, with a life of its own.



This set of oral histories is by no means the whole story of Richmond. It is one piece of its history and one effort to generate community-based literature. I hope that it will encourage others to record the stories, the songs, and the traditions of our community members. They have a lot to teach us.

Judith K. Dunning  
Project Director

February 23, 1990  
Regional Oral History Office  
Room 486 The Bancroft Library  
University of California  
Berkeley, California



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Alan Clarke

"Everything has been related to water for me. I've always liked the water, and it's been good to me," Captain Alan Clarke told me not long after I had met him. I began hearing Alan Clarke's name soon after I started interviewing local residents about the Richmond waterfront. Interviewee Harry Williams remembered catching rides on Alan's sailboat as a young child. When I recorded M.M. "Tubby" Snodgrass about his years working for the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry Company, he mentioned that the ferry was the brainchild of Captain Raymond H. Clarke, Alan's father. What firmed up our commitment to interview Alan Clarke was when we discovered that, in addition to his personal connection to the Richmond waterfront, he also had been a twenty-year pilot for Crowley Maritime Corporation's Red Stack. Since the Regional Oral History Office was involved in an ongoing project with Crowley Maritime, we decided that Captain Clarke's oral history would benefit both projects.

Three interviews were taped with Alan Clarke during 1985 and 1986. Two were conducted at the Richmond Yacht Club, of which Captain Clarke is a longtime member, and one was recorded on site at the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor. The first and second interviews focus on the Richmond waterfront, while the third documents the San Francisco waterfront and his affiliation with Crowley Maritime.

In talking about the beginnings of the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry Company, Alan Clarke recounted many tales he heard from his father, Raymond H. Clarke, who worked on the ferry from 1914 until 1941, most of those years as skipper. There were accounts of prisoners being brought by ferry to San Quentin, enjoying their last breath of fresh air and their final meal outside prison walls, and there was a vivid story of a violent Christmas day storm which stranded the ferry outside Point San Pablo.

With some amusement he recalled his father as always having some business scheme or project going on, "Father always seemed to turn up on the right side of things." In 1939, he saw an opportunity to build a harbor at Point San Pablo, designed primarily for sports fishing. Alan Clarke worked for his father during this time and one thing that stands out in his mind was the excellent bass fishing in San Pablo Bay, "You could catch five fish, which was the limit at that time per person. You



could catch enough food to last you for two weeks...five fish would weigh as much as one hundred and ten pounds."

During those years prior to World War II, the harbor was busy twenty hours a day. Captain Clarke recalled having sixty-five row boats to rent at two dollars a day and fifteen or twenty party boats. To give me some idea of the harbor's use, he told me, "On a weekend, all the boats would be reserved in advance. I would come down and turn on the lights at three-thirty in the morning, and there would be 150 cars in the parking lot." Most of the people who used the harbor facilities came from the East Bay and from San Francisco. If they had their own boats, they often ran with a car engine from a wrecking yard. Raymond Clarke's towboat ran with a Chevrolet car engine.

Before the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor became such a popular site, the harbor was dredged and an access road over the winding hill was built. During the second interview, Captain Clarke told me in detail of the intensive labor that was part of the harbor project. He was working with men from Arkansas and Texas, "old guys from the Southern oil fields who knew all the tricks." He recalled, "I was a young guy in perfect condition, and these little old men would just almost work me to death...It was the greatest education I had in my life too, working with these fellows from different backgrounds." In addition to building new roads, berths, and a parking lot, they sank old wooden lumber schooners around the perimeter of the harbor. The water was so shallow that the whole structure of the ship, the hull and all, was visible.

I recorded Captain Clarke's story of Point San Pablo as we drove from Point Molate to the now rundown yacht harbor. He remembered the area as looking quite different in the late 1930s with thirty or forty fish reduction plants and purse seiners, four and five deep, waiting to discharge. After the sardine boom, there was a dramatic drop in activity.

Several factors contributed to the decline of Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor during World War II. All fishing had to be done in daylight which curtailed the harbor's activity, and people were busy working in the Kaiser Shipyards as well as other war-related industries. There was a gas shortage, and when the fish disappeared, that was the end of the harbor's boom era.

Alan Clarke went into Army Transport as a civilian and then to Crowley Maritime's Red Stack for twenty years as a skipper. In our final interview, Captain Clarke spoke candidly of his two decades with Crowley Maritime. He recalled some advice from Tom





Crowley, Sr., "He told me, 'Young fellow, I want you to remember one thing. You're never going to get a nickel from me unless you fight.' That's the way the outfit was. If you didn't have the courage to fight for what you believed in, they thought nothing of you." In his oral history, Captain Clarke told of the fight for a forty-hour work week in the early 1960s, and the bitter ten-month strike by Red Stack pilots in 1969 which marked his departure from Crowley Maritime.

Captain Clarke spoke about the navigational skills he acquired during his years with the Crowleys. The phrase, "having your feet pushed in the fire," came up often as he described an era of operating a tug with a compass and a coursebook rather than radar. He considers himself lucky to have trained as a pilot during the 1950s and 1960s before radar became standard because it gave him the opportunity to prove himself as a pilot. At the close of the interview, Captain Clarke told me, "If you don't have confidence, you can't be a pilot."

Since 1969, Captain Clarke has been affiliated with the California Inland Pilots, which in 1985 became part of the Bar Pilots organization. Recently retired, he and his family reside in Mill Valley, California.

Judith K. Dunning  
Project Director

March 20, 1990  
Regional Oral History Office  
486 The Bancroft Library  
University of California at Berkeley



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly or type. Use black ink.)

Your full name Alan Howe Clarke

Date of birth 3 Jan 1918 Birthplace San Rafael, Ca

Father's full name Raymond Howe Clarke

Occupation Capt & Partowner S.R. Ferry Birthplace Alameda, Ca

Mother's full name Alice Monica Clarke

Occupation House wife Birthplace San Rafael, Ca

Your spouse(s) Ann Hodgson Clarke

Your children William Howe, Robert Alan, Christian Mc Donald,

Susan Kathryn

Where did you grow up? Richmond, Ca

When did your family first come to California? 1860

Reasons for coming ? Opportunity

Present community Mill Valley, Ca How long? 26 years

Education (and training programs) Richmond Schools, St Marys College

Occupation(s) Retired, S.F. Bar Pilot



Special interest or activities

Sailing, Golf

Ideas for improving Richmond's image.

As a non-resident, I would

not be prepared to address that question.

What do you see for the future of Richmond?

Utilization of Port

light Industry



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Family\_Background\_in\_California

[Date of Interview: July 23, 1985] ##

Dunning: Where were you born?

Clarke: I was born in San Rafael, California.

Dunning: What year were you born?

Clarke: 1918.

Dunning: Where did your parents come from?

Clarke: My mother was born and raised in San Rafael. My father was born in Alameda and raised in Alameda.

Dunning: How about your grandparents?

Clarke: My grandparents on my mother's side came from Ireland. On my father's side, I don't know where my grandfather actually came from. I think he came from Canada. I only met him twice in my life. He did a lot of work in agriculture as far as the botany work. He was an inventor, not too successfully. He had a farm in Iowa. That's the last I ever heard.

Dunning: This was your father's father?

Clarke: Right. As I say, on my maternal side, my grandparents were both dead when I was born, so I never knew them. My grandfather was an accountant, on my mother's side.

Dunning: What was his name?

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## This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended.



Clarke: His name was Ryan.

Dunning: A good Irish name.

Clarke: Oh, yes. My grandmother was Irish also, of course.

Dunning: Do you know what brought your family to California? Did they ever talk about that?

Clarke: Looking at history, the Irish all came to the United States to get away from the troubles in Ireland, and I presume that was the reason they came. As far as my father's side, I really don't know.

I do know that my father's uncle, who was my great uncle, wound up in Iowa. A bachelor all his life, he owned a couple of farms and a bank. When he passed away, they found out he had never even been a citizen of the United States. He had come across the border from Canada.

Dunning: Did your parents talk about their childhood very much?

Clarke: Very little. My mother had three sisters and no brothers. As I say, her parents died when she was young. They were raised by my Aunt Catherine in San Rafael who was the oldest daughter. The four Ryan girls, they were called. So from the time my mother was about ten she didn't have any parents.

Dunning: So Catherine was really like a mother?

Clarke: The oldest daughter, yes.

Dunning: The oldest daughter often took the place of the mother.

Clarke: That's exactly right. Yes, that's what happened.

Dunning: How many brothers and sisters in your own family?





Clarke: I have one sister. She's about three years older than I am.

Dunning: Can you describe a typical day for your mother when you and your sister were young? Things that you remember about a day?

Clarke: When I was very young?

Dunning: I'd like to go back as far as you remember.

Clarke: I don't recall any specific things that come to mind. My mother was a large woman, a red-haired Irish woman, and very handsome. She had been very slender all her life, and then she had double pneumonia. At that time they thought the food was a big thing, and she had to eat every three or four hours. She finally became, as I say, a large woman. She must have weighed two hundred pounds, about five foot eight and a half.

She was just a typical, I presume, Irish mother that took care of the two children and took care of the wants of her husband, and that was it.

Dunning: Did she ever work outside the home?

Clarke: No, never.

Dunning: Do you think there are certain things that your mother tried to teach you or hand down to you?

Clarke: She was a very willful person, independent, but willful I will say. She was very definite on what she wanted to do, in the sense of what she wanted her kids to do. I think that we all received excellent training for manners.



Point\_Richmond\_1920s

Clarke: Our schooling, I think, was very good, not just because of her, but I think the city of Richmond at that time had excellent schools. I think if you talk to anybody from that era, they will all say that they were so lucky to have the teachers that we had.

Dunning: We're talking about the early twenties?

Clarke: That's correct, yes. I went to Washington Grammar School, which was in Point Richmond. I left there in the fifth grade. Washington Grammar School was a small school, but it was a very good school. We had kids from all different backgrounds that were going there. In those days in Point Richmond, there weren't many rich people or poor people, or what I call poor people. I didn't know what the word poor really meant then. I do now.

Most of the parents worked for the Standard Oil Company, which was the major employer. There were several doctors that lived in Point Richmond who were probably the most affluent people, but we never thought about that. Money was never considered at that time. Everybody seemed to be able to eat and get dressed. Really, that's all we cared about, or at least that's all I cared about and thought about.

Dunning: The basics?

Clarke: Yes, right. We never thought about social position, I don't think, at that particular time.

Dunning: Money really wasn't a factor in your friendships?

Clarke: Not to my knowledge it wasn't, no, and not in school particularly.



Dunning: Were you living in Point Richmond at that time?

Clarke: We were living in Point Richmond. We had moved twice in Point Richmond. The last time we moved, we were up at the top of Washington Avenue. At that time--this is now in the late twenties, about '28--my father had made a considerable amount of money in the stock market. Then they built a home in Mira Vista. That was in 1928. I transferred from Washington Grammar School to Peres Grammar School.

Mira Vista, "Nucco Hill"

Clarke: Then Woodrow Wilson School was just opened up brand new, and when we moved to Mira Vista, I finished at Woodrow Wilson Grammar School. It was strange, looking back now, it's funny, but I don't think there were a hundred and fifty homes on Mira Vista, which was great, because as a kid, after school we could run across the hills and go up to Wildcat Canyon. It was just fields of grass. It was really great.

There was a stigma to be raised and to live in Mira Vista at that time. This was my first understanding of a breakdown in economics as related to people. The kids used to tease all of us that were at Mira Vista, they said we lived on Nucco Hill. Now, Nucco, of course, you know--

Dunning: I've heard that.

Clarke: Nucco was a substitute for butter, and the reasoning went that the people that lived up there couldn't afford to buy butter because they had these big houses, and they had to eat Nucco. It's funny, that stuck with me all my life. I get this unnatural reaction, I guess, but as you move up in the society situation, there's always going to be something like that.



Clarke: It was strange. But then, as I say, we moved up there. It's funny. I had a very dear friend, which is my oldest friend to this day, J. D. Vincent.

Dunning: Oh, J. A. Vincent.

Clarke: Well, there were two. There was J. A. and there was J. D. There were two brothers. They're both retired now. J. A. is the oldest brother. He was an engineer with Standard Oil. J. D. wound up as an airline pilot.

Dunning: J. A. is the engineer, and I'm interviewing him.

Clarke: J. D. is four or five years younger. He and I have been friends since we were just little boys. You lose track of kids, because transportation was different then than it is now. Five or six miles, which is all you're talking about between Point Richmond and Mira Vista, is like being in a different country, because you just didn't get together much anymore. It wasn't until high school that we finally renewed our friendship on the same basis it had been when we were small.

Dunning: What was the transportation?

Clarke: In the early days, in the twenties, we had streetcars that ran all the way from Richmond out to the ferry company.

Dunning: Was that the Key Route?

Clarke: I don't know what company it was to tell you the truth, but it used to run all the way out to the ferry company. That was the only means of public transportation. Then, in Mira Vista, it used to run all the way up the hill.





Clarke: I know on Halloween, some of the kids would grease the tracks and they couldn't stop the darned, bloody thing coming down the hill, and it would go right across San Pablo Avenue. Fortunately in those days there was no traffic. Otherwise it would have been a calamity.

Memories of Father, Raymond H. Clarke

Dunning: I know your father was working on the Richmond-San Rafael ferry. Before we get into that, could you talk a little bit about what he was like, some of your earliest memories of him?

Clarke: My father, Raymond H. Clarke, always had something going on. I mean besides the ferry company. He always had some little business or some project going on. I swear that he didn't sleep over four or five hours a night because he would be thinking of things to do. He was a very active man, and he was quite a hunter, a duck hunter.

He had been quite an athlete in his younger days. I can remember that when he was in his forties, he was a member of the Elks Club. They had a baseball team, and they finally conned him into coming out. I remember I saw him hit two home runs. He wasn't a big man--he was only about five foot eight and a half--but he was an excellent athlete, and as I say, very active mentally.

I remember he always had a boat. In the early days there were power boats, or the power launch. At the time I was four or five, I used to be on the boats with him. We would go out fishing. I've been on the water, started very young. I had a picture which



Clarke: disappeared of my father and my mother and I, at the age of two, in the San Rafael Canal in a rowing boat, which would be my first time on a boat.

My father was always very busy. You could say he was an ambitious fellow.

Dunning: Do you know how he first got involved with the water?

Clarke: Really I don't. I think that his background didn't lend anything that would put him in that direction, towards the water. He wound up in San Rafael as a young man working for the Carson Glove Company.

As I say, he was an athlete, and he played on the team. All the towns in those days had their own baseball teams. He played on the town baseball team. Walter Mail was one of the pitchers. There were several of the fellows that went on into the major leagues and the coast leagues from that club. From what I gather from people of that era that I talked to, my father was well-known and well-liked as a young athlete.

He was an avid duck hunter. He and a group of his cronies, they had an ark at Greenbrae. I can always remember him telling the stories that whoever's turn it was to wash the dishes, they would throw the dishes outside and wait for the tide to come in and go out, funny stories like this which probably weren't true, but maybe they were. I think that this was where he started on the water, was through the ducks.

#### Early\_Days\_Towing\_Hay\_Scows

Clarke: As I say, my father always had an active mind. In those days, a lot of the produce was brought in by hay scows. They were sailing scows. If you're familiar



Clarke: with San Rafael, San Rafael Creek is very narrow. The wind normally comes right out of San Rafael, so the scows had a difficult time getting up to discharge their cargo.

As a matter of fact, where the freeway goes across San Rafael now, that's where the creek used to run to, and that's where they used to discharge all the cargo. The scows used to have a lot of trouble getting in there. My father bought a boat, I think it was called the Jewel. It had been used for running Chinamen ashore from offshore.

Dunning: From offshore where?

Clarke: Off the coast. The boat was beached in Bolinas, and the immigration people and the government arrested the people, and he bought the boat at auction for \$200. That was his first boat. Then he got the idea of towing the hay scows into San Rafael. Whatever he charged for it, I don't know.

Then my mother would go out to McNears Point and watch these hay scows coming down the bay. She'd see the ones that were going to go to San Rafael, then she would go back and tell my father, who was at the Carson Glove Company. He would leave, get the boat, and go out and bring them in. That's how he started.

### San Rafael Freight and Transfer Company

Early Connection with Thomas Crowley, Sr.

Clarke: As a young man, he wound up with a couple of scows himself, a couple of power freight boats, and a couple of tow boats. That's when he started the San Rafael



Clarke: Freight and Transfer Company, which was the name of that particular operation. What happened there--this kind of dovetails along with later on when he gets involved with Crowley--is the fact that he was doing very well. He had a friend that had some big company up in the Petaluma area, so my father did all the freight work for this particular company.

At that time there were maybe a hundred and fifty small businesses like my father's in the transportation business on the bay, each one jockeying and cutting the rates. Tom Crowley Sr. decided to get them all together and form an association, in which they would establish rates, and stabilize their rates so they could all make a living.

It was a good idea, so they all did this. Then of course, Crowley went around behind them and cut all their rates that they established, and broke about half of them, including my father.

Dunning: What decade would this be?

Clarke: This would be in about 1915. My father used to tell the story, and I remember when I went to work with Crowley, why old man Crowley, he said, "I know you've heard some stories, however, there are two sides to a story."

We never discussed it, Mr. Crowley and I, but he knew that I knew, so we had a pretty good rapport. I always had a good rapport with Crowley because of that. Anyway, that's how my father started in the water transportation business.





Beginning of Richmond-San Rafael Ferry Company

Charles Van Damme, Oliver Olson, and Andrew Mahoney

Clarke: Then he got the idea that to get across from Marin County to the East Bay, you had to either go all the way around the other way through Vallejo--that's before the Carquinez Bridge--take a ferry across the straits, or else go from Sausalito around the other way. He thought that there ought to be some means of getting from Marin County to Contra Costa County.

People would drive down and they would drive out by Point San Quentin on Sundays, for example, so my father took to going out there. People would stop, and he would talk to him. They were wondering how to get across the Bay. He used to keep track of all the cars he would talk to. At this time, he was living with his uncle, which was Charles Van Damme. Charles Van Damme was a well-to-do businessman.

Dunning: This was before he married?

Clarke: This is now 1915 or '16.

Dunning: About how old would he be? In some of the stories I've read, it said that your father was only about twelve or thirteen when he conceived this idea.

Clarke: Oh no, no, no, no. He was born in what, '87? He would be in his mid-twenties. Anyway, Van Damme had a ranch in Sonoma, he had a home in San Francisco, and my father was living with him in Sonoma. Van Damme was in the lumber business, in the drayage business in San Francisco.

Dunning: What was the business?



Clarke: Drayage, which is trucking. In those days, drayage was horses and all that. In the lumber business he was in the Fort Bragg area, and the Van Damme Park is up there, which he donated to the state. He had two very good friends, who were Oliver Olson, of the Olson Steamship Company, and Andy Mahoney, who was the police commissioner of San Francisco. Those three men were very close friends.

My father proposed this idea to his uncle about starting a ferry company. Like all older businessmen, why they looked at this young fellow and thought, "Well, this is kind of a crackpot idea."

Anyway, Mahoney and Olson said, "That's an interesting idea."

They convinced Van Damme, and so the three of them got together, and they put up the money. My father, of course, received a ten percent interest, or whatever it was, for the idea. They chartered this one ferry, the Ellen, and went across and tried it out, and it was successful. Then of course, they built the Charles Van Damme, which was built in Benicia. From there, why the ferry company just kept building up, and up, and up, and up.

My father didn't have any licenses, so he started as a you-name-it. He was selling tickets, he was working on the ferries, and of course then he got his licenses and worked up to captain. Then he was marine superintendent, which he didn't like.

Dunning: Why was that?

Clarke: He just didn't like the administrative work.

Dunning: That's mostly what that job incorporated?



Clarke: Yes, right. He didn't like that, so he spent most of his time on board as skipper. This is when I came along. At that time, they started the ferry from San Rafael. Then they decided that it would be better to have the ferries originate on the Richmond side, and that is when we moved from San Rafael to Richmond, which was about 1920.

Dunning: Was your father captain at that point?

Clarke: He was a captain, yes, which was a good job in those days. Looking back on it, it was funny that the ferry boat captains made as much if not more money than the masters of the seagoing ships, which was strange. It's all turned around the other way now, but in those years it was a very important job, because of carrying people--that's the most precious cargo you could carry.

Anyway, that's how we wound up in Richmond, and that's how he became interested in boats. As I say, he always had a small boat. Power launches, primarily, up until about 1929 or '30, when he bought the MONSOON. It was a forty-six foot sloop. That was the first time that he got involved in sail.

Recollections of the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry as a Young Boy

Dunning: You were around boats from an early age.

Clarke: Yes. And at this time, I was interested in sailing. This is where I started learning in sailing. Then, in 1932, a group of men decided to form a yacht club, which was the Richmond Yacht Club. Of course, I was a part of this as a kid, and this is where I started



Clarke: sailing competitively, which was something it seemed I could do well, and liked to do, and that was the start of my career on the water.

Dunning: Going back to the ferry, as a child, did you spend much time on it?

Clarke: Oh, yes. We would take my father's meals down to him. My sister, and I, and my mother would ride the ferry across to San Rafael. It was like a family on the ferry. It was a very close-knit group, all of the crews and everybody. It was really a great organization.

It's funny the things I can remember. On the ferries, on the car deck, they always had these great big fifty gallon drums of sand, which they would spread around because oil would drop, and also they were used in case of fire. Then up on the upper deck they would have a bucket. There were about six or eight buckets with water in them in case of fire.

I can remember as a small boy, they used to have a ladder you would climb up, a straight ladder, to go from the upper deck up to the wheelhouse deck. This bucket was right underneath the ladder. I was sitting on one of the rungs of the ladder. I was a small boy, and I couldn't have been more than three or four.

I slipped through the ladder and wound up in one of the buckets. I couldn't get out of the bucket. They had the whole bloody crew looking for me, and they couldn't find me, and here I was stuck in this bucket. Can you imagine that? It's funny how I can remember that to this day, and I should forget it. It's not a very embarrassing thing, but I can always remember that.

Dunning: For a three year old it would be pretty embarrassing, and probably a little scary too. I've heard that at that time the route from Richmond to San Rafael only took about thirty minutes.





Clarke: It was about a thirty minute trip, a half-hour trip, right.

#### Food Service on the Ferry

Dunning: What surprised me when I talked to "Tubby" Snodgrass is that people would have complete dinners, and before Prohibition, they would have their wine or drinks, all in that thirty minute period.

Clarke: Oh, yes. They had an excellent restaurant. A German fellow, Harry Bottker, ran all the restaurants for the ferry. Later on, he had a place up on San Pablo Avenue called Mammie's Place, which was very popular for dinner, and for chicken. They had a dance band there.

The food on the ferry was excellent, and people would have a complete meal. How they did it, I don't know, with the serving and all that, but it was a real neat operation, real neat.

#### Transporting Prisoners to San Quentin

Dunning: I've heard a few stories about how prisoners would be brought across to San Quentin, and that would be their last free meal.

Clarke: It's funny. I'll tell you a story about that. My father first got to know the fellows that brought the prisoners across. A lot of them were from Southern California. It was the last trip across the Bay, and quite often they would have one prisoner, and these two officers would bring him up in the wheelhouse, and they would talk to my father.



Clarke: This one fellow from Southern California was going over to San Quentin to be executed. I can't vouch for the veracity of the story, but my father used to tell this story, so I'll pass it along.

##

Clarke: These two inspectors from Southern California brought this fellow up. They were talking going across the Bay, and evidently very lightheartedly.

My father turned to the prisoner and said, "That's a very expensive suit you're wearing." One thing led to another, and my father said, "Where you're going, you don't need a suit like that." He said, "I'll give you five dollars for it."

The fellow said, "Well, why not?"

My father gave him the five dollars, and they exchanged clothes. When my father got home, he had the suit and the five dollars. That seems just to me like my father. That's the way he was--Father always seemed to turn up on the right side of things.

#### Tales of Captain Raymond Clarke

Clarke: Another time, we were down in Los Angeles. We drove down, and that was a very arduous trip in those days, by car. This was in the twenties. We wound up in the middle of Los Angeles, and my father made a left turn.

A cop pulled him over and said, "You can't turn left down here."

My father said, "Well, I'm from Northern California and I've never been here before."



Clarke: No, the cop wouldn't buy that, so he said, "Come with me."

He got on the running board--they had running boards in those days--and down we went, here we go, the whole family, to the police station.

My father goes in with this officer. He's gone about fifteen minutes, and pretty soon he comes out, and there's three or four plainclothesmen with him, and they're all joshing and talking. He walks in, and of course he meets some of these inspectors who used to bring the prisoners up to the prison. My father always came out on top. I never saw any man that could get away with the stuff that he did. It was funny.

In Richmond, Chief Jones was the chief of police. The station at that time was in Point Richmond. We were living in Mira Vista, and my father was invariably always late. The ferry started at six o'clock in the morning, and they left right on schedule.

My father was behind schedule, and he goes roaring down Macdonald Avenue, right through the center of town, which was only about five or six blocks long then, probably going thirty, thirty-five miles an hour, which was speeding. This officer chased him by car and kept blowing the siren, and my father kept waving him off.

Finally, when he stopped, I guess past Point Richmond, the officer said, "You've been doing thirty-five miles an hour."

My father said, "Look, the ferry leaves at six o'clock. I've got to be there. Don't bother me." So off he goes. But he had gotten a ticket.



Clarke: He got through work at two o'clock in the afternoon, and he goes right in the chief's office in Point Richmond. He's mad about this ticket.

In those days it was no big thing, and the chief said, "No, forget about it captain. Just don't worry."

My father said, "I will not forget it. By gosh," he said, "Chief, I want my outboard motor back which you've had for the last year and a half."

Sure enough, he had loaned it to Chief Jones, and Jones had never returned it. But that's my father. He always had something.

Dunning: Do you attribute it to luck, or--?

Clarke: I used to think it was luck, but if you ever played poker with my father, you realized it wasn't all luck, I'll tell you that.

Dunning: Are you hinting that he cheated a little bit?

Clarke: I don't say he cheated, but he sure shaved things, let's put it that way.

Dunning: Now, that story you told about the prisoner and the five dollars, did he ever feel funny about that, or badly?

Clarke: No. I don't think he felt badly about it.

Dunning: It never occurred to him to return it?

Clarke: I don't think it ever occurred to him. As I say, I cannot verify the story, but I would gamble that it happened that way, knowing my father.





Ferry Stories of Cattle and Foot Passengers

Dunning: I've heard about cattle being brought across on the ferry. Is that true?

Clarke: Oh, yes. They used to have cattle and herd them across. Something which you might want to follow up on, is that there are still a couple of people around that were on the ferries. Bob Markley, Captain Markley, who still lives in Richmond and is a very dear friend of mine, was deckhand on the ferries before he got his licenses and went up and filed to be a pilot with Crowley.

Dunning: So he ended up with Crowley too?

Clarke: Right. He can tell some great stories, believe me, Bob Markley. I'm sure I would like very much to have you interview him, because he's got some great stories.

Dunning: How long was he with Crowley?

Clarke: As I say, he was deckhand on the ferries for a number of years. During the war, I saw Bob going up the ladder on the side of a ship. I was kind of shocked, because I didn't know he had gotten a license. He went with Crowley during the second world war. He retired from Crowley about eight, nine years ago.

Dunning: Has he lived in Richmond the whole time?

Clarke: He's lived in Richmond the whole time. Bob has got a great sense of humor, and he can tell some stories that I'm sure you would love to hear about the ferries, and also about Crowley.

Dunning: It's good to have that connection.



Dunning: In terms of the cattle being brought across, where would they be? Was there a corral, or--?

Clarke: Usually all these ferries were paddlewheels. They had paddlewheels on each side, and they had these big housing routines that enclosed all the paddlewheels. On each side of the housing there was a little space, and this is where they would build the corrals, or kind of corral it up and put the cattle in there. Then the center part of the boat was used for putting the vehicles.

I can't say that I'm privy about the cattle. Markley would be the one to find out about this, because he would be part of the action. I do remember they took cattle, but I can't tell you all the things about that.

Dunning: Would there be many foot passengers, or did most people have a car?

Clarke: There were foot passengers as well, but most of them had cars because you didn't have transportation to San Rafael. In Richmond you did. You did have a certain number of foot passengers.

For example, later on, I went one year to Marin Junior College, and there was Bill Bottoms, Ralph Johnson, Corky Marshall, Phil Goettel, and Gordy Campbell. The six of us went over there, and Bill Bottoms had a car on this side, and Ralph Johnson had a '28 Nash Sedan on the other side, so we would all ride in Bill's car to the ferry and go across on the ferry. Ralph would bum a ride on one of the cars going down the dock, pick up the Nash, pick us all up, and away we would go to school.

Ralph Johnson had the Richmond Transfer. He's a millionaire now. So is Bill Bottoms. They're still in town.



Dunning: The Richmond Transfer, what is that?

Clarke: It was Richmond Moving and Transfer. It was a moving company to start with, that his father had. Then Ralph and his brother Phil expanded it, and during the war they made a tremendous amount of money and went into containers and packing supplies for the armed forces. Bill Bottoms was with Ralph in that business, and then he branched out on his own. Right now he owns the property on the other side of Brickyard Cove. He's going to build all those big condos over here. He also owns the quarries.

#### Christmas Day Storm, Ca. 1921

Dunning: Are there any other stories that stand out in your mind about the ferry? Were there ever any accidents that your father talked about?

Clarke: The only one that I ever heard him really talk about was the Christmas Day storm. I'm not too sure of the date. It was either 1921 or 1922 on Christmas Day. They had a very, very violent storm. The old-timers still talk about it to this day.

We lived up on top of Washington Avenue. It was so hard, it blew out windows. We had a garage over our car. It wasn't a garage which was on a foundation like they have now. It blew the garage right up off the car, over our house, and put it on top of the house next door to us. It was a violent storm.

My father was supposed to be off duty at two o'clock in the afternoon, and my mother had dinner all prepared, and he didn't come home, and didn't come home. She took my sister and I, and we walked towards the ferry company from the top of Washington Avenue. I



Clarke: can recall that Red Rock was solid white on the south side, all the way to the top. The waves were breaking, and the winds were taking the spume up over the top.

What had happened, my father, on his last trip from San Quentin had a full load of cars. It was so rough that the water was coming right through the ferry on the main deck. The warden's car was parked under the lifeboat. The lifeboat fell on top of the warden's car. Another fellow, he said, had a brand new Model T Ford, and he said he must have tied seventy-five life preservers on that Model T Ford in case the ferry sank.

In rolling, one of the crankshafts broke on the paddlewheel. With a paddle on one side, you couldn't control it. They were pretty well drifting helplessly out there, being blown up the Bay. In the meantime, one of the stays on the smokestack carried away, so the smokestack would go one way, and that would pull the whistle pull on one wheelhouse, and it would blow the whistle, then it would go the other way. He said it was utter confusion. They finally wound up anchored behind Point San Pablo. That's where they spent the rest of their Christmas Day.

I've talked to old-timers later about that particular storm. Captain Darragh, who was our marine superintendent at Red Stack, remembered the storm very well. He told me things that happened down in San Francisco on that storm. I've never seen a storm like that before in my life. But that's just one of the things that happened on the ferry.

Dunning: Did it do a lot of damage to the ferry itself?

Clarke: Not really bad damage. It broke a crankcase, but the other things were mostly minor. It's hard to think, looking back now in modern times. Can you imagine a





Clarke: fellow tying life preservers on an automobile? It kind of gives you a clue--crazy. But I can believe that those things happened.

### Work Shifts on the Ferry

Dunning: What kinds of shifts were there on the ferry? It started at six in the morning.

Clarke: Originally when they started, the crew worked twelve hours a day. It was strictly a daytime deal. Then, later on, as the ferry became more successful and they had two to three boats running steady all the time, they had union contracts and they would work an eight hour day. They would start at six in the morning and they would get off at two, and then they would go from two to ten, and that last ferry would be at ten o'clock. An eight hour job was a good job, number one.

As a matter of fact, the pay on the ferries, looking back--the deckhands were getting, I think, at that time \$125 a month, where the average fellow working in the refinery was getting maybe \$105 to \$110.

Dunning: Is this pre 1920?

Clarke: This is the 1920s. They were prize jobs. It was hard to get a job on a ferry company. Most of the fellows that worked there were all local fellows.

Dunning: Although we're jumping ahead, one thing "Tubby" Snodgrass said, is that they had a really difficult time during the World War II years getting people to work on the ferry. He said that he would actually have to go to people's houses and pick them up, because people were going to work in the shipyards, where the salaries were higher.



Clarke: There was more money to be made somewhere else, and that was the thing. When Van Damme died, and then Olson Sr., young Olson, and Mahoney took over.

#### Labor Disputes Leads to Bridge Planning

Dunning: Young Olson and young Mahoney, were they the sons of the original owners?

Clarke: They were the sons of two of the originators, right.

Dunning: What were their first names?

Clarke: Oliver Jr., and I forget Mahoney's first name. But from then on the ferry company started going downhill. I can remember when they had two strikes.

Dunning: What years would this be?

Clarke: I forget the years, but one strike was before the war, and one was after the war. I know the one after the war, my father told them, "You've got to settle this strike. You can't let it go on."

They were out just being stubborn. Strangely enough, this was 1946 or 1947, and I had a yacht business at that time down in Richmond, and people from Standard Oil that lived in Marin County, particularly the Cal research people used to come there. The head of Cal research, kept this boat in my harbor, and he said, "Al, is there any way you can work out a deal to get some of our people from Marin County to Richmond?"

I had this boat about thirty-six feet long, and I said, "Yes, I can do it."



Clarke: So I got a lot of chairs, and I would pick them up in San Rafael and take them to the Rod and Gun Club at Standard Oil, which was kind of strange, because here was the son running a ferry service while his old man's company was on strike. But I did that for about seven or eight months.

Dunning: That long? The strike was a long one.

Clarke: Yes. It was strange talking to these fellows during the transit. These were all executive type men, and they were highly incensed about the strike and the ferry company. This is when the talk started, to build the bridge. These people who were pretty influential in Marin county got Senator McCarthy, who was a young senator from San Rafael. That's where the deals started to build the San Rafael Bridge.

Dunning: Coming out of those labor disputes?

Clarke: That's exactly right. That's exactly what happened.

Dunning: Who was striking?

Clarke: The sailors. The deckhands were striking. Looking back, it wasn't a big deal as far as money was concerned, but young Olson and young Mahoney were stubborn, and they were going to show who was boss. It's just one of those things, you know, the wrong time and the wrong place.

Dunning: Do you think the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge was inevitable? Would it have been built at a later time?

Clarke: Oh, yes. The strange thing was, the ferry company always owned a franchise which is issued by the PUC [Public Utilities Commission], the state of California, and so they had the exclusive right for transportation between Marin County and Contra Costa County. Young Olson and young Mahoney let that expire. When the



Clarke: bridge started to be built, the ferry company was going to be completely wiped out. The state didn't have to pay off anybody.

It took about \$200,000 spread around Sacramento before they got an agreement for the state of California to buy out the one strip of land which the ferry company owned in Point San Quentin. That's why the bridge winds up in Point San Quentin.

#### Thomas Crowley Purchases the Marin Islands

Clarke: Another little funny story about this part is that Andrew Mahoney, who was one of the original owners, and the police commissioner in San Francisco, was also a very close friend of Tom Crowley.

During the course of talking about things, Mahoney said, "If ever a bridge is going to be built, why we have the franchise, and we will build a bridge across at the proper time. If we do, we'll probably use the Marin Islands for the western anchor."

So old man Crowley bought the Marin Islands for \$25,000. Of course, when the bridge was built, it didn't go to the Marin Islands. I was with Crowley at this time, and the Standard Oil Company had made a very comprehensive study of all the transportation problems within the whole Bay Area, including bridges, freeways, and population increases. It was a very comprehensive book, about three, four, five hundred pages.

My father was given a copy, which he in turn gave to me. I read it over, and I in turn took it down to Mr. Crowley. I thought he might be interested. I can





Clarke: always recall, he was in his office, and I heard him starting to swear. He had a vocabulary of profanity which was unequaled.

Finally, he came out and he threw the book down, and he said, "Those dumb people."

I knew exactly what he was talking about, because they had built the bridge in the wrong place. He was going to make a fortune by selling the Marin Islands.

Dunning: Hasn't that come into the limelight recently about Marin Island? Are the Crowleys selling it now?

Clarke: They're trying to sell it, yes.

Dunning: For how much?

Clarke: Several million dollars. It's worth it, I guess.

Dunning: He was probably hoping for a lot more money back then.

Clarke: Oh, yes. He would have gotten a lot of money for it then, too. Of course, it's all relative, the amounts of money, but for \$25,000 he probably would have gotten a half a million dollars at least for the islands, which isn't a bad return.

Dunning: How long did your father work on the ferry?

Clarke: When he started was in '14 or '15, up until--I forget exactly the year he retired. He retired before the bridge was built. Let's see, he probably retired about 1941, '42, from the ferry company, I think. Yes, right around '41 I think, when he decided to retire. At that time he had the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, so he was doing both things, and he decided to give up the ferry company and just run the harbor over there, until he sold it.



Dunning: Did you start working on the ferry at a young age?

Clarke: I never did work on the ferry.

Dunning: That's kind of surprising, isn't it?

Clarke: I guess in a way maybe it is. I didn't say I had something I wanted to do, but I went to college, and--

### Building the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor

Dunning: Did you have jobs before that as a young boy?

Clarke: Oh, I worked. As I say, my father always had something going on the outside. He started the Richmond Yacht Service. That was a harbor that was built right across from the original yacht club at the foot of Second Street.

These weren't businesses per se. To me, I look at it, they were always avocations, just something to do. He built that harbor and had something going on. Then he decided to build the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor.

He had a partner, Bert Swanton. Swanton also had a yacht harbor up by Port Chicago, I think. At this time, I had just gotten out of college, and I had a chance to go to Standard Oil. I was an Economics major in college.

Dunning: Which college?

Clarke: St. Mary's. I had a chance to go with Standard Oil. Of course, I was surrounded by Standard Oil people up on the hill, but I just didn't want to get involved with people I knew that well, so I took a job with the



Clarke: world's fair. That was 1939. I was in the sports department at the world's fair. I was there for a year, which was a nothing job, but lots of fun.

At the same time, my father was building this yacht harbor out at Point San Pablo, and his partner pulled out, which left my father holding the bag. Then he asked me if I would come out, and while he was with the ferry company, I would run the job, and keep time, and order materials, which I did.

It was a great experience for me. I was working with these fellows from Arkansas and from Texas. I was a young guy in perfect condition, and these little old men would just almost work me to death.

Dunning: What would their jobs be?

Clarke: We were doing everything. We were doing construction work, we were building things, the carpentry work, we were building berths, we were building roads.

Dunning: You were constructing the whole yacht harbor?

Clarke: The whole thing, right. I had no experience doing this. Working with all these men, old guys from the Southern oil fields, they knew all the tricks. After a while they found out that I wouldn't quit, and they started teaching me things and tricks. That was the greatest experience in my life.

Dunning: Was this an interracial group?

Clarke: No, they weren't. It wasn't interracial, but almost interracial when you started talking about Arkansas and Texas. It was really a great thing. As I say, these little old guys, they knew every trick in the book. And I learned them all. To me it was the greatest experience in my life working with those fellows, and to me, I think it was the greatest education I had in



Clarke: my life too, working with the fellows from different backgrounds, but with a common goal just to do one thing. We all did it, and it was great.

Dunning: What did that area at Point San Pablo look like when you started compared to what it looks like today?

Clarke: There was nothing there, actually. There wasn't a thing, and there's not much there today, to tell you the truth.

Dunning: Kind of a quiet little place?

Clarke: Well, it's run down something fierce now. But there was absolutely nothing there, and we built the road in. I helped build the road in. I had never run a tractor in my life, or a steamshovel or a grader, but we did all these things. We didn't have a lot of equipment to do things, so you had to improvise. These guys in the oil fields, they had tricks.

We did things that looking back, you just shake your head and say, "How the devil did we ever figure out how to do this?" But we did it.

Dunning: Even today, that's quite a road going in.

Clarke: Oh, yes.

Dunning: There was nothing there?

Clarke: Absolutely nothing.

Dunning: How did you even decide on that exact route?

Clarke: There had been a little trail that had gone up there at one time. Then the trail was expanded to make a road. There was no other way to get into the property. To go around the shoreline, the railroad was there, and they





Clarke: owned twenty-five feet from the center of the track on both sides, so there was no way to get a level road around. You had to go over the hill.

Dunning: And Chevron owned most of the other parts of the hill?

Clarke: Yes. There were three parcels of land that were owned by the ferry company. My father bought the one from the ferry company. Then Standard Oil bought the other one, and a fellow by the name of Sholin bought the other one.

But there was absolutely nothing there at all. Where the parking lot is, that was all marshland. We took all the spoils from the dredging, dredged the harbor, and put them there to make a parking lot. As I say, it was just starting from scratch and putting something in where there was nothing. I thought that was kind of fun, to me, to do something like that.

#### Choice\_of\_Harbor\_Location:..Good\_Bass\_Fishing

Dunning: How was that particular location chosen?

Clarke: The reason for the harbor being there--at least this was my father's reasoning--was that at that time bass fishing was very big. You wouldn't believe the fishing in the Bay at that time. A lot of people kept their boats in Berkeley, and Oakland, and Richmond. The fishing was in San Pablo Bay. It would take an hour and a half to get there, sometimes two hours. That's four hours out of a fishing day.

My father said, "Well, why not build a harbor out there, and they can be fishing in twenty-five minutes?"



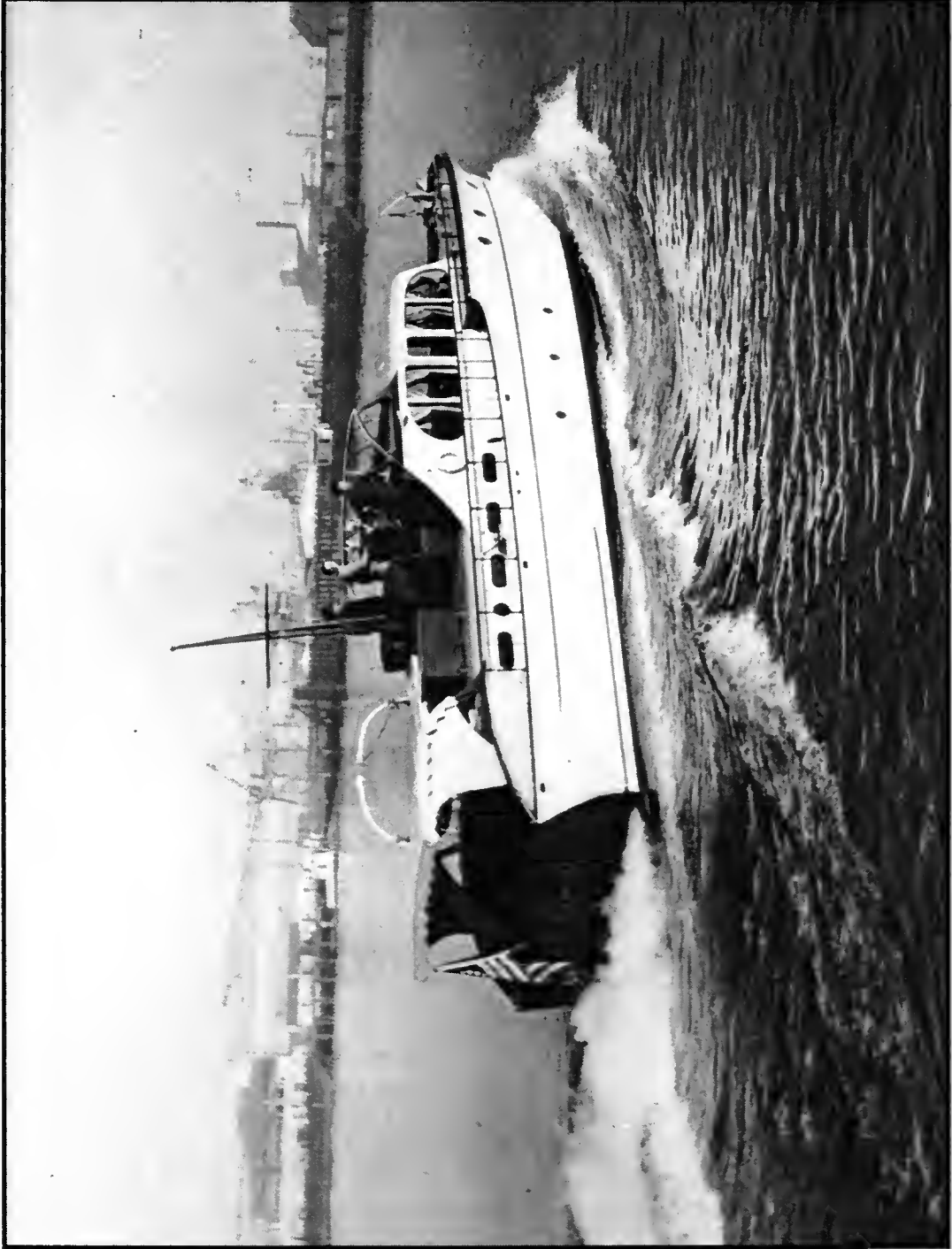
Clarke: The people liked to fish, so it was designed primarily for sport fishing. During the years up until the war, that place was just going twenty hours a day with business and people fishing. At that time you could rent a rowboat for two dollars a day. Two dollars would rent a rowboat, and you'd get two or three boxes of bait for twenty-five cents apiece.

At that time, if you caught a fish, you wouldn't believe the fish. You could catch five fish, which was the limit at that time per person. You could catch enough food to last you for two weeks. A lot of people would go out there and actually fish for food.

We had some two wheel carts for carrying supplies to the boats, and fishermen would wait in line to use the carts to carry their limit of five fish to their car. Five fish would weigh as much as one hundred and ten pounds. People, you tell them that today, they don't believe you, but it was true. It was true. It was a very busy place.

##





Alan H. Clarke (center) and R. H. Clarke (right) on board the "Tak". Circa 1930s.





Captain M. Sekino with Alan Clarke, circa 1980. Captain Sekino was the master of the M.S. "Hakusan Maru". The ship was a major container ship from Japan. Captain Clarke exclusively piloted the ship whenever she was in San Francisco Bay.

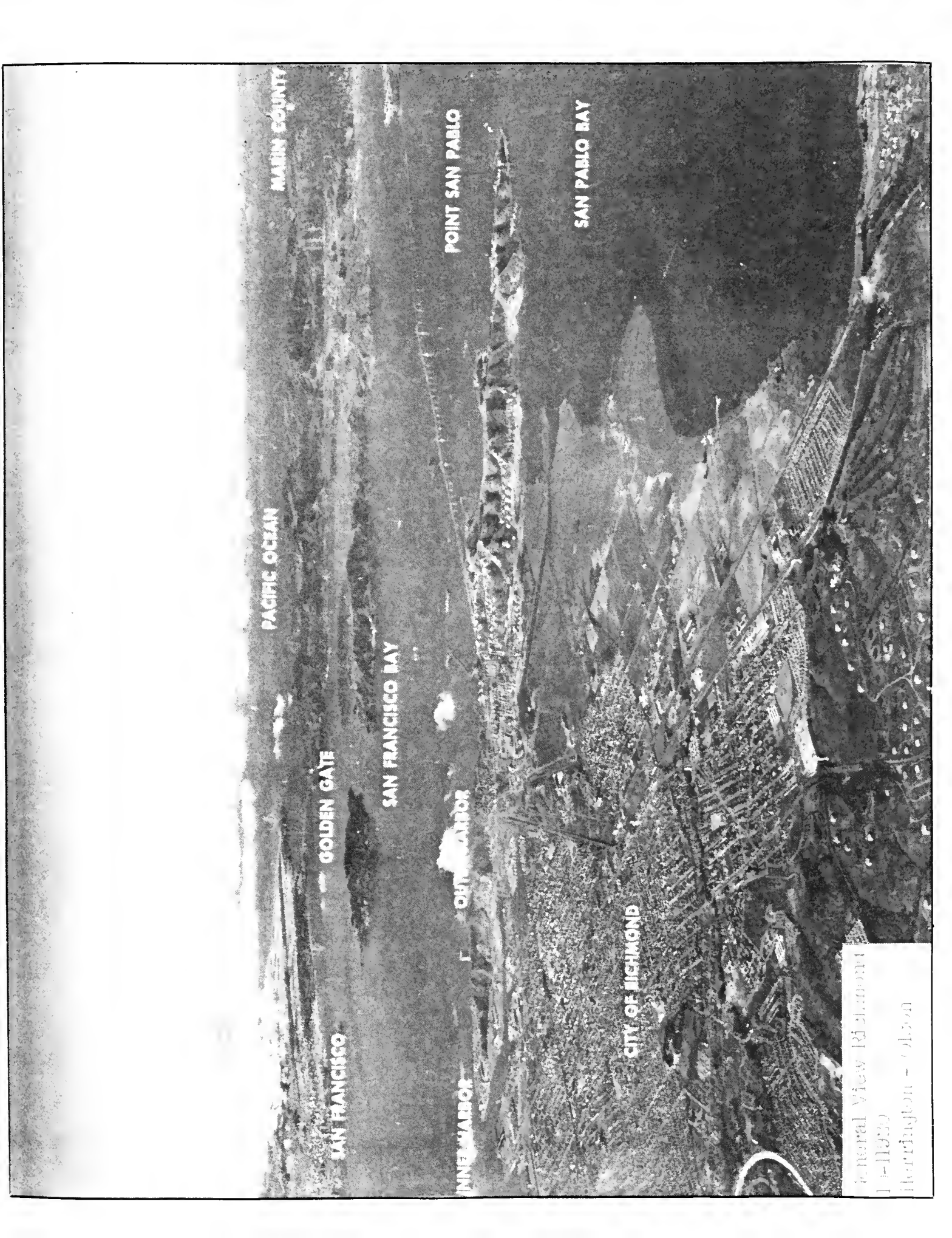






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MAIN COUNTY

PACIFIC OCEAN

GOLDEN GATE

SAN FRANCISCO BAY

POINT SAN PABLO

SAN PABLO BAY

SAN FRANCISCO

INNER HARBOR

OUTER HARBOR

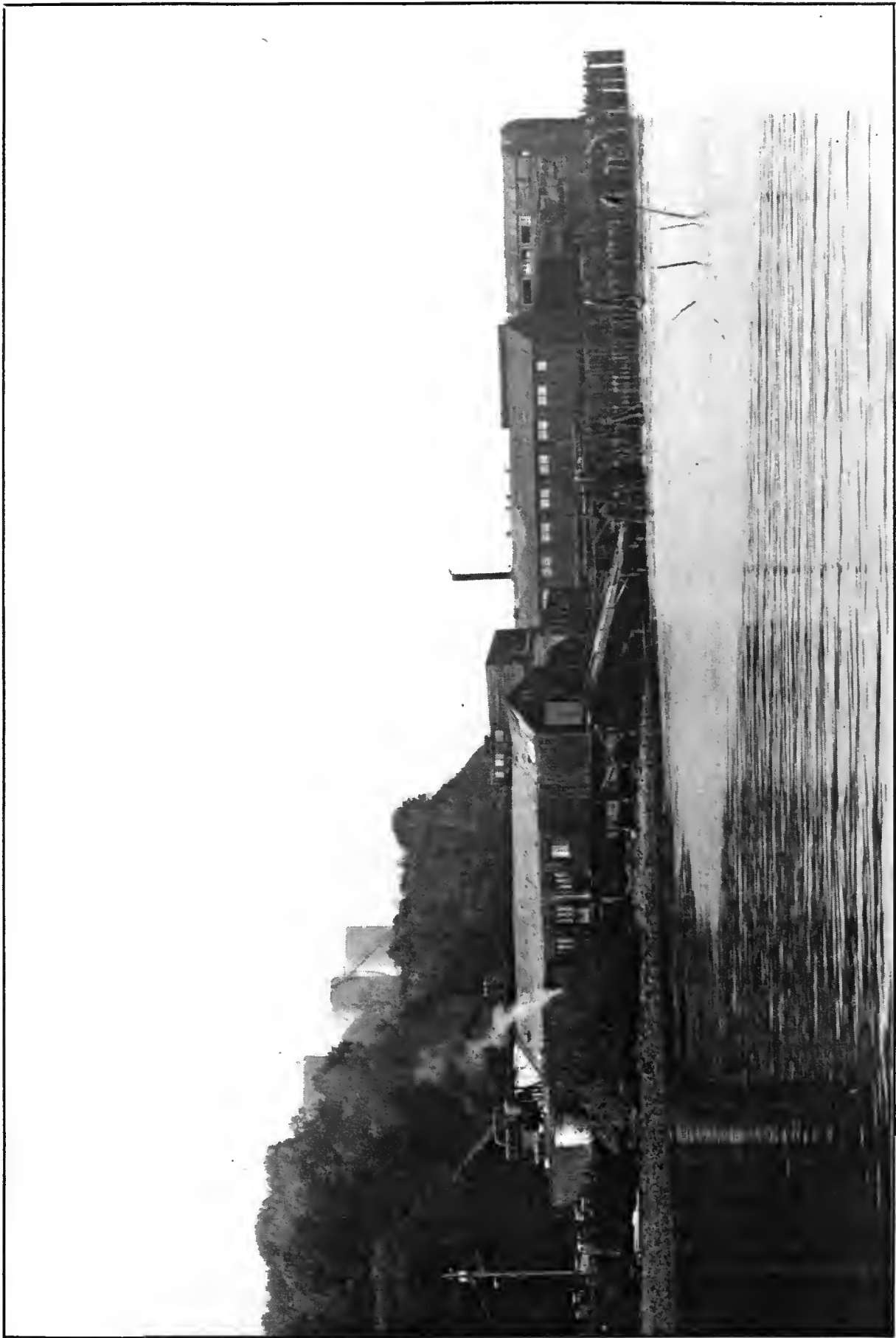
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View of rendering plant and old whaling station from Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, Richmond.

*Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985*





Rendering plant near Point San Pablo, Richmond, where whales were processed between 1958 and 1972.

*Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985*







Fishing off Point Molate, Richmond.

*Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985*



On Site: Point Molate and Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor

[Date of Interview: August 5, 1985] ##

Dunning: Today, we're starting at Point Molate and will be going down to the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor.

Clarke: Winehaven was there, and the Standard Oil Point Orient dock was still here. The other dock at Point San Pablo was here. There hasn't been a great many changes out in this direction at all. In 1939, there must have been thirty or forty fish reduction plants, starting from here all the way around the point, for reducing sardines.

Dunning: That was during the big sardine boom?

Clarke: That's right. As a matter of fact, those piles sticking out there, they were the dock for a cement ship hull. That was the fish reduction plant which was moored there. It reputedly belonged to the brother of the president of Mexico at that time. But there were thirty or forty reduction plants.

Dunning: That many?

Clarke: Yes. I have pictures at home somewhere of all the purse seiners, four and five deep, waiting to discharge.

Dunning: When were the fish reduction plants torn down?

Clarke: Well, they gradually disappeared. After the sardine boom was over with, why they finally disappeared. There was a couple of them. The Red Rock building is still there. They made that into a whaling station. You've probably heard about that.



Dunning: Yes.

Clarke: This little road brings back a lot of memories. I spent a lot of time. One of my jobs when I worked here was to maintain this road. But this wasn't like this before.

There was a little trail that ran up where the road is now. We enlarged it all and made it into a road, but there was nothing here, absolutely nothing.

Dunning: Oh. Look at the deer!

Clarke: There are deer up here. These tanks weren't here at that time. Look at that [looking at the view to the harbor]. I don't know why somebody didn't run off this steep corner.

Dunning: As far as you know no one ever has?

Clarke: Nobody ever has as far as I know. All this property here was owned by the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry Company. This parcel was bought from the ferry company by a man by the name of Ed Sholin. He had a little road that turned off right down here. He built a building down there, and a dock. He used to rent rowboats. I think he had fifteen or twenty rowboats he used to rent out for fishing. He built all his own boats himself. He was quite a man.

Dunning: Was he a Richmond man?

Clarke: No, he wasn't. He was, I think, from Oakland, but he had spent most of his life up in Alaska. He used to wear those special boots all the Alaskans wear. He was quite a big bear of a man.

Dunning: When you said the ferry company owned this property, does that mean that your father had some ownership also? Shares?



Clarke: Yes, that's true. He was a stockholder, of course, in the company. There were only about twelve people involved in the ferry company that actually were owners. No, less than twelve. I think it was about ten.

### Building the Road Into Point San Pablo

Dunning: It's pretty bumpy here. Maybe when we get down to the bottom you can tell me what you remember about building the road. You said it was quite an adventure.

Clarke: Well, it had to be an adventure because I had never run any equipment before. [laughs].

Dunning: This isn't exactly straight territory either.

Clarke: It's actually learning on the job routine. This was all a marsh. It went down about where the tracks are. That was all built up level. From there down it was about ten feet down. It was all marsh.

When we dredged the harbor, we took all the dredging spoils and pumped them in here. A lot of it was mud, but then we hit gravel. This whole half of it was piled up by the gravel from the dredgings. As the mud part dried out, I spread all the gravel over the whole thing to build it all up to where it is today. It never was finished, but at one time this was all level.

Dunning: How long a process was that?

Clarke: To do all that? Well, the dredging part, that only took about a couple of months, but waiting for this to dry out was about a year. Actually, it should have been longer than that, looking back on it, because in





Clarke: filling the thing in, I know a couple of times the tractor almost sank through and nearly went out of sight.

But you look at it now and for a fellow that had never done any of that kind of work before--or since as a matter of fact--I take great pride in the fact that we did something. We actually made something out of nothing. When you look out and see all the breakwater and the boats out there, there was absolutely nothing there.

#### Using Wooden Schooners to Construct a Breakwater

Dunning: How far was the marshland originally?

Clarke: I'll show you. There's an old hull laying out here now. Let's go over here by the boat shop. See. What they have done now is to put a solid breakwater around. When the harbor was first built, to put a breakwater in at that time, my father just didn't have the money to do that. What we did was to take old wooden steam schooners and use them. This is the perimeter of the harbor now.

## [tape interruption]

Dunning: You were starting to tell me the story of the dredging.

Clarke: Yes. There was nothing here. It was all mudflats. At first we dredged out half of what you see here, half of the harbor we dredged out, because that was all that we could afford to do at that particular time. But the perimeters of the harbor remained the same, that is where the breakwaters are now.



Clarke: We bought these old wooden steam schooners which used to trade up and down the coast carrying lumber. We took those and sank them in place around the perimeter of the harbor. There were three on the east side, and there were four on the west side. It was rather picturesque to see the old ships there.

Dunning: Were they sunk all the way down, or could you see them?

Clarke: The water's so shallow. They only went down maybe four or five feet, so the whole structure of the ship, the hull and everything else, was all visible. As a matter of fact they used it for a movie set. I forget who it was now. First it was Robert Mitchum, then it was John Wayne and Anita Ekberg. It was some film about China. They used the old hulls here for a set, blowing up things and all that. It was really great.

Anyway, that's what we did. Outside you'll see a wreck sticking up. It was just a bare part of a hull. It's like a wreckage. To take care of the opening so the northern storms wouldn't come in the harbor, we had an old hull which was a ferry boat hull, stripped right down to the deck level. That was secured in place by pile dolphins as a protection from all the northerly weather. Then we put railings around it, and had benches with windbreaks behind them.

People would go out there with their families, and fish for a little bass, and bring their lunches. It was safe for the kids. At that time, I think it was one dollar for an adult, and the kids were all free. The purpose of the harbor to start with was that it was built for the people who like to fish.



Fishing for Food, Not Sport

Dunning: What was the approximate year that the harbor started?

Clarke: Nineteen thirty-nine.

Dunning: So we're talking right before World War II?

Clarke: That's when it started.

Dunning: The first time?

Clarke: Yes. The fishing in those years--a lot of people don't believe it, but the fish limit at that time was five striped bass, and the season ran from August to October, or even before that, say June, July. People would go out and fish and bring back five fish. It would be over a hundred pounds of fish.

In those years, we were just coming out of the bad times, so this meant food. It wasn't just sport, it was also food. We had about sixty-five rowboats here which we used to rent out for two dollars a day. We would tow them out wherever the fishing was supposed to be the best, two and three people in a rowboat for two dollars.

Dunning: They could get a week's supply of food.

Clarke: That's right. We had about fifteen or twenty party boats which would take anywhere from five to twenty people out fishing. On a weekend, all the boats would be reserved in advance. I would come down and turn the lights on at three-thirty in the morning, and there would be one hundred and fifty cars already in the parking lot. You couldn't believe how busy this place was in those years. In 1942, I left with the army transport. But those years, everything was just busy, busy, busy.



Dunning: Backtracking a little, how did your father originally get the idea for this harbor, and then how did you get involved in it?

Clarke: First of all, besides the ferry company, my father always had something going on on the outside. As I said before, he had a very active brain. He had a yacht harbor in Richmond Harbor, the first yacht harbor, Richmond Yacht Service. He built that because we had boats of our own, number one, and he had friends who had boats.

It started out kind of as an avocation routine, and then it developed into a full-time business. A lot of people that kept power boats there would come all the way around to San Pablo Bay, and it used to take about an hour to an hour and a half to get out here. In the afternoon, when the wind was blowing, it got real rough, and it took an hour and a half to two hours to get back. A lot of the wives would complain about the rough weather going back.

So he hit upon the idea, "Well, why not cut down the traveling time by having a harbor out here which would specialize in people who liked to fish.

Dunning: And he already owned some of the land through the ferry company?

Clarke: That's right. Anyway, that was how it started. He had a partner, originally, by the name of Bert Swanton. Bert Swanton had a harbor up by Port Chicago. As a matter of fact, I think the harbor is still there. Bert has now passed away. But the two of them were going to build this together, and there were plans to put a park in the upper part of the area here. About three months into the project, why Bert Swanton pulled out and left my father holding the sack.

Dunning: Do you know why he pulled out?





Clarke: I never talked to Bert about it, and my father mentioned it, but evidently it was going to be too big of a project maybe. I don't know what it was, but he pulled out, and that was towards the end of '39.

I was with the world's fair. My first job was with the sport department at world's fair. My father asked me if I would come over here and help him out because Bert had pulled out, so I could keep track of the time for the men, and order supplies, and all that. That's how I wound up here.

Although I had a college education and I could race any kind of a boat there was, as far as knowing how to hammer nails, or use a pick or shovel, I didn't have the slightest idea. As I say, when I was first here, I was keeping the time, which was a nothing deal. It was boring. I had to order supplies. For a young guy, it wasn't enough action.

My father said, "Well, maybe you better start helping out with the fellows who are building this thing."

We had a group of fellows working here who were from the Texas oilfields, and Oklahoma, little old guys. They almost killed me, working me to death. I was in good shape, and these little old guys would just work you right to the ground. They knew all the tricks. After a few months, I wouldn't quit, naturally, and they figured I wouldn't quit. They started teaching me. All the stuff that I've learned, I learned from those men. They were something else. There wasn't anything that they couldn't do. We've done things here that--It's like this building right here.

Dunning: The little red one?



Clarke: Yes. The base of the building, the floor of it, was an old ferry boat ramp, the part that they lower down on the deck of the ferry boat. I forget what they call it now. They had an old one over there, and my father got it for nothing. My father just loved to collect stuff.

So we towed it over here, and we decided to use it for a floor of a machine shop. We were going to build a machine shop here. That thing weighed twelve tons. We raised that thing up in the air twelve feet with hand jacks. To get the blocking, you know, the cribbing, to put it up, keep going up, we would go down the railroad tracks here, and they had ties stacked up for repairs of tracks, so we would borrow all the ties for cribbing.

I remember we got the thing up in the air about nine feet. We had all this cribbing, and a fellow named Orrin Frary was working with me. We were underneath, and I heard some kind of a little noise.

Orrin said, "Get out of here."

He went out one side, and I went out the other. The cribbing all came apart, and down came this whole bloody mess. After all the work. It took us maybe ten days to get it up that high. Then we had to do it all over again.

We did that in 1940, and it's still standing. We're not engineers, we're not contractors, and yet the bloody thing is still there. I kind of get a kick out of some of the building we did around here, because it was learning as we went.

Dunning: You mentioned that group of men you worked with. How many men were there, and how did they get hired?

Clarke: I don't know how they got hired.



Dunning: Where did your father find them?

Clarke: I really don't have the slightest idea how he ever found them, to tell you the truth. There was about four or five of them.

Dunning: That's all?

Clarke: Yes. We built a piledriver--we had never built a piledriver before in our life--so we could drive our own piles. We built our own. It was a thing of beauty, I'll tell you. It looked like something that Rube Goldberg would dream up. But it worked, and we drove all our own piles and we built all our own berths, did the whole thing all ourselves. It was kind of fun, really fun.

Dunning: When you mention the guys, you keep referring to them as old guys. You were probably in your twenties. How old is old?

Clarke: They were in their fifties, I would say. Maybe one of them was forty, but the rest of them were all in their fifties. At least they looked like they were seventy, because they were well-weathered men. Let's put it that way. They had had a hard life in the oil fields and all the work that they had done. But boy, every trick in the book they knew. To me, I look back on this as the most educational part of my life. They sure taught me a lot.

Dunning: Are there any particular men that really stand out in your mind?

Clarke: Not by name. I don't even remember their names, most of them, now. I can't think of the one fellow's name. He's the one that taught me all about how to run a caterpillar, or a bulldozer, a power shovel, a grader. We had all the equipment and ran it all ourselves. I



Clarke: ran all the equipment. Why I got stuck with that, I don't know, but I wound up getting stuck with running the equipment.

It was really an experience. We used to tow skiffs out to the other side of the Bay. I think back on it now, and man, we were kind of stupid, because can you imagine towing say thirty rowboats in a line? Three and a half miles on the other side of the Bay. These people would get out there and they would drop the anchor and fish all day, and it gets rough out there.

Then we would go out in the afternoon. We would go out about every two hours and if they wanted to come in they would stick an oar up on the side of the boat, and then we would go along and pick them up and bring them back. I've come back in the afternoons when it was rough with a string of twenty or twenty-five skiffs. You would have to go slow because you could capsize them. It was taking maybe an hour and a half to two hours to get back. It wasn't so bad for me, because I'm on a boat that's bigger, the towing boat, but these people. Can you imagine riding in a skiff? They were crazier than I was.

Dunning: How far out were they?

Clarke: About three miles out there.

Dunning: That far?

Clarke: Yes. That's a long ways. Thinking back on it, I thought, "Man, that's unbelievable that people would do that."

Dunning: Do you think it's because they were primarily city people who didn't have too much experience with the water?





Clarke: I think that is true, because there weren't that many people on the water in those years. We never had any casualties. Sometimes there were a couple of people that would get out there and they would have a jug of wine. I used to always worry about it. They would get loaded on wine and stand up in the boats. That used to worry me.

#### Incident with the Coast Guard

Clarke: Another time, just before the war broke out, they had a quarantine on, and all boats had to be in by sunset. There was no traffic on the Bay at all after sunset except for commercial vessels. Of course, we were not included in that group.

These people would get out there in the middle of the Bay, and if they weren't doing so well, they would decide to pick up the anchor. The tide runs sometimes up there about three, three and a half, four knots. You would find them up the Bay five, six, seven miles. You would start counting heads and, "Hey, we're missing three boats."

I remember one morning about two in the morning we were missing two boats. I had called the people up at Crockett and Rodeo to keep an eye open. I had looked all over. I couldn't find them. There was a coast guard boat station down at the end. We had one boat which we owned which was a very fast boat. It did about twenty-five to thirty knots. I went out after dark. I went down to the point, deliberately went down to the point so the coast guard would see me. Sure enough, they spotted me, so I turned around and came roaring back this way, and they were chasing me.



Clarke: Well, I knew every inch of this whole area. There's a place out here called Mud Island. There used to be a little channel inside there, oh maybe you only had about three feet of water. I kept right on going, and they were chasing me, and I went across--I knew where the little channel was--and I put the coast guard boat up high and dry over here. I went out the other side by Point Pinole. I couldn't find the boats, and I came back. I had turned the lights out.

They finally got off about midnight. They came down with their 45's, looking for the guy that ran the coast guard boat. Of course, we were all long gone by then.

I went home, and about one o'clock in the morning--I lived with my folks at that time up in Mira Vista--the doorbell rang. I went down, and here was a fellow in fishing gear, and a taxi cab outside. He wanted to know if I would give him the twenty dollars for the taxi cab. He was one of the fellows from the two boats that were missing.

They had gone up the Bay with the tide and wound up behind the breakwater at Mare Island. That's all United States Navy area. They pulled the boat up on the marshland and went tromping in the navy base, and the marines grabbed them, of course. Anyway, after they talked their way out of that one, they called a cab--they didn't have any money--and they found out where we lived. I had to pay the cab driver twenty dollars, and the two boats are still up at Mare Island. That's a fact.

My father was wild that I gave them the twenty dollars, and said, "What are you going to do?" But I was just glad to see they were alive.

Dunning: But you never got caught by the coast guard for your little escapade?



Clarke: No, they never found out. They had a hunch what boat it was, but they couldn't prove anything. Oh, they were wild. But Point San Pablo, we knew it. We had duck blinds. We had about five duck blinds we put out here. My father was a great duck hunter, so we had our own blinds, and we finally built four or five more, and people would rent those out for duck hunting. So I just knew this whole area like the palm of my hands.

Dunning: You mentioned Mud Island. Where would that be?

Clarke: Let's see, now where are we here? Here's Number Four buoy right over here. Right where this big piece of pipe--you see where that muddy spot is out there in the water?

Dunning: Yes.

Clarke: Well, you can walk out there. It actually almost runs dry on a big minus tide.

Dunning: At the beginning when we started talking you mentioned the hulls. You had three on one side and four on the other. What ever happened to them?

Clarke: Well, the torritos finally ate the bottom out, and they started to break it up. I was young and ambitious, and we had all these big hills here, and what I wanted to do was--we had the equipment, that is, the big power shovel, and we had a bulldozer--I wanted to start tearing down one of the hills and fill up the hulls with the dirt from the hills, and make a solid breakwater, because it was inevitable that the hulls were going to deteriorate, and then how are you going to replace it.

My father didn't want to do that. That was one of the disagreements we had that led to my finally leaving. He could dream up things to do, but they were never done the way they should be done. We were



Clarke: spending all our time every year rebuilding what he wanted to do. I didn't want to spend all my time just rebuilding. I wanted to build it once and for all, and devote my energy into something else. That's one reason I left. I wasn't going to spend the rest of my life rebuilding everything all the time.

Dunning: He sounds like more of an idea person.

Clarke: That's right. And what finally happened was the people that bought the place finally did put a breakwater in. There was really no problem. All you had to do was buy three dumptrucks, which at that time were very inexpensive, old beat-up trucks, and just start digging the hill down and start dumping it, and keep going on out. There was nothing to it, but he said, "No."

Dunning: So what happened to the hulls? Are they just disintegrated under the water?

Clarke: They're disintegrated, and you can still see little pieces of them sticking up every once in a while. But the cabins were all there. It was really neat to go through them.

Dunning: Do you have photographs of that?

Clarke: At home I've got photographs.

Dunning: That would be quite interesting. You mentioned that there was one hull from a ferry. Was that one of the Richmond-San Rafael ferries?

Clarke: No. That was one of the Key System ferries. I forget the name of the boat now. It was funny. When we towed it down the Bay from Oakland, there was one of the fellows and myself that had to ride the ferry hull down, and our job was to shovel all the accumulation of years of dirt and mud off the deck. It must have been





Clarke: a funny picture to watch us going down the Bay, two guys shoveling all this stuff over the side. But that's what we had to do in those days.

Residents and Workers at Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor ##

Dunning: Did many or any people live in Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor when it first opened?

Clarke: Well, we built the lunch room, which is still over there.

Dunning: Was it always called the Galley?

Clarke: It was always called the Galley. Upstairs was a three-room apartment, and there was a young couple that ran the lunch room and lived upstairs. Then we had a couple of other little cabins, one down below, and there was one on the beach where a couple of single fellows that worked here lived.

Leo Smith was one of the young men that worked here. Leo just retired from Standard Oil. He was one of their pilots. When war broke out, or was just about to break out, he was a first class quartermaster in the United States Navy. They were towing a drydock from Panama towards Pearl Harbor. He had been on watch for I forget how long it was, but anyway, his eyes were bad, and he was up for commission. When he took the examination, they found out his eyes were weak, and so then they forced him out of the navy. He had been eight years in the navy.

So he walks out of the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, and he has to register for the draft. For an eight year navy man to have to go in the army, that is unthinkable. He came to work for us, and at that time



Clarke: besides the harbor I had a couple of small towboats. He and I were running these little towboats when they were building the shipyards in Richmond. I had a towboat on the Point Molate dock for fourteen months. He and I ran that.

Leo got a deferral and then they were really breathing down his neck. He had a third mate's license. He went to sea as third mate on a brand new Liberty ship. He was gone for one year. He went out third mate and came back skipper. Leo is still a very good friend of mine.

Earl Messer was the other young fellow. Earl had been a marine. He had made a very bad mistake of punching his commanding officer. That's a court-martial offense. They put him in jail and he escaped from the brig. They caught him again, and he wound up with a dishonorable discharge.

These fellows in peacetime service, I can never forget this. Even though he had been discharged from the marines, everything was done just like he was still in the marine corps barracks. His socks were all rolled. The same thing with Smith. They were absolutely meticulous in their quarters.

Of course, Earl couldn't go back in the service, in any service. That really broke his heart. A big powerful young guy. So my mother went to bat for him. She wrote letters to the senators and the influential people that she knew, and they finally let Earl go back in the United States Army.

He served in the Pacific and wound up to be a staff sergeant and decorated. The last I heard, they took the dishonorable discharge off. Earl is up in Suisun City now, and married to some little gal up there. I haven't seen him for years.



Dunning: Why did your mother get on the case and support him?

Clarke: Well, she liked Earl. Earl and Leo were both fine young guys, nice guys, and my mother was down at the harbor all the time. She used to come down almost every day for a couple of hours just to look around. She got to know them all pretty well, and we would invite them home for dinner. So she took an interest in Earl, and that's what she did. I thought it was great, really great.

Dunning: Would your father come down here very much?

Clarke: Yes. He would come down either in the morning or in the afternoon for four or five hours, which to me was always a pain, because we would be doing one project, and when he would get here, he would want to change and do another project.

Dunning: He was the boss.

Clarke: That's right, he was the boss. You would plan things and get things going, and then he would come down, "No, no. Let's put that aside. We'll do this over here."

Dunning: How did the other men react to that?

Clarke: They didn't care.

Dunning: They didn't care?

Clarke: No, they didn't care. But we all got along well together, all the fellows that worked here. As a matter of fact, one of the sons of the men that taught me, when I had the yacht harbor in Richmond after the second world war, why he was out of work, and I hired him to do some work for me. He was just like his father; he could do anything. Those people are something else, I'll tell you. Something else.



World War II Changes

## Influx of Black Population

Dunning: How did things change right when the war started?

Clarke: Of course, the shipyards were being built. Living in Richmond, we never anticipated--at least I didn't anticipate--the tremendous influx of people. I think a lot of people in Richmond didn't really understand that either. Of course, the biggest part of the influx were black people. We only had a couple of black families in town, and we never thought anything about this at all. But this was a different breed of cat.

Racial Incident At Point San Pablo

Clarke: Then at Point San Pablo, just before the war, they brought the national guard in. They mobilized the national guard about a year before the war broke out. We had a national guard unit stationed on top of the hill up here. They were primarily for air detection. They had searchlights and these big ears. They were from Georgia, and they would come down to the Galley and drink beer. They bought a lot of beer. We arranged for them to go out in people's boats for fishing for an afternoon.

There were three Irishmen, Clancy, Kramer, and Carlson. I don't know why I happened to get to like them a lot. They were from Boston. They said, "The Civil War is not over."

I was a dumb, naive kid. I said, "What are you talking about."





Clarke: "Man," he said, "they're still fighting the Civil War down there."

I still didn't know, because I didn't know anything about this black routine. I had sold a boat to Elwood Meadows, a man from Berkeley. He was a black fellow. He owned a couple of service stations down there. He and Mrs. Meadows were both just nice people. They were, I think, some of the first black people that ever owned a boat, to my knowledge. Everybody in the harbor liked them, and people would invite them aboard for beer or a drink, or whatever, and both of them were just nice people.

I was over at the boathouse one day on a Sunday. A man by the name of Sal Amato, he was a plastering contractor in Berkeley--he's still alive--came over there.

Sal came over and said, "You better get back to the office Al."

I said, "What for?"

He said, "There's trouble."

I didn't know what to think--you know, trouble, we never had any trouble around here. So I go over there, and in the office is Elwood Meadows and his wife. I said, "What's the trouble?"

He said, "I can't take this much more, Al. I don't want to cause you any trouble, but I've had just about all I can take."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "Those soldier guys out there are insulting my wife."



Clarke: Now Meadows was a powerful man. He had played football at San Jose State. A mild mannered guy, but all the equipment was there. "Well," I said, "Geez I'm sorry. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll talk to the commanding officer tomorrow about this." I didn't really know how to handle the situation.

About this time, Amato comes back in. He said, "Al, can I see you back in the storeroom a minute?" We went out of the office in the back storeroom, and he said, "You better get out there. Those guys are waiting for Meadows to come out. They've got pieces of two-by-four."

Well, it was one thing in my day that you never gang up on anybody. If you want to fight, you go one on one, but you never gang up. I went out the back door and went around, and sure, there were about six of them. I go over to the six of them and asked, "What's going on here?"

They started this jabber. "Well," he said, "We're going to get that so-and-so when he comes out."

I said, "Look. We own this place, I run the place, and we take care of our customers first, and you come next, but they come first. You're insulting his wife, and we can't stand for that."

This one little guy, he said, "He pulled a knife on me."

I said, "He wouldn't have to pull a knife. He could eat you alive with his hands. He played football. Don't give me that knife stuff."

Why they didn't beat up on me, I'll never know. But I think that I learned a lesson. The strongest defense is a strong offense. I said, "Get out of here. I want you all out of here right now. Get out."



Clarke: They said, "Well, we'll get him on the road out. There's only one way out, and we'll get him on his way out."

"Get out."

So out they went. Amato said, "Well, what are you going to do now? How are you going to get them out of here?"

I said, "Well," I told Elwood, "You and your wife get in your car and follow me." I said, "Sal, you want to come with me?"

Sal said, "Okay."

So we got in my little '37 Plymouth, and we go toodling up there. They had their station up at the top of the hill. I'll show you on the way out. They had a guard posted at the side of the road. Here they were, so I went roaring right into the middle of them, and they all started diving out of the way, and I slammed on the brakes, jumped out of the car, and ran for the guard station. I told them my name, and that I wanted to see the commanding officer right now, or the officer in charge. Now they can't touch me, because I'm there on official business. Well, the captain wasn't there, but the lieutenant came out.

I said, "We've had trouble down there. I want to see the commanding officer tomorrow."

He didn't know what to say either, so he said, "I'll report it."

They couldn't touch me then because the officer knew about it. My father found out about it that night, and he was wild at me because of kicking them off the property when they spent a lot of money buying beer.



Clarke: The next morning, I'm out doing something, and my father's in the office. This captain came down, and his name was Johnson, Captain Johnson. He had his sergeant with him.

My father called me over and said, "Well, explain what happened."

So I told him what happened. They were insulting his wife, and I had witnesses to back up the story.

I'll never forget this as long as I live. He said, "You don't understand. Where we come from, we shoot coons like you shoot rabbits."

I grabbed Captain Johnson and threw him right through the screen door. My father's eyes were like this. [opens his eyes wide] Why I did it, I don't know. The sergeant didn't know whether to pull his gun, or what to do.

The captain picked himself up, and said to the sergeant, "Let's go."

He put up a sign that we were out of bounds, off limits, so all the soldier boys couldn't come down here anymore. My father was really mad at me now.

Anyway, these three Irishmen, Clancy, Kramer, and Carlson, they would sneak in down in the afternoon, or later in the evening, and have a beer. They would be here about forty minutes, and here would come the M.P.s and grab them, and off they would go. This went on for about every week.

One day, after about several months, I was called in the lunch room by the gal that ran the place, and she said, "There's a man in here that wants to talk to you."





Clarke: This man in there was an elderly man in fishing clothes. He said, "I want to know what that off-limits sign is all about." So I told him the whole story. He said, "I'm Colonel So-and-so from the Sixth Army headquarters. We can't have officers acting that way or letting that sort of a thing happen, because in this war that's coming up, there's going to be black, red, green, white, all together, and we can't have officers that feel that way."

So he went right out and ripped the sign off himself, and three days later every officer was gone. They took every officer from Georgia and took them out of the outfit. That was my first education of the black situation. I've never forgotten it.

Dunning: It's quite a powerful story, and quite a lesson.

Clarke: It sure was to me, I'll tell you. I couldn't believe a man saying you shoot them like you shoot rabbits. That's pretty strong stuff. I guess, after looking at what I've read since, they probably did. I would really believe it. But they shipped the whole outfit out. I don't know where they went to. I never heard anymore from any of them. Anyway, that was my introduction to the black problem.

Dunning: Did Mr. Meadows continue to come here?

Clarke: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I sold two other boats to black people because of that, I think, really. Meadows, to this day, he had these service stations, and then I sold him a bigger boat and a little better boat. Then after the war, he bought a bigger boat and went into the charter business. He runs out of Berkeley, I believe, to this day, he and his son. They have two boats, and they run fishing parties, salmon, and bass. That's kind of neat, too, that they started from here and now they're in the charter boat business.



Dunning: If you hadn't come into the situation like that, they might have left.

Clarke: That's true. I was talking to somebody a while back and asked if they knew if Meadows was still around. This fellow said, "Yes. I saw him just a while back."

I said, "Be sure and say hello for me." I hope he did, but I've never looked him up since the war.

Dunning: Did you ever have pressure from other people because you did sell boats to blacks?

Clarke: No. Nobody ever said boo. We had people that came out here from the shipyards from Texas, and Oklahoma, and Arkansas who were, you know, racist. There's no question about it. But we never had any trouble here. Never. Everybody seemed to get along. I don't know what the reason for it was, but we never had a bit of trouble that way. Uptown they had trouble, but we never had any trouble down here.

Dunning: Maybe this was a place where people went and got away from everything, too.

Clarke: I think so, yes. I remember Eddy Anderson. Eddy Anderson, that's his real name. His stage name was Rochester. With Jack Benny, you might have remembered that. I remember he came out and rented a skiff one day to go fishing.

Then he came in the office and he said, "Do you mind if I leave these here?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "My shoes."



Clarke: He had these special shoes--I don't know what kind of shoes they were, but he wasn't about to trust them in a rowboat, and he left his shoes in my office.

### Recycled Boats During the War

#### Towboats with Chevy Car Engines

Dunning: Where did most of the people come from that used the harbor?

Clarke: Most of them were from the East Bay, and then we had some people from San Francisco. A yacht harbor, or any kind of a marine-oriented deal for small boats, was a fledgling business in those days. It's funny, looking back at the prices that were charged for boats then. There wasn't any money around like there is now. Fellows would buy a hull or get it somewhere, and they would go down to a wrecking yard and get some old engine out of a car. You wouldn't believe some of the get-ups that we had and some of the boats.

Dunning: There weren't many casualties?

Clarke: No. They would make it work. Talk about Rube Goldberg, I remember we had a towboat here that my father bought in Redwood city, and it almost sank when I brought it back from Redwood City. It had a regular Chevrolet car engine in it. On the back of the transmission, it had a sprocket with a chain going down to a big sprocket on the propeller shaft. That's what drove it. And of course, the propeller was so big the Chevrolet engine couldn't do it by itself, so you had two different sized sprockets for a reduction gear.



Clarke: You tell people that today and they can't believe it. Talk about Rube Goldberg. We made it work. In those days, they didn't have all the equipment they have today, and you had to make do with things. The things that people could do, and it all worked. It all worked. They didn't have any money, but they would figure out ways to do things.

Dunning: People would recycle more? Probably coming out of the Depression people learned to use all kinds of extra things and not throw things away.

Clarke: That's right. Things were tough and they had to make do. And they did.

Dunning: You said that mostly people were here for sports fishing, but did you have many commercial fishermen working out of here?

Clarke: Not at that particular time. Most of the full commercial fishing--that is just for the fishing itself--was out of San Francisco. There was no shrimping done up here in those years. Afterwards, the shrimping was discovered on the other side of the Bay, and there were three boats working here after the war just doing shrimping.

### Pollution in the Bay

#### Fish Tasting of Diesel Oil

Clarke: But they all disappeared, of course, with all the pollution. What happened, talking about pollution. We had this fishing barge, and they used to catch all these little small bass out there from twelve inches up to fifteen. They were all young bass. You could catch





Clarke: fifteen or twenty of them a day. It was a lot of fun with a fly rod. The people would just throw them all back.

There was one school teacher and his little boy who came out here every week, maybe twice a week. They would always go out to the barge. He would take the biggest fish, maybe this long, and he would take it home.

One day he said to me, "I don't know what's wrong, but the fish taste like diesel oil."

#### Disappearance of Bass

Clarke: Well, the fish and game boat used to come in here. Kenny Hooker was skipper, and he had married a girl that was a classmate of mine in high school. I told Kenny about it, so they checked. Sure enough, what was happening was all these settling ponds that Standard Oil has back there in the marshlands were seeping out underground someway and coming out here and polluting the entire whole area between Point Pinole and Point San Pablo. In two years all the little bass were gone. They're still gone.

Our next-door-neighbor was Francis Smith, who was in charge of the whole refinery. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Smith was one of the Hannahs. They were large stockholders and ran the company.

I told Mr. Smith. I said, "You people are killing off all the bass with all the pollution."

He swore up and down, "No way."



Clarke: The fish and game filed a complaint, but Standard Oil had more power in Sacramento than the fish and game did, and nothing was ever done about it. We saw all the bass disappear completely. You could almost walk on them out here in the early days. The fishing was that good.

Then they all disappeared, and it was all because Standard Oil and all these other companies were dumping stuff, and they had so much power with the politicians that nothing was ever done until the last fifteen years. That's a fact. So I have absolutely no sympathy for these outfits that say it's going to cost them too much money to clean up their act.

Ducks were out here by thousands, and the ducks were all bottom feeders. In shallow water they would dive down and get clams or mussels. Now you don't see a duck. There are no ducks. Nothing. That's how it happened.

Dunning: When I see fishermen fishing off some of the roads into Point Molate, I just wonder about the fish.

Clarke: They're starting to come back.

Dunning: Do you think that they would be polluted?

Clarke: No. I was talked to a young fellow today, a skipper of a towboat. His father's a harbormaster over in San Rafael. He was talking about the fishing and how it's picking up. He said there are still people that he know that won't eat the fish they catch because they are worried about the mercury content. The fish and game says it's not a problem, but there are people that are still worried about it.

Dunning: How long did you go on eating the fish from this area?



Clarke: I haven't had a striped bass for I don't know how many years. It's not because I was worried about the pollution or the mercury content, it's just that I don't fish anymore, number one, and there was nothing to fish for, to tell you the truth. Although today now, this young fellow was telling me that he's been out to Red Rock, and he said that every time they go out, they catch fish, striped bass. To me it shows that they're all coming back, which is a good sign.

Hopefully a lot of these people fishing off the banks will start catching something, because it's food. It's good food, and God know there's enough people in this country that need food, I'll tell you that.

#### Sardine\_Boom:--Fish\_Reduction\_Plants

Dunning: Can you talk at all about the sardine boom?

Clarke: I didn't know much about that kind of a business except that all the reduction plants were built down here.

Dunning: You mentioned that there were about twenty of them?

Clarke: Oh, easily. Yes. Fish-Delish, Red Rock. Just those two I always remembered. They were from that red building there. That was the Red Rock fish reduction plant, and that was the furthest plant on this side. From there all the way around to those piles I showed you on the other side, they were one right alongside of each other. They were catching so much of the sardines, and they were reducing them over here.

There again, all the residue, they would just let go over the side from the plants. It was like a thick gum. All the shoreline would be lined with the residue, and the boats on the waterline.



Clarke: We finally complained about that and the plants eventually did something about that. But oh, it was a mess. You wouldn't believe. There would be one hundred and fifty, two hundred boats waiting at one time to discharge. They would discharge and then they would go right back to San Francisco to get supplies to go out again, because they worked most of the time when the moon was not out. In those years out at sea going down the coast, you would look in and it looked like the lights of a city, and it would be a school of sardines. That's a fact. You wouldn't believe it. All the way down the coast you would see this. They were catching sardines like they were going out of style, which they finally did go out of style.

Dunning: Because people were catching them so much?

Clarke: I presume that was part of it, but why they disappeared nobody ever knows. It's a mystery to this day. They didn't catch all the sardines. There had to be some somewhere, but they aren't here on this coast anymore. But there was a lot of money made in the sardine industry.

I was going to get a little deal from the Standard Oil. They had a little river steamer. It was about two hundred feet long. It was laid up on the Herman Slough. It was like a little tanker. I asked Standard Oil if they would be interested, and I planned to get this ship and put diesel fuel in it, and fresh water, and have a radio telephone so the boats coming in to discharge their fish could call up and they could order supplies. We could pick up their groceries and supplies for them. I thought it would be a neat little business, because while they were waiting to discharge they could be taking on fuel and water and supplies.

Standard Oil was all in favor of it, but the only trouble was that my name wasn't Foppiano. Your name had to be either Slavic or Italian. There was no way





Clarke: that you could break into that gang unless you had a name like that. That's a fact.

So the whole idea went down the tube, but I still thought it was a great idea. They all went back to Fisherman's Wharf where the Foppianos or whoever it was were furnishing the supplies.

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Dunning: You were mentioning that you couldn't break in unless you were Slavic or Italian. I have heard some rumors-- I don't know how true they are--that the mafia ran some of the fish reduction plants.

Clarke: I don't know about that, but there were an awful lot of Italians involved in it all right. I don't know why that should be, except that the Italians controlled the fishing business at that time, and maybe that's why they went in the fish reduction plant business as well. There was another thing I wanted to tell you.

#### Mysterious Drowning on the Waterfront

Clarke: There was a strange incident that happened, the only tragedy that ever occurred here. There was a young couple, his last name was Franz. I forget his first name. He was a young professor at Cal. He was German. His wife was a graduate student there.

He was a tall, handsome, Teutonic fellow in his late twenties, maybe thirty. His wife was a beautiful, charming young woman. They had a little sailing kayak they kept there. It was about eighteen feet long. Because I had sailed and raced, I got to know them pretty well. They would come out on Sundays or on a weekend, put their little kayak in the water, and go



Clarke: out sailing. Now, most people at the yacht harbor were sport fishermen, and they would wear jeans or even overalls. This couple would always come in white shorts and tennis shoes. What a contrast! Everything was just proper.

One day, it was a day like this, and maybe a little windier, they came down to go out. I told them, "I don't think you better go out. It's blowing too hard."

No, no, they were going to go out. Later on, one of the fishing boats came back, and they had Franz on board. They had capsized over by Point Pinole, and his wife was lost. He sat in the office and told me exactly what happened, so I had to call the authorities, and the police came out. Franz told the same story to the police, word for word. From what I gathered later on, he told the same story, and it was always identical.

We went out the next day and dragged. We finally found her body. A couple of days later, two fellows drive up out here, and they come in the office. They were F.B.I. They wanted to know what the deal was on this Franz killing.

So, "What do you mean killing? The drowning."

He said, "No, no, no, no."

Now, this was something to do with espionage. What it was I never did find out about. That's a fact. A couple of months later, Franz comes back and wants to get permission from me to have his wife's ashes buried out here. Of course, this is all railroad property right here. They have twenty-five feet on each side.

I said, "I have no control over what you do on their property."



Clarke: But he went down there, and this next little cut down about three hundred yards, that's where her ashes are. That's a fact.

The next day, why, here come the two F.B.I. guys again. They were tailing him. I don't know what the scoop was all about. I never found out a thing about it. But that was the only tragic thing that ever happened here, and it was still a mystery to me whatever went on.

Dunning: Do you have any ideas about what it was about?

Clarke: I'm sure that this Franz was probably a spy. Maybe there had been some disagreement between he and his wife in the activities, or whatever, but they felt that maybe she was going to give information, and he got rid of her. But I'll never know. They couldn't pin a thing on him anywhere. So we had a little excitement.

#### Buildings in the Vicinity of Point San Pablo

Dunning: You were saying that you called that the Red Rock Cannery?

Clarke: Yes.

Dunning: Then it was the whaling station?

Clarke: Then it was a whaling station.

Dunning: Now it's a rendering plant.

Clarke: I don't know what the devil they do over there now.

Dunning: Actually, they process oil from restaurants and use it in catfood.



Clarke: Is that right?

Dunning: Yes.

Clarke: Well, that was the best building. Of all the fish reduction plants, that was the best constructed, and I guess that's why it's still there. But the Fish-Delish was way down on the corner. I remember that.

Dunning: Were the others torn down in the forties after the sardine boom died down?

Clarke: Yes, they were torn down. It's a wonder they didn't burn down, when you stop to think about it, because they were all wooden structures, but they were finally all torn down. Then Fred Parr bought the property next to us. He wanted to buy this place too, but we couldn't come to terms on the deal. He did buy the Scholin property, and I think he now has the property from here all the way around to Parr Terminal One, which is the Richmond terminal. The city of Richmond might own part of it now, but this piece alongside, that belonged to Fred Parr, I know that.

Dunning: And Pac Tank has some of that property.

Clarke: They do too, I guess. Pacific Refining, or whoever it is, true. There was talk a while back that they were going to build a big barge terminal on this side of the point. I know that Crowley Maritime was very interested at that time. I remember Art Stone, an old Point Richmondite, showed me the plans, and then the whole thing was shelved. I don't know why.

It's strange, because the Point Richmond people always hung together. Art Stone started out washing dishes on the ferry and he wound up to be vice-president of this outfit. It's a big terminal





Clarke: operator. They run this whole operation at Parr One. He retired about two years ago and they had a big party for him up at the Mira Vista Country Club.

Art Stone married another classmate of mine. It's funny; everybody I know has married my classmates except me.

#### Wartime Decline in Yacht Harbor Activity

Dunning: Was there a real change at Point San Pablo during the war years? Did it get busier in terms of people?

Clarke: I left here in the latter part of '42, or the first part of '43. It was busy, but the trouble then was that everything had to be done in daylight, so it curtailed the activities. People were so busy working during the war effort and all that they would come out, but it was never as busy as it was before the war, never. People couldn't utilize their boats as much as they would like to. There was a gas shortage. From then on it just kept dropping down, and down, and down, and of course, when the fish disappeared, why that was the end of it.

#### Work with the Army Transport

Dunning: You left in '42?

Clarke: Yes.

Dunning: Would you just mention briefly why? You had a disagreement with your father?



Clarke: Well, two things. That was one of them, but the main thing was that I was hurt playing ball as a kid, so I couldn't get in the service. All my buddies were in the service, so between the disagreement here, I wanted to do something.

A friend of my father's was Captain Sawyer. As a matter of fact, my father gave him the job as superintendent of the ferry company. Sawyer was now a major in the army, and he was a liaison officer between the Sixth Army Headquarters and Army Transport. Army Transport was a civilian branch of the army that took care of all the army transports for transporting troops, all the towboats, barges, tankers, and support vessels.

I called up Sawyer and asked him if he needed a good man over there. He knew my background, knew me, and he knew about how I had hurt my leg.

He said, "How soon can you get here?"

I said, "An hour."

So I drove over to Fort Mason and he took me into Captain Berry's office, who was the commanding officer of Army Transport in the San Francisco area. There I was. I started right out as second officer. I made one trip to sea, and to me, the sea, I didn't like that at all. It was boring, number one. Nothing but water out there. I like to handle things.

So, when I got back, I asked Major Sawyer if there was any chance of getting inside on the big tugs. He arranged that. In the meantime, I'm getting my licenses. Of course, when I got on the big tugs, handling ships and all this, why that was exactly what I wanted to do. It was something I just had a knack for. I spent all my time with the two pilots that we had with Army Transport, Captain Glenn Havens and



Clarke: Captain Maudsley, who both knew my father. As a matter of fact, we called Maudsley the old iron duke. He was the only man I ever knew who had a pilot license for Lake Tahoe. At one time when he was out of work, he ran the mail boat around, the old steamer. I used to spend all my off watch time with him. I must have been on, during the war, several thousand ships with him, piloting and learning, which to me was just a great time to learn. Being under a man like that was even better.

After the war I went back in the yacht business for a while.

Dunning: In Richmond?

Clarke: I had the Richmond Yacht Service, where the Point San Pablo Yacht Club is now. I had big ideas. I wanted to put in a marina, and we were going to take over the whole basin and put a big harbor in there. Santa Fe, of course, was opposed. They owned all the property.

As a matter of fact, they sent Mr. Ryden out from Chicago. He was the vice-president. When he got through talking to the City of Richmond and me, why that was the end of the line. If you couldn't get property on a long-term lease, you couldn't afford to get money to do what you wanted. All you could get was thirty-days-notice lease. So there was no future there.

That's when I decided to go back into the towboats and piloting. I went back with Army Transport. In the Korean War they called me back. I was there for a year at Fort Mason.

Dunning: Where you actually in the army, or where you there as a civilian?



Clarke: As a civilian. Then I went from Army Transport to Red Stack. I was at Red Stack for twenty years as a skipper. Then, since 1969, I was with the inland pilot organization, the California Inland Pilots. Now, February of this year, we're all in one group, the Bar Pilots. But that just seemed to be a succession of things. Everything has been related to water for me. I've always liked the water, and it's been pretty good to me, evidently.

Sale of Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, ca. 1950

Dunning: I would like to save the story about the Red Stack until our next session, because that's such a big story. When did your family sell Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor?

Clarke: It had to be around 1950. I think somewhere around there. My father had left the ferry company, and he was down here full time. Everything was going downhill and it was too much for him. He couldn't get people to work at the yacht harbor. Finally it was just too much; he had to get rid of it. I had no inclination to come back. Without the fishing, there were too many drawbacks. The road was the major one.

Dunning: What was it without the fishing? Just recreation? Would people just come out to take boats out?

Clarke: Before, yes, but when the fishing disappeared there was no reason to keep your boat here. Where we used to have a hundred and twenty-five, a hundred and forty boats, it wound up to have about sixty or seventy. You can't support an operation like this with sixty or seventy boats.





Clarke: There was a lot of maintenance to go on. You have to dredge about every six years, which was a very expensive operation, and replacing. It was just a constant, constant routine. We didn't have this modern material they have with fiberglass, and all these plastic routines they use for flotation. We used to have to use twelve by twelve timbers, and after five years they would all get waterlogged and you would have to replace them.

Then we went into getting barrels. You would build a slip and you put barrels underneath the slips. That worked all right, but then the barrels corrode up and then they sink. Then you've got a problem; you've got a barrel underneath your boat. That didn't work out. But there's always a constant routine. Of course, now they have all these modern things so you don't have to do as much work towards the harbor, but the work on the harbor never stopped in those days.

Dunning: Who did your father sell it to?

Clarke: There were two or three people involved, an attorney, and I think he had a couple of other people. This attorney, I forget his name now. He's down in Oakland, I think. I know that we carried a note, and I think the note was just paid off three or four years ago. I know when he wanted me to take the note and use it as an interest in owning, come in as a partner with him, I said, "No thank you."

Dunning: You knew you wanted out?

Clarke: Right. Well, the thing is that it's too big of an expense based upon the lack of fishing. If you could develop the fishing back again and really go after it, you could bring business back here and it would be a good moneymaker. But, at that time, four or five years ago, there wasn't any fishing, so why put your money into something that's not going to come out. I think



Clarke: today, if a guy went after it properly, that he could develop the harbor again. But it would take an awful lot of money. An awful lot of money.

Dunning: Do you think it would be oriented more towards people living here on a residential basis? I notice now there are several houseboats.

Clarke: That could be part of it, I guess. I don't know why there isn't more. I thought of that at one time. I talked to Jack Stoddard. I don't know whether you've ever heard of Jack Stoddard. He was a local Richmond fellow. Jack has passed away now, but he always had something going on and was always promoting something.

I had talked to him once about building ferro-cement barges and putting apartments on them. That is, like a duplex. Where you're running out of land, you've still got land, and where you have a small piece of land with a lot of water, then you could put a tennis court or a swimming pool on the shore side, with parking, and have everything else on the water. As long as you could handle the sewage situation, which could be done. I still think it could be done.

Dunning: It's kind of the same principle as Brickyard Cove?

Clarke: It would be. The only good part about it is that you would have darned little maintenance on a ferro-cement type of a barge. Where everything is built above the deck of the barge, below the barge would hold all your sewage routine. It could be done, and maybe some day it will happen.

Dunning: Do the same partners that bought out from your father own it today?

Clarke: I think so. It could be a tax shelter.



Dunning: Looking at the yacht harbor today, it appears that they just make enough to maintain it, if that.

Clarke: That's about it.

Dunning: Or to break even.

Clarke: You can break even on the cash flow, but then you really make your money on the depreciation and the write-off based upon his tax situation. That's where he makes the money.

Dunning: Were your family still the owners when Dan and Fritz Kauffman started working here?

Clarke: Yes.

Dunning: And they started running The Galley restaurant?

Clarke: Right.

Dunning: Would many people come over to use The Galley from the fish reduction plants and the whaling station?

Clarke: No, very few. There were a couple of the foremen that would come over, but the rest of them--working in a fish reduction plant, you can smell them coming for half a mile. So they never came over here, not because of that, but I think there was another restaurant down at the Point, and they probably went down there because they served a lot of hot meals, and it was a real greasy spoon. Very few of them came over to The Galley.



The Belt Line

Clarke: The Belt Line, the railroad, was in operation then, and every day the train crew would always stop by twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, to have a beer. I remember my little niece, why they would take her for a ride on the train. It was kind of neat.

Dunning: Was that on the Santa Fe track?

Clarke: The Belt Line is a combination of both of them.

Dunning: The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific?

Clarke: Yes. The Santa Fe would run it for five years, and the Southern Pacific would run it for five years. When I was out here, at that time the Santa Fe had it. You wouldn't believe. Can you imagine going down and borrowing all these ties, and then the foreman would come by, and he knew darn well we were doing it. We always put them back.

Dunning: Oh. You never asked anybody?

Clarke: No, we never asked anybody.

Dunning: If you asked they would say, "No."

Clarke: Yes. Midnight requisition, so to speak. The foreman knew we were doing it, but he would always say, "Be sure you put them back. Be sure you put them back." Which we always did.

Another time I remember talking about the railroad. There was a boat that sank right out there, and we were trying to get it on the beach, so we ran cables, and block and tackles, and did what they called a "dead man." Now, a dead man is where you dig





Clarke: a hole in the ground and you put a big timber down, and then you cover it back up again. Then you pull against this timber.

Well, we used the railroad tracks instead of the dead man. We had a natural dead man, so we just used the railroad tracks. The trouble was, we pulled them out of line, and the railway people had to come out and put them all back. Dumb stuff.

This piece of land belonged to the ferry company too, the other side of the fence. My original plans were to try to get my father to get that as well. You can't see it from here, but there's a little reef that sticks out. The idea was to start taking down this hill here, make a big area between that other hill and this one over here, and start from the reef, and work out around, and end up out at the end here.

So this wouldn't be the perimeter. The perimeter would be further out. Then you would have a tremendous basin. In the meantime, you would create a great big area in here for all flatland. You know, for parking and all that. But that didn't work either. I couldn't sell that.

Dunning: It sounds as though you have as many ideas as your father.

Clarke: I think so.

East Brothers Lighthouse

Dunning: What about East Brothers lighthouse?



Clarke: It's funny. I never got involved out there. I'm involved in the sense that I'm an honorary on the board, but when I was at the yacht harbor I never even went out to the lighthouse. I used to fish out there, but I never was really involved with the people.

Now, there was a young couple that ran the light just after the war. During the war too, I guess. My mother got to know them very well. As a matter of fact, up until my mother died she still corresponded with them. He was coast guard, and he retired from the coast guard.

They had the two little kids, and they would come in every day and she would take the kids into school. They always brought their boat in here. I can't remember their name either. I didn't know them that well because I just left at that time.

Dunning: I'm sure it's in that new book about the lighthouse. [East Brother. History of An Island Light Station. Frank Perry. Point Richmond, California: East Brother Light Station, Inc. c. 1984]

Clarke: I'm sure it is.

Dunning: How does it feel to look at Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor now? You said you haven't been down here for years.

Clarke: Oh, it's kind of depressing. In one way, it's depressing, but I can look at things that I did and kind of laugh at it. It's kind of neat, it's really kind of neat that the--whoop, there he goes. Capsizes.

[watching sail boat]

It's a laser I think.

Dunning: It's a pretty windy day to be out there.



Clarke: Well, it's all right, but I was watching him go downwind, and I knew something was going to happen. Come on, you ought to be able to get that thing up.

## [tape interruption]

There was a big hill here, you know. I flattened all this out.

Dunning: So this right here wasn't marsh? It was mostly behind us?

Clarke: Yes. This was part of a big hill here. The railroad cut through here, and I went and started nibbling away with this big tractor we had, and finally got it all leveled out. Well, not leveled, but the way it is now.

Dunning: That's quite a job, taking down a hill.

Clarke: Yes. It was kind of fun. Really, looking back on it, it was hard work, but I got a kick out of all that. As I say, I enjoyed the time I spent out here. My number three son, why he's into cars, and he wanted to put a new engine in his car, so we got a new engine. I said, "We'll do it ourselves." He couldn't believe it.

Those are things that I had learned here, that we had to do all these things. Little tricks, and he had never heard of these things before. But they all worked.

Dunning: You got the engine in?

Clarke: Yes, I got the engine in all squared away.

Dunning: You scored a few points?

Clarke: Oh, did I ever score points for all the neighborhood kids. I was in like Flynn. I'll tell you. Yes, "Chris' dad, he did this. He can do that."



Clarke: Jack of all trades and master of none. That was about the way it was though.

### Changes in Mill Valley

Dunning: Have you always lived in this area?

Clarke: I lived, yes, in Richmond, always in California and Richmond. I lived for a year in San Francisco, and then when I got married--I didn't get married until later on--then we moved to Mill Valley, and I've been over there now twenty-three, twenty-four years. I always wanted to go back to Marin County. It was always a beautiful county and a good place to raise kids. Of course, it's changed. In twenty-three years it has changed again.

It's too bad, because Mill Valley, a lot of the people when we moved there were people who had been there for years, on the old ferries and on the railroads, and had retired. Because of the rising real estate prices and the taxes on the real estate, they were forced out of town. Now, the town is strictly doctors, dentists, attorneys, and psychiatrists, I think.

Dunning: Young people. Young affluent people.

Clarke: Right. Moving up. All my kids played ball at high school. They went to Tam High [Tamalpais] and were all into athletics. Now they can't get anybody to go out for the teams anymore. Nobody has any kids.

##





Roots\_in\_Richmond

Dunning: The first time I called your house and spoke to your wife, she said that often you two come over to Richmond and maybe consider moving back to Point Richmond, or--

Clarke: We thought about it, but I don't think so. Not now. I'm pretty well settled in Mill Valley. I would like to be back in Richmond. I really would like to be move back to Richmond, but the--

Dunning: Could you tell me why? Most people are moving out these days.

Clarke: True, but if I could find a place I like in Point Richmond, why, I might consider it. Point Richmond is a nice little town. And Richmond is a town too. But I have a lot of friends that live in Richmond, naturally. As I said before, even though I don't live here, I consider this my home. I think about it.

Of course, with Brickyard Cove, and the Richmond Yacht Club--I've been involved there for over fifty years. I know all the people there. One of the few things I like to do is to come over to the yacht club. I have my rowing shell there now, which is kind of fun.

Dunning: Do you still feel that your roots are pretty strong in Richmond?

Clarke: Yes, I think so. More so than it is in Marin County, without a doubt, even though I was born there. I have a lot of friends in Marin too, but I wish I had bought property at Brickyard Cove. My mother's home was at 555 Washington Avenue, where you go to the crest of the hill and come down, right on the corner. I wish I had saved that, I really do. That would have been a neat



Clarke: place to retire to, a nice view of the Bay and a nice little home. But I didn't. Who ever thinks of retiring when you're fifty, anyway?

### Postwar Population Boom in California

Dunning: You experienced all those changes in Richmond because of the war. I'm interviewing some people that lived here before the war, and a lot of them had the idea that the people that were recruited from the South and Midwest would leave after the war and Richmond would become the small town again.

Clarke: I think that was the mistaken impression they had. But then, so many people passed through California, whether they worked in the shipyard or whether they passed through enroute to the war in the South Pacific, and what they saw they liked. California is really something special as a state. And they all came back. The people that worked here, they were sure treated better here than they were back where they came from. There were opportunities in California, and there still are. So I can see why people stayed. Nobody predicted it, but I can see why, because we didn't know what we had to start with.

We didn't realize the beauty of San Francisco Bay Area. It wasn't until the last twenty years that people started to wake up to the fact. When it started to disappear, then they suddenly started jumping on it. You know, "Wait a minute, we have a special place." We never thought about it that way.

And people could buy property. They could own their own places, and maybe where they came from they couldn't do that. For the black people, I'm sure it was a great opportunity.



Dunning: Although in interviewing some of the few blacks that were in Richmond before the war, they had a really tough time with the influx of people, because that's when they experienced some of their first discrimination.

Clarke: Right. I know. My mother had a black lady working for her, taking care of the house. She used to tell my mother about a certain class of blacks. I remember her saying that they would deliberately go down the street waiting to bump into white people, and deliberately bump into them, just absolutely trying to provoke something. And they could get away with it, where back where they came from there was no way. So this was one way, maybe, of getting a release.

### Politics in Richmond

#### George Miller, Jr.: Organizing for the Black Vote

Clarke: Politically, you talk about naivete. Nobody ever realized, the local people, the impact these people would have politically. It really wasn't until George Miller, Jr., who was a real sharp politician. He was the one that saw the opportunity.

To buck the system in Richmond was really a tough thing to do. It was a closed little corporation, believe you me, politically, and the power structure. The only way it could be broken was by organizing the blacks. This is what George really did, and this is where he really got his power. They voted solid for George Miller, Jr.. You couldn't touch him in this area. And he did a hell of a job, too. But I can remember all the innuendos. He and Bert Coffey, they were called Commies and all this stuff.



Clarke: That's what changed the whole picture. Of course, once the blacks got a taste of political power--it took them about fifteen or twenty years--now they pretty well control the situation here. There's nothing wrong with that, I guess, as far as I'm concerned, as long as they have competent people.

The Port of Richmond, if that's an example of competency, it doesn't speak too well, I'll tell you that. Some people tell me that the power structure that's in here now, you just can't tell them. They just don't want to be told, which is kind of strange. I've often wondered why the port would never go.

#### Building the Civic Center

Clarke: I think the power structure that had control in Richmond only cared about their own personal little routines. As long as they got theirs, why that was fine. It didn't go any further than that. The only big thing they ever did as far as I can see was build the Civic Center. There was a big question mark about that, why should the money be spent at that time, when they had so much poverty in the area. Rather than spend the money on that, they could have spent part of it for promoting the town to get industry to move in.

As I told you before, the property was pretty well controlled, and unless they got theirs, nothing was coming in. Big companies just said no way, they wouldn't come. It's too bad. We had all these people in Richmond. We had labor, water, power, land, everything, and nothing ever happened.





Port\_of\_Richmond

Dunning: Do you think it was because of the internal political structure that the Port of Richmond didn't take off like Oakland has taken off?

Clarke: Oh, yes. There's no question about it. Nothing was utilized. With all the potential they had in Richmond, nobody ever took the time to really promote it. They just kept their own little bailiwick. Richmond was kind of a forgotten city, really a forgotten city. Here we had all the land, easy land to build on, we had a deep water port, fresh water, everything, and nothing ever happened. It still hasn't happened, and that's crazy. Something is wrong. Something is very, very wrong.

Dunning: Currently, there seems to be the big debate between continued industry versus the residential and light commercial use.

Clarke: Yes, but they have all that area out in North Richmond which is ideal for industrial growth. Prevailing winds are always going the other way, which certainly isn't going to interfere with any residential situations. But nothing happens. I don't know why. I don't know why.

Of course, I'm not that deep into the local politics anymore, except by talking with, like J.A. Vincent. He and Barbara Vincent are very, very involved in politics, and they follow it very closely. Most of the information I get I get from them, and from Bill Bottoms, and a few other friends from the yacht club that keep their finger in.

It's strange. I spent one day with the army engineers. They have a big project. They were going to dredge to forty-two feet of water all the way into



Clarke: the Richmond Harbor for the big new container ships. We spent all day in a yacht going through the whole area, and people in the city engineer's office and the port director were involved.

The head fellow from the army engineers from the University of Nebraska, he said, "But how many ships do come in here?"

Well, very few. Here all that money sits there in that brand new container dock, and not one ship, not one ship. Do you know why? They never spent the money to solicit cargo. Now that's stupid. It's like building a service station and then not putting up a sign.

Dunning: There was never any major marketing done?

Clarke: There was absolutely nothing. They just assumed they would build the dock and--

Dunning: People would come to them?

Clarke: --come to them. It doesn't work that way.

Dunning: And then there's only room for one.

Clarke: Really one ship, one major ship now. Of course, there's no way to expand. The outfit that has the contract now, they are supposed to build the second part of it, but my experience with Richmond is that they will not do it, and Richmond won't do a thing about it. What can they do?

This fellow was there from this Dutch outfit. I think it's a big Dutch outfit that has the contract. He was with the army engineers giving a presentation about their plans. But that's all it is because the proof of pudding is in the tasting. Until you see some ships and cargo coming in there, I don't think the army engineers are going to spend their money to dredge.



Clarke: I know that I used to handle the big container ships from Japan that went into Oakland. It was Matson Agencies that handled all their ships. Richmond was going to cut a deal with Matson Agencies, and all the Japanese container ships were going to come over to Richmond. Matson would use their terminal just for their own ships.

Who was it? I guess it was Captain Eddy who was the port director. I said, "It will never happen."

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes."

I said, "No it won't. All they're going to do is use you for a bargaining chip."

By gosh, Richmond signed a contract with Matson Agencies, and I think none of the Japanese container ships ever came over. I think they had a couple of tramp ships come over. Matson didn't do a thing, but what they did was use that as a means to get their deal in Oakland reduced. It was strictly to have a bargaining chip. All the Japanese container ships still go to Oakland. Then Matson finally pulled out of the whole deal, and that's where they are today with this new outfit. It's unbelievable.

Dunning: Wasn't there a proposal in the last couple of years about the Port of Oakland actually taking over the Port of Richmond, or managing it?

Clarke: There was talk about it, but just talk, because Oakland, they have some very ambitious plans over there. As a matter of fact, last week I was with this outfit in Oakland, consulting engineers for the port, and they were showing me their new plans for the Oakland inner harbor from Jack London Square down to past Todd Shipyard. They're going to put in more container berths there. These people are designing the docks. They were talking to me about the problems of handling ships there.



Clarke: But they aren't going to fiddle with Richmond. They're going to improve their own property before they bother about this one. They're making so much money they might just as well put it in facilities.

These people, it's like A-ball, baseball, and major league. Right now, Richmond is A-ball, and they're playing major leaguers. That's their problem. They don't have the players. They just don't have the players.

#### Driving out of Point San Pablo

Dunning: Now this was a water truck?

Clarke: Yes. At that time we had a well up here, and we had a tank on top of the hill. We had to pump the water up from the well up to the tank. Well, the tank only held about ten thousand gallons, and it wasn't really enough. To supplement that on a busy weekend, I had this water truck. We would go down and get water at Point San Pablo, and then I would drive over. They used to have a road that went up there, and we would drive this truck up to the tank, and I would put it in the tank.

We got out to Walnut Creek, and this truck was a 1918 Maxwell. It had the slats with paper, like covering over the top with slats. It had the old ooga horn over here. I wish that I had that thing now. It would be worth a fortune. The only way you could get up the hill with a load of water was you had to back up. It didn't have enough power to come up front ways.

Dunning: That road directly up there--that's Chevron property now--was that there?





Clarke: That's really a fire trail. No, that wasn't there. When we had to take the tractor over to work on the other side of the road, we had to had to go up over the top of the hills.

Dunning: The partners that bought this area from your father, did they also buy this surrounding land?

Clarke: Yes. There were thirty acres. It goes right up to where this fence is. It goes all the way up there where the tank is, and it comes down over here.

Dunning: So it was the whole package?

Clarke: Right.

Dunning: When you think of having thirty acres on the Bay, it's potentially very valuable.

Clarke: It is, I guess, in a way. It will never lose the value. But then again, you can take the amount of money that you had tied up in that and make a lot more money with it doing something else.

## [tape interruption]

It's a bloody road, I'll tell you that.

Dunning: I still can't believe that you built it.

Clarke: It's funny that I'll be docking a ship down at Point San Pablo, I'll point up to the old road going up. "Now see that road there Captain?"

He says, "Yes."

"I built that."

He says, "You got to be kidding." [laughs].



Dunning: It is a whole other world down here.

Clarke: Yes, it sure is. It's a really different world. If we ever could have gotten a road down by the railroad tracks, it would have been a lot better, but that's all controlled by the railroad. They own twenty-five feet on each side, and it just can't be done.

I remember once I had a bet with a fellow that I could make it into Richmond to the hardware store at Eighth and Macdonald and back in thirty-five minutes. I won the five dollar bet. Can you imagine that? Talk about crazy young guys.

Get a piece of property up on the hill and build a house on it. My father would never do that, but this was always a pretty view.

This old hull out here, that was the old ferry hull. It was right at the mouth of the harbor when we had it, but it broke loose and drifted over there, and then mysteriously caught fire. That's what's left of it right there.

Dunning: You must feel like the Bay is your home, the actual Bay.

Clarke: Really. It's like in that article in the paper yesterday. They quoted me as saying I don't sail or race anymore because there's too many nuts out there. That's actually what I said all right, but I'm sure I'm going to get a lot of flack out of that, too. But it was truth. It's a real truth. Anybody that asked me, that's what I would tell them.

This is where the command post was when the army was up here. They used to be some buildings right over down here. They're gone now, but they had their barracks right over here.



Dunning: None of these tanks were here in the thirties?

Clarke: No. Sure is a pretty day.

Dunning: I know. It's gorgeous. And of course, the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge wasn't here.

Clarke: No, no. We had an old grader. The first one we had was what they call a road master. I think it was built in 1926. I think it was obsolete when we got it. When we were grading this road, you had to back up the hill. It didn't have enough power to come up the front way, so you would back up. Then you had somebody standing here, and you would back up and jump on the brake. They would put a block under the wheels so they could shift gears.

My father was here one day, and I was running it. He missed putting the block in, and when I went to take it out of gear, I couldn't get it back in gear, so I'm free-wheeling down this hill. It was a great big grader.

Dunning: Going right towards the water.

Clarke: Right. I didn't know whether there was anybody coming up or anybody coming down the road, and there was nothing I could do but steer it. We came screaming down here, and I made the turn without capsizing and turning over. I must have wound up a quarter of a mile down the road before it finally stopped, my father running after me.

Dunning: Was Pacific Molasses Company in operation?

Clarke: Oh, yes.

Dunning: That's really an old Richmond company.



Clarke: It's been there for years. Charlie Rennick was one of the top guys from Richmond in Pacific Molasses. There used to be a big, brick pumphouse here for pumping water for Standard Oil. I missed that with the grader that day, too.

It was really kind of fun, for me it was, a young fellow.

Dunning: I've met people fishing right along here whenever I come down.

Clarke: Yes. I bought a little towboat to work on this dock when they were going to build it. I bought it up at Rio Vista for \$700. It was built in 1887 out of steel. They built it at Union Iron Works in 1887, and it was called the May. As a matter of fact, the hull is laying over at the Maritime Museum in San Francisco now. It had a three cylinder gas engine, a Samson gas engine, which I've never heard of before or since. They were designed for pumping water over the levees up in Stockton and Sacramento.

Anyway, I bought the boat for \$700, and I paid for it in the first five days on this job. I was there for fourteen months. Leo Smith and I used to work ten hours a day running on that job.

## [tape interruption]

Dunning: Have you heard of any plans for Winehaven?

Clarke: No. This is all owned by the government.

Dunning: But I heard that the navy may be releasing it for sale.

Clarke: Is that right? Well, Standard Oil will wind up getting it, I imagine, because they have thirty underground tanks here.





Dunning: Right under here?

Clarke: Not here, but I'll show you where they are. They built thirty underground tanks, and--[loud noise stops conversation].

Dunning: That old winery is such a beautiful building.

Clarke: Yes, it sure is. This is a neat old place. I know after the war there was some chief gunner's mate that was in charge of this for the navy. He was very friendly with my parents. They used to call him "Gunner." Of course, that was the nickname for a chief gunner's mate, was "Gunner."

If you can find Forrest Simoni, why you should talk to him.

Dunning: I'm definitely going to try to contact him.

Clarke: Another name I'll give you in case you have trouble finding Forrest Simoni's whereabouts, you might get a hold of Elton Brombacker.

Underground tanks, all these structures here, these are the vents for them.

Dunning: I didn't know that. Also, there was an article in the paper on how Red Rock marina is going to be renovated.

Clarke: Is that right? What are they going to do?

Dunning: It's going to be a big marina.

Clarke: How are they going to make a marina out of it is what I want to know. They had some wild ideas.

Dunning: I think it's definitely people from out of town.



Clarke: I know that it was offered to Tom Crowley for \$78,000, I think somebody was trying to sell it to him

Dunning: Tubby Snodgrass and I went in to Red Rock marina for an on-location interview. If you think Point San Pablo Harbor is run down, that place is unbelievable.

Clarke: There's practically nothing there at all is there? A junkyard.

Interview at the Richmond Yacht Club

[Date of Interview: August 6, 1986] ##

#### Recap\_of\_Work\_at\_Point\_San\_Pablo\_Yacht\_Harbor

Dunning: The last time we talked, which was about a year ago, we were down at Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor and you were talking about building the road in there. I would like to trace your career from about that point, the World War II era, and then lead up to the time that you joined the Crowley Corporation.

Clarke: I think the starting point should be when I got through college. My first job was with the sports department at the world's fair, 1939. My boss was Art Smith, who was the sports editor of the Chicago Tribune. I was over there for a year. It was kind of a nothing job, but for a young guy just out of college it was great because we had the aquacade as part of our deal, and with all the beautiful young swimmers it was just great.

About that time my father had a partner who was going to build this Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor. His partner was a man by the name of Bert Swanton, who had



Clarke: a harbor up in Suisun Bay. After about nine or ten months, why Bert Swanton pulled out and left my father holding the bag. That's when he asked me if I would come over to Point San Pablo and help him out. Quite honestly, I didn't know anything about construction or anything. About all I did was I had played ball and raced yachts.

Anyway, I went out and it was kind of a nothing job. I kept time and ordered supplies and pretty soon I was doing all the other things I had to do and running bulldozers and graders and pounding nails and sawing timbers. You know, all the stuff that you had to do to build something. Which was great. It was the greatest education I ever had in my life.

From there, anything that floated I could handle. Whether it had power, sail, it didn't make any difference. I was a yacht racing champion at this time. I was with my father for about three or four years and I was running the whole show there at that time.

Dunning: At Point San Pablo?

Clarke: Yes. We had two sets of ways for hauling out boats and we did the whole thing. It was a great maritime experience. Just before the war they were going to build a shipyard at Yard Three. A man came out and he wanted to rent a barge. In talking to him, they were going to do all the test drilling, submarine drilling, at Point Potrero for Shipyard Number Three. Raymond Concrete Pile Company had a contract. So I went around and rented a barge for them, and they rented some skiffs, and anchors and all this other gear that they had to have to put their drilling rig on.

I said, "You have to have a boat to tow this around."



Clarke: We had a little towboat, so we made a deal for that. I was with them for about two months. We did all the drilling work. It was very interesting working with these people, and there was money in it. As a matter of fact, I was making probably more money with that than we were making at the harbor.

Dunning: Because of World War II?

Clarke: Well, just before World War II.

### Start in the Towboat Business

#### Buying the Towboat May

Clarke: They were impressed with what I did and the help I could give them in local knowledge, so they had other contracts coming up which they wanted me to get involved in. About that time the Point Molate project came up. They wanted a towboat there for fourteen months. So I went out and bought a little towboat called the May in Rio Vista. It was built in 1887. I got it from a union iron works from San Francisco, and I paid \$800 for it. My father was wild because I used company money to buy it.

Anyway, we bought it and we got the contract. I worked there for twenty hours a day for fourteen months and paid for the boat in the first week. I could see there was a lot of money involved. In the meantime, the Raymond Concrete Pile Company came back and they had the contract for building Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, and they wanted me to provide fortified towboats, small towboats, over there.





Clarke: As a young guy, ambitious, I could just see dollar signs. My father wouldn't let me do it. He wanted to keep me there at the harbor, under his thumb I guess, so to speak. I was wild. In those days, as most young guys, I figured I could make enough money to retire when I was thirty-five. Anyway, he wouldn't let me do it, and we had a big argument, and by that time the war came on.

I had hurt my leg playing ball so I couldn't get in the service, and all my friends were gone, so I thought, "I gotta do something."

So I called up a friend of my father's who was a former Matson man, Captain Sawyer. My father had given him the job as port captain at the Richmond-San Rafael ferry. Then the army grabbed him and he was the liaison officer between army transport service and the sixth army.

### Work with Army Transport

#### World War II

Clarke: Army transport service was a civilian branch of the army that provided all the transports, support vessels for the army. So just out of a hunch I called his office in San Francisco and of course he knew me.

I said, "Do you want a good man over there?"

He said, "How soon can you be here?"

I said, "An hour."



Clarke: So I went over there and he took me in to Captain Berry who was the head of army transport, a navy four striper. Right then I started as second officer because of my background.

Dunning: Excuse me. You were a second officer, but you were a civilian?

Clarke: Civilian, right. But you see, on ships you have a skipper, you have a mate, chief mate, first mate, second mate, third mate. As I say, I skipped up one grade, and I didn't even have a license. Of course, working for the government you didn't have to have a license.

Dunning: You didn't? Why is that?

Clarke: Well, the army, the government can do anything they want to do.

Dunning: Particularly during wartime?

Clarke: Yes. They prefer to request a license, but the way things were, there was a shortage of people. I wound up second mate and I made a few trips on a couple of C-3 transports out to the islands and back. There was nothing out there but water, boredom. I liked action. I liked to handle things.

When I got back I asked Sawyer, "I would like to come in and get on the tugs, the big tugs." And I told him why.

So he arranged a transfer and I was transferred to the big tugs. We made some trips up and down the coast. Then they had two pilots, Captain Maudsley and Captain Haven, who were the two pilots running transport. Captain Maudsley knew my father, so he asked that I be placed on one of the tugs that handled all the ships that he handled. With all this power, to



Clarke: me that was just so easy. I was used to sail. I never had an engine in a sailboat in my life. Here he had all this power to go ahead and back up and he had a crew and everything. It was great. It was just something I could do naturally. I got my licenses, my pilot's license, my master's license.

Dunning: What was the first license? What was the order?

Clarke: I got second mate, first mate, then master's, and my pilot's. I got my pilotage in 1943. Anyway, I worked my way up. There were four people that got the top ratings and I was one of the four people in the port that got the top rating for the army transport.

Just before the war was over, Captain Mulven, who was the port superintendent, was going to go over to Manila as port superintendent, and he asked me to go with him. I was going to be pilot in Manila for him and the army transport ships. I was all set to go and Captain Barry stopped it.

He said, "No, no. You're staying right here. We've got plans for you."

And I believed him. Then came the reduction in force and the fellows that came in after me who had had service time got preference. Suddenly my top rating disappeared from my file, and so I was going to be let go. I was wild. I told Barry off and the whole bloody tribe and went stomping out. Then, I went into the yacht harbor business at Richmond Yacht Service and was there for about five years.



## Korean War

Clarke: Then the Korean War came along. The army transport called me back up and wanted me to come over. So I was over there for about a year and a half, two years, and all the people that had been sitting around there for five years after the second world war had held these jobs. They couldn't do the work, so they had to call guys back. There must have been half a dozen of us from the old gang that went back.

I was first mate. I was doing all the work that the skipper was supposed to do. Anyway, I had asked for skipper's pay and they wouldn't give it to me. One night we had to go up river somewhere. I had read over all the army regulations, and it said whenever the vessel is underway the master has to be aboard.

So when they were going to send me up I said, "Well, get the skipper down here."

"What for?"

"Well, the regulations say the skipper's got to be aboard."

"Well, you've been doing this."

"I know, but the regulations say he's got to be here."

There was a big hassle. They were going to court-martial me, which they can do in time of war. The next day we had a big meeting with the chief of staff of the sixth army and this big hassle over this thing. So I told this colonel, "You give me a letter stating it's all right to go against the regulations, and I'll stay and I'll do it. But unless I have something to protect myself, I'm not going to do it."





Clarke: The colonel said, "Come out in the hall a minute." So we went out in the hall. He said, "You know, you're absolutely right. But I'm leaving this post in about thirty or forty days, and I don't want my name attached to anything pertaining to money. Why don't you just stay, and when my replacement comes, I'll leave a memo for him. I'm quite sure it will be worked out."

I said, "Colonel, you know, that sounds great, but he's going to say the same thing you say. Why don't you just release me and let's forget the whole thing?"

He said, "You're sure that's what you want?"

I said, "That's what I want."

"Okay."

I walked out and I went down to get all my gear. Billy Darragh, who had been a former skipper down at army transport, was now a navy pilot. He was on the dock and he said, "What happened?" I told him, and he said, "What are you going to do now?"

I said, "I don't know. I'm going to get my gear off the boat."

He said, "Well, don't leave until I come back."

So I went down and had a cup of coffee and got my things together and Billy came back. He said, "My father wants to see you down at Pier 25 on your way home." His father was Captain Darragh who was port superintendent for Red Stack, which is Crowley Maritime now. I knew him by reputation but I had never met the man. So I go down the end of Pier 25--at that time it was their office--and meet Captain Darragh.

He said, "Can you start tomorrow morning?"



Clarke: I said, "Well, I would like to have a week."

He said, "All right."

Incidentally, army transport was pretty well controlled by the Masons. A lot of the promotions were based upon strictly whether you were a Mason or you weren't a Mason.

Dunning: Do you know why that is?

Clarke: No. The people that were in the higher echelons were Masons in high orders and they just helped themselves. There's nothing wrong with that, I guess, but that's the way it was.

Dunning: Was there ever any pressure for you to join the Masons, an invitation or--?

Clarke: No, although I'm a good Catholic, and I know that one of the skippers was on the coaching team for the Masons and my chief engineer was Gordon Phelps. Gordon was a third degree Mason, and because his father had been a Mason he had just done the same thing. He had never gone up the ladder. Anyway, this Captain Ellis was after Gordon to keep going up the ladder. They used to come over and use my room for their little coaching sessions. I would go in the other room and they would put up all the blackout screens and the whole bit. About every thirty minutes I would knock on the bulkhead.

Captain Ellis would come out and say, "What's wrong?"

I said, "I can hear every word you're saying." Thinking back, it was funny as the devil.



Clarke: So I went down to Red Stack and talked to Captain Darragh. As I was young and cocky, very independent and very cocky, so I said, "Fine." I said, "By the way, Cap[tain], down at the army you had to be a Mason to get ahead. What do you have to belong [to] to get ahead down here?"

This man was just a big block of a hand. A handsome man, but he had fists the size of two of mine. He pounded the table, his face got red, and, "And nothing but ability, son. That's all it takes here." I didn't know he was a Catholic.

I said, "Well, I've got lots of ability, plenty of ability, Captain. I might as well tell you right now that if I don't make skipper in one year I'm gone."

He said, "All it takes is ability." And I got lots of that. That's how I started. Thinking back, talk about the arrogance that I had or showed at that time.

Dunning: You were in about your mid-thirties at that time?

Clarke: I was about thirty at that time. I went to work and I was a mate and there was no problem, although the army fellows were not appreciated at Red Stack. I don't know why really.

Captain Bob Markley, whom I talked to you about, who lives in Richmond, still is alive. I was mate with Markley. Markley had been sailor on my father's crew in the ferry years before, so I knew Bob. He was the one man nobody wanted to work for. But my association with Bob had always been a long one and we had no problems. We worked well together and he boosted my stock every time he got a chance, so inside of eleven months I was skipper.



Dunning: Why was it that other people didn't get along with Captain Markley?

Clarke: Well, he had very unorthodox ways of doing things. He liked to work everybody very hard and a lot of people didn't appreciate that. And he had odd ways of doing things. But he was a good seaman and to this day Bob and I are very good friends. He belongs to the Richmond Yacht Club too.

Anyway, then I went skipper and there were three or four others--at that time there were about eight or ten mates all with skipper's licenses trying to get up. There was a lot of competition. I guess I was about number five and I had only been there eleven months and went skipper, which a lot of people I'm sure didn't like. Anyway, the company put me up. The four people that went ahead of me to skipper, inside of eight or nine months had been put back to mate again. I never went back. The day I was appointed skipper I stayed there. As I say, it was something that it was natural for me to handle ships and to handle things.

Dunning: What were you handling?

Clarke: All types of commercial vessels. At American President Lines, the passenger ships, all of them. Of course, you don't handle them all right away, but you start up and you work your way up. But as I say, from day one it was something I could do. The company knew that and Captain Darragh liked me. I just worked my way up towards the top.

#### Types of Vessels Handled

Dunning: Could you give me an idea of how you worked your way up, what kind of vessels that you would work with to begin with?





Clarke: It was funny. One of the first jobs I had, I forget the name of the ship. It was a Polk and Talbot C-3.

Dunning: A what?

Clarke: A C-3 type of vessel. They were about five hundred feet long. It had to go from Alameda to Pier 38, San Francisco, and it had to go stern in. The ship was deep, drawing about twenty-nine feet of water. They sent me over there. It was about five in the morning. They had a little Bay Cities tug which Crowley also owned to help me out. Then the Red Stack was supposed to help me in.

This particular ship, it could have been the Polk and Talbot Pathfinder, I'm not too sure. There was a skipper on there that was Captain Fancy Pants Peterson and he was a bear of man, about six foot five, weighed about two seventy-five, every inch a master. He didn't know me from Adam. He didn't say anything, but was just watching what I was doing.

I backed the ship out, turned around. We're going down the estuary, and by now it was starting to get daylight. As we came out of the estuary he starts to swear. He goes on and on. I can't imagine what he's upset about because everything's going fine. I finally asked him, "Captain, am I doing something wrong?"

"No, no, no, you're doing fine. But look. Do you see any Red Stack tugs anywhere?"

I looked around. Of course, he had already done this. I said, "No."

"Well, there's supposed to be a Red Stack tug to help us in. We have to go stern in over at Pier 38. Now we're going to have to go bow in and change all the cargo gear over to the other side and lose two hours of stevedore time." He's going on and on.



Clarke: I'm listening to all this and of course he's absolutely right. I start thinking and I said, "Well, you know Cap[tain], it's just the first of the ebb tide. Why can't we take this ship and drop it down tide, land it across the end of the dock, run a stern line, and back slow and heel ourselves around?"

He looked at me, this great big guy, and he said, "Do you think you can do that?"

I said, "Yes, I think I can, but if I can't I know you can." This man was a top quality guy.

He said, "All right, let's go it."

Dunning: It's a big challenge?

Clarke: I said, "Shall we shift controls up to the flying bridge so we can see both ends of the ship?"

He said, "Yes."

So the three of us, we all go up there and I come down tide and land that ship right across the end without a towboat, and run a stern line, and we're backing slow and heaving it around, and no problem.

Here comes a Red Stack tug, blowing their whistle. It was Bill Figari, on the tug, Sea Rover.

I said, "Cap[tain] will you tell the mate forward to tell the tug just to push up on that bow. Don't put a line. Just push up to help us get around the corner."

So he did and the tug just wouldn't even listen. He came right around the bow and what they called a three line lash-up facing aft. By this time, why he's alongside. Up comes the ladder and here comes Bill Figari up the deck.



Clarke: Peterson said, "And who is that?"

I said, "Well, that's Captain Figari. He's senior to me."

He said, "We don't need him."

I said, "Cap, he's senior to me."

He picked up a big megaphone and said, "Hey you. Get off my ship." Figari looked up at this big guy and he turned around and walked off and got on the tug and the tug left.

We proceeded to heave her around and go on in, and as we're backing in, why Captain Strand, the port captain, was down on the dock and old Peterson was leaning over the rail. He said, "Well, Cap, it's like the old days isn't it?"

Strand says, "It sure is."

So anyway, we get tied up and Peterson said, "You did a nice job," and gave me a bottle of whiskey.

Now I have no way to get back to Pier 25 except take the bus. So here I am with a bottle of whiskey in my hand and I get on the bus and go back to Pier 25 and walk out in the office. In the meantime Figari had gone back and given this big horror story. So I walk in with this bottle of whiskey in my hand and put it on the desk and I said, "Well, Captain Peterson says that everything worked out fine and here's a bottle of whiskey for you."

Captain Darragh had a twinkle in his eye and he knew perfectly well that if Peterson had given somebody a bottle of whiskey he's done something. He had



Clarke: already heard Figari's story about how he got kicked off the ship and they wouldn't use him. "Well," he said, "That's real nice."

Then Horrigan is the chief dispatcher, a former pilot, and he's an old-timer, too. He said, "Well, what are you trying to do, put yourself out of business before you start?"

I said, "Well, why Cap? If I couldn't have done it, Captain Peterson could have done it. I wanted to prove that we had people who could do it just as well."

Captain Darragh said, "That's right, son." And that's how I started. It to me was a natural thing to do. A lot of people would never have tried it, I guess, but to me it was just a natural thing to do and Peterson agreed, and we did it.

Dunning: Do you think you have a natural instinct for handling ships?

Clarke: I really do, yes. I really do. Other people say the same thing, that I have just a natural instinct for handling ships. I've always had the feeling as I said before in the interview, that anything that floats I can handle. I don't care what it is. But anyway, that was Red Stack.

#### Shipowners and Merchants Towboat Company

Dunning: Red Stack at that time was owned by the Crowleys?

Clarke: Oh yes.

Dunning: They got that in about 1918 or something?





Clarke: Yes. Right.

Dunning: What was the actual company that you were employed by? I know there are a lot of umbrella organizations.

Clarke: Shipowners and Merchants Towboat Company.

Dunning: That was the first one?

Clarke: And they were called Red Stack.

Dunning: Okay.

Clarke: That was the big company, the biggest company he had at that particular time in terms of investment.

Dunning: We're talking about the mid 1950s now?

Clarke: That's right. Anyway, I was with them, and everything was going fine and the courts got involved and unions. Captain Joe Gannon, who was head of the Masters, Mates, and Pilots that we belonged to at that time, was a former deck hand and mate for my father so I knew him real well. In all the union negotiations I always talked to Joe about it. I had far more education than all these other fellows did. I finally got involved in some of the labor issues, which I was told not to do by Gannon, just to keep away from it. But somebody has to get involved and explain things.

#### Sailor's Union, 1959 Strike

Clarke: Anyway, we had a big strike in 1959. We didn't call the strike. I think the sailors called the strike, but--

Dunning: This was the Masters, Mates and Pilots?



Clarke: The whole--the deckhands went out, the engineers were out, everybody was out. But the strike was called by the sailor's union. So then we formed. The Red Stack pilot went down to the union hall and set up our own dispatching office. We handled ships without towboats for about nine months and did so very successfully.

Dunning: How did you manage that?

Clarke: There's ways of doing things. Anyway, it was very successful and the steamship people were very happy about it and they wanted us to stay right where we were and not to go back with Red Stack.

What happened was that when the agreement was finally signed we were all in the union hall and Gannon said, "Well, the contract is all signed."

At that time Don Fuller Sr. was one of our top pilots and he was running our dispatching set-up. He had told me two months previously that he had been promised a job in the office. I told Don, I said, "Just keep away from all the negotiations so nobody can say anything bad about you in the future." Which he did.

So when Gannon said that the strike was over, he picked up all the records. I said, "Where are you going, Don?"

He said, "Well, I'm going down to Red Stack."

I said, "But those records belong to us, the union. They don't belong to anybody else."

So we had a big argument and Gannon sided with me. Don said, "Well, what's the big objection? What's it all about?"



Clarke: I said, "Well, who knows who's going back to work at Red Stack? They haven't said who they're going to haul back."

Dunning: You had been out for nine months?

Clarke: That's right. I said, "If they don't call us all back, the fellows that are left here, they're going to continue doing pilot work and they're going to use those records."

After the big discussion I told Gannon, "Call up down there and see what the scoop is."

So he called up and he got ahold of Figari who was now assistant to Darragh. Figari said, "Well, we'll hire maybe two or three back and see how it goes."

When Gannon told us that I said, "Hey, that doesn't do it. Hiring two or three back. Figari can't make a decision anyway. You call up Tom Crowley and you tell him that we either all go back or none of us go back."

So he called up Crowley and Crowley said, "You're all back on the payroll as of right now." I guess that was the first run-in I had with Figari. So we all went back to Red Stack.

Dunning: How many pilots were there?

##

Clarke: We had fifteen pilots at that time and everybody went back. We never had any intention of not going back. But I think in looking back that all Figari was trying to do was use his power to pick and choose and punish anybody or anybody he feared. Of course, by going over his head to Crowley we countered all that. Anyway, we all went back and no problem.



Issues\_Leading\_to\_Strike

Dunning: What were the original problems leading up to the strike?

Clarke: Well, it was funny. In this company they would pay base wages, whatever they happened to be at the time, and all overtime. And there was a considerable amount of overtime, which there had to be based upon the rate of the salaries they paid. But with the overtime and all, and you combine them both, it worked out very well. They paid the overtime in cash every week.

Now, the trouble with that was that the poor sailors, when they go to buy a home, nobody counts the overtime. All they do is count your base pay because the overtime can change. Well, their base rate was so low that they didn't qualify for an FHA loan. This was the start of it.

At the same time, I brought up the point, even before the strike, to Crowley. I said, "You know, it's illegal to do what you're doing with the overtime like this." Which it was.

Tom, at that time, even though we had a very good relationship, was a very combative fellow. And, "Rrayr-rrayr-rrayr," and all this stuff. Well, he checked it out and he found out that I was right. Then they had to put the overtime on the checks.

Dunning: Which Tom was this?

Clarke: Young Tom. Old man Crowley, he told me, "Young fellow, I want you to remember one thing. You're never going to get a nickel from me unless you fight." That's the way the outfit was. If you didn't have the courage to fight for what you believed in, they thought nothing of you. And that was the old man. And he was right.





Dunning: Did he tell you that from an early point?

Clarke: No, it was about maybe the second or third year I was there. Because I would get involved in some of these discussions and he knew that and he knew my background. Right in the back of my employment card was written, "Son of Captain Raymond H. Clarke." They knew who I was and they knew my background. As I said, Crowley had broken in my father in the towboat business back in 1912 or 1913, so he knew my father and knew me.

That's the '59 strike. Then we went along fine. In the meantime we had improved our conditions and it was a very good job and we had a great group of people. Captain Darragh finally retired, which was a sorry day.

#### Captain Bill Figari Becomes Superintendent

Clarke: Figari took over. Bill Figari was a real nice guy. A Catholic, well-educated, went to USF, went to King's Point and all this. But the people that were in that company at that time were men who were pretty strong-willed men. They had to be tough, not physically tough, but mentally tough. Figari was not that kind of a man and he couldn't deal with that kind of a person. He wasn't a guy who could get involved in a give and take discussion. It had to be a one way routine.

He and I had several disagreements. I had talked to Crowley after the '59 strike about getting involved in management. We had about a four hour discussion. At that time I told Tom, "I know Bill Figari's father." But I told Tom, "Bill Figari's father had been with Crowley for forty-five years." And there was an association. Crowley is a very loyal man. I said, "I know



Clarke: the relationship between Bill and the Crowley name, and I don't want to get involved in a competitive deal with Bill."

He said, "Why?"

I said, "Because I think I'm smarter than he is, number one, and I can handle things better than he can. But you've got other places and businesses."

So he said, "Well, we'll think it over."

This was supposed to have been a very confidential talk between Tom and I. About three months later Bill Figari calls me out on the veranda and said, "Al, I want to let you know that you're being considered to go down to L.A. and take over the work done by McGillvray down there, to take--

Dunning: Work on the what?

Clarke: Captain McGillvray ran the outfit down there. "And then setting you up to take over when McGillvray retires."

I said, "Well, gee, that's nice to hear Bill." Now, I didn't want him involved in this thing at all.

I said, "It's something to consider. I would like to know what the job entails, and money, and all this stuff."

So I didn't hear any more about it. Now Leo Collar was our office manager, and Leo Collar is now the head man for Crowley Maritime. But Leo was at that time about twenty-seven and a big gregarious fellow, highly intelligent. He was one of the few people that could argue with Tom Crowley and win.



Clarke: The reason he could win was he had all the facts. I knew that Leo was going places. He was that kind of a guy. We used to talk, he and I, about different things all the time. Anyway, after this thing, nothing happened for three or four months. Leo was being booted up to Puget Sound Tug and Barge, which Crowley owned, to take over Puget Sound Tug and Barge as president.

In the office one evening, he was packing his desk and I said, "Leo, whatever happened to that deal about me going down south?"

He said, "Didn't you ever hear?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Your fine Sicilian friend cut your throat from ear to ear, that's what happened. It was all set. It was all set until Bill Figari spoke up. You know Figari and Crowley. That's what happened."

I thought, "Well, I'll be." Man, I was wild. But there was nothing I could do about it.

Anyway, then it came along to the '69 strike. In the meantime, I had been fighting to get the pilots together, the river pilots, the independent pilots, and the Red Stack pilots.

Dunning: All under one?

Clarke: There was an agreement that they would do their job and we will do our job. I had it all drawn up. After several years of fighting with this thing, I finally got an agreement. Then Crowley got wind of it, young Tom. So I was called down to his place, and oh, he was angry. I couldn't understand. We don't do any of



Clarke: their work anyway, but they're doing about fifteen to twenty percent of our work, and this agreement gives us back the twenty percent that they're doing.

The only trouble with this deal is that Crowley owned Bay Cities as well as Red Stack, so the independent pilots will use the Bay City towboats. He didn't care because he was getting his money out of the towboats anyway. By having the river pilots doing some of the work it kept us in check. It was a smart maneuver. However, I thought it was just as smart to do it the other way. The whole thing fell apart because Crowley said, "No way."

Dunning: Did you have an elected position in the union?

Clarke: Yes, I was president of the union, which was kind of an honorary position. It's not a paid position. We had some great debates, but I found that young Tom would love to try to get mad. Once you get angry in a debate, you're dead. I had done some debating in college and I knew this. So I knew a few tricks and I could lead him around in certain circles, and then he would get mad because I would trick him. But we had some great debates, he and I.

Looking back on it, it was really very, very educational. But we always worked out a compromise. It's funny, Tom, his mind was set almost in stone. That is, in relationship to dealing with labor. I'm sure he was flexible. He's a very intelligent man. But he would say no for anything. I was racing one day when I was at Red Stack about this time, and one of the fellows on board was Ted Anderson. Ted Anderson was the vice-president of Hendy International, which owned a lot of tankers and a lot of cargo ships, carrying ore for U.S. Steel.





Crowley Enters the Oil Delivery Business

Clarke: Ted had been a former master. During the race, he and I were down below talking. He knew I worked for Crowley and was a pilot. He was talking about their ships that would come around the East Coast delivering oil to L.A., and then they would run all the way up to San Francisco to discharge fifty, sixty thousand barrels of oil. So it takes a day up, a day back, and a day discharging. That was three days. You're talking fifty, sixty thousand dollars.

Just off the top of my head, I said, "Hell, we can do it cheaper than that with a barge. We can take the \$60,000 off the ship down there in L.A., take it up the coast, and save you three days in your turnaround."

Ted said, "Well, work it out."

So I went to Crowley, young Tom, and I told him this. He said, "Oh, we don't want to get in the oil business."

I said, "Well, it's just sitting there waiting to be plucked."

So by gosh, I saw Ted a month later, and sure enough Crowley went to them and got a contract. I think he got fifty cents a barrel one way, which is \$30,000. It comes out even money-wise for the tanker people, but they save three days and their turnaround, which means they can make more trips.

So Ted says, "Well, he stuck us for sixty cents a barrel, the robber. But it still works out. What did you get out of it?"

I said, "Nothing."



Dunning: It was your idea.

Clarke: Yes. He said, "Nothing?"

I said, "Yes. I didn't get nothing out of it." And that's Crowley. I went to him with ideas when he started taking oil up north. And then the barge would come south again light. "Well, why don't you carry lumber south? Package lumber south. The barge was empty."

"Well, if I wanted to get in the lumber business, I would get in the lumber business." Six months later he's got a deal going with Olson of Olson Lumber Company doing exactly that.

When I heard about it I went to Tom. I said, "I see you're finally going to haul lumber?"

"Yes, we made a deal with Olson."

I said, "Well, you better look out for Olson."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Well, when young Olson took over the ferry company out here, he ran that right into the ground."

Dunning: Is that Oliver J. Olson?

Clarke: Yes. I said, "You keep your eye on him." Sure enough, a year later he found out Oliver J. was dead heading his own lumber on the barge and not reporting. Of course, that was the end of that little scene.

Tom came back and he said, "Well, you were right about Olson." But it was funny. I could go to him with ideas and he would always, "No, no, no," and yet the idea would always work. Of course, by this time I



Clarke: knew I was never going to get in the management with that outfit through Figari. Then the '69 strike came along.

### 1969 Strike of Red Stack Pilots

Dunning: But you would still go to Tom Crowley with ideas?

Clarke: Oh yes. I liked talking to him, and my mind was fertile and I had ideas. So I didn't make any money out of them, but it was kind of fun to at least know that you were doing something that was right.

Then the '69 strike came along, and as I say, Figari was in charge then. The feeling was completely different in the company.

Dunning: Now when you said he was in charge, what was his position?

Clarke: He was the superintendent, I guess you would call him. Now, at this time the river pilots had an office down at Pier 41, a dispatching office, if you want to call it a dispatching office. They had a desk and a couple of chairs and a telephone.

The river pilots had approached some of the Red Stack pilots. If the strike was called they could use the facilities of their office. The Red Stack pilots held a meeting. I did not attend the meeting because I was working. I was out on a ship. When I came back I was informed that the Red Stack [pilots] had voted unanimously to accept their offer. The offer was to use their facilities during the course of the strike. There were no strings attached, and when the strike was



Clarke: over, do whatever you want to do. No big deal, it was either do that or else go down to the union hall and do the same thing.

So anyway, the strike was called. Then we had a big meeting of the Red Stack pilots, and now suddenly there's a split in the group.

Dunning: In the group of pilots?

Clarke: In the Red Stack pilot group. They were afraid to go down and associate with the river pilots. This is what it came out to be. And yet we had taken a vote. We had a big roaring debate about this thing.

So the fellows that--I won't say all of the senior guys, but most of the senior guys said, "Hey, we took a vote on this thing and we're going to honor our vote. That's it."

So half of them went down to CIP, including me, and the other half--

Dunning: Went where?

Clarke: To the California Inland Pilot Association. The rest of them stayed at the ferry building. Right away, we're busy. At that time we had walkie talkies which Red Stack had provided. So then Figari calls us up and says that we have to turn our walkie talkies in. Captain Jack Frost and I went down to Red Stack with our walkie talkies to turn them in. Figari, and Don Fuller Sr., and John Lowe were in the office.

Bill Figari said, "I understand you joined the river pilots."

We said, "No. The group all voted to utilize this office during the course of the strike."





Clarke: And I said, "All we're going to do, Bill, is service Red Stack accounts, so when this thing is over we'll bring back some good will. This is what we're going to do."

Anyway, when the strike was over we were never invited back to Red Stack, the guys that went down there, and we were the senior people. So there was a lot of very bitterness over this.

### Bitter End to the Strike

Dunning: So half the group went back to Red Stack?

Clarke: Yes. See, all Bill Figari wanted back was the group of yes men. He didn't want anybody back, the senior guys who would question him. Anyway, that's what happened. In the meantime, Crowley and I would talk. Maybe once every two weeks he would call me on the phone. All during the strike.

Dunning: How long did the strike go?

Clarke: Ten months.

Dunning: A long time.

Clarke: Crowley and I had talked about the whole thing and what was going on. I had recommended that they reduce the manning scale and take the pilots off the towboats as skippers and have a separate entity, which would reduce his payroll by about \$400,000 a year and also reduce his liability, but he would still have control. Figari opposed this, too. Whatever, I think he thinks we're still putting coal in the boilers. But anyway, Crowley was interested, and as I say, we used to talk about this. The other fellows were starving. They weren't getting any work. We were getting all the work during



Clarke: the strike. Finally, the strike was over, and of course we weren't invited back, so we just kept right on doing what we were doing. Now the steamship people were in our sites, because we had done their work during the strike. The other fellows had sat around doing nothing, you see. There was a big hassle over this.

In talking to Crowley, even during all these turbulent times after the strike, I kept saying, "The thing to do is to get rid of the pilots. Either have them all independent or else form an entity of Red Stack pilots or whatever you want to call them, bay pilots, and keep them separate from the company but still have control."

He actually investigated it but nothing ever happened. I heard later that Figari said, "No, no, no, that's not the way to do it."

Well, it got to a point where I had been talking to other people, executives in Red Stack, that agreed with me, but there was nothing they could do about it. Anyway, about eight, nine months after the strike, Crowley calls me down to offices--at Pier 50 at that time--and we spent three hours talking. He wanted me to go back to Red Stack.

I said, "I can't do that. I would be Judas goat." Because if I went back there would be four or five or six other fellows that would go right back with me. Well, that would then destroy the C.I.P.A., number one. I said, "Well, I can't do that."

We argued. He brought in the controller and he brought in the general manager to talk to me. I said, "No way." I finally said, "Look. I'll go back on one condition, Tom."

He said, "What is it?"



Clarke: I said, "You take Bill Figari and you take him out of Red Stack. You can put him down here in a closet if you want to. If you get him out of Red Stack, I'll go back."

He said, "I can't do that, Al."

I said, "I know." Because Bill's son, Mike, was killed in an explosion on one of the tugs and the company was liable. So the agreement was that Bill got a half interest in the tug, Sea King, and guaranteed a job, I guess for life or whatever.

Dunning: Was this in the sixties?

Clarke: This was in the sixties, yes. He said, "You know."

I said, "Yes, I understand that." And I said that, "Bill Figari is going to destroy everything that company was. I believe it. I will never go back as long as he's there."

So anyway, I get up to leave and the controller and the general manager walked me out to my car and they said, "You know, you're absolutely right, and we all agree with you, but there isn't anything we can do about it."

Anyway, things went on of course. Now the Red Stack finally, after about a year and a half, they found out that carrying the pilots was just too much of a load, so they finally got rid of all the pilots. What they did was make a deal with the bar pilots to have the bar pilots take them in as bar pilots. The bar pilots never asked anybody from the C.I.P.A. to join. It was a private deal between a certain guy in the bar pilots whom I won't name that set this thing up.



Clarke: We're doing very well, but economically you could see down the road that the bar pilots invariably were politically appointed people.

### California Bar Pilots

Dunning: The bar pilots, I don't exactly understand what it is they do.

Clarke: The bar pilots are commissioned by the state of California to bring the ships in over the bar and to handle any ships within the limits of San Francisco Bay and Suisun Bay. That was the third or fourth act of the state legislature back in 1849 or 1850. It goes back a long way. But the fellows who were appointed bar pilots were politically appointed, not for ability but based upon the company they represented or the pressure.

We did all the undocking work and the shifting work. Red Stack did that and then the C.I.P.A. did it. But when they took in half of the Red Stack guys, why then you could see down the road they're going to replace these people that were going to start--independent pilots would start losing work. So then we changed our tactics and tried to get a bill through for the state to take over all the pilots. That took us about three and a half years, which we finally got through about a year and a half ago.

Dunning: Oh, not until a year and a half ago?

Clarke: So now all the pilots are one. Which is the way it should be. Now we have a training program, which they had never had before.

Dunning: Is it still state appointed?





Clarke: Yes, right. Now there's a training program and I'm one of the training officers for the pilots. I think in four or five years we'll have all top qualified people. We don't have them yet, but I think in four or five years we will have. That's about it.

You know, some people hold a lot of hard feelings against Red Stack and Crowley. I don't, because it was a great education, a great training ground. The top pilots all came out of Red Stack. We had letters from all over the world of foreign flag shipping companies praising the things that we did. All of us were very proud of our ability and we still are. At least I am and most of us are. Some of them are still very bitter about what happened. But that's life I guess.

Dunning: Do you still have association with the Crowleys?

Clarke: I haven't seen Tom Crowley--Oh, I saw him at the St. Francis Yacht Club about five, six years ago, and that's it. No, he and I don't talk anymore.

In the meantime, as I say, Leo Collar kept working up. When they expanded so rapidly in the oil exploration business and providing tugs for the oil people, Leo Collar was instrumental. He is now the head man for Crowley Maritime.

And I knew that as soon as Leo Collar got in the position of complete power that he was going to get Bill Figari. And he did. He finally jerked him out of Red Stack. They had five floors and they're building up there in San Francisco. So here's Bill got a desk in--there must be forty desks in the room, and Bill's got one desk sitting there and that was it. He took that for about a year and a half, then finally resigned. But I knew Leo Collar was going to get him, and he finally did.

Dunning: Bill Figari must have been pretty old by that point?



Clarke: He's the same age I am.

Dunning: Really?

Clarke: Yes. He's still around. I see him at the Propellor Club. He will come up and say, "Hi, Al. How are you?" and all.

I say, "Hello," and smile, but I know, and he knows that I know. But anyway, that's the story.

### San Francisco Bay in the 1950s

Dunning: Yes. I've gotten an overview. One of the things I would like to get an idea about is the activity on the bay in the mid-fifties when you started with the Crowley. I'm wondering what the traffic was like, and what kind of vessels?

Clarke: The vessels at that time were primarily all vessels that were built during the second world war. C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4s. Labor conditions were different than they are now. There weren't any containers. It was all cargo which was loaded piece by piece. There were ten or twelve thousand stevedores at that time handling cargo. The whole waterfront was busy.

Ships would move at six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock at night. So you would turn to at five o'clock in the morning to get to a ship say in San Francisco, take it across the bay to Alameda or Oakland or whatever, and then that night you go back at six o'clock and move them somewhere else. There were ships moving all over the place and Red Stack did ninety eight percent of it. We were busy.



Daily\_Work\_Schedule

Clarke: There was a lot of shipyard work. There was Moore Shipyard at that time, there was Todd Shipyard, there was Bethlehem Shipyard in San Francisco, and all of them were busy. So during the midday you would be doing shipyard work, and then at five o'clock in the morning and six o'clock at night, why you're moving ships--and we were putting in an average of sixteen, seventeen, eighteen hours a day. That was a normal workday.

##

Dunning: Would you be on call, or would you be working that whole day?

Clarke: You wouldn't be working that whole day. In most cases you wouldn't be. In some cases you did. But you do a job say in the morning. You get back at the dock maybe at nine o'clock. You might do a shipyard job up until about noon. The crew would have to do some maintenance work, and usually in my crew I would always have them take a two or three hour break in the afternoon before we started at five o'clock again at night, because you just can't keep going that way forever.

And we had to maintain all the equipment on board. I will say that the equipment was all maintained. The boats were all neat, clean, painted at all times. You can go over there today--it's a different concept of running a towboat company--and they look like wrecks because it's all different. They used to feel that you had to have so many men on a towboat to do a certain job.



## Towboat Crew

Dunning: About how many people would be on a crew?

Clarke: There would be five.

Dunning: What were their positions?

Clarke: There would be a skipper, a mate, two sailors, and an engineer. The skipper, he was a skipper but he was also a pilot. He would go aboard the ship and the mate would then handle the towboat. Their concept was you would have five people to handle the towboat and to maintain the towboat. So you would put in these hours, but you would always have two or three hours during the day where you could maintain the boat--you had to maintain the boat. If you didn't maintain it, you certainly heard about it. As I say, the boats were all maintained. We had a great group of people down there, the sailors, engineers, and the licensed people. They were all just like a family and all good men.

## Production Time

Clarke: Today, the concept is that it's production time. And I will say, in the towboats it's very difficult to get production time. There are times when you would go to work at five o'clock in the morning and get through at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, and you don't do another turn of the wheel until five o'clock that night. In the meantime everybody's being paid, but you aren't producing a nickel's worth of revenue. And that's difficult. Of course, theoretically what you do then is raise your prices.





Clarke: Getting back to production time, you can see where it would be difficult. Even though you could raise your prices for the moves that you did do to try to compensate for that, there are times that it's a borderline case of making money or not making money. I remember when they started the studies--which was Leo Collar's idea--on production time. They kept records of it. You would probably be producing I would say on an average of maybe twenty percent. Now that isn't much. Crowley always claimed he didn't make any money on the inside, and I would have to agree with him. All the money that was being made was made by the tugs working outside, and the reason for that is for example just--

Dunning: When you say outside, what is that?

Clarke: That is towing up and down the coast or out anywhere. Because then your contract would be based upon an hourly rate. Just to take a number, say \$100 an hour for example. Towing outside, the boat's running twenty-four hours a day, so that's \$2400. Where on the same basis inside, if you're working say ten hours a day and you're only producing revenue for twenty percent of the time, you just aren't making it. So with the outside boats, the revenue was keeping the whole thing together.

#### Red Stack:--Loss of Company Loyalty

Clarke: They got involved in this production time to the point where it is today. Now they call people in for four hours. So they work for three or four hours and they knock them off, but they're still subject to call to come back.

Dunning: But are they paid?



Clarke: After the four hours they're not paid. Now they're on their own. In other words, the secret is that unless you produce you don't get paid. What happens now is a lot of the older fellows, they all retired or went somewhere else and now you have a hodgepodge of people on the boats. It's just a shame, really, to see the whole industry like it is today. There's absolutely no company loyalty anymore to Red Stack. And you hate to see this because it was a top outfit. It was a top outfit. But anyway, that's about my story.

Dunning: Beyond sixteen or seventeen hours a day, when you first started, how many days in a row would you work?

Clarke: When I first started my first week I put in one hundred and eighteen hours in six days. That's a fact. I couldn't help but think to myself, "Clarke, what are you doing here?"

But I wanted something and I didn't mind paying the price for it. Because I was going to be a pilot, there was no question about that. Over the years we changed things. We worked sixty hours straight time before overtime when I first went there and we finally got that reduced down to forty-eight and then we got it down to forty-four. Finally after x number of years we got it down to a forty hour week.

What we would do, we would work four ten hour days and then overtime over twelve hours a day. At that time, I would say that in four days we would average pretty close to fifty-five, sixty hours a week. In my particular case I would say fifty-five. Then you would work four days, and you would be off three. That was a good job and it was a good watch. But we had the business then, too, to support that. Then as things changed, why of course a contract like that survived. It's to where it is today.

Dunning: Where everything is containers?



Clarke: Right.

### The Fatigue Factor

#### Fight for Forty Hour Work Week

Dunning: Do you consider fatigue to be one of the hazards or problems?

Clarke: It was a hazard, and that's why I always insisted that my crew, for two or three hours in the afternoon, why boom, go lay down and take a nap and rest because you just can't continue doing it. The company never ever complained about that as long as the boat was maintained. We always saw that the boat was in top condition and maintained tops and the company never said, "Boo."

That's the way it was, which was pretty good. I can remember we were fighting for a forty hour week and Crowley said, "No way, I can't do that," and "Three year contract."

Then he finally agreed to cut it down to forty-four hours the first year, then it would go to forty-two hours the second year, then forty hours the third year. Of course, the logic was that how can you guarantee to pay us forty hours a week three years from now when you don't know what the business is going to be? If you can do it then you can certainly do it now. Of course that was a losing argument with Crowley. He got the forty-four, the forty-two, and the forty. But we finally got the forty hour week after all those years.

Dunning: By what year?



Clarke: Oh, this was about 1960, 1961, somewhere around there. But it was a long, tough, hard fight. I can remember one meeting with Crowley. There was always rumors that Crowley had certain people on the payroll someway or other. In our case, Joe Gannon was our business manager. As I say, I've known him all my life, and he was pretty well off. There was no way anybody could ever buy him. But some of the other unions, the M.A.B.A. and the I.B.U., there were rumors.

We were at a meeting at Crowley's office. There were the engineers representative of the sailor's union, and I was there. There was this one fellow from the engineers, Bobby Eaton. He was a fellow known to drink too much.

I remember Crowley, after talking about a certain thing, taking a dime out and throwing it on the floor in front of Eaton and he said, "Here, here's a phone call to go make your report." And by gosh if the guy didn't pick up the dime and walk out to make the phone call.

Crowley knew exactly who was who. People feared that man. When Crowley got married, he walked in the office. He used to come in the office every day about nine-thirty or ten o'clock.

He walked in the office and I said, "Well, congratulations on your marriage, Tom."

He said, "Rrrrmmm," and he just walked right into the other office. Pretty soon he came back out again and he said, "Al, you know, you're the only man here who said that." But his first reaction was going, "Rrrrmmm."





Recollections of Thomas Crowley, Sr.

Dunning: Did Tom Crowley Sr. have much to do with the company at this time?

Clarke: He used to come in every morning at nine and then Tom would come in about a half hour later. The old man would go back to his desk and he would look over the bills, receipts for the previous day. He would never say too much. But as young Tom got more involved in the affairs of the company--and this was all part of the deal of the independent pilots using Bay Cities Towboat Company--I remember asking Tom one day.

I said, "Which cap are you wearing today? Am I talking to vice-president of Red Stack or am I talking to president of Bay Cities?"

Because he was the president of Bay Cities. He was vice-president of Red Stack. Crowley Sr. had set it up whereby his sister controlled Bay Cities stock, Crowley controlled Red Stack, and young Tom was in Red Stack as vice-president. His sister's husband was in charge of the other business but Tom was in charge of that, too. Old man Crowley had this thing of checks and balances set up. It was unbelievable.

Anyway, one day Tom Sr. and young Tom were both in there and they get in this big roaring battle, and I mean it was heated. Old man Crowley accused Tom of trying to destroy Red Stack. Young Tom called him a crazy old man and it was bad. Old man Crowley never came back again. That was when I guess he finally threw up his hands at the whole thing. I'll never forget that.

The old man was quite a guy. I remember about three or four years after this big blow-up one Sunday he came down to the office and I happened to be the



Clarke: only skipper sitting there. He and I talked for about an hour, then he had to leave.

Now, he had to be in his eighties, so I said, "Well, can I give you a ride, Mr. Crowley?"

He said, "Are you working?"

I said, "Yes, but there's nothing doing for several hours. I'll be glad to drive you somewhere."

So he said, "All right." So we got in my car.

Do you know where the police station used to be over there, the northern police station? Anyway, he was going on over there somewhere to visit an old crony. As we were driving up Broadway he said, "See this place over here?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I've consumed a lot of liquor in that place." And, "See this place over here? I remember that place back in 190hmmm." And he's telling me all these stories.

Of course, I knew he had been quite a rounder in his younger days. I let him off in front of some old apartment house over there. He was going up to see some old crony of his, and that's the last time I saw old man Crowley. He was a tough old geezer.

#### Regulations on the Towboats

Dunning: I wanted to ask you about some of the rules on the towboat. Did you have rules and regulations? I'm sure there were rules about no drinking, and--?



Clarke: Oh yes, there were rules for--there weren't any rules. It was just unspoken rules. As I say, it's a different ballgame. I can remember Pier 23 on the Embarcadero, which is quite a jazz place now. In those days it was owned by a man named Havilock Jerome. He was probably the most Damon Runyon type of character you had ever seen in your life. He was a real character. There was sawdust all over the floor. All the longshoremen and the towboat people used to go in there and drink. They would have a tug going to sea say at midnight and the whole crew would be in there drinking. Old Cap Dyer would come down and see if they had sailed all right, and there wouldn't be a soul on the tug.

He knew exactly where they were. He would go over to Pier 23. He would say, "Well fellows, don't you think it's about time to go?"

"Okay, Cap." And they would all get up and down they would go to the tug and away they would go to sea.

Today every man would have been fired. There was a different breed of cats then. A couple of drinks never hurt anybody really on that kind of a deal. You would never want to board a ship with the pilot that way, but as far as going to sea in a towboat, there was nothing wrong with that. But in experience we have never had anybody with a drinking problem in any of my crews. After the job, sure, you would have two or three drinks. There was no problem there, but never during the job. Never. A good group of guys. They were tough.

#### Memories of Close Calls

Dunning: Have you had many or any close calls that stand out in your mind?



Clarke: Oh man. Close calls?

Dunning: Or the worst?

Clarke: Oh yes. I was involved in a big major one bringing a dead ship out of the Suisun reserve fleet. It was a big roaring minus tide and you have to come across the channel across the bridge, and then come through to go down to the Bay Area. Everything was going fine and then suddenly the ship just took a shear--a dead ship. We were towing it with four towboats. It took a shear and we couldn't break the shear and we hit the bridge.

Dunning: Was this the Martinez Bridge or the Carquinez?

Clarke: Martinez. There's two bridges. There's a railroad bridge and a highway bridge. We hit the bridge and the stern of the ship went through, knocked the smokestack down. It was a big, bad scene. That was a major, major incident. There was nobody injured. It could have been a calamity.

There was a big pipeline on the bridge. It was a great big pipeline. I'm standing up in the flying bridge and I see that this pipeline where the stack hit it is bent up. Suddenly I realized that that wasn't a water line, it was a gas line. I thought well, there's no sense in standing up here and get time killed, and I went down below on the next deck. But we got out of there and got the ship through the bridge and on down.

The bridge tender called and said, "Cap, you must have a rabbit's foot in your pocket."

I know there was \$1,500,000 worth of damage. I know that just click, click. I thought, "Well, that's a dumb thing for a guy to say just after a situation like this." I said, "What kind of a crack is that?" back on the radio.





Clarke: He said, "When I saw what was happening I called and had them shut the gas off. There was high test aviation gas going through the line." If we would have fractured that line, the whole bloody works would have gone.

Dunning: When was this?

Clarke: It was around 1968. I can remember I filed a report. To Figari I said, "I better go down and see Tom."

"No, no, I don't think it's time for you to see Tom."

Anyway, later on, I saw Tom and I said, "Jesus, I'm sorry it happened, Tom."

He said, "Well, those things happen. Why does it always happen to the top pilots, though?"

"Well," I said, "I can't understand what happened, but everything was fine and then suddenly it just broached and there was nothing I could do." And he knows my background in yacht racing, and that I'm aware of currents.

All I can figure out is that they were dumping water out of the dams. So my mate at that time, Schell Havernass was his name. We talked about it, and he had a Norwegian friend in Sacramento in the water department who checked. Sure enough, they had discharged, and as we approached this main channel, this excessive current hit us on the port bow and there was no way we could get the ship up into the current, and just broached down to the bridge and that was it.

I remember going and making depositions. There would be nine or ten attorneys. As it turned out, the only liability that Crowley had--there were three Bay City towboats and only one Red Stack towboat. And



Clarke: because the ship was a dead ship, all they could sue for was the value of the one Red Stack towboat. At that time, Crowley put a price on the towboat of \$150,000. So that's all that he was liable for. Then he bought the boat back for \$150,000. It was strange that during the course of all these depositions, when I mentioned about that gas line, the shipping people went right straight up in the air.

And who else was involved? The State of California was involved, and they went up in the air. Suddenly, the poor railroad people, the SP, were in trouble because the State of California couldn't have any lines coming across any of their bridges carrying inflammable stuff. There was a big hassle over that, and also they found out that the contractor who had put the fender piles down on the bridge hadn't installed them properly. There were things that came out of this that were unbelievable.

Dunning: Dirty laundry came out?

Clarke: Yes. As it turned out, Crowley wasn't hurt that bad. But he asked me once, "Why didn't you come down and talk to me after it happened?"

I said, "Because Bill Figari told me not to." That was the same old routine with this guy Figari. I guess I was just an inherent threat to this guy all the time.

Ideas for Management

Clarke: Whatever, it worked out to both of our advantages, so who can complain too much, but I would have like to have been involved in management because it's funny, I could always see ahead and see what things were going



Clarke: to happen. I remember talking to Tom about the improved technology in steel where we were able to build bigger barges. At that time he just poo-pooed it. But I used to do an awful lot of reading in technical journals about what was going on. It all came true. I would have liked to have been a part of it, but whatever works, works.

Dunning: Have there been any particular periods in your career that have been more exciting than others or that really stand out?

Clarke: I think during the strikes that we had where there were no towboats involved. At that time you were given the opportunity to produce all the experience and skills that you had.

Dunning: There were no towboats, just barges?

Clarke: There weren't any towboats to make up for your mistakes so you had to do everything absolutely perfectly. As I say, I went through two of these periods, one for nine months and one for ten months, and never had any damages.

I can remember jobs that I've done that looking back on it now you would almost shake your head and think, "I wonder if I would have the nerve to do that same thing again?"

But you did it and you had reasons for doing it, proper reasons for doing it, and everything worked fine. It's like almost if you read the Forester books about Hornblower. Now Forester does his research on sailing ships. Anybody who was a professional seaman like myself and likes sail particularly, I enjoyed reading all that Hornblower material because it's accurate. The things that they did with those old great big sailing ships to me is a marvel.



Clarke: And yet by the same token, if you reach deep down, there are things a person can do which sometimes you don't know you can do. During the strike, this was the time to prove what sort of a person you were and how much you had to offer. And we did it. Some did it better than others, but we all did it. It was a great thing to go through.

Necessity\_of\_Confidence\_for\_a\_Pilot

Dunning: You seem to be a very confident person.

Clarke: If you don't have confidence, you can't be a pilot. I guess that's a fault of a pilot, particularly in a group of pilots. Then it's really complete chaos because in a sense you've got a group of egomaniacs. But if you don't have confidence there's no way you can be a pilot, I don't think. I know that the Red Stack in the old days, when I'm talking about my time, when they moved a fellow up to pilot and they sent him out on a job, if he turned the job down he was finished. That was it. I know of two pilots who did turn a job down and that was the end of them. They're now pilots up in Crescent City.

They just said, "Well, I don't think I'm quite ready yet." Well, that's it. Goodbye. That's the way they were. They were tough.

Dunning: And you've never really said that?

Clarke: No. I'll turn jobs down now based upon a way an agent wants to do the job. I'll say, "I will not do it that way. This is the way I'll do it." But I've never said that there's a job I can't do. There's always a way to do things.





Lack\_of\_Radar\_on\_the\_Tugs,\_1950s\_and\_1960s

Dunning: In talking to the Ghio brothers who have been on fishing boats since the 1930s, they said, "Well, you can't have any fear when you go out."

Clarke: That's right. Do you realize that in the 1950s and 1960s we never had radar on any of the tugs, none. All you had was a compass. That was it.

Dunning: Even into the sixties?

Clarke: That's right, never. In fog we would run all over the bay without radar. But everybody was different. I had a set of courses for all the different places in San Francisco Bay based upon running at between eight and ten knots, stopwatch times. We had a coursebook with all these in there, and we ran all over the bay. You would run full speed, just check your watch and you changed course based upon that. I never had a bit of trouble. Now these fellows today all have two radars on their boats. If their radars aren't working they won't leave the dock. We never had radar.

Modern\_Equipment\_and\_Loss\_of\_Navigational\_Skills

Dunning: They don't have those skills, is that it?

Clarke: They won't push themselves to obtain the skills. I've asked some of these fellows, "Well, don't you have a coursebook?"

"What for?"

"Well, if the radar goes out when you're out in the middle of the bay."



Clarke: "Oh, we just call for help."

I don't understand. I think the period that we went through was the greatest period for training. And you think back, the same thing with the bar pilots that used to run out the Golden Gate without radar. Those people were top people; they had to be. Now if you've got radar there's no problem. But I think of how lucky it was just to go through those periods, and prove that you can do things.

Dunning: You developed skills that pilots coming up now wouldn't necessarily have, or they certainly wouldn't use.

Clarke: No. And they won't try to. I believe that you've got to have your feet pushed in the fire. This is how you learn. You're forced to learn. This is how we were taught. We were forced to learn or else. These guys today, nobody forces them. Nobody forces them.

I can remember when we used to tow the acid barge out. Once or twice a week they would have this pickling acid from the steel plant up at Pittsburg, and we would take it outside and discharge it. It was ninety-eight percent solution. It wasn't a strong acid. But that's how they disposed of it. So we would tow it out just south of the Farallon Islands. At that time I had the tug Relief. All we had was a compass, and we had run out there in dense fog, in and out, never a bit of trouble, all based upon stopwatch times, and never a bit of trouble, never. You could almost set your watch for how long it was going to take us to do it every single time.

You tell some of these fellows today about that and they think, "You were crazy." It can be done.

Dunning: You could do it today, but then the people around you wouldn't have those skills, so--



Clarke: But they have--I can't walk on water. I'm just like anybody else. I don't have any superior intelligence to anybody else. This knowledge is available to everybody. But unless you try it. They won't try. See, we were forced to try and we found out it worked. They aren't forced to try. They have the same intelligence that anybody else has. And it's kind of a shame they don't. It gives a person confidence to know that you can do things without a lot of special gear, I think.

##

Dunning: It seems that recently you're hearing about more accidents on the bay, or is that the case?

Clarke: What do you mean by accidents?

Dunning: Well, the Jack Jr., the fishing boat that went down. Do those things always happen?

Clarke: No, they don't always happen. They have happened in the past and they will happen in the future. I think that a majority of us feel that the Jack Jr. incident in particular is a prime example of what's going on in the industry today, is that the people ashore are exerting more and more pressure on the people on the ships to maintain schedules and to do things which are cutting corners.

They are phasing out the older fellows, experienced people. The older experienced people, you can't pressure them. They know how to say no. There's one thing you learn in this business, which is when to say no. If you don't have the courage to do that sooner or later you're going to get in trouble.

So what happens? They displaced the older experienced people for young people. The skipper and the chief mate on that ship, one was thirty and one was



Clarke: twenty-eight I think it was. They're intelligent people, but they can be pressured. They've got top jobs now. They don't want to lose that job, and they react to pressure. I feel sorry for them, but I think their boat is going to get nailed bad. They might even get nailed for manslaughter.

Dunning: You think?

Clarke: It's possible. But I would expect them both to lose their licenses. And that's a terrible thing. On the ships, we finally have these younger guys saying, "Well, geez, we got to be up there at a certain time."

I'll say, "Hey. You've come from the Philippines. Now you're telling me I'm supposed to make up the time coming across three thousand miles of sea? Forget it, man. This is the way it's going to be." And they can't do anything about it, of course, but you see this in younger guys.

The old-timers care less. "Let's get there in one piece," that's all they say.

### Pressure on Pilots

Clarke: But I'm talking about the one accident. We've had our share of damage reports in our amalgamation pilots now and a lot of that is due to the fact that all the pilots are required to do things that they never had to do before.

Dunning: For instance?

Clarke: For docking and undocking. The bar pilots never did this before and now they're being forced to do it and some of them don't know how to do it. There's been a lot of accidents based on that.





Clarke: And there's so many small boats in the bay now. That's another thing. There's no way you can ever correct that because you're in a confined area. The deep water ships can only go in certain areas based upon draft. With the tremendous influx of small boats now--

Congestion on the Bay and Increase in Accidents

Dunning: Do you mean small fishing boats or pleasure boats?

Clarke: Pleasure boats and fishing boats. It's the same thing. It's inevitable that there's going to be more accidents. There's more of them. That's all there is to it.

Dunning: I'm surprised there aren't more. If you look out on a Saturday or Sunday it's pretty congested.

Clarke: It's bad. Yes, it's getting bad. As a matter of fact, there was a meeting this week which I didn't attend. The head of the coast guard district here was giving a little seminar based upon deep water ships and small boats. I'll be interested to hear what the outcome of that was. It makes it difficult for us. If something occurs, we have a license issued by the coast guard, and we can naturally be disciplined by the coast guard. But the fellow in the small boat has no license. There's no way.

Dunning: Anyone can take a small boat out.

Clarke: Yes. Which we think is wrong, but that's the way it is. It's crazy. There was one fellow here two months ago that was inside the bridge, right at the bridge, on about a fifty foot yawl. One of our pilots was coming in.



Clarke: Our pilot said the fellow tacked and then he tacked back. He said, "I knew immediately that there was no way that he could get enough way to tack again."

So he came right alongside the ship, and the gangway was hanging out say three feet or three and a half feet, which caught one of the shrouds and pulled the mast down. Of course, there was all the reports made over this thing and that. But the owner of the yacht was down below when it occurred. He publicly said it was our fault. Now that's unusual.

I'll tell of an incident when I was at Red Stack where I was involved with a yacht. We were laying up in the lee of Angel Island one Sunday waiting for a tanker to come into Richmond. It was a beautiful day. We were up there off Angel Island, the lee, where it's kind of warm there and nice. We were out on the boat deck aft, my mate and I, and he had his next door neighbor and his little boy aboard. We were out there just talking.

This big yawl came by going downwind towards the San Rafael area. They all waved, we all waved back. Just idly watching, they went down about two miles and then they came back tacking back on the wind. We watched them coming and coming, and they keep coming. They're coming right for us.

We thought, "Well, they're going to come up again and say hello."

No, it's collision time. The mate hit the throttle and put her full ahead to get away from them. They came in and hit the side of the tug and knocked the bowsprit off, and they go wandering off to Oakland somewhere. So we filed a report. Quimby was Crowley's attorney, Jim Quimby. He's one of the great brains of admiralty law on the Pacific coast. Anyway, I filed a report and we talked to him.



Clarke: "Well," he said, "They're going to sue." Some doctor owned the boat and they were going to sue. He said, "These turkeys. Even though Crowley believed us and the attorney believed us"--you still have to get involved with attorneys.

Anyway, about two days later--why my mate at that time was Danny Darragh. He said, "Al, unbeknownst to me my neighbor had his movie camera on. He's got the whole thing on film."

I said, "You're kidding me?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Get ahold of your neighbor and get ahold of the film."

So I called Quimby and I said, "Hey, we got movie pictures of this whole scene."

Quimby said, "Oh, great, great."

So we set the whole thing up and we had a meeting about two days later. We had the films developed. We set up a meeting with the other guy, the doctor and his attorney. We go up to Quimby's office in the conference room. His son is also an attorney there.

We all sit down and Quimby says, "Pull the blinds." He hadn't said a thing about what was going to happen.

The attorney said, "What's all this about, Jim?"

He said, "You'll see."



Clarke: He turned on the projector and here it comes in living color, showed the whole thing. Here he comes right up to our quarter, and just before he hits it you can see our wash where we put it full ahead to try to get out of his way.

They turned it off, brought the blinds up, and the other attorney stood up and said, "Well, see you later, Jim. Hey, come on, let's go."

The doctor, his face was white. He just walked out the door. Quimby said, "Oh, that was the most beautiful thing."

That was a strange thing to have happen.

Dunning: Are you liable for certain accidents?

Clarke: The company that you're with is liable, number one, and two you're liable because of your license. With my knowledge of sailing I know pretty much what a boat can and cannot do, a sailing boat, number one. The trouble is, the nuts that run some of these things that don't think like I think on a sailing boat. But you'll give way to one sailboat to get away from him, but then you've put yourself in jeopardy with somebody else.

That's the problem today, there's so many boats in the bay, with a deep water ship and the space it takes to maneuver. You can avoid one, but by avoiding one you've put yourself in a position with two or three more. So it's a bad situation.

Dunning: Would you sail on your off hours?

Clarke: No more. Oh, I did. I used to race up until about fifteen years ago. I used to race quite a bit. The last seven years I've raced six times. They have this old masters regatta that they invite racing skippers





Clarke: from around the country who are over sixty-five. The crew has to be over fifty. They've had it seven times and I've raced in it six times and won it three times.

I didn't race last year. With all the time off and all it would cost you about \$2,000, and I said, "It's not worth it. To the devil. I've won it three times. That's enough." Keep my name in there. I'm still around.

Dunning: Was your father influential on your career once you left Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor?

Clarke: No, not really.

Dunning: Did he give up on influencing you?

Clarke: Well, he never said it, but I think he was quite proud of my progress in the maritime field. The top deal in the maritime profession is pilot. That is the top. I think he was very happy to see me reach that. Plus the fact that he had always told me as a young boy that the top skippers were all Red Stack. I can remember him saying that when I was a young boy, and when I got there I found out he was absolutely right, that they were the top people. I think he was quite proud of that.

I remember after the war he said, "Well, come over to the ferry company. We'll start you out as mate. You'll probably be skipper in six months."

I said, "One of these days they're going to put a cable on those ferries and tow them back and forth across the bay." Oh, he was wild.

It was kind of a cruel thing for me to say because there was a lot of skill involved in running those ferries across the bay, whether it was Oakland and San Francisco or Richmond and San Rafael, in dense fog



Clarke: without radar, and you had to had to put that thing in a slip. That took skill and courage. They did it day in and day out.

But when I said, "Oh, they're going to put cables on them and tow them back and forth," I didn't want to be a ferry boat skipper.

Dunning: Did your father's career end when the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge was built?

Clarke: Oh, yes. Well, he had left a couple of years before that and devoted his time to the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor. My father was in the first car that went across the bridge when they opened it.

At home I've got three brass links of chain which were given to him years ago by the Rotary Club in San Rafael. It is the connecting link between Contra Costa County and San Rafael County, because it was his idea to build the ferry, which was the first link.

#### Personal and Family Background

Dunning: At what point in your career did you get married?

Clarke: I got married once during the war, which was a mistake, to a navy nurse. I just never wanted to get involved again until I got married in--let's see, I've got to start counting--in 1956.

Dunning: And what is your wife's name?

Clarke: Anne.

Dunning: Was she from this area?



Clarke: She was born in Santa Barbara, but she was raised in Carmel. I can remember when we had our first child, why the hours that I was working in the middle of the night. I can't think of the doctor's name now. He was a big pediatrician in San Francisco.

I remember him saying, "Don't worry about the baby. They take any schedule you want them to take. It doesn't mean that they have to sleep at night. They can sleep in the day, they can sleep anytime. Don't worry about that."

I'll never forget that. He said, "They came across the country in covered wagons. Don't worry about all that other jazz."

Dunning: How did your schedule affect your family life?

Clarke: I think in one way it's bad for a family life. Your schedule is such, your hours are so broken, it's hard to have a scheduled routine where you can be sure you're going to be at a certain place. Like all my boys played ball or were in the athletics.

Dunning: How many children do you have?

Clarke: I have four. I have three boys and a girl. They were all involved in athletics. You missed a lot of the games they played and the track meets because of your schedule. You try to take in all you can but it is not an ideal thing for family life.

I know these young fellows that we have now--as a matter of fact, we've had three of them in the last three months that have had children. Which is a first for the bar pilot organization.

I tell them the same thing. I said, "Take care of the family life, because the rest of it, hell, that's nothing."



Clarke: That's what they miss, and suddenly you get caught up in your career where it's foremost in your mind until all of a sudden you've lost ten or twelve or fourteen years of what the kids have done. You can never get that back. I know that my kids, there's an awful lot of things that I missed that I would have liked to be able to do. But they all turned out well.

Dunning: Did any end up with maritime careers?

Clarke: No, not one of them.

Dunning: Did you encourage or discourage them?

Clarke: No, I never encouraged or discouraged them. But I'm quite sure that in watching the hours that I worked and where I wasn't there that they said, "Hey, this is nothing for me." They were probably smart.

Dunning: I'm curious as to what directions they've gone in or are going.

Clarke: One's an engineer for CalTrans, and another boy who called this morning from Palm Springs, he's the conference manager for La Quinta, the big resort down in Palm Springs. Chris just got out of college last year and I don't know what he's going to do. He's involved with Skip Berg, who bought Hamilton Field. Skip has his own private garage and collection of cars, antique cars, race cars, so Chris is involved in that routine.

I don't think any of the kids will probably make the money that I made, which is not important. But they're all good kids and they'll all make out, that's the main thing.

Dunning: And your daughter?





Clarke: Well, she decided to quit in her junior year of college. Then she worked for this dress outfit in San Rafael. She was doing well--even though she got better pay than a lot of the others, it still is low--she finally just told them she wanted more money or else and so she quit last week. So I don't know. I'm going to try to see if she can get on with Nordstrom's and somewhere like that. She's good at this. She likes it and she wears clothes beautifully. She'll get her act together.

Dunning: There may be more opportunity in San Francisco.

#### Present Ambitions

Dunning: Do you have any special ambitions now, things you would like to do or places you would like to go?

Clarke: I guess everybody dreams. I would really like to go to China. That country intrigues me, particularly like the Yangtze River. That river goes up there for fifteen hundred miles or better. It would be interesting to see what they do and how they do it over there. But there are so many things in China that I would like to see. I would like to go down to the South Seas maybe. I thought about that. But then the more I read about it, why the more kooks there are down there, that I gave up on that. But China, I think I would like to go to China.

Dunning: Have you done much traveling?

Clarke: No, not really. When I was young we went all over the country. I've never been to Europe. We were thinking about going to Paris. As a matter of fact we have six pilots over there in a meeting right now. I thought we might want to go but we changed our minds after all



Clarke: this hassle with France. Paris is a beautiful city and there's a lot of things I would like to see, but we had friends come back and said they were the rudest people they ever met in their life.

I said, "Why should I go over there and spend my money?"

My number two son, he just came back. He spent six weeks in Europe. He was traveling somewhere with a young French fellow and he was going to go into Paris. His French friend said, "Don't waste your time and money."

Dunning: Really?

Clarke: Yes, "Don't waste your time and money."

Dunning: Well, in your work have you traveled much or have you mostly been based right in San Francisco?

Clarke: Mostly based right here. During the war you went on a couple of trips to the South Pacific, but that was all. As I say, there's nothing out there but water, water and boredom. Plus the fact that I was smart enough to realize that if something came up and you're out in the middle of the Pacific, you're going to miss.

So I said, "No, I'm going to be a pilot. That's it."

Dunning: How many years more do you think you'll be a pilot?

Clarke: About a year and a half. No more than that. Get this training program going properly and that's it. Maybe I'm getting burned out.

Dunning: Well, you've been in it for a long time.

Clarke: Yes, a long time.



Dunning: Is there anything you would do differently, other than it would have been nice to get into management with Crowley?

Clarke: Looking back, the one thing I would have done differently, and then I wouldn't be a pilot today, I would have stayed in the yacht business and persisted in the yacht business rather than go back with Army Transport during the Korean War. There again, the things that I had projected all came through. Like the big Richmond marina, I had this idea back in 1948. I didn't have the money then, but had the idea.

Dunning: Marina Bay?

Clarke: Right. But of course, during the time that I was in the yacht business there wasn't the number of people in the area at that time. There wasn't the money around that there is now. You had to work your fanny off to make any money at it. I think that if I had stayed with it I would have made money at it. There's no question about it. That would have been the only thing different that I see. I've always wanted to build something and it would have been nice to have been able to build a nice big marina. That's just the other side of it.

#### Future for Richmond's Waterfront

Dunning: Do you have any predictions for Richmond's future on the waterfront?

Clarke: I don't know. I had lunch with the port director last month. I knew his father very well. He had some good ideas, but this town is--number one, there isn't anybody in authority, except this new port director, who knows a thing about shipping. The council doesn't



Clarke: a thing about shipping, plus you can't tell them anything. You can't tell them they don't know. It's a disaster what they've done. I don't know whether you can pull it out or not, but it's going to be a long, long pull, as far as the port is concerned. I don't know. He's a bright young guy and he knows his business, but I don't know how long he's going to put up with these people here. He's only had the job a short time, and I gave him all the scare stories I could to prepare him for it. We'll see how he does. But I think you're going to find too that shipping is going to decline in the area.

Dunning: The whole Bay Area?

Clarke: Yes. I think one of the reasons for this is that the containers going from the Far East going to the East Coast of this country or to the central part of the country all go by rail. Now they have double decker containers on rail cars. But they can't go through the snow sheds up in the Sierras, which puts Seattle at an advantage and Los Angeles at an advantage. So there's been rumors already that several of the larger companies might put the bulk of their cargo either up north or down south. If that happens, it will mean there will be less ships in here. So we'll see.

Dunning: So Oakland's success may be temporary?

Clarke: Oh, Oakland's going to always be the top port. There's no question about that. San Francisco will never ever catch up with Oakland. As a matter of fact, in San Francisco the real estate people will take over the entire waterfront. You wait and see. Because as it becomes a burden on the city, politicians will be forced to make changes and let the real estate people do what they want to do to get revenue. No, Oakland, that's the big port and it will remain so.





Dunning: What do you think about that recent proposal about combining the ports?

Clarke: Years ago--you've heard of the Reber Plan?

Dunning: No.

Clarke: Well, in the Reber Plan, there were several variations. He had had a proposal putting a dam across say from Point San Pablo to McNear's and creating a fresh water lake from there on up. Then there was going to be locks for ships to get through or barges and all that. His plan says that by having a fresh water lake he could reclaim all that marshland, which is now all salted up, which you can't grow things on, which is right.

I can remember going to the meetings on that when I was young in college. I thought it was a great idea. But it was fought by San Francisco tooth and nail because Oakland would have gotten some advantages from this. The locks were going to come through here. San Francisco had the political power. They used it very brutally. For the whole East Bay they just controlled the whole area.

Now things change. One man, one vote, San Francisco can't grow any bigger, and it hasn't. As a matter of fact, it's shrunk a little bit. But the East Bay now has all the political power. Oakland is sitting back there remembering all these things and just laughing up their sleeve. What have we got to gain? Nothing, absolutely nothing. They've already got it. It will never happen. It will never happen.

There's no question that from a tax standpoint it would be benefit to everybody. It's like the metropolitan deal they have back in New York where they consolidated airports. But it will never happen I



Clarke: don't think and that's why it won't happen. And I hope it doesn't because San Francisco deserves every kick in the pants they can get.

Dunning: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Clarke: Not a thing.

Dunning: If at a later time something else comes to your mind that you think should be recorded either about Red Stack or ideas about the waterfront, Richmond, or San Francisco Bay, let me know. It would be a short session.

Clarke: If you would like to I could get Bob Markley, if you wanted to sometime talk to him.

Dunning: You were going to ask him. Was he receptive?

Clarke: Oh sure. He's a character.

Dunning: I'm getting to the end of my funding. I might be able to squeeze him in.

Clarke: He lives in town.

Dunning: Since he was involved in Richmond and San Francisco area.

Clarke: And the ferry companies. The ferry company, and he's been a member of the Richmond Yacht Club from practically year one. Then he knows the area. Then of course he was at Red Stack.

Dunning: That would be good. Also, I was going to ask you if you had any old photographs?

Clarke: I had an album and somebody walked off with the album when I had the yacht place, which is a shame, because I had pictures of the early port years ago when it ran



Clarke: right up almost to Washington Grammar School. Somebody ripped the whole bloody thing off. Why I'll never know. Too bad, because there used to be some great photographs.

##



APPENDICES





# Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor Has a Breakwater

By William Hogan

FOR YEARS, in maritime circles here, "Rotten Row" meant the upper Oakland

estuary where dozens of wooden lumber schooners, sailing vessels, tugs, barges and lesser craft rotted at their moorings or on the tidal mud. They were shrines for prowling maritime historians and occasional camera nuts, but "eyesores" to the citizens who lived nearby.

The war considerably cleaned out the estuary's "Rotten Row." But another, which now creates one of the most unique, beautiful waters on the coast, is that at Point San Pablo, in Contra Costa county, not far from the heart of the bass fishing country.

This latter-day rotten row of heeled-over, crumbling wooden steamers, surplus naval craft, a broken barge and the hull of the ferryboat Golden Gate, swings on a wide arc on the mud. Inside the arc, and on an adequate channel, is a kind of "poor man's boat anchorage." It's called the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor.

This graveyard of coastal steamers and the striking pool they create, is presided over by a veteran skipper of the Richmond-San Rafael ferry run named Raymond H. Clark, who started the project in 1919. That was a year of relatively low costs. But Captain Clark, a small boat enthusiast who for years had mulled over such an enterprise, found a rock breakwater at his property would cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000 to build.

He made a deal to pick up a half dozen condemned wooden steam schooners on the Alameda flats and towed them up the bay. After the war he latched onto two surplus LCJs and a sub chaser and dumped them. The hull of the Golden Gate was already there. The cost of the entire breakwater came to not more than \$7000, and Captain Clark was in business as a harbor master.

The breakwater contains some of the coast's best-known single and double-end steam schooners. They include the Bertie Hanlon, Jane Nettleton, Salmon King, Carlos, Siskiyou and Anne Christensen, all built between 1890 and World War I.

They were units of what the shipping industry here used to call the "Scandinavian Navy," because masters and crews were Johnsons, Petersens, Johansens -- Swedes, Norwegians and Danes who kept their Viking accents and created legends from Alaska south. This was part of the fleet, incidentally, which built the cities on the coast, hauling timber from Puget Sound, Oregon and the Redwood coast for generations.

Captain Clark (who looks not unlike Harry S. Truman) said

## With a Past

there are 125 small boats berthed in Point San Pablo Harbor (there is room for about 15 more). Most are small, unpretentious fishing craft. There are a couple of party boats moored there which take casual customers to the bass region; about a dozen commercial shrimp boats make their headquarters there, too.

The San Pablo enterprise has been so successful that last year a yacht club was formed (pennant, commodore and all). Some 50 boats form the yacht club fleet, slightly more ornate than the work boats and fishing craft nearby.

Most private boats are owned by East Bay residents, but some reside in San Francisco and on the Peninsula. They want to keep their boats nearer the fishing grounds and the rivers than in more fashionable harbors nearer to home.

The San Pablo Yacht Harbor is in a sheltered area of San Pablo Bay looking toward both the Marin islands and Solano county. The bay bumps right onto the Contra Costa hills at this point, and adjoining the harbor are wooded arroyos which rise to the Standard Oil Company's tank storage farm. You reach the harbor by private road from the road which leads to the Richmond ferry slip and the Navy's Point Molate fueling base.

### First Ferry

Captain Clark started the San Rafael-Richmond ferry in 1915 when there was no connection between the East Bay and Marin county and the Northwestern Pacific boats from San Francisco to Marin had a capacity of only four automobiles each. The original Richmond ferry, he said, had a capacity of 17 cars. At that time a good day's ferrying meant hauling about 15 cars across the bay; some days six or seven cars were taken across.

He worked as a deck hand, skipper and superintendent on the ferry line and for a generation kept his eye on the property around San Pablo Point as a possible "snug harbor" for his retirement. The skipper feels he just made it; the area is potential industrial property with a Santa Fe spur track running through it.

Captain Clark escorted the reporter and photographer around the arc of his ship breakwater during their visit there last week. The Jane Nettleton, a gaunt relic of the lumber trade, once tossed helplessly in a 70-mile gale 33

miles west of Cape Blanco, Oregon, with a fire in her hold. Her lumber cargo was tossed overboard. Her chances of ending up at Point San Pablo were never thinner.

### Billions of Feet

He pointed to others—the Siskiyou (built in Aberdeen, Wash., in 1912), the Carlos (built here in 1908). Each of these ships, he said, is a piece of maritime history; each is known around the sand bars of the coast's small harbors, the regions of heavy breakers, of wind and fog.

The Bertie Hanlon after her lumber career was a fish reduction plant, turning sea life into fertilizer, and the smell could be detected for miles to leeward. She remained to take her place in this unofficial museum.

Lumber and lumber products were their chief cargoes—shingles, ties, redwood and pine logs, tanbark, billions of feet which built up West Coast cities. Their cargo back to the lumber camps included liquor for the jacks, mill machinery, food supplies, occasional passengers. There were many legends.

A skipper named "Rainwater" Johnson (it tells you in the book "Ships of the Redwood Coast") allegedly navigated his steam schooner on an even keel for two blocks inland on rainwater alone at a redwood port before he rang full-speed astern and backed down again into the stream.

Captain Clark, who has been around the bay on small boats and large for about 40 years, could get nostalgic about the ghosts in his rotten row. He hasn't time; he expected a playground when he retired, but he runs a going game as yacht broker, harbor master and business executive. And official host when the bass is running and Point San Pablo swarms with yachtsmen and friends as do few other similar basins on the Pacific Coast.



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Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers"  
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Play: "Boomtown" based on the oral histories of shipyard  
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