

G. Karpinski
Melumpit

Mar 1/77

Gregory Karpinski
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Trans. Fred Wessell
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by Pat Billing

Works at Chevy Gear and Axle, Local 235 *as a Melumpit.*

PP: Mr. Karpinski, I wonder if you could tell me first where you were born,

CK GK: I was born *Sept* December 16³, 1952, in Detroit at Saratoga Hospital.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

GK: Four brothers and two sisters.

PP: Are they all living in the Detroit area?

GK: Yes.

PP: Have *you* ever *lived* ~~worked~~ anywhere else?

GK: No. Well, my sister lived in California for a few months.

PP: Is your mother Polish? *or part Polish?*

GK: Yes.

PP: Was she born here in the states?

GK: Yes.

PP: Where was she born?

GK: I would have to say in the Detroit area.

PP: What about your father?

GK: He was born here.

PP: So they met here?

GK: Yes.

PP: Do you know how they met?

GK: No.

PP: Did your grandparents migrate from Poland?

GK: On my father's side. My mother's parents didn't.

PP: You mean they were born in the *S*States?

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PP: What about your wife? Is she Polish or part Polish?

GK: She's one-quarter, I think. Both of her parents are Ukranian. On her mother's side, her mother's half Polish.

PP: Did you tell me before that you don't have any children?

GK: That's right.

PP: What was the year of your marriage?

GK: ^{Sept 13}
~~December 16~~, 1975.

PP: You got married that year on your birthday?

GK: Right. It's both our birthdays.

PP: Do you think it's a good thing for young people to work in the auto plant? I'm talking about children who are born now, in 1982-83. Do you think it's a good thing for them to work in the plants when they grow up?

GK: Gosh!

PP: Well, what if you had children, would you want them to work there?

GK: No.

PP: Did your father or ^{an} uncle or any other close relatives work in any of the plants?

GK: My dad drove a truck for a firm that supplied Chevrolet. My grandmother did. ^(worked in a factory) She worked during World War II. I don't know exactly how long she worked there.

PP: Do you know what she did?

GK: No.

PP: Do you know what plant she worked in?

GK: I think it was Dodge Main.

PP: Did she?

GK: My grandfather retired from there.

GK

PP: You talking about your father's side?

GK: My mother's side. (*lived in K'tels*)

PP: How about your father's side?

GK: He was an Eastsider, Van Dyke and Harper.

PP: Would you say that you consider yourself as an American or as a Polish-American?

GK: I've have to say I've got that Polish awareness, but not real strong though. I guess I'd have to say I'm more Americanized *As far as* ~~start speaking Polish or like that.~~ *I don't*
My wife speaks fluent Ukranian.PP: Now your parents were actually Polish or of Polish descent so they spoke Polish when ^{they} you were growing up?

GK: Yes.

PP: Did they speak Polish in the house when you were growing up?

GK: No. Well, it was only when they didn't want you to know what they were talking about, when you were bad or something.

PP: But they never taught you Polish.

GK: No. I studied it in the first grade when I was going to *Queen of Apostles*. They taught Polish in the first grade, *(I only went there the first grade)* but I never had the chance to ~~practice.~~ *grasp it*

PP: Well, would you say that you identify with Poland?

GK: No.

PP: Does what's happening now affect you, the Solidarity Movement?

GK: Not real close.

PP: Well, I was just wondering because some people do have a real feeling of closeness with Poland, the Solidarity Movement, the Pope,

GK: Well, it's *close to my* ~~does really break~~ my heart, but I'm not up on the *every* things...

GK

PP: Well some people do.

PP: Is there any particular area of Poland that you are interested in, that you want to talk about? Polish culture, music, anything like that?

GK: I played the drums. I ^{used to} played in a polka band.

PP: Did you? Which one?

GK: It was called the blue lights.

PP: Where did you play?

GK: Mostly weddings. Recently, ^{we} couldn't find the right type of musicians. An accordion player and myself, ^{we} wanted to ^{get} ~~form~~ ^{together} a polka band. Polka picnics, you know, summer time and stuff like that.

PP: Now, when you were growing up, whereabouts did you live?

GK: In Hamtramck.

PP: You lived right in Hamtramck? Were you aware of Hamtramck being a Polish community?

GK: Oh yeah.

PP: In what way?

GK: Well, there were a lot of "skis" around all the time.

We had a We used to go out to ^{Warsaw} the park and hang out when we were kids.

PP: Where were you hanging out?

GK: At the time, Hamlin Road which is something like 21 mile ^{d. Degunda} road. It was just a place that every Sunday we'd meet ^{when I was a kid} We used to have Polish picnics in the summertime. ^{still do.}

PP: You made a comment just a few minutes ago there were a lot of "skis" around. Was that a common phrase that people used to refer to Polish people or was that just something you used?

GK

GK: No it was just . . . you know . . . yeah.

PP: Do you belong to a Polish parish now?

GK: No. Ukranian.

PP: Do you belong to any Polish organizations?

GK: No, I really don't belong to anything. Aside from _____
which is a Catholic organization helping mentally retarded. *Chloria*

PP: How did you become interested in that?

GK: My dad ~~had~~ worked with them, seven or eight years. Because
of his involvement and ^{me} his helping out and stuff like that.

PP: When you were raised, did your parents own their own home?
got interested that way

GK: *No* We rented a lot. Mostly rented houses. Until about I think
I was about 11 years old when they finally did buy a house.

PP: Where were you in the order of children? *birth*

GK: Third.

PP: Third, so you have two brothers older?

GK: Brother and sister older.

PP: How many years ^{have you owned} were you at this house *3*

GK: Seven.

PP: Seven? So you got this when you were married?

GK: Before we were married.

PP: Before you were married?

GK: Yeah. We fixed it up and...we bought the house/^{in May}and then we
got married in *Sept*ber.

PP: You must have spent a lot of time and work on it?

GK: Right. Not a lot (laughs).

PP: Do you own a cottage or a boat or anything?

GK: No. Working on it.

PP: Which one are you working on?

GK:

GK: More or less a piece of property, something with a cottage on it.

PP: Whereabouts?

GK: That's up in the air.

PP: Oh, I see. You haven't decided. Just working on it.

GK: Right. Well the thing that's nice about living here is that a lot of people are moving out to the suburbs and everything and buying this home, this was supposed to be our starter home and we weren't going to stay more than five years but the bottom fell out of everything and rather than spend \$100,000 we decided to stick around and it's really convenient because I live so close to work ^(2 miles) and there's a lot more time to do what you want to do.

PP: That's true because time is worth ^{a great deal} a ^{parent -} parent or an in-law live with you? Those people that live half an hour further out have half an hour each way which is an hour plus all their money for gasoline. There's a big advantage to living close to work. Have you ever had

GK: No.

PP: Now, let me ask you something about work. How long have you worked at Gear & Axle?

GK: I started there in May of 1976. April.

PP: Where did you work before?

GK: I worked in a small shop. Used to make steel ceilings. ^(Acoustical manufacture) Acoustical ceilings. A small shop near Six Mile and Mound.

PP: Was that your first job, or were there other part time jobs?

GK: I worked at Chrysler for four and one-half hours.

PP: Four and one-half hours??? What happened?

GK: I was just young and didn't realize what I got myself into.

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GK: There I was putting windshields in with a guy that always talked Spanish and I just said, nah this ain't the life for me. The guys broke me in on the job the wrong way. The supervisors stopped the whole assembly line and said what are you doing. It was different windshields...that had different beads in it so the guys told me that when the chrome beads come around just leave them on top and someone else would put them in. Well, that's not what they wanted. They were asking me, well who's the guy who told you. I told the supervisor this guy told me not to put them in. Then I thought I'm getting this guy in trouble and said I don't know. The guy was staring ^{there} ~~at me~~ but I didn't want to squeal on him, so he said I was fired.

PP: That was a quick job.

GK: I worked through high school. I worked in an auto parts ^{sales} department, in stock.

PP: When you worked for 4½ hours for Chrysler, then you went into the ^{shop} ~~parts~~ business.

GK: Right.

PP: What actual job did you have?

GK: I was a press operator, packaged the material after it was ^{painted} cleaned, put it in the ^a boxes and shipped it out.

PP: Approximately how old were you when you went to Chevrolet Gear and Axle?

GK: 23.

PP: From when do you date your seniority status now?

GK: Oh, April 15, 1976.

PP: When you went into Gear and Axle, what did you hire in at?

GK: I was just a regular hourly...I was a production worker.

I don't know how I managed to stay away from the assembly

line. They put me on a knuckle job which was supplying

^a the conveyor ^{with parts}. Steering knuckle. Three-quarter ^{ton} and one

ton truck^s. Mostly physical labor. A job for a new hire.

We'd lift these things off and as they were coming off the

machine we'd put them in the skiff if the hooks were full

and then if there were no parts coming take them out of the

skiff and put them on the line.

PP: What is a skiff?

GK: ~~It's~~ just ^{containers} continuous.

PP: So how long did you do that?

GK: About ten days.

PP: And then what?

GK: I got laid off.

PP: Got laid off? How?

GK: They had a small cutback. ^{They} Had hired a ^{probably} thousand sixty people

^{April} they were getting ready for summer vacations. For some reason

they had a production slowdown and about half of us, they

laid us off/ ^{for 2 weeks.} Then I came back and worked in a similar type

job but in a different plant. - ^{Went to Plant 1}

PP: What did you do then?

GK: I worked, I was on day shift, probably for only about six

weeks. Then I was supplying parts for...oh, I was on a

transfer line, I was ^{with} supplying parts off of one conveyor

and ^{put them} onto another. Yeah, that's all I did. And then I went

on afternoons and at the same time I was going to school.

They ^{had} a pre-apprenticeship course. ^{They had it posted near} ~~Had to punch in the~~

GK

time clock. A pre-apprenticeship course where they get you ready to take the apprenticeship test.

PP: I see. Now you had graduated from what, high school in Hamtramck?

GK: Yes.

PP: You had decided to take this pre-apprenticeship course to ^{get} put you ^{for} through the apprentice program?

GK: Sure.

PP: What were they actually teaching in the pre-apprenticeship course?

GK: Ah, they'd ^{brought} match you up on the basic math that they were going to have on the test, they'd give you similar type tests, get you to identify certain things, to show you what these tests were going to be more or less like. They've been running those...I think the union runs them...they've had...

PP: How long did they run them? ^{them to gonna people.}

GK: Oh, I think it was 12 classes in six weeks and they were about an hour long.

PP: Then at the end of that you would try out for different...?

GK: No, you'd take the apprentice test. They usually timed them when you took the course, it usually coincided with whatever was going to be on the apprentice test.

PP: But for different trades?

GK: No. For every trade. You ~~choose~~ made your three choices.

PP: I see...what were your three choices? Do you remember?

GK: Millwright, machine repair and pipefitter. I was still on afternoons and this was 10 months after I worked at Chevy. And they came up to me on Friday night and handed me an A V O...which means avoid verbal orders. Write something

down. And then they said you're transferred to maintenance. I showed up there Monday morning, no it was afternoon shift. It was the last day of February of 1977. I worked on afternoons for two years.

PP: As what?

Apprentice
GK: As a millwright. What they do is they usually try to get apprentices half their time on one shift and half their time on another. So at first I thought I'm going into the trades on the afternoon shift but then I didn't realize that the second half I was going to be on days, and I'd probably never go back to afternoons and that's exactly what happened. I've been on days ever since.

PP: Approximately how long did it take you before you got your journeyman's card?

GK: Just a little over three years. They go by hours and we'd work a lot of hours. So as long as you can finish your school up. I finished school and two weeks later I had my hours in. Once ~~and~~ ^{now} awhile I'd hear of guys who'd finish school and couldn't get their hours in and there's other guys who had their hours and couldn't get the classes. Like right now there's nothing going on. At Macomb Community College is one way to ~~get~~ ^{have} your classes and Henry Ford is another.

PP: Where did you get yours?

GK: At Macomb. And right now if these guys didn't stay in synchronization with everyone ^{body} else, if somehow they missed school or didn't sign up for a class or something, now they're waiting for enough people to build up and then

they'll take the class.

PP: How many hours a week did you have class?

GK: Depending on how many classes you took. They were 15 week courses and the classes were two hours a week. Okay? So, let's say I had a math class and it was on Mondays from 2 to 4. You know, it depended on how many classes you took. Stayed and studied at school. I took two or three classes a semester and it was 19 classes to finish the course.

PP: It took how long?

GK: Three years.

PP: Do have any brothers or sisters at any of the plants now

GK: I ~~think~~ ^{my sister} she worked at Ford for awhile and was laid off.

She's working for the post office now.

PP: Do you like your work

GK: I like this job. (It's ever-changing, challenging, frustrating too.)

PP: Many jobs are frustrating. You mentioned being ^{not} lucky enough not to be on the line. Do you find being on the line boring?

GK: Yes. Very.

PP: Do you ever talk to people who work on the line about that?

GK: Yes.

PP: How do they feel about it? They all find it boring too?

GK: Most of them do. It's just a job like that, you have to have something to occupy your mind. I've heard stories about ^{of guys} . . . it turned out that one Black guy hit another Black guy on the head with a hammer. This happened at Plant 3. It was about 4 or 5 years ago. One guy wanted the fan on and the other one didn't.

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PP: Have you ever considered...what, you're about 30 now, right?

GK: Yes.

PP: Have you ever considered or wanted to change jobs? To something completely different?

GK: I've thought about that.

PP: Have you any ^{dream} ideas about what particular kind of work or other jobs you would like to do?

GK: More or less being my own boss. I'd like to...I don't have any one particular thing in mind. I'm going to have to...I was talking earlier about trading ^{my trade dry - it happened to} ~~with my~~ father. ~~He was~~ ^{His trade died was mud} He's a plasterer, wet plasterer.

Dry wall...I guess at one time plasterers were offered to put dry wall in and he just laughed. That's garbage.

Who's going to put that stuff in their house. This stuff is just going to fade away. Well, I think my dad was about 35 when dry wall was ^{completely washing} ~~just blocking~~ out plaster. It was hard to get work. And that's about the way I feel with what's going to happen at the plant.

PP: What did he go into?

GK: He worked for a ^Ssuperintended for the city in DPW.

PP: Let's talk about your job. Why do you think your job is going to ^{die} ~~bottom~~ out?

GK: Well, right now General Motors, they're getting away from individual trades. They're not going to have just a guy that's a pipefitter, an electrician...they want what they call general maintenance men. And that means you will be a specialist. They'll put you in this corner where this machine is operating, and no matter what goes wrong with it,

you'll fix it. If it means a new hydraulic line, you'll be there. If it means an overload to be pushed into ^{the} a new panel box, you'll be there. I think this is the way . . . they have them in assembly plants now. These guys will just do everything.

PP: Well won't you have to have a lot more training?

GK: I think it'll take just a little longer. Like I say, if it's just one little area, like I work throughout the whole complex right now. I'm never in the same place. Every day is different now. I could be up on the roof. I can be down in the scrap conveyors. That's the way it is right now, but when they go with this general maintenance type thing, these guys aren't going to be very versatile. They're going to know their little operation, and that's going to be the end of it. Hopefully, I'll be going to school in September to get educated in some robotics. Knowing repairing and ^{knowing} the work of the robots.

PP: What do you actually do now, basically?

GK: We move machinery, put up overhead conveyors, install floor conveyors, move the parts, install the assembly lines, ^{we} maintain the assembly lines. That about covers it.

PP: So was it you that decided to go to school in robotics. Or was it suggested to you?

GK: No, I just. ^{Robots} I know that's a field that's going to be around for awhile and I'd just like to be a part of it.)

PP: Where are you going to school?

GK: (I'm going to start out at Macomb, see how it goes.)

PP: Do they have some kind of certificate or program in robotics

out there?

GK: Yeah, they're starting a whole ^{series} bunch of things out there.

PP: Are there enough classes in it?

GK: I guess every semester they're adding more.

PP: Do you have any friends who are doing the same kind of thing?

GK: No. I've talked to some of the guys I work with ^{and they're} but ~~the~~ ^{interested in taking these} ~~problem is with classes and ... too~~

PP: Have you ever considered relocating to another state?

GK: Truthfully?

PP: Yes.

GK: No.

PP: You like it here in Michigan.

GK: Yeah. I like the seasons. Never want to go to California or Florida. ^{Side 2} I would have to say family, not even family, just the ^{whole} feeling in the whole Detroit area...it's just home to me...I don't know how to explain it. I have a friend who moved to California because he works for the ^{Burroughs} Corporation. He was transferred out there. He's a computer specialist and designer. He comes back once a month, every six weeks. I guess that same thing that ^{keeps him} ~~makes him come~~ back keeps me here.

PP: Is he Polish?

GK: No.

PP: Do you know any Polish men who have moved to the Sunbelt to another state ^{who have} and been laid off?

GK: No.

PP: Does your wife work?

GK: No. She;'s been going to school.

GK

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PP: She's in school? What's she want to be?

GK: She wants to get a degree in special education. Teach retarded kids. We both took a sign language class together, *last summer*. She's going full time.

PP: Have you ever thought about what age you want to retire at? This is a *strange* question at this early age. But have you thought about it?

GK: I've thought about it. I'll have 30 years, if I stay at Chevrolet, I'll have 30 years when I'm 53 which is pretty young. I don't know, I'm one of those people that just plays things by ear. I guess I'm not a very good planner. Don't set too many goals.

PP: Well, would you stay longer than 30 years?

GK: I have no idea. I've thought about it and I know some people say they get 30 years and there's no way there going to stay. I'd like to have something else. Other interests. I mean the only way I'm going to stay there is because I want to or I have to.

30 + 20

PP: How many times have you been laid off?

GK: You mean in all my work?

PP: Yes, have you any idea how many times?

GK: *2 - weeks*
A month.

PP: You've never had a long layoff.

GK: No. Acoustics closed up and left the state. Well, they didn't really leave the state. The owner told us that he sold it to another company which is located in Ohio.

So it wasn't...we didn't even have a chance to transfer.

But I was off...the place closed March 31ST and I was hired at

Chevy on the 15th so I was off two weeks.

PP: Acoustics being a small shop?

GK: Right.

PP: If you were laid off, would you consider retraining, perhaps to something else?

GK: I would probably go to school like in robotics and I think that's going to be a big field.

PP: How do you think your wife or your parents or your friends would think about your going into something new?

They must know that you're interested in robotics, how do they feel about it? Too modern?

GK: No, they don't think that. I don't want to stagnate myself
I just want to ...

PP: How do your parents feel about your going into this field?

GK: They like it.

PP: I mean it's non-traditional yet on the other hand your father ~~wants you to go...~~ *want through this whole but with the possibility of beginning a redundant*

PP: What do you think about someone taking early retirement?

Is it a good idea?

GK: Early Retirement?

PP: Yes. Like you get your 30 years in and you can leave, taking early retirement.

GK: It's great. It's great to have something outside of what is going on in the shop. I know a guy that's a millwright leader on ~~the~~ afternoon shift that will have his 50 years in next week.

PP: Fifty??? You mean 30.

GK: No Fifty. Five Oh!

PP: And he's how old.

GK

GK: I think he's going to make it. I guess he went in underage or something. He's Polish.

PP: Do you think that ^{aff. action} ~~Polish extraction~~ has anything to do with layoffs or is it strictly based on seniority.

GK: Well, the affirmative action... If it had happened 15 years ago, then it wouldn't have had much effect on, you know, the Blacks not being in factories now. But I don't think it has much affect now.

PP: Have you played an active role in the union?

GK: No.

PP: Do you vote?

GK: Yes. Well, I've been going to the union meetings, but as far as getting anywhere ^{with them} ~~active~~, no.

PP: Have you taken any classes on unions, anything like that, nothing in unions or anything?

GK: No.

PP: If you knew a few years ago what you know now about our current economic conditions, would you have tried a different line of work. What do you think about that? It's hard to say looking back but given the facts, like you say, your job might become no more and things might be kind of hard like signing up for another ^{type of} ~~apprenticeship~~.

GK: I think so, yeah.

PP: What would you have thought about?

GK: I thought about it ~~yeah~~, see what happens when people get into an apprenticeship, get into a program for apprenticeship, usually they're the ones who have had some type of education or at least ^{want} ~~doing~~ some type of education and they don't

that are little areas
 want to be stuck in some kind of corner. Everybody who takes the apprenticeship test puts down some type of profession ~~like~~ ^{so} electrician or pipefitter and if you don't score the highest, when they ~~run into an~~ ^{they handed me the AVO} to become a millwright, I took it. I wasn't going to wait around for machine repair. Or wait around to become a pipefitter. I just wanted an out from where I was at, I wasn't looking ahead. I didn't even know that ^{too} much about what a millwright does at Gear and Axle. Not until I was... I didn't know it was in ^{the} existing trade

PP: Of course there are millwrights in other parts of the plant too. It's a trade that...

GK: It's a very visible trade. Right now there are spinoffs, machine repair, tool makers at one time or another got involved in this type of work. Carpentry.

PP: They worked in the mill?

PP: How do you feel about Japanese and other types of foreign cars? Do you have any feelings one way or the other?

GK: I think the United States got everything they deserved.

PP: You do? Why do you think that?

GK: Well, ^{take} the General Motors Case... they had a chance to down-size the car, but they were making money hand over fist and they said should we take this twelve billion dollars and give it to the stock holders or should we reinvest. So they gave it to the stock holders. There ^{They got caught with their pants down} I thought was the tombstone, ^{down} that's all.

PP: Well how do you feel about people ^{using a} buying Japanese or other foreign cars?

GK: ^{buy it} I think you get what's more valuable. I know myself I have ^{even} Japanese products. I've got a video recorder that was made in Japan. ^{For imports}

GK

PP: What kind of car do you have?

GK: I've got a Chevy.

PP: What year?

GK: '75.

PP: Would you feel better about foreign cars if they were assembled in the U.S.?

GK: I don't think that's ^{really} the answer. I think the U.S. plants, they have to be competitive. Particularly now what's happening is that the unions are getting broke. To wrap it all up, the big companies are just putting the working man back in his place, that's all. I think they could flood the market at any time they wanted. If they just wanted to flood the market at any time with cheaper cars they could do it.

For: imports

the plus they wanted +

PP: You mean ^{the} American ~~models~~? *auto companies*

GK: Yes.

PP: Do you think people have the money to buy new cars all the time.

GK: I'm ^{over due for} interested in a new car, but I just keep fixing it.

PP: It's a lot of money, but not everyone can fix their car.

GK: But you just got to take your chances.

PP: Now if you were permanently laid off, how would you feel. You mentioned about going to school. Is that really what you would do? If you thought you would be permanently laid off, would you get your savings and go to school?

GK: No, I'd probably try to get a job somewhere else and try to go to school.

PP: Who pays for your robotics schooling? GM.

GK: GM.

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PP: Are you allowed so many hours of school. How do you get that schooling is what I want to know.

GK: As long as it's job related you can take classes ~~of your own selection.~~ *and they'll pay for it.*

PP: You said you were going to go to Macomb. Right? Is that the best place around here?

GK: No, I would imagine probably that Lawrence Institute of Tech is one of the better places...I don't know how I could get in though.

PP: Would GM pay for your classes if you wanted to go there?

GK: I'm pretty sure they would, yeah.

PP: What do you think about people aged 18 or 20 being trained now to do more than one job? You ever thought about that. *kind of* In the future, the young people would have at least two jobs to go to? *Because jobs do become redundant* You ever thought about that? *many* You think it might be a good idea?

GK: It would definitely be a good idea. *Just by having* If I had something to fall back on. When times were good, you could do what you really wanted to but when times were bad you would always have ~~something to fall back on.~~ *something else.*

PP: What do you think about these quality of work programs and such that they have in the plants?

GK: *QWL* (They have a pretty good...the people who do get involved in them, it's too bad that everybody doesn't get involved in them. But I think they're pretty good.) They have ideas and... *circles*

PP: How often do you...?

GK: Once a week.

PP: Do you think that management and labor are candid about ~~at these~~ *at* these things, are candid about what they want?

QWL

GK: I think they can pretty much leave things alone too. If you don't want to talk about certain things there's ways of getting off ^{the subject} assembly. Well, we can't do anything or... First of all in a circle, they say that anything that's settled contractually cannot be discussed in the ^{so} meeting. As far as well this is my job or wanted to be or something like that or something that is in the contract that's like if you come up with an idea like ^{we} you should have a Xerox machine in this building or whatever the case may be, if you think you have a good idea or a cost cutting idea, then ^{they} you kick it around.)

PP: Do you think that the ideas from these groups have a long range use or that in the long run they ^{prove} will be of some benefit to the plant? Or to the men who work there?

GK: Well, when I went to an orientation thing, it did sound feasible, it did sound like it could work. It did sound like they wanted it to be long range. So I think it ^{could} work. I think it's nice to have a place where you can speak ^{you} or mind or give your ^{news} grievance.

PP: What do you think of the importance of a job to a man's well being with all these people being laid off now? Men who have had jobs for many, many years suddenly don't have them. I'm talking about the older person, not the very, very young person. How do you rate the importance of a job to a man's life? Do you think it's very important, or just important, or there ^{are} other things that are equally important?

GK: I think it can be really important... somebody... well there are some people who are in the factories because they have

GK

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to be. There are people who wish they ^{were} could ~~quit~~ the factory. To some, it's pretty important.

PP: What about these people...well you know ^{several} some people who are laid off.

GK: Right.

PP: What is the effect on the family of their being laid off?

I don't mean just financial ^{and} economically but how has it had an ^{after} effect on the family? Having a man home all the time and possibly depressed. I just wonder...do you know anyone who's been laid off and ^{any kind of} gone through all the problems?

GK: Not really.

PP: ^{Microcosm} ~~Microcosm~~ at home ^{there} may be come intensified ~~Microcosm~~ at home. Because they've lost money and hard times and this sort of thing. You haven't seen any of this? You haven't seen any illness?

GK: No.

PP: Nobody getting ulcers or anything like that. Because this can happen when ^{people are} you're under stress. Some of these ~~men~~ ^{people} when they get laid off, they're so worried about what happens when their benefits run out and they've got a family, it's a real responsibility. So stress is a real problem.

^{GK}
^{PP} But you haven't seen that?

GK: No. Nothing. Right now it's just the younger people who are laid off at Gear and Axle. There's nobody that has a lot of years. The ones that do the machine repairers, they're back to about 11 years of seniority. ^{they are cut back} Like the apprentice journeymen...they don't go out on the street, they're put back into production. And I really don't know any of those people...I don't know how. Would have to be pretty devastating.

GK

PP: In your work are you working with men who are much older than you are?

GK: It goes right up the line because they were pretty active, they were making apprentices all the time.

PP: How old is the youngest one on the assembly line?

GK: He's probably right around 20 or 21.

PP: That young? He can't have much seniority then.

GK: No, but he got into the trade. There's people in the trade that if they were still in production they would be laid off. Seniority goes...you keep plant seniority and you are protected in ^{the} ~~your~~ trade.

PP: Being in the trades is one form of protection.

GK: If you're a millwright.

PP: If this is the case, then why do you say that your trade is dying? You're taking apprentices when they're 20 or 21...

GK: Well, they came in when they were young. Around three years ago things were still moving pretty freely then and they happened to slip in there.

PP: Well let me ask you this then. Are there any younger apprentices, any 18-year-olds then?

→ GK: No there aren't. My brother Mark was an apprentice, not an apprentice but in ^{an employee} training. He's cut back and they have three new journeymen laid off and another...

PP: Well now the three journeymen who were laid off...how old were they?

GK: They hired in as journeymen. I don't even know them. They were on second shift.

PP: Oh, I see. But they are older ~~and got laid off~~ than this.

GK

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than this guy on your shift...but why would they get seniority...
he was in there longer. Is that why he's still there?

GK: Right. But they hired journeymen after he was an apprentice.

PP: Oh, I see. And his seniority started after he was an
apprentice.

GK: Right. And the day he came into the trades is the day ^{where} his
seniority goes back to.

PP: So actually your seniority goes back...you mention this
date, April 15, 1976, that's when you were in Gear and Axle,
but is that when your seniority began?

GK: No.

PP: What is the date of your seniority?

GK: March of 1977. It was either February 28 or March 1. I'd
say March 1st.

PP: Now is there anything you would like to add before we stop
talking? Anything you want to comment on?

GK: You asked me before why my trade was dying. I've got to
be part of it.

PP: Part of what?

Workplace
GK: (If they decide at Gear & Axle to merge the trades, I would
like to have an opportunity at that. In fact, with my
seniority, I wouldn't have the opportunity. Depending on
how they would go about doing that, I wouldn't know what
they would do. Definitely it would cut down on manpower.
Because they would just take one guy here and stick him
there. Like I say, machine repair is back 11 years.
If they merged, let's say, if they just tried it out,
merging machine repair with millwrights, All those guys

that have...they picked their trades and I picked mine. And I don't think that they should come up with merging trades like that. There's no way I would be a part of that unless they did something, unless they said we're going to take a ratio from each trade and make you guys general maintenance men.)

Workplace

PP: Do they have robots there now?

GK: They have one. But it's not operating yet. They're working on setting it up right now.

PP: What's it going to do?

GK: It's just a painter. Automatically spray paint axles. We've got a guy now who wears a mask and sprays them...

PP: And this robot's going to do all this? So you think you're going to have a lot more robots in Gear and Axle?

GK: If it's around. That's another thing...I don't know how long Gear and Axle will be there. The new machines that they are ^{buying} putting in could very well be picked up and put anywhere in the United States. It doesn't have to be at Gear and Axle. Now they're finding out that they have to constantly update this machinery. I worked in the yard where we were shipping out machines ^{that} for other companies to purchase. And I saw a date on there that said 1928. If they've had that ^{press} machine since 1928, I think they got their money's worth. And then they sold it!

PP: How do the men feel about this robot. The men in the paint spray area, how do they feel about this robot that's going to...

GK: I've talked to one of those guys and...it's not a very good job. So it didn't seem to bother him. Breathing those

fumes and you blow your nose and black paint comes out of your nose. Even with a respirator. It's not a very good

job to ~~start~~ ^{begin} with. ^{If} Robots ^{took} ~~doing~~ jobs like that ^{people really} ~~wouldn't~~ ^{worry about it}

PP: Do you have to wear any safety equipment?

GK: Safety glasses. Ear protection. I keep ear plugs in my coveralls many times.

PP: Does everyone wear safety glasses?

GK: Yes.

PP: How about hats?

GK: Hard hats? No. That's by choice. If you were in construction ^{area} or something, you should be wearing them. And safety shoes are optional. Only because if they were mandatory, then the company would have to pay for them.

PP: Do you spend any time over at the union, at the local; do you go over there, ^{meet} ~~make~~ friends there or anything like that?

GK: I ^{go to} ~~meet~~ with the skilled tradesman. ^{meetings}

PP: How often do they meet?

GK: Once a month. Third Thursday of the month. See what they

PP: were having...they were meeting once a month at 11 am on

Sundays. If you were working, see we sometimes worked 7

^{Schedules} ~~days a week~~...If you were working you would have to go during

your lunch period. We used to get lunch from 11 to 11:30.

You would be at a union meeting for a half hour during

which probably nothing would happen and you'd have to be

back on your job. or make a special trip which was not too

hard for me. But when I do get a day off, I don't want to

end up going down there. So now they're having them on

Thursdays and I've been going to them.

PP: Okay. Well thank you very much for talking to me.