

*Tool & Die  
Grinder*

Interview with George Kubasinski, Interview 1  
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Transcriber: Diane Roth  
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

*clock*

This is Pat Pilling. The date is June the 21st, 1982. I'm talking with Mr. George Kubasinski who lives at 37625 Badger in Sterling Heights. Mr. Kubasinski is a tool and die grinder at Chevy Gear and Axle and a member of Local 235.

PP: Would you tell me first where you were born and when you were born?

Kuba: I was born in Detroit in 1945. February 2nd.

PP: Were you born in a hospital?

Kuba: Yes, I was born in a hospital.

PP: Were any of the children born at home?

Kuba: No. I believe I was born in Grace Hospital.

PP: So, actually, that makes you how old now?

Kuba: Thirty-seven.

PP: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Kuba: I have three brothers and one sister.

PP: Are they all living?

Kuba: Yes.

PP: Do they live in this area?

Kuba: My brother, Clare, lives in Sterling, my sister lives in Sterling, and my brother, Jim, whom you've met, lives in Troy. My brother, Tim, lives in Roseville.

PP: Is your mother Polish or part Polish?

Kuba: My parents are Polish on both sides.

PP: Where were they born?

Kuba: ... In Detroit.

PP: What about their parents?

Kuba: As far as I know, I'm the second generation born here. Now, I think I'm the third generation. Because my grandparents, I believe were born here too. Their parents came here from Poland.

PP: So, really your great-grandparents came over.

Kuba: Right. I mean to say we're third not second generation born here.

PP: That's usually considered fourth generation by people who (16) . They consider the first generation as the immigrants. So, if your grandparents were born in the States, they'd be second and your parents would be third and you would be fourth.

Is your wife Polish or part Polish?

Kuba: No, not at all.

PP: Do you have children?

Kuba: Yes, I have two boys and a girl.

PP: How old are they?

Kuba: I have a son eleven, Martin. Jim<sup>e</sup> is fourteen, just yesterday. And Laurie's fifteen.

PP: Have you ever thought that you would be interested in having them work in a plant when they grow up?

Kuba: I'd like them to do whatever would make them happy.

PP: Have they shown any interest in working?

Kuba: Oh yes. My two boys ~~have~~ constantly got my garage all tore up with bicycles and motorcycles and go-carts. They like that type of thing.

PP: Are they very mechanically minded?

Kuba: Yes, especially my son Jim.

PP: He's the one that's fourteen? Has he expressed an interest at all in the same kind of work that you do?

Kuba: In mechanics, really. I started out being a mechanic. I took some training to be an auto mechanic. ~~Then~~ I started working in a small shop doing tool work. Then I changed my field.

PP: I'm going to ask you about that in just a moment. But, I want to know a little bit more about some of your relatives, because I am interested in the Polish aspect of your background. Did your father or any other relatives work in the plants, at all?

Kuba: Yes, my dad worked in Dodge Main when he was younger.

PP: What kind of work did he do?

Kuba: He worked in what they call (31) testing. Where they tested the differential. I think from noise and (32) the gears and that type of thing.

PP: Is that part of the skilled trades?

Kuba: No. It was sort of a inspectors type job,  
I believe.

PP: What about all the other relatives? (33)

Kuba: My dad's father worked (34) Dodge Main. He  
was a (34) <sup>his whole life</sup> he ran a turret lathe.

PP: So he was probably one of the original members of  
(35) <sup>focal 3?</sup> Your grandfather.

Kuba: My grandfather on my mother's side worked  
for (36) <sup>Briggs</sup> He's a carpenter. In the early  
days, he actually worked on the line and  
built the bodies of the cars. If you under-  
stand that back in the '20s and <sup>early</sup> '30s, cars were  
actually a wood frame with the sheet metal over  
it. In later years, before he retired, he just  
worked as a carpenter around the shop (39).

PP: Do you remember any stories your grandfather  
told you about what it was like working  
in the plant back in those early days? I'm  
talking about the 1920s.

Kuba: No, I don't think it ever really came up. I  
can remember, especially my grandfather on my  
mother's side, we spent a lot of time over there.  
And he was constantly building something for  
somebody or doing something to his house.  
I can remember going with my dad. My dad,  
in later years, was a milkman and he had a  
truck all the time. And he would go to  
Briggs and get all the (scrap wood for him.

Kuba: As a kid, I can remember (44) and that type of thing. He'd take the good wood and he'd use it to fix somebody's porch or the scrap he would burn in his furnace.

PP: Where did your grandparents live?

Kuba: My dad's parents lived on Forest between Elmwood and Moran. My mother's parents just lived a few blocks up from there on a small street called Platt. And Platt Street ran into Moran. It was between Hancock and Warren.

PP: Were either of those in Hamtramck?

Kuba: No, that would be in the, do you <sup>know where</sup> St. Hyacinth (49-50) or St. Elizabeth <sup>are</sup>?

PP: No. But, nearby.

Kuba: On the East side.

PP: Do you know how your parents met?

Kuba: Not really. I think that my dad used to come to my mother's house <sup>with</sup> one of her brothers. I think my Uncle Art or my Uncle Norm (53).

PP: Do you, yourself, identify with things Polish or with Poland at all? Do you think of yourself as a Polish-American rather than an American?

Kuba: Oh yes, I do.

PP: What about your feeling about Poland itself? Are you interested in what's going on in Poland now with <sup>the</sup> Solidarity movement?

*Substantive*

Kuba: Oh really, yeah. I feel that people over here should really get up in arms over what's going on over there. That we should get some sit-down strikes or done something to show support for those people. Because they're really getting depressed over there.

PP: Do you think it would have done any good?

Kuba: Oh, I think so. I think it would have forced our government to intervene.

PP: Why do you think they want to? I mean, because I know they've had food drives and there have been quite a few demonstrations. Especially in Chicago.

Kuba: I don't know. Everybody's too busy thinking about themselves, I guess. Me included. I've had those thoughts but I guess on some small scale, you, yourself could probably start something. But, I guess I'm <sup>just</sup> as guilty as everybody else as far as that. I mean I lack ~~the~~ ambition.

PP: Have you had any interest in going to Poland?

Kuba: I've never had any interest in leaving the country, at all, to go anyplace. I've been around the United States; California, the East Coast.

PP: Were you ever in the Service?

Kuba: No.

PP: Where did you live as a young person?

Kuba: In (68) Detroit.

PP: Would you consider this area, where you live now, as quite heavily Polish?

Kuba: Oh yes.

PP: Do you have Polish neighbors on the street?

Kuba: The people next door are Poles on both sides. I think his name is Boris Kowalski. I guess his parents changed it to Kowls (72). I can't think of his name on the other side. They've just lived there a few years. There's quite a few Polish people.

PP: Do you attend a Polish parish?

Kuba: No.

PP: Is there a Polish parish in this area?

Kuba: Not that I know of, no. Sometimes we'll go into St. Josephat (75) on Fairfield. It's right on the end of the expressway right now. I-75; you see it when you're going into town. My grandfather liked that parish. He actually wasn't in that parish. But, they went there every Sunday.

PP: This was your mother's father?

Kuba: Right. He felt that it was a poor parish and he used to go there every Sunday <sup>and contribute over there</sup> It's really a beautiful place. About two years ago, they had a Polish festival and they had all the Polish parishes open to the public where you could go in and go through the Sacristy (80).

Kuba: We went over to St. Joseph's (81) and they had a tour of that. And then the (82) . They had a Polish band playing and they were serving dinner. We went over to St. Hyacinth. (83) I went to <sup>grade</sup> high school at St. Hyacinth. They had dinner going. They had Polish dancers. A group, the <sup>slushus</sup> (84) . I think there was (85) going on. I've been asking every year since then, but I guess they haven't gotten together to do it again.

PP: But, they had a Strawberry Festival at (86) St. Florian's.

Kuba: That's something they have every year.

PP: This is something special that they had. Well, maybe if enough people ask about it. They certainly have church tours in Detroit and people go and visit them. (88) .

Have you been out to St. (89) Mary at Orchard Lake?

Kuba: Oh yeah. My brother Tim went there. My youngest brother.

PP: Do you belong to any Polish organizations at all?

Kuba: No.

PP: When you were being raised, did your parents own their own home?

Kuba: Yes.

PP: Is this your first home?

Kuba: Yes. I've lived here fifteen years.

PP: This area must have really grown in the past fifteen years. Were there many houses when you

PP: came in the area?

Kuba: This was the first house back here. There were two builders in here. And this builder had this block in here. And the other builder had all the frontage on 16 Mile. And they started building this house as a model. Then, the other builder wasn't selling as good, or something. I think he acquired lots right out on the Mile Road. So, when I came in here, this house was standing. And I bought it. And that was the only house back here for six months. So, we watched all the rest of these houses built.

PP: Did you have water, sewage and everything?

Kuba: We had everything except for a telephone. We went without a telephone for a couple of months.

PP: They would have had to pay a lot of money to the line put in just for you.

Kuba: Yeah, we waited and then they brought it up<sup>(100)</sup> and it was just fine. But, I can remember in this area, for a long time. My dad used to peddle milk here about twenty-five years ago. I can remember riding the truck with him and there was nothing out here. There's a riding stable back here off of <sup>(103)</sup> and Hayes. I think it's called Jack's. We used to deliver milk there. Along Dodge Road there were about four truck <sup>(104)</sup> gardners and that was all that was out there.

PP: Do you have a boat or a cottage?

Kuba: No, I've got a trailer. Me and my wife like to camp.

PP: Is it one of the regular trailers that you live in or is it one of the other?

Kuba: It's a pull-trailer. It's sitting right there. It's a Holiday Rambler.

PP: Do you camp in Michigan?

Kuba: We've been all over, like I said. We've been to the East Coast; to Boston and to Maine. We took ~~it~~ *it once when* we went to California. We've gone to Florida a couple of winters.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters working in the plant now.

Kuba: Yes, I have two brothers who work at Gear and Axle. My brother Jim, who you interviewed, and my brother Clarence.

PP: Where does Clarence work?

Kuba: He works in the mill department. He does skilled trades jobs.

PP: Is he older or younger than you?

Kuba: He's younger than I am. Both him and Jim are younger.

PP: Let me ask you now some questions about your work history. When you were going to high school, what kind of jobs did you have? Do

you remember that far back?

Kuba: I worked in a service station, a gas station on 6 Mile Road. That was my ambition, I guess, was to own a gas station or a garage, or something like that. I wanted to be a mechanic.

PP: So you did mechanical work. You weren't just pumping gas.

Kuba: Yeah, right. I had an uncle who was working in a small tool shop that was owned by some German people. It was called *Bokun* Tools. It was on the West side.

PP: How do you spell Bokun?

Kuba: B-O-K-U-N. It's named after a little town in Germany. Anyway, he offered to get me a job there. They paid more than what I was doing. And I was interested in finding out what it would be like. And I went over there. I ended up working for twelve years for those people. My brother Jim and my brother Clare both worked for them too, at one time or another. My brother Jim went to Chevrolet and then I went to Chevrolet and then my brother Clare went to Chevrolet. I had a friend also that worked with me at Bokun. He went to work over at Chevrolet before Jim did.

PP: Actually, when did you go to Gear and Axle?

Kuba: In '74.

PP: What do you count as the date of your seniority? What date does it date from?

Kuba: I think it was July 22nd, or something like that.  
'74.

PP: So, when you went into Gear and Axle, actually what did you start out as?

Kuba: I started out as a journeyman. Then tool and die grinderman.

PP: Oh, you started out because you had gotten your journeyman's card? At Bokun.

Kuba: I served my apprenticeship at Bokun.

PP: When you were serving your apprenticeship there, did you take courses?

Kuba: Yes, you know, like (133) . I didn't take such an extensive course as what they give through Gear and Axle. In their apprentice program. But, I did go and take blueprint reading and different shop related; math and stuff like that.

PP: Where did you do that?

Kuba: (135) <sup>Dec 67?</sup> High School.

PP: How long does the actual classwork take?

Kuba: I went a couple of years in the evening.

PP: How long was the actual apprenticeship?

Kuba: The apprenticeship there was eight years.

PP: Did it make a difference pay-wise whether or not you were working as a journeyman at Bokun or at Gear and Axle?

Kuba: Oh yeah.

PP: Is it about the same? I mean the pay as a

PP: journeyman. Were they the same at Gear and Axle?

Kuba: No, I made more money when I went to Gear and Axle.

PP: I suppose there were more benefits too.

Kuba: Right. I used to work a lot more hours when I worked at Bokun. Financially I *did* make more money working at Bokun.

PP: Was Bokun a union shop?

Kuba: Yes.

PP: What Local did you belong to?

Kuba: That's a union. It's Mechanical Educational Society: MESA. I think they're quite well known on the East Coast. It was Local 24. I think it's us and <sup>(14a)</sup>Wesson Pool that were part of that Local. Very few people ever heard of the MESA.

PP: So, actually when you went to Gear and Axle, you dropped membership in that, I suppose, and took up membership in 235. Would you say you liked your work; you enjoy the type of work ~~that~~ you're doing?

Kuba: Oh yeah.

PP: You don't sound too enthusiastic. Is it just because you're not feeling too well today with a bad back?

*Work* Kuba: I enjoy my work and there is nothing I'd sooner do. After you do something for twenty years, it becomes sort of old hat.

PP: Well, this is one of the questions I wanted to ask. I'm always interested to know when a person gets to be thirty-five or there about, if they ever considered changing jobs. It used to be that nobody changed a job when they were thirty-five. It was~~not~~ done. But, now, times have changed and some people do change. Some people change to something related to what they're doing. Sometimes they change to something completely different. So, I wanted to know from you whether you had ever considered a job change, of any kind.

Kuba: Ch, I've thought about it. It has presented itself to me. Being married and having three children, just to jump into something . . .

PP: You couldn't do that. But, still, there are people who decide they want to do something different and go to school and work toward it. It takes a long time if they're working a full forty hour week.

Kuba: I've thought of it.

PP: What kind of work have you thought about, if you had the chance? <sup>if you could</sup> work as you are now and train, so your income would be the same. And train for something else? Have you ever thought of what sort of thing you would like to do?

Kuba: I don't know. Anything that I've ever thought of would have been directly related to what I'm

Kuba: doing. I've always worked in the finished product, in the <sup>grinding</sup> (175) end of the thing. I run all types of grinders. I have run like, lathes and milling machines at a time but, never as a full time thing. Just as a fill-in or whatever. And I've thought at different times that I'd like to do that. Get into actually dealing with machines rather than the finish grinding. More or less that. Not a complete change into electronics.

PP: Just in other words, a related job. Have you ever considered relocating in another state? Say, if something did come up even <sup>with</sup> the job you're in now, in another state? Would you ever consider leaving Michigan and re-locating?

Kuba: I guess everybody thinks about that at one time or another. But, I'm very close to my family; to my brothers. I mean, (185) just the three of us. I must talk to my brothers ten times a day at work. They'll come down and see me on a break. Or at lunchtime, we'll eat lunch together or whatever. Most of the people that we work with, they sort of look at me funny: 'you talk to your brother at lunch? I haven't talked to my brother in fifteen years or something.'

PP: Tell me, are all of your children very close too?

PP: Their cousins? There's a difference in ages, I realize. I mean the kids that are on the same age level.

Kuba: I'd say so. Because me and my brothers and my sister, we keep close contact. They were all here yesterday. With my son's birthday and Father's Day. We've had it annually the last eight years. We've had Father's Day here. We have a picnic out in the backyard.

PP: It must be quite a big group when you're all all together.

Kuba: We had about thirty people here yesterday.

PP: Wait 'til the kids get married and bring their families, then it's really going to be big.

Kuba: We get together for everybody's birthday in the family. Every kid.

PP: So what would you miss if you ever did move to another state?

Kuba: Just relations. I think you actually become dependent. Whenever my brothers need some help, they can count on me. Or vice versa. I'd just plain out miss them. My mom and dad are the same way.

PP: Does your wife work?

Kuba: No.

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

Kuba: No. I can't think of anybody.

PP: There has been a push recently to go down to the Sunbelt. Actually, how many years of school have you had beyond high school? Do you have any idea?

Kuba: Like I said, just a couple of years of night school.

PP: What high school did you graduate from?

Kuba: Wilbur Wright.

PP: (212) Wilbur Wright in Detroit. How long did it take you to get there?

Kuba: Half hour, forty-five minutes.

PP: Have you always worked in the same plant?

Kuba: I've always worked in a main toolroom. The main toolroom <sup>(217)</sup> should be in Plant 4. We've got one in Plant 7~~1~~. There's a small toolroom in Plant 1, 6 and 3 and in Plant 4 now. On weekends or for early overtime or something like that, they may send us to one of those other plants. The last time I worked a Saturday, they sent me to Plant 1 to work.

PP: How many people do you actually work with? Are you on sort of a team or (224) ?

Kuba: The area I work in, in the grinding room there are about eighteen people. We work together on jobs.

PP: So, roughly are there eighteen people on a shift then?

Kuba: Yeah.

PP: You're on days. Have you been on afternoons at all?

Kuba: Oh yeah. I hated it.

PP: How did you get back on days?

Kuba: Just through longevity.

PP: So, actually how many years?

Kuba: I was on nights for five years. I couldn't stand it.

PP: How were you lucky enough to get back on days?

Kuba: They had people retire <sup>(233)</sup> and they fired a few people. I think right now I've got about three or four people below me. They started cutting people back. There's three or four people below me on day shift that they'd have to send back before I would go back.

PP: It's pretty safe that you'd stay.

Kuba: Well, things can change awfully quick. That's the only thing about the car company that bothers me. The place I worked for before, Bokun, seemed a lot more stable as far as working. For years, we didn't do <sup>hardly</sup> any car related work at all. That place did strictly work for <sup>(243)</sup> Bell and Howe, <sup>ll</sup> and Garwood, and <sup>(244)</sup> <sup>Pratt</sup> -Whitney, and places like that. We worked steady all the time. We used to work ten hours a day, constantly.

PP: Did you do any overtime then? Did you do any overtime beyond the ten hours?

Kuba: No. But, eight hours was normal pay.

PP: So, you got time and a half for <sup>the extra</sup> two hours. How many hours a week are you working now?

Kuba: Now it's basically forty hours. I don't think I've worked maybe five or six Saturdays this year.

PP: 'Cause I know some of the men that I've talked to have said that they're doing quite a bit of overtime.

Kuba: Not in our department.

PP: Have you seen any women working as tool and die grinders?

Kuba: No.

PP: Have you ever?

Kuba: No. In the cutter grinder department there are a couple of women, I believe. They had a gal that was a tool maker. But, if you're a tool maker or a machine repair/person, you have to be . . .

End Side 1/Begin Side 2

PP: Do you think they'll ever open it up to anyone else or are people (261) interested enough to apply for apprenticeship. So, basically, you've worked as a journeyman in this trade ever since you went to Gear and Axle?

Kuba: Right.

PP: Have you any idea at what age you plan on retiring? I know it's quite a ways down the line yet, but you must have thought about it once in a while.

*Retire*  
Kuba: I'd like to retire while I'm still young enough to enjoy myself.

PP: You mean you want to get your thirty years in?

Kuba: Uh huh. I think I'll be about fifty-nine years old.

PP: Would you stay longer than thirty years or would you get out as soon as your thirty years is up?

Kuba: That would just depend on the situation then.

But, I think that I would get out. I think today we've got some guys there that have like, forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine years in.

*Retire*  
For one thing, I think they're <sup>taking</sup> keeping the job away from a younger person. It's awful difficult for young kids getting out of school to get a job. Those fellows really, they've got the age and the years in there. And they're working for nothing, as far as I'm concerned.

And they're cheating somebody out of a job.

PP: But, on the other hand, maybe there's <sup>another</sup> a reason they're working. Maybe they just wouldn't be happy without their work.

Kuba: I can always find something to do.

PP: Maybe you can. But, what about the person who doesn't have hobbies. His work is his life.

*I can't see that.*  
Kuba: I built this room on the back of the house here. I did everything from the foundation, the cement work, what you see here. I'm working on those shelves right now.

PP: This is going to be a beautiful bookcase. Did you do the fr~~ee~~ze? (276)

Kuba: Yeah. All the work in here I did myself. Anyway, I've always got something going; that I'm building. I like to restore cars. I've got a '59 M~~er~~. It's a British car, that I'm restoring.

PP: What other cars do you have? What do you drive?

Kuba: Right now, I've got a '77 Olds wagon and I've got an '80 Chevy Citation. And I've got my trailer.

PP: How much seniority do you have?

Kuba: I believe this July I'll have eight years.

PP: Have you been laid off at all?

Kuba: Yes, right after I started at Gear and Axle.

The first February I was there I was laid off, ~~I was laid off~~ for about four weeks.

PP: If you were laid off again, say they have a big cut back at GM or something like that and they laid off people ~~from~~<sup>in</sup> your department with under ten years seniority or something like that. Would you ever consider retraining for another kind of job? Or would you just hope that you'd get called back? Or try and get another job in the same field but somewhere else?

Kuba: I don't know. I think if I was laid off for any length of time I would try to probably repair and sell cars. Because I do a little bit of that. I buy cars that are damaged and I fix them and sell them.

PP: Mostly classic or antique cars?

Kuba: No, like my '80 Citation. I bought it, it was about six months old and it was a total wreck. It was hit in the frame. And I repaired that. I just had a '79 Chevette that I sold to my brother Clare that was hit in the side. Actually, me and my brother Jim used to do this together. We used to do it constantly; buy cars, repair them and sell them. I think I'd try that for a while. Just to see how it would work out.

PP: How do you feel about someone taking early retirement; that is, prior to their thirty years if they keep getting laid off? Do you think that is wise or foolish? Do you think they should try and wait it out until they hopefully get called back? Or do you think it's better to take early retirement and then try something else? Given the 1980s; given today's problems.

Kuba: I think, especially some of the people <sup>that</sup> I run into ~~that~~ say they work for Chrysler's, that were just habitually laid off. Certain plants, they'd work them a month or so and then they'd be off. I think they'd be better off. My wife's got a cousin. I was talking to him about a year ago. ~~I think he~~ he'd been laid off for over a year from Chrysler. He'd gotten a job at Budd Wheel. They had a pretty good program going there. And then they called him

Kuba: back at Chrysler's and he just didn't know what to do. But, he had about eighteen years seniority or something like that at Chrysler's. So, he ended up going back there. He didn't work three months and he's back off again. And he doesn't have a job with Bud Wheel now. I thought at the time, 'oh you're making a mistake.' But, everyone's got to do their own thing.

PP: Do you feel that Affirmative Action has anything to do with job lay-offs?

*AA  
Action*

Kuba: Definitely. I think that's one of the problems we have with competing with the Japanese. They don't have a problem like that over there. <sup>And</sup> it is a problem.

*Job: important*

*Job: important*

PP: But, here, do you think it's seniority? Does it have a part too? Do you think Affirmative Action is more important than seniority in connection with job lay-offs? Some people feel that it's just those people with low seniority. But, you feel that Affirmative Action has changed things in the plant enough that this is?

Kuba: Yeah, sure. It's put unqualified people into jobs that they can't handle. You get people that are getting a salary and there's no way they can possibly earn it.

*AA  
Action*

PP: You're talking about production workers, are you?

Kuba: Production, and skilled trades people too.

PP: Would you have unqualified people in skilled trades?

Kuba: Well, yeah, really, in skilled trades. I've seen people that come through the apprentice school or through the ungrading program that were just plain pushed through. They don't know what they're doing. Basically, it happens all over.

PP: How do you feel about Japanese and foreign cars?

Kuba: I think we build a heck of a lot better car than the Japanese do. I think our cars are far superior. I wouldn't own a Japanese car. I don't know what's wrong with people over here because in one way or another we're all tied in together. Especially in this state. If all the auto workers were turned out in the street, everybody'd be hurting.

*Japan  
import*

*Japan  
import*

PP: What about if the cars were assembled in the States? Such as, the Volkswagen <sup>which</sup> is assembled here. Would you feel differently toward that type of car?

Kuba: I feel that anything that they sell over here, they should <sup>either</sup> put a higher tariff on it or have it assembled here, to benefit us. I don't care for Volkswagens. I've driven in them, known people that owned them. To me they're just a big tin can.

*import*

PP: I gather from recent newspapers that GM is going to have some kind of agreement with

PP: Toyota.

Kuba: They're big money people and they're going do whatever is going to benefit the . . .

PP: Whether this will mean that the Toyota will be made over here using American workers, I don't know. I wonder if that will make a difference in the way people react to that particular car. If they're made over here.

Kuba: From what I understand just recently in the paper, they've invested a lot of money over there in Toyota. They own a lot of their stock. Like 40-some%, I believe. Right now we're not having any labor problems or anything like that but, sooner or later I think that's all going to catch up to them too. They've got all the latest production processes and whatever. For years, over here, the Gear and Axle Complex is the perfect example. The Complex is so old. They do replace things now and then.

PP: You have robotics coming in now, don't you?

Kuba: Yeah, to some degree. We don't have the latest equipment by a long shot.

PP: Have you visited anywhere that does have much later equipment, in your particular line of work?

Kuba: Oh, I've gone down to the tool show they have

Kuba: at Cobo Hall. Just to check out and see what they have. When we went down there, this one gal, that was with us, she works for the Society of Automotive Engineers. She's a commercial artist, I believe, for them. She expected to see robots walking around. Robotics is like having a hydraulic cylinder at the end of a conveyor.

PP: Kind of like an arm doing something. It's not a little man out of Star Wars. I think our early science-fiction, the pictures, moving pictures, and descriptions in books and so forth, make you imagine the little man syndrome, really.

*Robotics*

Kuba: Most of this, to me, they've been doing <sup>it</sup> for a hundred years already. They're just applying it a lot more than they ever did before. They used to have a guy at the end of the assembly line that grabbed this part and pushed it off onto a dollie or something. And now, instead of that, they've got a limit switch. The part comes down and it hits the limit and this cylinder comes out and it pushes the piece off. So, they replaced a person there. Before when labor was cheap, they never thought of doing that.

PP: Do you think we'll have some kind of robot doing your kind of work?

Kuba: No.

PP: It's too precise, is it?

(don't believe they ever will.)

Kuba: We're repairing or making new parts of machines.

There's too many variations.

PP: If you knew a few years ago what you know now about economic conditions, do you think you might have tried a different kind of work? Stayed in something mechanical rather than going into tool and die grinding? Or would you have gone into that anyway? What I wanted to know is do you think it's an on-going trade that won't become redundant?

→ Break in interview for coffee requests + comments on pool.

Kuba: I don't feel it's a dying trade, no.

PP: Because some people do feel that what they're doing is (366) that.

Kuba: (I don't see how they could phase out machine repair people or grinder hands or machinists because no matter how technical things get, they've got to have somebody to replace the cogs in the machine.) That's where we come in.

job sec only  
Full work.

PP: Could you give me a very short description of actually what you do in your type of work?

Kuba: We do die work: button dies, which are for punching out holes in steel. Mainly at Gear and Axle the brake shoes. We do grinding on coining dies. Coin die forms the radius on the brake shoe. I do grinding on small machine parts: locaters, cylinders. The different machines that we have in the grinding department are:

Kuba: we have surface grinders, o.d. grinders, the cylindrical o.d.'s, i.d. grinders for the i.d. hole. (378) <sup>1/2</sup> grinders. With the (378) <sup>1/2</sup> grinder you can grind i.d., o.d., ~~cont~~

PP: Now o.d. is what?

Kuba: Outside diameter and i.d. is inside diameter.

We have a big blanchard grinder, which is, it has a rough stone in it. It is a table that runs in a circular motion with a grinding wheel that runs above it in the opposite direction. It's for squaring <sup>up</sup> of steel. It's a little rougher process. If you work in the grinding department, you run all those machines. You might not run ~~each~~ one of them every day. We have some people ~~that~~ just prefer to stay on one machine all the time. But, they should have the capabilities of running every machine in the department. Because, like on a Saturday, you may be the only person there and you may have to run four different machines in <sup>any</sup> one shift, depending on what comes in. You might have a machine repairman bring a cylinder that has a hole that's been scarred or something and they want you to clean it up. or somebody else comes along with a shaft that's was broken and they welded it and you've got to do that.

PP: So, really the people in your department play quite

PP: a key role in what goes on.

Kuba: Right. And as far as the finished parts for our general stores to keep the plant rolling. And if there's a break down. *(Telephone ringing)*

PP: Let me know something about your role in the Union. Are you quite active or not active?

Kuba: No. <sup>I vote.</sup> I try to know who, I feel, is doing a good job in the Union and help them get in office. When there is an issue that comes up in the plants that I have an interest in, I'll go down to a meeting. But, as a matter of fact, I don't go to all the meetings.

PP: But, you go to the skilled trades meetings sometimes too?

Kuba: Right.

PP: Have you ever taken any education classes at the Union Local?

Kuba: No.

PP: Have you any interest in taking any at any time? I mean, I know they give them on Union subjects like collective bargaining. But, I understand they give them on retirement, on stress management, assertiveness training, and various subjects.

Kuba: When I worked for Bokum Tool, it was a small shop. During the period I worked there, I think the most people we had employed were forty people. I think we went between thirty

Kuba: and forty people. I was a committeeman on the bargaining team there. We had two committee-people and a Union steward. Everything's done on a much smaller scale than at Gear and Axle. But, I actually negotiated contracts with the company. The last two years I was there, I was elected the shop steward. I actually instituted their retirement plan over there. Four years previous to my leaving there, I had brought this up. We had a little bit of a Cost-of-Living. We diverted part of our Cost-of-living into a fund so that we could build up a base to start a retirement plan. And before I left there, we did start one. To me it's a thankless job. No matter how hard you try to do it right, you can never make everybody happy.

PP: So, that's why you didn't go into it when you came here.

Kuba: I had my fill of it. Let's put it that way.

PP: Have you ever thought of going to Wayne State or a community college, such as Macomb, to just take any courses for interest sake?

Kuba: No.

PP: Do you think the Union should be in the education field? Do you think it's a good idea for them to have all these courses? Do you think they should have more courses?

*Ch. Future Educ*  
 Kuba: I think education's a great thing. I think everybody should get as much as they desire. I'd like for my children to get *all they can* can.

PP: But, do you think the role of the Union is important in education?

Kuba: As far as educating people in the Union workings?

PP: Both the Union workings and perhaps other subjects too.

*Educ. in local*  
 Kuba: There are a lot of very unqualified people connected with the Union, I think. I can see them setting up programs through community colleges or something like that, that could benefit the workers. But, I've known of programs that they've had through our *local* run by people that I feel aren't really qualified.

PP: What do you think about the idea of young people, because of the problems that people are in now because of lay offs and so on, being trained for more than one type of occupation? Do you think that's a wise idea? *well*, I'm talking about a young person sixteen, eighteen now instead of <sup>just</sup> training for one type of trade or occupation trying to get training in two. So, that if one happens to become redundant or they get laid off, they've got another one.

Kuba: I could see it, yeah. Especially in an inter-related type of thing.

PP: Do you think it's necessary or do you think they should wait until later years to get training for a second occupation?

Kuba: I think if a young person has the wherewithall to stick it out and do it, I think it'd be a great thing.

PP: Let me ask you something about the Quality of Work Life circles (door closing). Do you participate?

Kuba: Yes, I do.

PP: How do you feel about those?

Kuba: I don't know. I think the company ~~felt that~~ they had to do something. I don't think they've made a whole-hearted effort in this. I think it's costing the corporation a lot of money. They don't really listen to everything we have to say. Maybe they shouldn't. Also the Union. We just recently brought up a thing that I feel is a real big problem over there. ~~It~~ when somebody's injured in the plant; what's the procedure? How should it be handled? We had a fellow on the second shift that had a stroke. The foreman in Plant 71 took it upon himself to put this guy on one of these three wheel electric buggies. If you've ever been in our complex, you see those electric scooters going around. And took him to Plant 6 Medical. Which is like three plants down Holbrook.

PWK

Kuba: And it's across the railroad tracks and whatever. And this man had had a stroke. Since then he's had a second stroke and the guy's completely incapacitated. So, I was asking around. I asked the <sup>fellw that</sup> ^ I'm working for right now, what's the procedure. Have you ever had any training as to what should we do? Somebody gets a heart attack. He says, well, nobody's ever really instructed him but he figures he would call Plant 6 Medical. So, we raised a bunch of bull about it. We're trying to get a medical department or an arm of the department right in our building. Well, the Union stepped in and told us we couldn't discuss that. That that was a contractual matter and that we should just butt out.

And anyway, then the medical department come along and they put up a sheet of paper by each telephone in every department stating what you should do. You should contact the nearest medical leader. 72 would be the closest one to us, which they just have one male nurse there and not much of a facility. Then, it's upon him to call Plant 6. The bottom line is they don't want anybody calling an ambulance until somebody comes from Plant 6 Medical <sup>department</sup> ^ there and checks the person out. Now, you know yourself that anybody's having

Kuba: a stroke or a heart attack, the first few minutes are critical. This really bugs me. Especially the Union's attitude that we're infringing on their rights or whatever.

PP: Well, can you work something out in the Quality of Work Life?

Kuba: Well, I keep bringing it up at every meeting, so sooner or later something will happen.

PP: Do you think the Quality of Work Life circles have a long range use?

Kuba: Oh yeah, I think they're going to work and that it will all gel. Those plants are like a big city, really. You've got everything going on inside those plants. You've got people drinking and gambling and everything. We've had a problem with a few fellows who were just drunk all the time. One guy in particular that I can think of, that is a heck of a nice guy, and just started drinking and it's just too accessible. So, we brought that up at our circle meeting. That the company should go after these people that are selling this stuff. Stop them from selling it.

PP: This is in the plant, you mean?

Kuba: Yeah, right. And they did it. It was common knowledge; everybody knew who was doing it. Just something that was being ignored.

PP: How do you rate the importance of a man's job

PP: (door opening) to himself or his own sense of self-worth or self-identity? How important do you think a job is to a man?

Kuba: *man's job* (It's their whole life. As far as that's what keeps everything going. Their home, their lifestyle. It's everything.)

PP: Do you think this is partly been ingrained in you? This attitude from your Polish background or do you think not?

Kuba: My dad was a heck of a worker. He never took a day sick. Like right now, I didn't work today <sup>because</sup> I've got a backache. My dad, as far as I can ever remember, has never taken a day off sick. He had that milk route of his. He went with ~~(sick)~~ <sup>Vicks</sup> and whatever wracked on him, he went to work. My mother's dad was the same way. He had really believed that if you took a job with somebody, that you gave them a fair day's work, no matter what they were paying you.

(clock chiming) You agreed to work for them. He didn't believe in Unions too much. I think he was some sort of a supervisor at one point. When he worked for ~~(S&S)~~ <sup>Bugs</sup> he crossed the picket line when they were trying to organize down there. That was the way he felt. My mother worked for National Bank of Detroit for twenty-five years. She's a heck of a worker. I can remember her, she ran NCR machinery; the cancelled checks. They'd have a problem. In the middle of the night, you'd hear her on the phone. ~~All of a sudden she'd . . .~~

End of Interview.