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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project  
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**John L. Lavelle:** I was born in Topeka, Kansas, 1891, November the 22nd, on 1314 Jefferson Street, North Topeka. And I went to school in Topeka, it was ah, you know, you only went to the eighth grade in common school, then you had four years in high school. I quit in the second year of high school, seem like I knew more than the people that was trying to teach me.

I stayed with some white people, the mother and I lived right there together. I stayed with these white people until I was twenty years old. I got out on my own when I was twenty. And the old man, he worked for—at that time, it was Continental Creamery Company,. then it switch into Beatrice Creamery Company out of Oklahoma, then it switch into Fox River Butter Company in Chicago, and I was working with (inaudible) in the companies all the time, say from about 1914 until—well, while I was 14 until I was 20 that is what I was doing. I worked in the butter room, in the churn room, and sort on like that, you know and I got quite a bit out of that. Then he [the "old man"] made a trip to Florida and he got crazy about Florida, and he come back and brought me some mangos and so on like that. I got crazy about Florida, in 1916, I come to Florida. I've been making Florida my home ever since.

I want to start with the first World War and—but I was telling Sanders, I guess they put Sanders on me so much. I'd been here about two weeks and I picked up the paper. They wanted a chauffeur, so I went to this address, 333 Plant Avenue. I'll never forget it. And where I came from if you go to the back door, you're liable to be eat up with a bull dog or somebody I'll shoot you. You go to the front door.

So I walked up to the front door, rang the bell, and a lady come to the door. "What are you doing here at this front door?"

I say, "Lady where I came from if you go to the back door you're liable to get shot, they crick the dogs on you—"

[Woman:] "What do you want?"

[Lavelle:] "I be here regarding the advertisement you have in here for a chauffeur."

[Woman:] "Who do you work for?"

[Lavelle:] "I been working for Goodyear Tire people."

[She] says, "Well, where at?"

I said, "Out of Akron."

She say, "Well, I couldn't pay that kind of money."

And I say, "You don't know what you're paying for," which I knew she couldn't.

So she say, "Well, we don't give but \$6.00 a week and one meal." \$6.00 a week and one meal, that was in 1917.

I just bummed around here from September 1916 until in seventeen [1917]. I had a little money. I had \$1,800 which I was a millionaire back in those days; \$1,800 was another man's dream. So she told me she couldn't pay any more, I said I couldn't work for that, so I walked on off the porch. That happened to be Sumter L. Lowry Junior's mother—the guy that who run for governor here a few years back<sup>1</sup>, that's the same guy. And he and his mother are just alike, they's stumped down Virginia crackers. Now Dr. Lowry<sup>2</sup>, wasn't a better man in the world than him. There's good and bad in all nationalities; that old man would give you the shirt off his back.

And to show you what happen now, there was two advertisements, one right below the other one. I takes this other one and I go and where Maas Brothers [Department Store] are now—was a two story building there, Maas Brothers was across the street just east, and they built this building and moved it over there in 1923, in February. Cause—reason I can tell you so good about it is cause I got a job on the second floor as a porter and I stayed there about six months. The engineer and I couldn't get along, so I went to (inaudible) Washington and told him I didn't need the work—well, I was really government paid. I say, "I don't need to stay here and work and take you people's slush;" I said I'm leaving. "Oh, no we like you—" I'm leaving, so I left.

I was working along the waterfront. I've seen some hard times—not I, but other colored people. Durin'—I'm just jumping around, I'm not giving you right straight along. During

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<sup>1</sup> In 1956, against LeRoy Collins.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sumter L. Lowry, Senior, who was on the Tampa city council in the 1910s, and for whom Lowry Park Zoo is named.

Hoover's time, I averaged—in the four years he was in office, I averaged twenty-five dollars a week where plenty didn't have twenty-five cents a week. I worked on the waterfront, I work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, maybe Thursday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and sometime on Sunday I'd fish. I had a old late model Ford and I would go get a nickel's worth of ice and put it the number two tub, and I'd get my gang together—was two or three fellers always wantin' to go fishin' with me. [They said] "How much you charge me?" [Lavelle:] "I don't charge you anything." Well, they would buy maybe a couple of gallons of gas; gas I think was around twenty-one cents, twenty-two cents, a gallon then.

Back in that day you could buy two pounds of mullet for a nickel. Right there on 22nd Street, just off 7th Avenue right at the that drugstore, I think it's commercial now. Okay, in the back of it there's an old second hand store or a fish market or something in there now, but it was a fish market right there then. And I have seen mullet, you go in there, two pounds for one nickel. You go and get you old two pound mullet like that, that was durin' Hoover's time.

**Otis Anthony:** What were the conditions of blacks working on the waterfront?

JL: The conditions for blacks working on the waterfront was good and bad. They had—now there was Clyde Mallory, was the roughest one in the world. They kept the [longshoremen's] union out of here for years and every place say that had a agency, you know. The reason why I know so much about here, I organized Local 1402. Local 1402, I organized it; if my wife was here she'll tell you the same thing. I was the first president that they had, John L. Lavelle was the first president that Local 1402 had.

OA: Okay, so you was back there with back Michael Lazarus?

JL: I was there before. Michael Lazarus was—the waterfront work that he did, he'd catch a job now and then in the warehouse. But I worked the ships, I carried number one gang, Clyde-Mallory<sup>3</sup> for eleven years. I was the header of number one gang for eleven years. Now I did cuss, you know I done all such stuff like that, but to hit you or anything like that—it was one or two crackers there that would threaten or something like that, but if you blowed up at him he took cover just like he would do now. And I had all of them to worry over. I wiped two or three of them down there. I use to would fight in a minute. I didn't allow you to call me a nigger, black men or white men, if you called me a nigger, you are liable to get my fist through your mouth. "You wouldn't know old nigger, so and so." Bam! I'll hit you, what you hit me for, you called me a nigger, I'm no nigger.

But I'm the guy that organized Local 1402.

OA: Okay, what year was this now?

JL: That was in 1935.

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<sup>3</sup> Shipping line.

OA: Okay, now the working conditions up to that time, were they still bad? Were y'all organized?

JL: Well, when I organized, here's what happen. We were getting along good but we didn't get any money. Sometime we would sit down all day down there, waiting on a ship to come in or maybe a week. And when the ship come in we made thirty-five cents per hour, ten hours a day. They're driving you all the time, "All right, come on there, what's wrong with you, let's go," so and so and so. Ten hours a day, then if you worked over that night, you got one nickel more, one nickel more.

And the funny part about it, I have a friend that worked down there with me; he use to run the winch for me. He lived on the corner of 21st Avenue and 20th Street; if you happen to go by that way, you'll see a big man sittin' there with a big collar around his neck. He fell off the porch and broke his neck and he been wearing that collar now for two years. They call him Big Larry.

And it use to be a ship come in from New Orleans every Monday, come up against the dock—I go there and tie it up—called the *Pawnee*. So I belong to the union in Baltimore, but I never tried to use no union card, because it wasn't any union here. So I went to work that Monday morning—I can't think of that captain's name now, but he been on that *Pawnee* for years, and he says to me, "Lavelle, why don't you fellows organize?"

I say, "Organize what?"

[Captain:] "Oh, man, why don't you fellas get you a union? New Orleans got a union. New Orleans get seventy-five cents an hour now, and time and a half overtime, and different commodities they get different prices. If you were to loading fertilizer or unloading fertilizer you get about a \$1.25 an hour."

So I say, "Yeah, well, I don't know who to go to."

He said, "You—don't you carry a card?"

I say, "Yeah I got a card." I happen to have one; I pulled it out and showed him.

He say, "Yeah, that's Baltimore and Philadelphia, that's International Longshoremen Association; why don't you get into that?"

I say, "Well, who's the president of that?"

He say, "Joseph P. Ryan."

I say, "He was the president when I got into it," such and such year.

He say, "Why don't you get in touch with him?"

I say, "I don't know how."

He say, "Well, when I come back next Monday I'll bring you something."

OA: He was white?

JL: White, captain for the company and had been with Clyde-Mallory for years.

OA: Okay, now the man that was over it was Joseph what now?

JL: Joseph P. Ryan; he was president of the International Longshoremen Association at that time. He's dead now.

OA: This was in the thirties [1930s]?

JL: That was in thirty-five [1935].

OA: Thirty-five [1935], okay.

JL: So he brought me some data, and I wrote right back to New Orleans, and they sent a man in here. In the mean time I got in touch with Secretary Perkins in Washington and ask her about organizing. She told me if I was going to be a bona fide organization she would send me credentials to get organized. So she sent credentials and I organized—I started to organize. \$1.25 member initiation fee, and along in that time we had about 1,100 members, and then we had 500 that worked banana boats, ten cents and fifteen cents an hour.

OA: Okay now what part did Perry Harvey play in this thing?

JL: Perry Harvey, he—at the time that I organized, he was running winch for me.

OA: What is that? What is winch?

JL: Runnin' winch—see, there's two machines here. Here's the hatch of a ship where the cargo goes in. Okay, it's two winches here with the booms up here, one boom sets over—hangs over the dock, the other hangs over this hole. All right, you hook on—this here's called the main (inaudible); you hook this on, they bring it up, and this other guy takes it over and set it down on the dock. I have a man over here and man over here running these winches, see.

So, he was running winches at the time for me and he didn't pay any attention to the union or anything like that; most the time he was asleep. Yeah, he had some kind of sleepin' disease, he'd sit there, and you'd be talkin' and he'd wake up and tell you everything you said; he be sometime (snoring) like that. Very shortly—yeah—or so and so, like that, funniest thing I ever seen.

So on the 8th day of December there was a fellow came here from Mobile, Alabama, a white fella; he belonged to the Seaman Union, and he helped me out and give me pointers and showed me what to do. So for a while we had him keepin' a little of our money, but I took the money away from him and we got us a treasurer. That was before we even got a charter or anything.

So I said to him, "You know, I got enough names here, we oughta be able to get our charter in here."

He said "Okay," so he sent off for the charter for us. And it got in here and he say, "You might as well set up your organization."

I say, "You mean a president, a vice president, financial secretary, recording secretary, and a treasurer?"

"That's all we need right now, if you want to put in other officers or something like that you can get them in later."

I said, "Okay."

So it was on a Saturday night out on the corner of Central and Harrison—use to be the Lafayette Hall. Charlie Moon had it, Charlie Moon run a saloon down below and had that dance hall up above. I had the—we had the Odd Fellows Hall for a couple of years, paid them five dollars a month for it. I had a office up there, but that wasn't big enough for Perry after we got organized. He had to go down, cause Charlie givin' a little this now and then you know, he went down there, and they—that's where their breakthrough to get their money and everything to buy Beulah [Baptist] Church, or wherever the present hall is now, and they got and brought that and got that.

But as I say on the eighth day of December, 1935, we organized, and they put out I was president, Perry Harvey was vice president, Michael Lazarus was—I think he was recording secretary, and a little man by the name of Johnson—a little preacher—he was treasurer. And we had one other officer, I forget his name. And we walked out—that was did around 8:00, about a quarter of nine. I walk—I got down. I had a (inaudible) this old late model Ford of mine and I drove down to Cass [Avenue] and Franklin [Street], to the Economical Drugstore there, walked on that side of the street.

And I went over to get some ice cream for my wife and the stevedore was there. He looked at me and says, "Well you niggers is got officers now, huh. Got you a union." Course I'd been down there plenty of times after we would have meetings and he'd tell me everything that went on, we knew it wasn't safe, so if the Negroes was carrying it to him, now that's what you had to go through, when you call yourself trying to help them.

So, Monday morning which would have been the tenth, I went down to take my number one gang and go aboard—I think it was the *Aguadale*—and this same guy that talk to me Cass Street pull me out and says, "You gonna need to go, them niggers can take care of

you, all you got, all these niggers is on this waterfront down there now. You and the rest of them can make plenty money." Perry Harvey was with me, he pulled him out—pulled seven of us out. All of them didn't have a hold of it the way this cracker had got a hold of it—they would have, but they pulled seven of us out; all of us was headers or had something to do down on the dock that we didn't have to just get right down to labor. See, a header didn't have to put his hands on anything, he just had to tell the other fellas what to do.

So, I didn't make it no better or no worst, I went right back up town, wired Secretary Perkins, wired all the names that they had fired. See now they had fired us, told us we couldn't come back down there to work. Everything from the time that this captain told me what to do, and Holt Ross from New Orleans started sending me literature and everything about the union—he didn't tell me this, I got this from when I got out of the government. I worked with the government a little while as a Secret Service man. Everything that I would say to you—we would have a conversation I would put it down, time of day that we met, the time we departed, what was said in that time.

Well, I've been accosted by all the stevedores. Now we had one man that had come in here in twenty-seven [1927] to unload a ship of cement, and he come from Pensacola and they started callin' him Pensacola Man. Well, when he come in they was paying twenty-five cents an hour, and he was paying fifty cents an hour and they told him he had to cut that out; he was going to ruin these here niggers in Tampa, paying them all that good money. So we had to join the Marathon Association where the stevedores had to pay what they paid.

Okay, during this time in thirty-five [1935] when we did get them in here, we tried to negotiate a contract with them. I asked for a \$1.00 an hour. If I'd have asked for \$2.00 an hour I might have got a \$1.00 an hour, but I wasn't that deep into it. See, I thought if I can ask for an \$1.00 an hour I may get ninety cents or something like that. But I bet you can't guess what they give us. Three cents. No time and a half, just three cents an hour more. Edgebull wouldn't pay it. Edgebull says to old Captain Huggins, he says "Three cents?" Clyde-Mallory—she kind of handled (inaudible) all these Southern states, kinda had 'em in her grip. Whatever Clyde-Mallory said everybody went right with them, see, cause the way it was Clyde-Mallory own their own dock facilities and everything; all these other companies rented. Edgebull, and Mooremac, Waterman Lines, and Lykes Brothers owned their dock. Lykes Brothers followed Clyde Mallory. So Edgebull says, "I will not pay it. I'll even give 'em a nickel or I won't give 'em nothing." He say, "Well, you—if you pay it you pay that." He say, "Naw, I to want pay it; the company will pay it. I'm gonna give 'em a nickel." So he gave them a nickel and went on over Clyde-Mallory and gave them a nickel.

So—I think it was in May thirty-five [1935], I went to a convention in Galveston, Texas, they had the International Longshoremen gave—and had a convention in Galveston and I went there, and Joseph P. Ryan told me, "Well, just as soon as you get back, you got to go to court." So just as soon as I come back, I got a notice of subpoena I had to go court. So we went to court; we had four days in court—imagine now, four days in court—and



out of them four days, I think I was on the stand about six times.

OA: Okay now, what was the court case about?

JL: About the seven men that had been fired. All pertaining to the union, see and you'd be surprised they would call these men up and they'd talk to me, these stevedores. Now they weren't all from Clyde-Mallory, and all of them talk good about the union but Clyde-Mallory and Lykes Brothers. We had one man that was supposed to meet this representative Holt Ross, from Maritime—I mean from the International Longshoremen Association. We were suppose to meet in Floridian Hotel one time, and he told Holt Ross that he wasn't gonna meet with no Niggers. And Holt Ross told him, say, "Now listen, I'm going to Orlando from here, and when I go from Orlando to Jacksonville, that would throw me to be back here week after next, Tuesday morning at 11:00. I'm going to be in this same building, the Floridian Hotel, on the eleventh floor, room so and so. Now, you want to be there."

Well, Culbreath was the chairman of the Maritime Association here in Tampa. When we met, everybody was there but Culbreath. Holt Ross said, "Where is Mr. Culbreath? Where is the president of the Maritime Union?" He can't come, he's busy. He said, "Can you get a hold of him?"

"Oh, yeah, we can get a hold of him."

He said, "Well, you get on that phone, and you call him and you tell him I'll give him fifteen minutes to get here. If he don't, they'll never sail another ship out of Tampa." Fifteen minutes he was there and he talked to a Negro, he say he wasn't going to negotiate with no nigger. He told Holt Ross that. Holt Ross told him, "There isn't any niggers in here, but I who—what you talkin' about, but you gonna negotiate with them. Get back to the court now."

All these men where there that I had talked to, they would call them on the stand. "Is it so?" Now like this Gillette, he's with Clyde-Mallory; he sent for me one day on a Tuesday—see, we get a ship in on Monday morning, we'd work it Monday, Monday night, Tuesday at five o'clock it be ready to sail. We unloaded it and loaded back; it be ready to go to New Orleans or to New York. Next Monday it be another ship come in from New York, we'd unload it, start Monday, Monday night, Tuesday five o'clock it be ready to go. So, he call me off the job one Tuesday—I like cigars, I'll have a cigar in my mouth all the time—when I walked into the office

***Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.***

JL: So he said to me, he say, "Let's get right down to business. My company from Jacksonville had authorized me to give you six hundred dollars and a life time job if you let us know—"

I said, "Mr. Gillette I'll tell you just like it is. Six thousand dollars want buy a

(inaudible)." I happen to be able to duck and dodge and didn't get any—oh, I got a few on the shoulder and then the guy, he goes to work. He'd asked me was a black guy—Clyde-Mallory paid him to do it, and—see, I went to see this little Seaman Union man at the Alamo Hotel. The Economical Drugstore was there on Cass and Franklin; right in the back of that building was a little old hotel called the Alamo Hotel back in thirty-five [1935], had a few rooms up there. I went down there to see him, and when I went to see him, he and I sit around the room and talked a while, and we come down in the lobby—walked out. When we walked out, they grabbed both of us and took us down to City Hall, and he had his little briefcase and he had his credentials who he was and what he was doing, and he told them he was just talking to me.

Well, they'd watched us and knew what was going on, so they go to work and turned him loose. When they told me I could go, I walked out on Florida Avenue from the desk. They grabbed me and pushed me in the car, shoved me down and put their feet on me—a couple of cops. And they come on out to Palm Avenue and they got poor Joseph Shoemaker, they got another there; then they turn around and went down on 8th Avenue and they got the other one. They took us out to Riverview. When we got out there, there were four or five out there, and boy they really put something on those white fellows, and they called them Communists. I was suppose to be a Communist, but I'm a Negro, I didn't know what Communist meant, pardon me sir.

They didn't beat me like they did them. And every time they do something I'd throw up my hands and ward off the licks. One guy grabbed his blackjack and swung at me. I was hung up in the palmettos and laid there a long time. They was drinking their moonshine and whiskey and everything, and I eased out of them palmettos and I got to the highway and caught a truck—flagged a truck, got in gear. I had a few fellows on me. Charlie Wall was living then, and I went Charlie Wall's house and told him what had happened; that was about one or two o'clock in the morning. So he sent me to one of his old men he used to work tinder and they got that all, and he sent a man. He said, "Now get a man there at eight o'clock in the morning to go with you." So up until the time that I was elected president, it was a white man rode with me all the time, with a machine gun in a violin case.

OA: Who set that up?

JL: That was Charlie Moon. Charlie—he use to be one of the big gang leaders here. Charlie Wall.<sup>4</sup>

OA: Was he black?

JL: No, he was white, he was white—you might as well say he's black. He and a black man by the name of Bud—I don't know what Bud's last name was, but everybody called him Bud Wall. They were babies together and I think Charlie's mother died, and they nursed Charlie—Bud's mother nursed Charlie on her breasts like it was. And Charlie done everything in the world for Bud that he could. Charlie would get on a rampage, get

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<sup>4</sup> Charlie Moon and Charlie Wall were both gang leaders. Lavelle is referring to Charlie Wall.

hopped up and go downtown, go into a bar, pick up glasses and bust all the mirrors and stuff out and nobody could stop him. They were scared to arrest him, and they would send for Bud.

OA: Now this was Charlie Ward?

JL: Wall.

OA: Wall.

JL: And they would send for Bud, and Bud—they called him Bud Wall. And he go there and walk in and [say], "Charlie what's the matter with you? You always getting into trouble."

[Charlie:] "Bud now who sent for you?"

[Bud:] Say, "Come on, let's go." He'd turn around and tell 'em, "I'll be back in the morning and we'll get everything straighten out." Bud'd go down there the next morning, damages done so and so and so, have it all fixed up and no more was said about it.

OA: Okay now, the man that they tarred and feathered—was they killing people? They was killing people, right? They were killing some of the organizers?

JL: No, here's what happened. See, this one organizer, he was organizing for the ILD [International Labor Defense], and they said that was a communist organization and they tried to put me in with the communist organization, see; they use him to get to me. Okay, after they beat these fellows and turned them a loose, (inaudible) got Shoemaker into town somewhere, and they put Shoemaker in the hospital. I think Shoemaker lived four or five days after that; he had a bad cold. All the time out there cold and spittin' up blood and everything, and they beating on him and he died. And the man that beat him the most—he was a motorcycle cop—he had a wreck and got killed; it's just the way things turned out.

So, as I say, I won that case, that broke the back and when—at the trial when the judge told Clyde-Mallory, says, "Well, Clyde-Mallory, they caught up with you. Seems to me that it's going to cost Clyde-Mallory about \$72,000, got to put all these men back to work that you fired." And all they were back there just laughing and grinning, because you see they advertise. I see it every now and then in newspapers—I mean in magazine—"Ship and Travel Clyde-Mallory"—but now if you get hurt, or you lose your life and your folks sued Clyde-Mallory, they'll find out there isn't any Clyde-Mallory, it's Aqualines Incorporated.

And when he told them Clyde-Mallory had to pay \$72,000 they laughed at him. He said, "I know what you are laughing about, but the laugh is going to be on the other side of the face when I get through. Well, there isn't any Clyde-Mallory. That's just what I know, but Aqualines Incorporated is, and they're the ones." So that ended that. And you know it hurt

them so bad that they sold all their holdings out here. Right now I think it's the Munson Line or some line that does a little work out of where Clyde-Mallory use to be.

OA: What part did Charlie Moon have in this area?

JL: (inaudible) Charlie Moon was a racketeer. I don't know when Charlie Moon came here. I came back from World War I 1919; I went to work at Oscar Daniels shipyard. That was a steel shipyard, just on the north side of where the cement plant is out here; it was a big shipyard in there and they had been building big war time ships. Before I went in the army here, there used to be a wooden shipyard called Quira and when the war broke out in seventeen [1917], they said that Quira was a German. A bunch of crackers went out to Quira and tried to make him kiss the flag or something, and he wouldn't do it. And they maneuvered it some way and they took it away from him and they turned it over to Oscar Daniels. And when I came back from World War I, I went to work out there with Oscar Daniels, and I run on to—

OA: Excuse me, Mr. Lavelle, now when you started working at the shipyard then? Can you tell us something about the shipyard, like describe some of the working conditions?

JL: Well, now, the working conditions were really—well, I'll say they were fair, they gave the black man the same thing that they gave the white man. But it's just like any place you go down here. If a white man can do something and black man can do the same thing, they give the white man a little more money than [they] do the black man, see; that's the way it was back in then. Now I went out there and went to drivin' rivets out there for fifty-two cents an hour; that was my hourly rate, but I got away from that, I went to doin' piece work. Well, they couldn't push me back on piece work. Whatever they paid the white man they had to pay me. If they paid two cents a rivet, they had to pay me two cents a rivet, if they paid fifty cents a rivet they had to pay me fifty cents a rivet.

So I say it was fair, but they had plenty of crackers out there now. I wasn't out there about a week—I'd go out there dressed up in overalls and they wouldn't hire me, so I said to this fellow, "They keep on asking for riveters and everything, and I go out there and they won't give me a job."

He say, "Man you doing the wrong thing, putting on overalls to go out there to get a job. Do you want a job?"

I say, "Yeah."

"Put on your uniform and roll your overalls up under your—"

And I went out there the next morning. [They said] "Hey, soldier boy, come here. You ever worked around a shipyard?"

I say, "No, I've done construction work. I used to work for White Construction Company."

"Yeah, what did you do, put up hydrolytic tanks, hot rivets or cool?"

"Hot and cool."

And then he says, "Wait a minute." So he got on the phone there.

A fellow come down there and stood there, and looked at me and walked up and punched me. "Lavelle, what are you doing here?" His name is Johnny Pecham, he use to work for White Construction Company, he and I—it was five of us worked together and the last time I seen him was when we were in Del Rio, Texas, putting up a hydraulic tanks out there.

So that was it, I went to work and the first thing he done, he said, "I know you don't want fifty-two cents an hour, but I'm going to put down here at fifty-two cents an hour. But tomorrow morning we'll get you a gang together. I'm going to put you where you can make some money." I say okay, so the next morning he got me a gang, that's a man—what they call a hold-on man—heater and a passer and a buckner. Well, it's according to where you go. He wanted to put me on the skid, but they didn't pay much on the skid; you get five cents or six cents on the skid.

So I told him I rather go on the shell—that's on the side of the ship—and use some dry-wall rivets in 'em and—like the seams that lap like this—and use to drive rivets through there. They quit that now, they weld all that. See, there use to be a lap about twelve to fourteen inches on each plate, they go around and then lap, but now they just put 'em right together like that and weld 'em. I don't think I want to go to sea on a welded ship—don't seem like it be strong enough, because those big waves would rip these rivet ships to pieces so you know what they would do to a welded ship. But as I say, I've seen the good and the bad of it.

OA: Do you recall the soup lines in Tampa?

JL: Huh?

OA: The soup lines?

JL: Soup line? I've never seen a soup line here. See, in thirty-seven [1937] I left here and went to the East Coast, and I didn't come back until seventy-two [1972]. I was over there thirty-five years. I knew from 1916 up to thirty-seven [1937], that's what I was giving out—from thirty-seven [1937] to seventy-two [1972] I don't know what they had over here. They may have had soup lines but I never heard anybody say anything about it. No, the soup line is something that I've never seen, 'cause I tell ya, these Latin people—I think kind of hard to get a soup line, maybe but I doubt it.

OA: Any particular reason for you leaving in thirty-seven [1937]?

JL: Huh?

OA: Any particular reason for you leaving in thirty-seven [1937]?

JL: Well, I'll tell you. In thirty-seven [1937] things had gotten kind of slow, and I'd just married this girl that I've got now, I just married her in June of thirty-seven [1936] and I wasn't makin' the money that I wanted. But I'd started to buy a little house out on Lake Avenue—they got a project in there now, just off of Florida Avenue. I was scuffling like everything to try to keep the little payments and I didn't want to lose it—which I was lucky enough to sell it back to the man that I brought it from for the same thing that had I paid him. And things they were telling me about, things doin' good on the East Coast and they had given me a job back on the waterfront here, but I wasn't going to trust to any mistakes. Couple times I'd be workin'—I'd happen to look up and it be a big piece of timber swinging over me, somethin' like that, and I can't tell—I couldn't tell whether—who was my enemy, so I said the best thing for me to do is to cool it for a while.

Well I didn't intend to stay thirty-five years, but I did. I stayed thirty-five, I got a home in Fort Lauderdale now, and—tryin' to sell it. That's reason you see things all junked up here; we been right here six years in this doggone place, and we can't sell our place. My wife's got some property out on 15th Avenue, but she doesn't want to live there; got a lot out there, we don't want to build on that, so we just marking time that we can turn that house loose there, and we can get us a decent house to live in.

OA: Mr. Lavelle, what did Perry Harvey do after you left?

JL: Huh?

OA: What did Perry Harvey do with the union after you left?

JL: Perry Harvey?

OA: We have been hearing a whole lot of things about him and they haven't been too good, really.

JL: Well, now, I'll tell you. Perry Harvey—the way I figure it, I don't like to say it—I guess that's reason I'm in the predicament I'm in today. Cause if I'd just went on and said—and reported what had happen I might have been president there myself right today, instead of his son. Which I don't envy anybody, because anytime you get into any kind of a business you got to be careful because it's dog eat dog—you can't turn your head one way or the other, somebody's always trying to hook in there.

But Perry Harvey—my wife workin' in the office—she was a stenographer—and she was working in the office. He would write letters out shorthand, and get her to address the envelopes with the typewriter, and he would send them to David and Joseph P. Ryan. Well, the letters would come back to me, and I wouldn't know anything about it. And that's one way he happen to get in there, into office like that, so I called him a crook. And

which I'm going to tell you the right down truth about it. Whenever you hold a office in these organizations like the CIO, AFL, you got to be crooks—not right soft down but you know you got to be in a way where you can be persuaded and different things.

But I've seen this Jimmy Gleason—he was old Joseph P. Ryan's right hand man when we were in Texas; now he's the big man like Joseph P. Ryan was. And you read in the paper where he said one thing this morning and this evening he's contradicted that; he's said something else. It's like a lot of these other unions; they holler about they're for the workin' man. Only thing they're after is the money.

OA: Okay Mr. Lavelle, last question I have to ask you is that—had not the union been instituted here, do you think it would have came anyway?

JL: Well, I believe it would have. I believe it would have, but it may have been ten years of maybe longer getting here, cause you see, the ILD—well, I'll tell you what it was all about. They had a union here—the carpenters had a union, and different other works had unions, but the longshoremen and labor, they didn't have any. I know I had two or three fellows workin' with me on the waterfront, they tell me, "Man, my brother-in-law, he's working for such and such ah contractor, and want to know if he can get a job down here." So, man them carpenter won't let them even (inaudible) hold a job, so they belong to a union they won't let 'em, blackies become (inaudible), ya know. If you want to come down maybe I can give you something to do and I'd take 'em home—but that was before the union, see. But after we got a union then things turned around. If the longshoremen would strike the carpenters would strike if they asked 'em to, so I think—I think the union helped, it helped.

OA: Yeah, I have one more question. You mentioned Secret Service, you said that and—how you got in it?

JL: Well, here's what happened. See, I was born about forty-three miles from (inaudible) Ninth Cavalry's home on the junction (inaudible). I used to ride around in the (inaudible) when I was a kid, ya know. But Fort Riley, Fort Riley, Kansas and I got hemmed up in—enlisted in the (inaudible). I don't know what you do call it; it was supposed to be the cavalry. They sent me to Texas, so when I was called in to World War I and I come back, they sent me back to Texas, and when I was discharged they gave me three months training in Jefferson (inaudible) Missouri as a Secret Service detective, and (inaudible).

*end of interview*