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Interview with Ronald Koscielski, Interview 1
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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Chav
5/26/84

This is Pat Pilling. The date is June the 22nd, 1982. I'm talking to Mr. Ronald Koscielski of Local 235.

PP: What kind of trade are you in?

Kosc: Machine repairman.

PP: Where were you born and when were you born?

Kosc: Detroit, 1939.

PP: What was the date?

Kosc: June 10th.

PP: Are your parents from Poland?

Kosc: No.

PP: They were both born in the States?

Kosc: Yeah. My parents were born in the States and my grandparents were born in the Old Country.

PP: Any particular part of the Old Country that you know of?

Kosc: No, I don't.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Kosc: I got a whole bunch of them. There's eight of us in the family.

PP: Any of them work in the plants?

Kosc: No.

PP: Have they ever worked in the plant?

Kosc: Two of my brothers have. One's in the Service now and the other one just quit.

PP: What plants did they work in?

Kosc: One worked in Plant 8 and the other one worked in Plant 2.

PP: Here, at Gear and Axle?

Kosc: Yeah.

PP: Is your wife Polish? Are you married?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: Is she Polish?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: Completely Polish or part Polish?

Kosc: Completely Polish.

PP: Have you any children?

Kosc: Yes, I got four children. Three girls and a boy.

PP: Ranging in age from what to what?

Kosc: From eighteen to eleven. ~~Nineteen to eleven.~~

PP: Have the eldest worked in the plant at all?

Kosc: No.

PP: Would you ever want them to work in the plant?

Kosc: No.

PP: Why is that?

Kosc: Because I'd like them to have something better.

PP: Why do you say better? In what way?

Kosc: Well, my job is fairly good being a skilled tradesman. But, it's too hard to get into a skilled trades job now. There's too many skilled tradesmen laid off. They're not doing any hiring in skilled trades. The only job



Kosc: they can get is on production.

PP: Did your father or an uncle or anyone like that ever work in the plant?

Kosc: Yeah, my *dad* used to. He used to work at Plymouth's. Then he quit and opened his own business.

PP: What did he do at Plymouth?

Kosc: He was a truck repairman.

PP: So, what kind of work did he go into when he opened his own business?

Kosc: He had an air conditioning, grease exhaust system cleaning business.

PP: Did you have any other relatives that worked in the auto plant or the auto industry?

Kosc: I think a lot of my uncles worked in Chrysler's. But, I'm not sure.

PP: When you say a lot, you mean two, three?

Kosc: *About*
Four of them.

PP: You have a big family, do you?

Kosc: Oh yeah. Big family.

PP: Where were you raised as a child?

Kosc: I think the name of the street was Illinois.

PP: That's in Detroit?

Kosc: That's in Detroit.

PP: Not in Hamtramck? Did you ever live in Hamtramck?

Kosc: No, never lived in Hamtramck.

PP: Whereabouts do you live now?

Kosc: Warren.

PP: Is it quite a Polish enclave where you live?

Kosc: No.

PP: Do you identify at all with Poland? The things that are happening in Poland at all?

Kosc: No.

PP: I just wondered because some people do with that Solidarity movement with the workers. But you don't.

Kosc: I'm too busy trying to lead my own life to worry about somebody else's life.

PP: Do you go to a Polish parish?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: Which one do you attend?

Kosc: St. Blaise. (27)

PP: Do you belong to any Polish organizations?

Kosc: No.

PP: Don't play in a Polish band?

Kosc: No. I don't like Polish music.

PP: What about Polish food?

Kosc: That I like.

Kosc: Had a lot of that Polish home cooking before I got married.

PP: Well, you do now, don't you?

Kosc: I still do, but not as much as I used to.

PP: When you were growing up, did your parents own their own home?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: And you have your own home now?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: Is this your first home or second home?

Kosc: Second one.

PP: Where were you before?

Kosc: Over on the East side on Theodore and Moran.

PP: In Detroit. What made you move out? Bigger house?

Kosc: Better neighborhood. It was going bad.

PP: Did your kids go to parochial school?

Kosc: Yes. Public school, excuse me.

PP: Did you go to parochial school when you were small?

Kosc: 'Til the eighth grade.

PP: Which one did you go to?

Kosc: Immaculate Conception.

PP: You mentioned you had a motorbike?

Kosc: Motorcycle.

PP: What kind of a car do you drive?

Kosc: I've got a Mustang II.

PP: Do you have a boat?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: What kind?

Kosc: Fourteen foot Skycraft.

PP: Where do you go with that?

Kosc: Usually ^{out in} the Detroit River. Lake St. Clair.

PP: Do you use that for fishing?

Kosc: Oh yeah.

PP: You have lots of hobbies then; with your motorcycle and your boat and fishing.

Kosc: Yeah, I've got lots of hobbies.

PP: Do you have a cottage someplace?

Kosc: No.

PP: Did you ever have a parent or a parent-in-law living with you?

Kosc: No.

PP: Now I'd like to know a little bit about your work-life, so to speak. What kinds of jobs did you have in high school?

Kosc: Well, I used to help my dad when he had a gas station. That was the only thing I done.

PP: Then what did you do after that?

Kosc: Then after that, I got a job at Cadillac.

PP: Doing what?

Kosc: Working on the production line.

PP: Which plant?

Kosc: Cadillac down on Clark Street.

PP: That was what, Local 23?

Kosc: Twenty-two, I think. Then I got laid off over there.

PP: What did you do on the production line?

Kosc: I did so many jobs, it's hard to remember. Just about everything. Put in light trimmings. Putting the parts on the line on the cars. Down to the (49) foundry.

PP: So, you stayed at Cadillac. Did you go into an apprentice program at Cadillac?

Kosc: No, I got laid off over there and they sent me

Kosc: over here to get a job. I come over here and
I got a chance to get on skilled trades, so
I stayed here.

PP: So you signed up for machine repairman?

Kosc: Yeah.

PP: How long was your apprentice program?

Kosc: I didn't have an apprentice program. I was
on the E.I.T. program.

PP: Did you take any classes outside the (52) .

Kosc: Well, they sent us to school for a while.

PP: Where to?

Kosc: It's a trade school over here where they send
all of them. I forget the name of it. It's
been about ten years since I've been over there.

PP: So, how long have you had your journeyman's card?

Kosc: About six, seven, eight years.

PP: When do you count your seniority from?

Kosc: From ~~the~~ fourth year you've been on, you get
what they call E.I.T.S. That's when your
seniority starts.

PP: So, what was the date of your seniority?

X Kosc: I don't even remember. It's so important
I even forget it.

PP: I only ask because most people remember
exactly what the date was.

— Kosc: It's unimportant to me.

PP: You don't even remember the year?

Kosc: I don't even remember the day I had it in.

PP: You don't even remember the year of your seniority?

Kosc: No. It's unimportant. I can't see any meaning for importance in that.

PP: I guess it's only important when people figure out how many years they've got to retire.

Kosc: The day when I have to find out about it, I'll just go look it up in the book and find out.

PP: Do you have any idea what you're going to do when you do retire?

Kosc: Not the slightest. I might be dead by then. No special thing planned.

PP: Go into business for yourself, or go fishing?

Kosc: Cross that bridge when we come to it.

PP: You're one of these people ^{that's} sort of day by day?

Kosc: In little ways. Something like that is too far in the future to plan on.

PP: Have you ever considered changing your job?

Kosc: To what?

PP: I don't know! To something else.

Kosc: No, not really. I like doing what I'm doing.

PP: Some people decide when they get to be thirty-five, forty that they'd like to try something else. So, I always ask people if that's something they'd like to do. Some people ^{do} have ideas and some people don't. Some people say ^{exactly} what you did; that they just want to stay where they are. Have you ever considered going out of state to find work?

Kosc: No.

PP: How many times have you been laid off?

Kosc: Only once when I was on production over at Cadillac.

PP: That's the only time? Never at Gear and Axle?

Kosc: I think I was laid off once over here and was off for two weeks.

PP: So, you'd say that you really liked your work?

Kosc: Oh yes.

PP: Have you participated at all in these Quality of Work Life circles?

Kosc: No, I think it's a whole bunch of horseshit. All it is is a big chill program.

PP: Does your wife work at all?

Kosc: No. She's a housewife. That's enough of a job.

PP: How many children do you have?

Kosc: Four.

PP: Do you know of any Polish auto workers who have gone out of state to find work?

Kosc: No.

PP: Beyond your classes for your E.I.T., have you taken any kind of classes in anything?

Kosc: No.

PP: Nothing at all? I thought you might have taken something in taking care of a boat or something like that.

Kosc: No. That ^{all} seems to come natural.

PP: Do you sometimes go off for several days?

Kosc: Yeah, sometimes I go off for a week. We were just gone three weeks ago for a week in Lake Leelanau On a fishing trip.

PP: You said you fish mostly *for walleye* . Any other fish?

Kosc: Once in a while we catch some bass, and pike. Fish through the ice and catch perch and pike. And a little bit of walleye.

PP: How many years have you worked at Gear and Axle?

Kosc: Twenty-three years. But not all at the Gear and Axle.

PP: But when they count your years in toward the thirty years, they count that.

Kosc: I worked at Cadillac for five years.

PP: You've had your journeyman's card for six . . .

Kosc: About seven, eight years.

PP: I'm trying to hurry up the interview because you said you have to go. What do you think about Japanese and some of the foreign automobiles? Any feelings one way or the other?

Kosc: Like what?

PP: That the United States shouldn't let them in or people shouldn't buy them.

Kosc: I think they should let them in but I think they should charge them the same price they charge us for shipping our cars over there. I think this country's stupid. You send a car over there, it costs \$28,000 for a *over there* Chevrolet, that you can buy for \$8,000 over here. But yet, their cars sell for less money over

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laid off /
Kosc: Whatever it took to get along.

PP: You wouldn't try to get into something else,
or would you?

Kosc: It's hard to say. It depends on what
would be open.

PP: Have you ever been interested in robots or
anything like that?

Kosc: Not really.

PP: How about computers?

Kosc: That's an interesting field. That's one big
open field.

PP: But, you've never taken a course in computers.

Kosc: No. We've got a couple guys in the shop who
are taking it up now.

PP: What do you feel about people taking early
retirement if they get laid off? Do you
think it's a good idea?

Kosc: Taking early retirement if you get laid off?

PP: No, what I mean is, if a production worker
keeps getting laid off and he's around thirty.
So he figures he'll take what he has and go
into something else. It isn't really retire-
ment. It's quitting and starting something
else, really.

Kosc: What do I think about that? It's up to him,
what he wants to do.

PP: What happens if a person has more years in,
and is laid off? Do you think he should just
wait and hope that he gets called back in?

Kosc: here than they do over there.

PP: Do you think you'd feel differently if they assembled them here using American workers?

Kosc: They wouldn't be Japanese cars then.

PP: What I don't understand is that many of the cars that we do have, apparently have a lot of foreign parts in them.

Kosc: All the steel we get is all foreign steel.

PP: Some people say they are more foreign than they are American.

Kosc: General Motors is trying to blow smoke up somebody's butt. They think that they are fooling somebody. But, all the steel they buy is foreign. It all comes ^{out of} Japan.

PP: I heard, for example, that the engine of the Luv truck was made in Japan *was*.

Kosc: I don't know if it still is.

PP: This is why I was asking the question. Because so much of a so-called American car is made What do you think about this out-sourcing?

Kosc: I think it's all right if the people at home here've got enough work ^{where} they can't handle it. And they need to send it out someplace else, that's fine. As long as there's people here who need work, it should be ~~sent~~ ^{kept} to this country.

PP: If you were laid off and GM decided they were going to not have as many machine repairmen, do you have any idea what you might do?

*on to currency
(edit)*

Kosc: It depends on what situation. I don't know.

PP: I'm thinking mainly of people at Dodge Main.

Kosc: You're asking me what somebody else would do.

I don't know.

PP: None of us know what somebody else will do.

But, sometimes people do have opinions on some of these things. That's why I asked you.

Have you ever played an active role in the Union?

Kosc: No. That's another farce.

PP: Do you vote?

Kosc: Yes.

PP: Do you go to trade meetings at all?

Kosc: No.

PP: Have you ever attended any of the education classes?

Kosc: No.

PP: I guess you're too busy with all your hobbies to do something like that. How do you think the automotive industry is affected by inflation?

Kosc: It's affected very much by it. You can see by all the people we've got laid off.

PP: Do you think it's the inflation or do you think it's the amount of imported cars?

Kosc: I don't think the amount of imported cars means anything as to finding out why people are laid off. They're trying to make everybody believe it is. But, I don't think it is. They're not selling that many more imported cars than they are American cars. So, how can the

Kosc: foreign cars be stopping our market over here on cars.

PP: What do you think about the idea of a young person, say one of your ^{older} kids, being trained for more than one job?

Kosc: I think it's a good idea.

PP: Do you think they should be trained in two completely different kinds of jobs or sort of a couple of jobs for later?

Kosc: Whatever they can handle.

PP: Have you ever talked about this with your kids? Have they ever talked about it to you?

Kosc: Not really. My oldest one's already got her goals set. She knows what she wants to be.

PP: What does she want to do?

Kosc: She wants to be an artist. She's going to college now and taking art courses. She wants to be some kind of illustrator, or something.

PP: What college is she at?

Kosc: Center for Creative Studies.

PP: Down in Detroit. # Very excellent school.

Kosc: She's a very excellent artist.

PP: What kind of art does she do?

Kosc: She's learning a little bit of everything there. When the semester ended, I think she was into acrylics.

PP: Although you are Polish, you don't seem to identify too much with things Polish. When you

PP: see some of the young Polish men laid off, do you think it affects them any greater than anyone else? Being laid off? Because of strong family ties and the importance of their jobs?

laid off.
Kosc: I don't see how it would affect one anymore than another. You don't say, you're laid off more because you're Polish.

PP: No, I don't mean that at all. I mean the affect on the individual.

Kosc: It doesn't have any greater affect on one ~~of~~ another.

PP: These have been just very general questions and I don't want to take too much of your time. So, thank you very much.

Kosc. Alngit.

End of interview.