

JAMES
KUBABINSKI
March
Reagan

Interview with James Kubabinski, Interview 1
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Interviewer: Pat Pilling
Transcriber: Deanna Cavanaugh
Side 1,

This is Pat Pilling. The date is March 29, 1984. I am talking with Mr. James Kubabinski, who lives at 5119 Berwyck, Troy, Michigan. Mr. Kubabinski works at Chevrolet Gear & Axle, and is a member of Local #235. We are redoing a tape that we did in June, 1982.

PP: Mr. Kubabinski, where and when were you born?

JK: I was born in Detroit, Michigan, October 5, 1949.

PP: Were you born at home, or were you born in a hospital?

JK: I was born in hospital.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

JK: I have three brothers and a sister, they are all older than I am.

PP: Are they all living.

JK: Yes.

PP: One of the things I am interested in is your Polish background. Can you tell me first is your mother Polish or part Polish?

JK: Yes, she is Polish.

PP: On both sides of the family?

JK: Yes.

PP: Have you any idea where her parents came from?

JK: I really can't tell you. I know that her mother's name was Bialkowski, and her maiden name was Bonberski.

PP: Could you spell the names, your mother's parents, you just

told me what they were but I was wondering if you could spell them.

JK: B-I-A-L-K-O-W-S-K-I, and B-O-N-B-E-R-S-K-I.

PP: Were your mother's parents born in ^Poland, or were they born over here, do you know?

JK: I believe her mother was born here, but I believe my grandfather was born in ^Poland. My mother's mother was born here.

PP: Where was your mother born?

JK: My mother was born, I believe at home in Detroit.

PP: What about your father's parents, were they from poland?

JK: I'mreally not sure. I believe my grandfather was born here and my grandmother, I believe she was born here too.

PP: Where was your father born?

JK: My father was born in Detroit.

PP: When you mean Detroit, do you mean Detroit, or do you mean Hamtramck?

JK: In Detroit.

PP: How many children do you have?

JK: Two. A boy and a girl.

PP: Can you give me their names and how old they are as of 1984.

JK: Anne Marie, she's eight years old^U, James Craig, but we call him Craigy, he's 4 years old.

PP: Is your wife ^Polish, or part ^Polish?

JK: Yes.

PP: Is she from this area?

JK: She's from Detroit also. Her name was Dembrowski.

PP: Have you ever thought about how you would feel about [?]either of your children, particularly your son, working in an auto

plant when he grew up, do you have any feelings about that?

JK: I'd like him to do his very best, if that his very best and if he feels comfortable with it than I would support him in it or anything else he might want to do.

PP: Because we did this interview in 1982, and now it's 1984, two years later, do you have any different feelings about a young person going into an auto plant now as compared to let's say two years ago when there was a tremendous amount of people laid-off, of course there are still people laid-off now, I know, but there were many more I believe at that time, and things were rather bleak?

[JK: I think even though things were as you say bleak two years ago, you really only feel ^{that} things are bleak, when they are bad where you're at, or when things aren't happening the way you want them to. I think I feel that two years ago I probably felt that there was a greater future, or more of a certain future at Chevrolet than I would feel there is today.]

PP: Why do you say that?

JK: (Even though the auto industry has picked up, I think they feel this may be a temporary thing and in order to try to assure their ^{is} future, they are trying to be very ~~cross~~ competitive, and Chevrolet Gear & Axle is an older plant and there is ^a lot of talk of either trying to do things in a much more efficient matter or just taking the jobs to other plants. It could possibly happen that they would phase out that plant or phase out part of it.)

PP: Did your father, ~~or~~ uncle, or other close relative work in one of ther auto plants?

Future Workplace

JK: Yes. I think I had one uncle that worked at Plymouths.
And my father's brother retired from the Tech Center.

PP: What kind of work did he do?

JK: I'm not really certain. I think he was in charge of
Travel. When someone had to go on a business trip, he would
arrange your travel and things like that.

PP: Let's talk again about things Polish. How do you look at
yourself, for example do you think of yourself as an American
or Polish American. When someone says what are you, what do
you normally think of yourself as?

JK: My first thought would probably be that I'm just me. I
would consider myself more of an American, or a Polish -
American than just to say that I'm Polish. I'm not saddened
by the fact that I'm Polish, but I don't feel that we're
superior to anyone else, and I feel that it's nice to be
Polish, I don't walk around with the thought in my mind that
I'm Polish.

Polish Id

PP: *Do* You feel more of an American than a Polish American? If
is someone said what nationality are you, would you tend to
say I'm an American, *where* or somebody else might say I'm Polish
American.

JK: I guess I'm Polish American but my first interests are
definitely here in this country, I'm definitely for the
United States.

PP: Have you ever had an interest in going to Poland?

JK: Probably a very mild one.

PP: Have you through talking to any of your grandparents or
other older Polish people felt any kind of identity with

JK: things Polish, back in Poland?

PP: I don't think so. My wife's been to Poland and her father's been there. He's talked about it, ~~we~~^{they} we've got pictures and we've got movies that I've seen. My brother, my older brother has gone at least twice. I wouldn't rule it out, but I can't say that, especially with the unrest in Poland I'm not looking forward to going even in the next decade.

PP: Have you any idea what area of Poland your grandparents the ones that live here came from?

JK: No.

PP: When you were very young and you lived in Detroit, were you in a predominantly Polish community like Hamtramck?

JK: Originally, until I was six years old, we lived on Theodore and that was in St. Hyacinth's Parish and I would say that that is predominantly Polish. I believe Polish was the language that was offered in the grade school.

PP: St. Hyacinth's is definitely considered a Polish church. Did you go to a Parochial school?

JK: Yes. I went to Kindergarten and first grade at St. Hyacinth's and then I went to St. Jude's and when I went to high school, I went to St. Anthony's.

PP: Do you attend a Polish parish church?

JK: No.

PP: Is that because there aren't any Polish churches where you live?

JK: There is a Polish church not too far away but we ~~go~~^{attend} to the church that is right here in the subdivision.

PP: What church is in your subdivision?

JK: It's St. Elizabeth Anne Seaton (?)

PP: I didn't realize there is a church this close. What is the Polish church that is near here?

JK: Our Lady of Czestochowa?

PP: Now, that's the Polish National Catholic Church, that isn't the regular Catholic church, that's the Church, is it not, that belongs to a particular group where the priests come over from Poland, am I correct in that?

JK: I really don't know.

PP: That's what I had heard. I'm not really quite sure of it. Did your parents own their own home when you were being raised?

JK: Yes.

PP: Do you own your own home?

JK: Yes.

PP: Is this your first one?

JK: It's our second one.

PP: Where was your first one?

JK: In Sterling Heights.

PP: You moved a little further down.

JK: North West.

PP: Do you have a boat or a cottage?

JK: No.

PP: How long have you worked for Gear & Axle?

JK: It will be 15 years on April 21.

PP: What's the date of your seniority.

JK: April 21, 1969.

PP: How many of your brothers or other relatives work at G & A?

JK: I have one brother ^{that} who works there now. I had two brothers but one was laid-off.

PP: What kind of work does he do?

JK: He's a tradesman. He worked in the toolroom as a grinder man.

PP: How much seniority did he have? *Obviously not enough.*

JK: Eight years.

PP: When did they start laying them off, at about what year?

JK: Ten years, twelve years?

JK: I think he would've had to have about ten years to keep his job.

PP: Have you ever worked at another auto plant?

JK: No.

PP: Maybe you can start to tell me how you came about to work at Gear & Axle. What kind of job do you have?

JK: I'm in machine repair but, basically we do machine refurbishing.

Machine Repair
We build machines and we retool them. We also ~~have to~~ ^{act} ~~as~~ support ^{for} the people that are taking care of the machines on the floor, if there's a breakdown they can't handle they may send parts to us to be reworked, refitted, and sent back out to them, or times we go beyond that, we go out and physically help them.

PP: Do you work in any particular plants?

JK: I work in 7-1 which is referred to as Central.

PP: When you say 7-1 is it sort of 7 dash 1, or 71.

JK: 7 - 1. There's Plant 7-1 and 7-2. I don't know why they

PP: didn't just make one Plant 8 ^{or} ~~and~~ Plant 9.

PP: How did you come to be a Machine Repairman?

JK: When I graduated from high school, I was going to ^{school at} South Macomb. I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do and I heard a lot about apprenticeships and I thought it might be nice to try one of those and someone told me that machine repair was a pretty good thing. I really didn't know anything about it or what they did. I didn't realize there was a such a person as a machine repairman or I guess maybe I should've. I started going to different places and making applications for ^{an} apprenticeships.

PP: When you were allowed to go into the program, did you work in the plant part-time and take classes, is that how it worked?

JK: No, the apprentice program at G & A was one of the last programs to utilize what they referred to as an apprentice school. They actually had a separate plant that was for the apprentices, you started out in that area and the machine repairman would work there for two years and you would become familiar with the toolroom machinery and you would make different parts ^{that} they would use on the floor and the manufacturing of the parts that we would send out. After starting ^{back} in the apprentice school you would also start related training at either Henry Ford or South Macomb. And after about a two year period, you would than go out on the floor and you would work with the repairman and you would become familiar with that phase of the training and after four years you of course complete your training.

PP: Actually, how many hours of college work have you had altogether?

JK: Altogether I have 90 hours.

PP: In what other kind of subjects beside the work you did for your apprenticeship?

JK: I had Pol. Sci., Natural Sci., Sociology, I have no biology, Psychology, I took three Business Law courses, Marketing, General Business, Humanities, Speech.

PP: ~~Your~~ ^{How long ago} how old now?

JK: 34.

PP: Have you ever considered at any time, a possibility of a job change, I mean did any of these other subjects interest you enough that made you feel that maybe you'd like to go into something else?

JK: I think people always think about doing something else. Everybody has a bad day and they think, gosh, it would be a lot nicer to do this, or not to have to do that. I think I thought a lot about accounting, I ~~would like~~ ^{I think I could} to be a very mediocre accountant. I think I'm a very good machine repairman. I think I'm a lot happier doing what I'm doing than I would be as an accountant.

PP: So, you thought at one point you might consider being an accountant but you wouldn't be as good an accountant as you would be a machine repairman?

JK: I don't think I would be happy as an accountant. I basically like to work ^{I do} ~~Budget(?)~~

PP: That's nice. I think I asked you a question, as I recall if you were the one person, I don't think I asked any of the other men this question about whether what you thought was the ~~A~~ ^Dmerican dream, didn't I ask you this question?

JK: No, I don't think so.

*Future
adv. c. job*

PP: I thought I had asked you this. I thought you were the one, because I remember you were 32 at the time and you said to me I think, something like "I think I've reached my American dream, in other words you had so many of the things that, you don't remember that?"

JK: Maybe. It sounds ~~reasonable~~ ^{feasible}. (I think generally I feel blessed, I think I have been very fortunate. I have accumulated a lot of things, I believe I have a good marriage and I have two good children and I think I am blessed.)

PP: Well, that was what you said, something like that before and I thought it's so rare for someone to say that at the age that you are, and then you were even two years younger, so it was very nice. Have you ever considered, say something happened at Gear & Axle, or they are relocating in another state, have you ever thought about moving say to a warmer climate?

JK: I think I've thought about it but I wouldn't want to move away from my family, ^{away from} my parents, ^{and} my brothers

PP: So that would be what you would miss most than if you moved.

JK: Yes.

PP: Does your wife work at all?

JK: No.

PP: Has she ever worked?

JK: (She works around our house and she takes care of our children and that's a lot of work.)

PP: Well, I'm glad you said that, not many ^{men} would think of it as work. Do you know of any Polish-American auto workers who have gone to find work in another state at all?

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(with)

Wife
Working

JK: No, I can't say I personally do know anyone who has re-located.

PP: One of things I did want to ask you, while we were talking about things Polish, how you felt about the Solidarity movement, have you any particular interests in that?

JK: I'm glad that they were able to establish the union and I'm sorry that it didn't work out completely. I think they needed ^aunion^s just like we needed one in the 30's. I think the need for us today isn't as great, ^Wwe still need the union but it isn't as glittering[?] as it was back then. Although perhaps it will be again.

PP: When you first started at Gear & Axle before you became a Machine Repairman in the apprentice program did you work in production or anything like that?

JK: No.

PP: You came right into the apprentice program at that time, you were very fortunate, this doesn't happen very often anymore, I suppose.

JK: No.

PP: People mostly^{ly} have to go into production and then wait until an apprenticeship is posted or something like that. Actually, how did you get your job at Gear & Axle, did you hear about it or was it ^{through} from a relative or a friend?

JK: I think I mentioned before that I was just looking for an apprenticeship and I applied to a lot of different places and Gear & Axle called me first.

PP: Have you had any thoughts about your time in, you have 15 years in, you basically have another fifteen years if you

wanted to take advantage of the 30 and out, have you thought about what age you might retire?

JK: I would like to retire when I'm 49 or 50, I don't know if I'll be able to or not.

PP: Why would you like to retire at that age?

JK: I just, you see a lot of people that ~~have~~ worked very hard all their lives till they are 65 and they retire, and than shortly they are not feeling well, or something happens and they don't really have that many years left to enjoy themselves in. If I could retire when I'm 50 and have 15 years or so to, maybe not live wildly, but to do different things, I think it would be nice.

PP: When you say do different things, what kind of different things are you interested in?

JK: Maybe traveling or something.

PP: At that time your children would be grown.

JK: My son would just be starting college.

PP: But still he would be a young adult. One does become an adult at ~~that~~¹⁸ age in Michigan. Tell me, have you been laid-off at all since you started work at Gear & Axle?

JK: No.

PP: Not at all. Ever?

JK: I had a two week temporary lay-off.

PP: If you were laid-off at all would you consider retraining into some other kind of job?

JK: Yes, I would definitely like to, not necessarily into a different field but I would like to expand ~~on~~ the one that I have. I would like to learn more about ~~electronics~~^E and maybe ~~the~~^R Robotics.

Robotics

PP: I wanted to ask some questions about that, given the fact that Robotics and Computers are very much with us, how do you feel about your job and the new type of robotics *and* automation coming into the plant and how do you see it in relation to your own job in the future?

JK: I would like to think it is going to expand our jobs and make them possibly a little more interesting, I hate to think it would take away too many jobs from people ~~who~~ are working as assemblers or things like that. I don't really want to see anybody lose their job. If they bring robots in mostly on a basis of people retiring and things like this *they* and really won't be laying people off I don't think it would be as bad although I know there are a lot of young people out there too that would like to have some of these jobs that should be vacated by people reaching retirement age so I guess I sort of have mixed emotions about them but, I guess they are an ~~un~~ necessary evil because people will only buy American cars if they are reasonably priced and if they are good cars, if they are built well. It seems that this is one of the ways that they have to go to reach that goal of building a good quality car at a reasonable price.

PP: Did you say you have taken a course in connection with Robotics.

JK: No, I haven't.

PP: Will you?

JK: Yes, I probably will. I have taken electronic courses.

PP: Do you think the company will send you to school, I mean are they going to send some of the Machine Repairmen?

JK: Yes, they are going to be sending people.

PP: Do you know when this is going to take place?

JK: I probably could've gone already on my own. I haven't yet because I have had a rather full schedule as of late, I hope to go maybe in the Fall. Last September I I took an electronics course which ended just before Christmas.

PP: Where at Macomb?

JK: It was through Wayne, it was offered at work.

PP: Now when you say it was offered in the plant, or at the Local?

JK: No, not at the Local. In the plant, but after hours.

PP: Now, who paid for the course, did the company?

JK: General Motors paid for it as long as you, there was a prerequisite of not missing more than three classes.

PP: Did you feel you learned a lot from it?

JK: I feel it was interesting, I think it should've been set up a little differently. I feel that the background of the people that were in the class was too varied and I think they should have ^{work to} segregated the people more according to their abilities.

Side 2.

JK: I definitely wasn't ^{to} the one ^{or one of} with the higher ability, but I think I probably held some people back and some other people probably held me back and I think if they would have gone through first and decided the basic levels and the abilities of the people and the needs they could've made the class a lot more meaningful.

PP: What do you feel about a person taking early retirement, because he's laid-off quite a bit and so maybe he wants to

retire after maybe 20 years in, although I realize that most people with 20 years in have enough seniority to stay on their job, but say a person decides he's just fed up with things as they are and retires early, do you think that's a wise thing to do or do you think a person should really stick out for 30 years in order to get the higher pension?

JK: If you have 20 years in and ^{if} you can retire you would have to have 20 years in or be 62, I would imagine. I feel anybody that is 62 and has 20 years in and feels that they can afford to retire, ^{that they} would like to retire, as far as I'm concerned they have earned it and they should go ahead and do it if it's what they want.

PP: Have you, do you feel affirmative action has ^{had} anything to do with job lay-offs or,

JK: No, I don't think so. Maybe in the Detroit Police ^{Dept.} but not ^{right at} in Gear & Axle.

PP: No, I'm just interested in Gear & Axle. By the way I read in the newspaper last night a short article about a man working on some railway car and he lost a finger or hurt himself and he's been awarded a very large sum of money for this finger, something over a \$100,000, I think. In the article, He didn't refer to Gear & Axle but they said some of the other railroad yard workers who worked ^{at} Gear & Axle for the railroad apparently, referred to Gear & Axle as "the pits," ^H how would you react to that? ^(grease)

JK: I always hear about how dirty the place is, and it is dirty. But I think it is an occupational hazard, I've heard about other plants ~~who have~~ supposedly are spotless, maybe they are, but I don't have any first hand information.

JK: I heard a lot of different things from people on the street, that when I tell them where I work they say Oh, I wouldn't go there for one reason or another. I don't really find it all that bad.

PP: I heard today also, that General Motors was beginning to show the Lake Orion plant to reporters to show them what a new plant looked like, I don't know ^{whether} if you heard that ^{on the radio.} I wondered myself what a brand new plant looked like and how ^{long} nice it would stay that way, nice and clean.

JK: A lot of that is two-fold, a lot of it is management help, how much time they want to allot to janitors to take care of the place because there is a necessity for that type of thing and than again the worker's should have ^{enough} pride in the place they work at to take reasonable amount of care themselves.

PP: Have you played an active role in your union local?

JK: No.

PP: Any particular reason why?

JK: I really don't have any union ambitions other than I vote in the local elections but I don't have any aspirations to run for any office.

PP: Do you attend the trades' meetings?

JK: The one's that I hear are important, ^{if} there is going to be something discussed I am interested in.

PP: What about any of the education classes that they have had down there, I don't mean strictly union things like on collective bargaining but on things like assertiveness training

JK: No.

PP: If you knew a few years ago what you know now about the economical conditions, we're talking now about 1984, but I also want you to refer back to 1982 which was when the original tape was made, ~~W~~ would you have tried a different kind of work do you think? I mean things got real bad in 1982, they're still not good in '84, but say 15 years ago when you went in as a machine repairman would you have gone into that type of work if you knew what things were going to be like now?

JK: [I think I have to go back to where I told you before where I thought about being an accountant but I'm happy with what I'm doing. I really, I don't know of anything else that I have a burning desire to get into. I think a lot of people today are getting into computers, I don't know if that would be my thing. If something ^{else} did strike my fancy then I would probably still go after it today.

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

Jap car
JK: [I'd like to say that they don't bother me but they do, I (pause), Basically, I would hope we could get by without import restrictions, that we could prove to the public that our cars are ~~just~~ as good, or better than theirs. And through natural course of events, through supply and demand that we would again prove to the public that our cars are good and that we would have a demand for our cars and we wouldn't have to rely on quotas and things like ~~to~~ *this to*. curb imports in order to sell our cars. I'm definitely against foreign cars but I guess I have a prejudice view point.

JK: One of my neighbors has a newer Oldsmobile and he's had some trouble with it and he told me the other day that he was thinking about buying a Honda, I was offended by it but at the same time I could see his point.]

PP: How do you feel now about GM and Toyota having some sort of agreement?

JK: I'm not really for that because I feel this is another way that they are probably going to bring more parts in that are made in Japan or other places.

PP: Would you feel differently if the cars were assembled in the U.S., such as the Volkswagen, I believe they have a Toyota plant in Fremont, California, for example.

Using American workers?

JK: I think that's probably better. If they are assembling or building cars here, ~~say~~ even though they have a different name they are still employing American people and we're creating revenue here. I really can't argue with that too much.

PP: What about the cars that are assembled here but use parts made elsewhere, for example I gather the Luv truck at one time had its engine made in Japan, I don't know if it still does,

JK: No, I'm not for that really, but that's just my opinion again and it's my point of view, probably a narrow point of view, but No, I'm not for that.

PP: What kind of car do you drive?

JK: I have a Buick and a Chevette and a Corvette.

PP: You have three cars?

PP: You have three cars? What year is the Buick?

JK: It's an '80.

PP: What year is the Corvette?

JK: '69.

PP: What year is the Chevette?

JK: It's a '76.

PP: How do you feel about people being permanently laid-off, do you think it's due to the imports?

JK: I think it's due to the imports, ^{due to} the price of gas.

PP: Would you ever go to Wayne State, a community college or another school to get more Robotics training in addition to what they gave you in the plant?

JK: Yes.

PP: Would you do it just if the company paid for it or would you do it on your own?

JK: I would do it either way?

PP: What do you think ^{about} of the idea that some people have proposed that young people such as your children growing up, when they get into high school or beyond, actually prepare themselves for more than one type of job, given today's world and the changes of jobs and so on, do you think people should prepare themselves for two types of jobs, or do you think they should prepare themselves for one type of job but be ready in case they got laid-off or that job was made redundant to go into a completely different type of occupation?

JK: I guess that would be better. I would think that would be good, ^{for people} to have more than ~~one source of, more than~~ one means or making a living, although I would hate to see people

Future
Workshop

JK: do that to a point where they wouldn't become really proficient in the trade, or whatever they were doing at the time. I wouldn't want to see it create so much mediocrity. I think that the way for us to build good cars or have good teachers is to have people that are dedicated to what they are doing at the time.)

future workers

PP: How do you feel about the Quality of Work Life circle?

JK: (I feel that they definitely have a place, they have a long way to go but hopefully they will get there.)

QWL

PP: Why do you say they have a long way to go?

JK: I think they are used by different people for different means, in order to obtain different means.) I don't really think they are serving the purpose yet that they should. Management at times just uses them to passify the union or maybe to passify higher management that they are trained to do something. I think some workers get into them as a way of getting out of work and I definitely feel there is a need for something like that ^{but} they haven't evolved yet to what they will be, *to their full potential.*

QWL

PP: Do you think they have a long range use?

JK: Yes, I think so.

PP: How do you rate the importance of a man's job to the image of himself as a person, do you feel a man's job is the most important part of his life, or his family is the most important part?

JK: My job is important to me because it helps me to take care of my family but my family is definitely more important than my job.)

Imp of job to man

PP: Let's talk a little now about the auto industry. I talked to you two years ago and things were bleak, can you remember back two years, have you any idea about how you felt at that time as compared to how you feel now?

JK: I think two years ago I felt basically the same except that I think maybe at that time that Gear & Axle ^{might have} had a more certain future than what I might feel today.

PP: Why do you say that?

Auto industry
JK: We kind of touched on this before. I feel that because of cost competitiveness today ^{that} within the corporation we ^{are} constantly looking for either cheaper outside sources or ^(further) cheaper sources within the corporation that there is price bidding between divisions and there is constantly a threat of losing jobs.

PP: Do they do a lot of this ~~outside~~ sourcing?

JK: Of course. *They do.*

PP: Have people lost jobs as result of this?

JK: I'm sure they have.

PP: How do you think the other man feel about it. Have you heard people comment on it, or make constructive suggestions as to what could be done by the company?

JK: Yes, I think people do. I think there are people there that are generally trying to help, to make constructive suggestions ~~like~~ ^W when they see something on their job that can be changed to make the job run more efficiently ^{they} do so, and there are people that have been there a great number of years and they feel very complacive, ^{and} they feel safe in that fact that

JK: they have been there 20 years or so and they say, "It could *just* never happen to me."

PP: What do you see as a future for Gear & Axle?

JK: Gear & Axle is basically, we made gears, we made rear-end drives, and we are going to have to expand into different things. We are doing some front-wheel drive work and we're going to have to get into a lot more of that, and we're going to have to keep the part of the truck market that we have in order to stay there.

PP: But isn't there only one other plant, isn't it Buffalo that is doing the similar type of work that you are?

JK: There's a plant in Buffalo and ⁱⁿ Canada. We're very competitive with the one in Buffalo for different jobs. There's also I believe, the new axle that is going into the Camaro is built in Australia, so we're definitely in competition with everybody.

PP: ~~Now~~ built by GM in Australia?

JK: I believe so.

PP: Because I know they have this plant, I think a Holden car that is a GM's car. In other words they would prefer to import those axles from Australia to here, which is the part plus transportation, rather than have it made here very close to the assembly line.

JK: They were building that particular axle in Buffalo and they were having a lot of problems with it. ^{reverse} I'm pretty certain that job is going to go to Australia.

PP: Where's the plant in Australia?

JK: I'm really not sure..

PP: In the past two years since I've talked to you, have there been any major changes at Gear & Axle, that you can think of, (except ^{well,} we mentioned about more front wheel drive?

JK: There is constantly rumors of jobs that are being lost to other divisions or phased out.

PP: Have you any personal knowledge of people who have quite a lot of seniority who have been phased out or moved to another plant?

JK: No.

PP: Do you think anyone from your plant will be moved to ~~like~~ the new Lake Orion plant or to the new Poletown plant?

JK: I don't really have any idea. There's been speculation that possibly that we would merge with them or we might supply some services for them, it's just all speculation.

PP: Have you any idea before Gear & Axle was called Gear & Axle whether it was ~~called~~ another plant or was it made up of several plants?

JK: Part of it at one time was called Central Gear.

PP: Do you know anything more about the history of the plant?

JK: Not really. All I know is that I believe that Plant #1 was originally called Central Gear and I think that in the early 30's it became ^{Chevrolet} Gear & Axle.

PP: Have there been many people laid-off in the past two years?

JK: There have been a lot of people laid-off, I think they have definitely come back up some, we're not as low in terms of total employment as we were.

PP: Have there been any new apprentices in say machine repair?

JK: No, there haven't.

JK: No, ~~there~~ haven't been any new machine repair apprentices, ~~there~~ have been electrical apprentices.

PP: Why do you think that is?

JK: They were very top heavy in machine repair, I think sometimes I tend to believe they were a very benevolent company, that they tended to over employ because they were making so much money, but I couldn't see any other reason for it, they definitely were over-employing, at least in the machine repair field.

PP: Would you buy any shares in General Motors?

JK: Yes, I think I would.

PP: What about Chrysler? Which two years ago was way down and now is way up which has certainly been a surprise to a lot of people, I think it went down to about \$3.00 a share now it's about \$25 or \$28 a share. But really, basically looking at the overall American auto industry, how do you feel for its future, given the fact that we are getting into these imported cars and so forth.

(JK: I feel we can build a quality product at a reasonable price that will get our share of the market back and probably drive out the competition, but it's only going to happen if we do build a quality car at a competitive price.)

PP: How can we build a quality car at a competitive price?

JK: Given all the facts that we know about wages, inflation, cost of living rise

JK: (I think one of the ^{big} things is people have to take ^{that} pride in what they do, they have to realize they have to go to work every day and just do a decent day's work. ^{And} Management has

Job can.

work

JK: to realize that everything they do to cut cost, that the bottom line, the most important thing can't always be cutting costs, that sometimes they will have to spend more money for quality. I'm not really sure that they're there yet. I don't really think they ^{really} believe that, ^{if} if they can save \$8 a car and go from something that might have had only 1% defects to something that will maybe have 10% defects, ^{now,} if they could save the \$8 they would probably go to 10% defects.)

PP: Yet they would still have to repair those cars.

JK: Possibly.

PP: I remember going through the Cadillac plant ~~and~~ once a few years ago and seeing ^{at} the end of the line and seeing a rather large number of cars put aside and I asked about it, and I was told all of them had defects and they would have to be repaired after they have gone through production.

JK: I don't know if the Japanese have that but I know all of the American car companies do that.

PP: Is there anything you would like to add to the tape about either your work or the future of the auto industry or what you would like to see besides this quality car with a competitive price. ^{is} Is there anything you feel should be done perhaps to really help the automobile industry.

JK: ^{I think} Something that would really help the automobile industry beside all the people in the plant working would be for the companies to bargain in good faith with the people that have bought their cars, ^T To take good care of their customers.

JK: I think if people were treated fairly at their dealers
and if they did in fact get a car there, had a problem,
, if the company would go all out for them, ~~that~~ there wouldn't
be that many problems