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R: Let's say union it is now . What was the name of your union first, ~~layed off professional workers~~ United Office and Professional Workers?

I: United Office and Professional Workers. Not at all . They organized the UAW...

R: Girls.

I: What year did they organize that?

R: I don't know, 1940 I guess.

I: So right at the same time that--

R: There are two girls still down in that local that were there...

I: Marie?

R: Marie and Tilly.

I: I didn't meet her.

R: Well, Marie was a longtime chairman I think. I guess she still is of the Girls Office Worker's Committee. She was my secretary.

I: Oh really. Yeah, you could tell talking to her that she had a lot of experience...

R: Oh boy.

I: Well, they were organized by the United Office and Professional Workers so they were never a part of UAW factory workers?

R: They are now.

I: They are now.

R: Now wait a minute. No. Even down town in Solidarity House they are not UAW members. They have an Office Workers Union of their own.

I: Is it an offshoot of the United Office and Professional Workers?

R: Yeah.

I: Do you know why it happened that way instead of the United Auto Workers Office Workers?

R: Well, it would have been a company union, wouldn't it?

I: Well, doesn't UAW have its own branch for salaried workers?

R: Yes.

I: Yeah.

R: But different types of salaried people. Engineers or they are into doctors and professors and everything else now. They've got some universities almost signed up for teachers and what not.

I: So was that United Office and Professional Workers Union a pretty effective union for the women in the offices?

R: Well as an officer I always used to think we'd be fair. In fact the former officer that did most of the negotiating for our local union with them whatever we had on the bargaining table with the company he would give to the girls and tell the company to shoot it at that, you know. So our girls had a contract far in excess of any comparable girls anywhere. 35 hour work week was initiated.

I: Oh yeah.

R: Oh yeah.

I: Okay. Well can you tell me a little bit about the type of work that you did in the River Rouge, when you came to work here?

R: Well, my father worked in the motor building on a crankshaft line. Now he never weighed more than 135 pounds in his life and he used to come home at night so darn exhausted that he would just about go wash up come down and eat and he would lay on the couch and listen to Amos

and Andy and Kate Smith who were the tops in radio at that time; up to bed, to get ready for work, and my mother kept saying; "you two boys," I have a brother a year and a half older than me," are never going to suffer what your father did. When you are 14, I'm going to take you, or 12, the application age was 12, to Henry Ford Trade School," which she did. As each of us reached the age of 12, we went up to Highland Park, adjacent to the Ford factory in Highland Park on Woodward avenue, to the trade school.

I: Why did your mother take that route in sending you to a trade school to work at Ford's? Was it sort of assumed that you would be at Ford's at some time?

R: No, she didn't mind us going to Ford's but she didn't want us working on a production line like her husband, coming home so physically beat every night.

I: So she was just giving you a skill.

R: She knew some skilled tradesmen among her friends and what not who lived a normal life. Now my dad had a hard way. See I'm foreign born. I don't know if you know. I'm from Canada. I came over here at the age of 9 and the way we came, my father led an aborted Alberta strike in a rubber plant back in Nariton, Ontario. We lived in a house that was built by the rubber company. He was a bootmaker and not a tiremaker. This was a bootmaker outfit. He started a union then that subsequently has become the United Rubber Worker's Union. And he organized it pretty well and they decided to go on a strike one day and the plant was built in four stories and he worked on the top making boots, and at a given signal they were supposed to go from the fourth floor down the stairs, no elevator, and each succeeding floors

join in the walkout. Well, I'm too young to remember all the details, but when he and one other guy started down the isle the other workers started looking at each other and some started to follow, bosses were looking, they ran back to their job and my father and this guy started down the stairs; the other guy got to the first step and he ran back and went to his job and my father walked down and when they saw him alone at the third floor, second floor, nobody joined. He walked out and walked home and our home was owned by the rubber factory. Well, they offered to reinstate him if he would sign allegiance to the company, swear that he would never again join a union, organize or walk out, and he refused. So he was just about blackballed in the rubber industry in Canada. He came here and got in the auto industry.

I: What year was that he was organizing in rubber?

R: 1923 I believe this occurred. And we came to, he came first and then sent for us. I came here my citizenship papers show January 25, 1924 and I was 9 on January 2. At any rate my brother and I both went to trade school. He went at age 14 and I followed a year and a half later at age 14. There were many good things to say about Henry Ford Trade School but there were a lot of things that the old man was given credit for that weren't quite true. Maybe he meant well. I don't know and that was always the thing that kept the Ford workers from organizing till 4 years after GM and Chrysler were organized. "If only the old man knew he would do something about it. It was the lesser bosses and whatnot that impose all these indignities and all this mess."

I: Was that just because of the way his image was portrayed over the media--?

R: Yes.

I: And the project that he embarked on?

R: I think so, yes. At any rate, I thought I was being impossed on, and I went to Henry Ford Trade School. It was very good. I started at 15¢ an hour but that is not wages. That was a scholarship they paid you.

I: How long did that last?

R: Well, you worked four years. You worked in the shop end of the school two weeks and then went to school one week. So we got very little schooling and I have always been ashamed of my grammar and what not, on that account because we had so little of it.

I: About age 12 you finished your regular school--

R: No, I was in Cass Tech High at 12 for 2 years. And I went in the Henry Ford Trade School at 14 until the age of 18. At any rate they operated in violation of the law because schools were allowed, trade schools were allowed, with industry, if the products they made were not used in the industry that was sponsoring that school. Well, it was so blatant what he was doing. Are you familiar with production lines where the trolleys run, conveyers run along on trolleys and what not?

I: Well, I have an idea in my head. I have never seen it.

R: We had a trolley repair department and if you ever saw kids work repair, oh my God. I myself worked on valves and they were from stead valves with gates that big, that operated in the powerhouses and what not to little things so big. Very little on rubber valves like you change a washer at home and most of them were metal. Some were so small and then when you had to send them to take the marks out where

it was quite evident where the leaks were and you had to sand those out. Hit them with a red lead and blue lead, black lead into each other so they made it. It was a male and female part you know. Your fingers were like sandpaper. I'd came home with blood oozing out of them. I got bitter in there. Although I learned a lot, I'll have to say. I was learning to operate lathe I don't know if you are familiar with machine shop parts, lathes and milling machines and what not and at the age of 18, 4 years we spend in the trade school, at the age of 18 into the factory on a factory _____.

I: Was that an automatic job?

R: No. Everybody that came through the trade school didn't get into the factory. It depended on whether they needed, you went in there as an apprentice. I was an apprentice toolmaker. My brother was an apprentice dyemaker. But I was up to then, we got an increase if we kept up with our shop work and our school work, a penny every six weeks or whatever the term was. But at any rate when I went to the employment office at Gate 2, now you probably heard about Ford in the middle 1915s or '16s establish a five-hour workday, or five-dollar workday. That's just so much poppycock. You had to go through so many qualifications. They had a sociological department set up that examined your needs for the money whether you were clean living. If you had a boarder in the house, because that boarder was actually taking care of the woman of the house while her husband is at work. They had so many. They could come in your house anytime of the day and what not. At any rate I was making 41¢ an hour is what they called a scholarship and never called it wages. Because you weren't supposed to work in a factory around any moving machinery until you

were 18. We were students and on a scholarship. If you forgot your badge on payday, for instance and you needed it, many times my brother was layed off and my father was layed off and we really needed the money, I'd listen I would notice the treasurer of the trade school would give some guys a check and some not. And I'm wondering what is it, I didn't bring my badge and I'm here they told me if you make proper application and look great you get it. So I got close to it and the treasurer looked at one kid and he said, what do you want, and he said, I want my paycheck I forgot my badge today and he says come back monday when you got your badge to get your paycheck. The next kid said, I want my scholarship fund and I forgot my badge today and they told me you could issue a paper badge for me to get through the rest of the day and issue my check. Yes sir. So I flashed that. Scholarship fund. At any rate going into the factory at the age of 18 in 1933 they said well we got to raise your wages you're not a full fledged factory toolmaker apprentice. They raised it to 42-1/2 cents an hour. Within three months I was cut to 32-1/2 cents an hour and was consoled with the fact that journeymen toolmakers were only making 30 cents an hour and Dearborn welfare families when the adult was working at Ford's and they got a dollar a day working at Ford to supplement what they got from welfare.

I: Why did the company originally pay you 42 and then drop?

R: Well, it was the depression. Thirty-three was still the depression.

I: And you came in at 32?

R: Thirty-three.

I: Thirty-three?

R: With the factory.

I: Yeah, with 42 cents they paid you and then they cut it after that?

R: Yes.

I: Just because everybody was getting wage cuts?

R: Uh huh. The day I got layed off, I received 50 cents an hour on my pay because Roosevelt had introduced the NRA, I don't know if you are familiar with that, National Recovery Act and that was a minimum pay. So I got layed off and got a raise in pay. But we had suffered a lot of indignities. You must have heard it so many times. Do this, do that, no if you protest it was either Miller Road is the nearest street, that's where the employment office was, hit Miller Road. Or sometimes they didn't even tell you to do it or else just fire you. Quite evident. It was so evident to most of us or not enough of us at the time I should have said. But you couldn't buck that outfit alone. So we were happy to hear about the UAW coming on the scene organizing and that was late '36 and '37. They told you they organized Chrysler and GM in '37, I'm sure you heard of the sitdown strikes and all this and that. It still took four more years to convince the Ford workers to join the union.

I: So who came into the shop as UAW organizers?

R: Most of it was done from within. Because the city of Dearborn passed an anti-handbill ordinance, professional unionists couldn't even come in the city gates and pass out literature and what not, it was against the law. I'd just go to city gates and pass out literature and what not, it was against the law. I'd just wait for them to come in, it was always known when they were coming. Off to jail they went. So that law was ruled unconstitutional and that let more in and they had started having organizational meetings. I would give a lot of credit

to the mine workers because it was a lot of layoffs in the mines and most of those guys headed for Detroit because the automobile business, for awhile was booming and they hired in there.

I: Which mines were laying off?

R: Coal mines.

I: Which mines were laying off?

R: Coal mines.

I: In Pennsylvania?

R: Pennsylvania, mostly, yeah. You will find among the old-timers many of the original organizers in Ford were from ~~their~~ coal mines. I'm sure you have heard of Percy Llewellyn who died in April of this year.

I: He was from the mines?

R: He was a member of the United Mine Workers but he never worked down below. He worked upstairs on the depo. I gave the eulogy at his funeral and I told the story that he told me. I belong to the mine workers but I was never down in the mines in my damn life, he said. I didn't put that coal down there and I'll be goddam if I was going down there and dig it. No, he worked upstairs as a check weighman working for the union checking the bosses weights. He was the foremost in the mine. I remember working in the plant there.

I: Do you remember the names of some others who were in the mines. Oh yeah, Mack Cinzori. How do you spell it.? Is that Cin?

R: Mack, that's his first name. That's his legal name. Cinzori. Mack Cinzori.

I: Oh yeah, I have seen that name.

R: I'm sure you have.

I: Did he actually work in the mine?

R: Yes, he did. Oh yeah. Hey, they all did except Percy as far as I know.

I: So they came in around the early 40s or late 30s into Ford.

R: Late 30s, yeah. The union got some concept of the _____ in the plant they established organizing locations in different parts of Detroit, never in Dearborn to begin with because you couldn't show there. Ford had their police department so locked up. He appointed them, he appointed the chief and the mayor and everything else. And on the border of Detroit where Ford it boardered Dearborn, you found out about it by the underhand or current talk where the union hall was went down and signed up. I went down and signed up in 1937 and I immediately bitched because it was $1 initiation fee and $1 month which was quite a chunk of money.

I: Was this the AFL you were with?

R: No. This was the original UAW.

I: CIO?

R: Yes. There was an old bank building down Vernor highway in Detroit.

I: Who were some of the earlier people who were organizing at this stage in UAW?

R: Oh there were so many.

I: Or some of the more important ones.

R: You know some of the ones that emerged in leadership aren't exactly the ones that were doing the organizing work at the time. Well the more important ones, of course, from the mine workers John L. became president of the CIO, John L. Lewis of the Mine Workers. He lent organizers to the UAW to work at Ford and the guy that was given directorship of the Ford organizing drive from the mine workers, was

named Mike Widman, Mike Widman. And the UAW as an organization had to have a co-director. They wouldn't let the mine workers come in and do it alone. His name was Dick Leanord, Richard T. Leonard. Later he became the Ford Department director of the UAW, regional director and vice president. But they were professionals if you call them, they were working for $35 a week but they were working fulltime for the union. It was guys in the shop they never got a penny that were doing the real work, Mack Cinzori for instance. He was only apprentice, his neck was out so far organizing, so was mine but let somebody else tell you about that. And Percy's he was fired for union activity. He was beat up by the cops. It was over 2,000 when we got recognition by the company finally in 41 there was at least 2500 National Labor Relations cases. People fired for union activity organizing and what have you. Twenty-five hundred.

I: Was Bill McKie an important figure?

R: Yes, yes, yes. An "avout" /sic/ communist. That was part of it. Everybody liked Bill and they hated communism. Well, not everybody hated communism. They knew what he was. He never pretended. And as a matter of fact after the Taft Hartly Law came in Bill was back in the plant he was elected local trustee and had to resign because he could not sign the anti-communist affidavit to retain local office. And he said he'd he damned if he'd dis-avow his communist affiliation.

I: Why was he well liked in the shop?

R: He was a lot older than most of us and he talked sense and he lived, you know he wasn't trying to organize a union for his own financial benefit or this and that because if ever a guy lived frugal it was Bill McKie. He never owned a car, to my knowledge in his life and he

used to get his bundle of paper and peddle them in the neighborhoods and whatnot. I remember one time a guy saw him going and thought he'd give him a lift. He stopped at the curb put his window down and said hey Bill, can I give you a lift. Bill said no I'm in a hurry and he went plodding down and _____. But in the tail end of 1940 we were pretty well organized. I forgot to tell you now that I started to make the confession, in 1937 I joined and whatnot but I dropped out because I had subsequent layoffs, couldn't afford to pay and thought it was too much and I had already given indication where my feelings were and whatnot. I didn't rejoin until the early part of 1940.

I: They didn't have some kind of provision for reducing the dues for layoff?

R: No. Now today when they are organizing a new plant you don't go in and make those people pay initiation fees and dues right off the bat. You hold that in abeyance until you get them a contract. But they didn't do it in those days. Well they do today. I think Emil Mazey was responsible for that. As a matter of fact when a plant goes on strike now for the initial contract maybe the workers in three haven't paid a penny in and initiation fees or dues, but if they go on strike in support of a new contract or a first contract, they get on the UAW strike fund. But not in those days. Those dues were only $1.

I: Lack of resources?

R: Oh _____. And yet when they organized Ford they had some 80,000 members in the Rouge plant alone. My God you were dealing with $80,000 a month. You got rich overnight. Well, you wanted to talk

about democracy in Local 600. I don't know quite what you had in mind.

I: Let me just progress one step at a time. The next thing is just describe the unit that you were a member of.

R: I served an apprenticeship as a toolmaker in 711X it was in the foundry machine shop. What you know now as the tool and dye unit then used to be just the tool and dye building. It was a tool and dye building with about 4,000 people in it who build all the new tools and dyes but then there was a tool room and a dye room in every building where there was many machine operations because they had to put those new tools, they did some construction work, yes quite a bit in the larger ones, but they had to put those tools and dyes into machines and whatnot and make them operable and then maintain them.

I: About how big of a group of workers would that be?

R: Well, for instance there were 1200 in the dye room in the Dearborn Stamping plant. It was then known as the Press Steel building. I get confused with these names now. In the Rolling Mill where they used to make the forgings and the frames for the cars, there were 1100.

I: Just in the dye room?

R: Just in the dye room within that building. In the foundry they had a large machine repair contingent and flask(?) repairmen and patternmakers because patterns were always associated with foundry operations.

I: So about how many men were in your tool and dye division of the machine foundry shop?

R: When the union could, well at one time we were 100 and something but no hold it, they started that new tool and dye building because we

were all doing construction work within our own buildings. When they started the new tool and dye building, they did the bulk of the construction work and drained the men and work from those buildings, now my tool room went down to less than 300 people from a high of 1100. So we were mostly a repair gang.

I: What was the year that they opened the tool and dye shop itself?

R: I think it was the latter part of 1939 or 1940. We started the lend lease with England. With lend lease you know with the destroyers (?) to Britain and this and that we were preparing for a war don't let anybody kid you. Ford said he could build airplanes on a production basis just like he did autos. And my brother worked in that he was a dye maker leader one of the youngest over in the new tool and dye building, and they brought in blueprints there wing fixtures and whatnot for these engine bombers. And he was one of the whiz kids selected to go to San Diego and learn assembly methods there. Ford sent a crew of his own out there. They spent months and months there while they were building. The willow run bomber plant. You weren't very far from there, where you are staying. It's now a GM assembly plant, but it's the original Ford Willow run bomber plant. See he, when he came back he immediately went on supervision because those guys were down there to learn and then come back and supervise others that's why he was _____. But you said you had heard of me being part of the organizing, I was when the, before the NLRB election in April of 1941, I had over two-thirds of the, and I wasn't alone, and all those guys down the street there, I damn near invited them up three of them volunteer organizer and whatnot. We had over two-thirds

of the members signed up in the UAW. And I can't tell you how many members were signed up in all the others or not because--

I: Your tool and dye--

R: My department in the machine shop. No I wish that record had been as good in the tool and dye building as a whole. They were mostly red apples. They were far from that record. I was negotiating wages and some working conditions before the union was recognized. We took, at a given signal one day we all lit cigarettes, that was someting new in the Ford Motor Company. Different things we used to do to demonstrate, you know. Always under threat, but the movement had grown so much. Now these bosses they just wanted to get by, you know. They were getting production or their work out, boy they tolerated more and more all the time.

I: Well, why do you think that the men in production in the foundry machine shop were receptive to the union whereas the tool and dye shop you mentioned was not so much so?

R: Well, working conditions mainly. It was the newest and largest tool and dye room in the world. Bar none. And they were catered to. There weren't too many. There were some including Mack Cinzori who was an apprentice there at the time. There weren't too many that emerged as ourselves, from that original group that emerged as union leaders.

I: And how did those conditions compare to yours in the production?

R: Well, we could see what was going on in production, Holy mackerel. I knew then when I left the trade school and went in the factory, I was more impressed than ever what my mother meant by saying, "You boys are going to be tradesmen not production workers because, they were like

animals, my God. Even today everybody thinks it's easy in a Ford factory, even today if you can get a trip through the Ford assembly plant and see those guys, they are like robots themselves--putting nuts on, putting bolts on, doing this and that. How the hell they stand the trade art it would drive me nuts. I couldn't have ever worked in there on production. They do it. Sometimes you ask a guy why and he says, I'm not doing that, I'm building a home or a cottage or something. He says my mind is far away. He's just doing this automatically. I don't know how they can robotize themselves like that. But anyway, we were surrounded by good union people, the production workers were the ones who knew they needed a union. Don't forget by that time we had many examples of what we were suffering. The production workers in some phases of work in Chrysler and GM were making more than the tool and dye makers in Ford. Not all, but some. But you never knew how much the guy next to you was making. It was no set wage scale and this and that like there is now. So he could be making more and he wasn't about to tell you because if he was making more he didn't want you going to the boss and saying I'm as good as this guy, so there was jealousies all over the place but when I took a wage survey in early '40 and found out that, oh we were way underpaid.

I: The UAW did a wage survey?

R: They sent sheets in there to all the stewards on the job and in departments, you know, and took a survey that way. But you had to go to the individual worker and ask him what he was making whatnot in order to complete the survey. Some were reluctant to tell you, some were so ashamed. Oh my God. A guy, I was an apprentice by that time,

may be making a $1 or $1.05 an hour. We had journeymen in there making 95--95¢.

I: Does the international have the result of that survey, do you think?

R: They did have, now whether they've got it now or not. Well they knew--well certainly their leaflets and everything showed how much less Ford workers were making, yes they have it.

I: This was in 1940 you say?

R: Yeah. Oh, earlier than that but I think they were more or less guessing before that because this was as I remember the first big survey they ever took. And boy that's when a whole lot of us got in trouble because we were really going behind the NLRB then. Our right to organize and do this and that and our leaflets was going beyond interviewing Ford workers and asking questions like that, you know.

I: How was that so? What other things were on the--

R: What was wrong?

I: No what else besides asking the wages were you doing ~~it~~ with the leaflets and the questionnaires?

R: Well just going up to a worker on company time and ask him to join.

I: Oh.

R: Most places you had a paid company lunch period. You weren't even free under the law to do it during that period because you were on the company payroll. And even when they had the half hour lunch period unpaid, well they'd still grab you for doing it but a lot of the NLRB cases came from there or were from such incidences as that, where the law said we were free to do it. Ford had another problem that Chrysler and GM didn't at the time. We probably had the largest percentage of, the decent word to say then was Negroes.--Negro

employees and the any of the others, and they were infiltrating jobs that were only held by Whites throughout the years and very few of them were in GM or Chrysler's. They had been relegated to foundry work, Shoveling sand, pouring steel, cleanup jobs in the other production buildings where those dangerous things _____. Finally Ford started to put a few in the tool and dye rooms as models. And demonstrated infiltrating the assembly lines and whatnot with them.

I: Well, what do you think his incentive to do this was.

R: Help break the union, I think, because most of them looked at Mr. Ford as their emancipator, not Mr. Lincoln. He was lying them on jobs that they had never had before. They never did have a vote or never did give a breakdown on how the Whites voted and the Blacks. The NRLB doesn't conduct the elections like that. But we could have told if they would give the figures by buildings because we knew the buildings that were predominately Black like the foundry.

I: The production foundry? How did they vote in that?

R: Nobody ever revealed it.

I: What's your impression?

R: I say about 50-50. Because the overall vote in Rouge plant was two-thirds for the UAW. Of course it probably wasn't all Black either. Most of the Whites were foreign born Italians, Maltese.

I: Did you think that the role of the Blacks changed over the years from them being more pro-Ford and against the union to something else later on?

R: Yes, it did for several reasons. It's hard to explain. There were new avenues opened to them, you know, positions of leadership, even if

it was a job steward in his own department it was something he had never attained, in his life before or on the bargaining committee, bargaining for several thousand of his subordinates, Chairman of the building and what not. Oh yeah they seized upon that because regardless of what Ford put in the production, introducing in the production other things, they did not introduce him into salaried personnel. So there were very few job opening on supervision or on that order. The Shelton Tappes you're talking about, this is an aside from the issue, he is elected recording secretary of the local union in 1942. That was the first year we attained local union autonomy. In other words the right to elect our own officers and whatnot. We were under UAW directorship. He started issuing buttons and they showed up at the foundry. While I was job steward there was district committeeman, bargaining committeeman, chairman and then he started issueing other buttons. Buttons are important, you know.

I: Why is that?

R: You mean something. You belong to something or you are somebody, you got to go read them. He not only issued buttons for the committeemen and getting credentials, there would be an alternate committee. There would be a guide and an alternate guide and what not. And most of those guys had their bosses sold that they were full-time union reps. And that was to the extent they could get away with it. If anybody wore a badge, man, he was a wheel.

I: Did that catch on at any of the other shops?

R: No, hey the Ford wheels found out about that. They knocked that out pretty quick. It was much cheaper, I'll tell you in 1946, it was much cheaper for the company to go to full-time pay committeemen than it

was to allow the job steward system to exist the way it was because a good job steward could invent more reasons for being off a job, invent greivances or do something else to get off the job. Oh, there were abuses, I don't hide that. So when the company went to full-time committeemen, paid by the company.

I: What was the difference, were there fewer than there when they were stewards?

R: Yes.

I: How did the company save?

R: Well they figured one full-time committeeman for each 250 men.

I: And how was it under the steward system?

R: Oh my God, every department regardless of size had a department committeeman and he always had an alternate and just whatever they could get away with. So we had some good ones and some bad ones, you know. Some of the loafers decided that was a good way to get off the job. I can't for the life of me say that they were all good union people.

I: How did the plant set up at Ford's, being the biggest employing unit around with all those different buildings and how did that affect the interaction that workers had? Did they socialize or talk with each other from their different building units, or did they mainly keep within their own buildings?

R: No. They kept within their own buildings because there was no way they could socialize or fraternalize during the work day in there, and we held local union meetings at Cass Tech, we always get a big hall we try to hold local union meetings, and really it was democracy out of the window because there you would have 18 different buildings coming

in there, each with maybe a common peeve but each with a separate peeve too, trying to get attention, the others for support, and everything else. They were so unwielding that they formed a General Council. Each building had its own autonomy like the foundry machine shop had a President, bargaining committee, their own officers, a limited autonomy, of course, it was a limit on what they could do. A portion of the dues were given to them, that was to maintain an office in the local union, that paid expenses and chairman and whatnot. And a General Council deal was figured so that all the, well I'd say there was 18 units at the time I believe that figure is fairly close. Based on their population elected deligates to this General Council just like the states here send delegates to the Congress proportionately.

I: Was that a big honor to get elected to the General Council?

R: Yes, but what you found was, it was a nonpaying job, so the meetings, most of the times during the war we were working six days a week, the meetings were generally held on a Sunday. That meant probably given up your only day off during the week and as I said voluntary. I would say a good portion of the General Council to began with was secondary leadership. Because the guys that had organized were in top leadership. Their wives and family were so sick of them going out nights organizing and doing this and that all for the union for nothing. I think they had heat at home, no more jobs, not another day of the week, or whatnot, so the real dyed-in-the wool guy he was there, he ran for election, and was there. That was one job where all of the top leadership in the buildings worked there.

I: How does that compare with the executive board?

R: The Executive Board is comprised of 9 or 10 local officers and the president of each unit.

I: So they were paid to attend, while they were attending their meetings they were being paid?

R: The chairmen of the buildings are paid for. They are on the company payroll. And they get their necessary expenses from the local union.

I: So they don't work in a shop anymore after they have become president of their unit?

R: Oh they are required to ring a time card in the plant. All the rules say at least once a day they got to ring in the morning or in the afternoon. Once a day they have to have a card ring.

I: Do they actually do production work or--

R: No, no, they are full-time for the union. They are in there overseeing the contract and overseeing the stewards that operate in the various departments. And each of those whatever the units are by number, I don't know may be down to 14 now, each of those have separate local unit agreements.

I: Did they have those way back in the 40s?

R: Yes. In the latter 40s yes because we never had plantwide senority for instance and each building had to go in there and establish an occupational group senority system.

I: Do you think that there are much differences between agreements worked out between the units and the company? From unit to unit--

R: Not on wages. They weren't allowed to negotiate wages in the latter stages. That was done by the national Ford Department. We get uniform wages nationally.

I: So seniority was worked out with the individual in units, anything else?

R: Oh yes. Working conditions. Some buildings had continuous Sunday operations for instance. At the glass plant you can't cut off a ribbon of glass Saturday and Sunday and start on Monday. The ribbon of glass runs all the time. Those furnaces run all the time and somebody has to be there to do them. So that's what you call continuous sevenday operation. The same with steel. You note that steel, you're in a malleable condition and send it down those rollers and make necessary steel plates or sheets. You don't shut that off during the weekends.

I: Do you think any of individual units were able to negotiate stronger or better contracts?

R: Than others?

I: Yeah.

R: To begin with. Yes. Some were able to get a paid lunch period, others weren't. But the worse of it is in those days they never got it in writing. Some of those agreements. When the company cut them off, after a few years, those unis went to arbitration, Dr. Harry Shulman was the Umpire for the Ford UAW at the time.

I: What was he a doctor of?

R: A doctor of law. He was Dean of the Yale Law School wasn't he?

I: I've read some of his decisions--

R: Yeah he was one of the wheels in the National Labor Relations Board when they started a War Labor Board, oh he was quite a figure. Have you ever read any of his--his umpire decisions are in bound volumes.

I: Yeah I have seen those.

R: Master pieces, most of them. You can learn from them at any rate. But that was when he made one of his famous quotes when these guys from different buildings come out and say we had negotiated paid lunch period. Where is the agreement. We don't have one, it was a verbal agreement. That's when in one of his opinions, and he said an unwritten agreement isn't worth the paper it's not written on. He threw them all out. Percy Llewellyn was chairman of the motor building at the time and he had one on writing and I don't know how but that was included in ___?_____,

I: Percy Llewellyn's shop had a strong unit agreement?

R: Yeah. Yes and no. I worked in a building where there were tool makers on the floor. The company wanted to establish classification of fixed repair, I said no way. That kind of repairs, and I knew the background on those, and, he made it. Fixed repair they wanted to pay a dime an hour less. Motor building allowed them to have that classification. The only building in the whole plant where fixed repair, the guy who maintained tools was allowed. So that was why there had to be some semblance of control over what one building, one building couldn't go in there and undercut what another one was doing. Even today you know that the national agreement with Ford is hold by the international union, not the local union. The local unions have agreements but they can't contradict the master agreement. They can supplement and add to it, they can't subtract from.

I: How about other aspects of the labor-management relations within the different building units. Do you think that they differed?

R: Well, people are people. Some bosses tried to get along, they tried, they were taken to school. Others carried on the fight, they were so

bitter anti-union nobody was going to tell them how to run their department and whatnot. And that fight went on for so long and the union was really at a disadvantage because, contract was signed, the initial contract was signed on June 20, 1941 and if we weren't at war we were the closest thing to it because Pearl Harbor happened December 7. And the UAW was one of the first unions to rush into a no-strike pledge. So some of these foremen just ran hog wild. Some of the superintendents, what could you do about it, you know. You couldn't use the strike. Oh we had many wildcat strikes all right. International union couldn't authorize them and sent you back to work.

I: Well can you remember where some of these belligerent foremen, vs. the more easy going foremen, which buildings they were in.

R: Well, of course I was restricted. I only worked in the foundry machine shop tool room. But they still floated in the breeze, like the higher ups. Well, maybe this will be a point. Henry Ford I, the original was a strong Mason, I don't know if you knew that or not. So throughout that time Masons became the head of most of the buildings and so the secondary leadership. When Henry Ford II assumed the presidency, he was released from, what was he, in the navy?, in the early 40s to come back and take over chairmanship of the Ford Motor Company because it was in a hell of a mess. He had already turned Catholic and married that O'Connel girl that he married. Well you would be surprised when he became head of that thing. The foreman and superintendents had switched to Catholicism. They went from Masons to knights of Columbus. You wouldn't think that went on. It went on. And of course that entered into politics in the union too, you know. The Masons against the Catholics. Henry McCusker, you talk to, was

one of the officers in the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. He worked in the plant.

I: Did Ford II's assuming the presidency lift the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists to a higher position?

R: Yes. No question about it. Because until then you never heard much about them.

I: You don't think they had much power before Ford II came in?

R: I never knew about it.

I: How about Paul Ste. Marie, was he involved with it?

R: He was from the tool and dye building and he was after we got our autonomy he was the first elected president of the local. But some of the things he did because the UAW then as now was just as dedicated to backing Democratic candidates and--

I: So how about other types of characterizations of the different building units, could you characterize some as having more skilled workers or having more blacks?

R: Well the tool and die plant was certainly the most _____ in the Rouge plant and most highly skilled. Because when you get into the engineering fields and whatnot they were out of the realm of the union. They weren't, they were exempt, so they were pattern makers, tool and dye makers were the highest skilled at the time, dye makers.

I: How about some of the other buildings, were there some that had a very low proportion of skilled workers?

R: Well, yes the assembly plants, the engine plants.

I: Assembly and engine. You got the motor included in that too?

R: Well, the engine plant, the motor building they used to call that one on Miller Road the motor building, and of course the name's improper.

When they built what was formally the aircraft engine building on the other side of the plant went into production, automobile engines after the war and that became known as the engine plant and not the motor building. All the workers from the motor building answered, well what could we absorb, numbers were dropped from 14,000 to less than half. Lines were automated eliminating manpower. You know what automation is I guess.

I: Oh yeah. So most of the other buildings units were basically divided--

R: Well there is skill to making steel. I can't deny you that. My God, no I wouldn't want to. Making steel in those first rollers and whatnot making that steel. Oh they were skilled in their own right.

I: So there was a high proportion of skill in those buildings.

R: In the rolling mill was the highest, I would say, proportion of other skilled workers. Then the transportation unit you had auto mechanics and still had truck mechanics but their apprenticeable trades incidently in Ford's. And those diesel engines, Ford still owns a railroad, you know, those diesel engines are repaired by Ford tradesman known as diesel engine and heavy equipment operator mechanics. That's an apprenticeable trade. A good portion of transportation units are skilled workers.

I: How about the characterization of the leadership in the different units, were there some units that tended to elect more right wing vs. left wing--?

R: Yes. It's kind of hard to explain why but it was true.

I: If I asked you about each unit would you be able to give me a general impression on whether they were right or left or center or shifting?

R: Well, most of them shifted one to the other.

I: Are there any outstanding as being predominantly left wing or predominantly right wing?

R: Casting machine shop, I said foundary machine shop, that was the name of it when I was in there. It became known as the casting machine shop later-- that was generally left through different chairmen or presidents. Unit president's, some call them chairmen, some call them a unit president. Motor building was generally of the left trend. Press steel, that's where Lee Romano was. The assembly plant was generally right. It _____ out some of the hardest working jobs working there. Why a guy should work in there should be a right-winger, I don't know.

I: And they have mostly low skills, right?

R: Yes.

I: What about the racial composition in that building?

R: Right now it's predominantly Black but it was being infiltrated, that's what I told you of a certain organizational period when they were working, they were assimilating them in there.

I: So during the late 40s say, what ~~kinds of~~ proportions do you think was Black in that building?

R: Oh, most of it is still White in the late 40s.

I: So 10-15 percent Black, something like that?

R: Yeah, but it started to climb more.

I: Was that the only predominantly right building?

R: What?

I: The B building?

R: No. Some of them, the Axle building was right wing to begin with, and then it switched to left, that's why I say some of them switched, with the same personnel there, it was just different leaders emerged.

I: What about the aircraft unit?

R: Well that was in Willow Run. Aircraft bomber was a separate local unit and that wasn't 600. The only aircraft unit we had in Rouge was aircraft engines.

I: Yeah, during the war, right?

R: Oh, that was mostly right. Besides Henry McCusker was chairman there when the once.

I: And were there many women in any of these plants/

R: No. No. The first women to come in were as timekeepers and whatnot, scattered around and the first women I think came into the tool room in the tool and dye building. They came in and were taught to operate one machine. They never served an apprenticeship operated one machine.

I: Were they brought in during the war?

R: Yes. Definitely.

I: And did they--

R: Not before.

I: Did they accumulate to high numbers during the war in that building?

R: No, not in the tool and dye building. They did in other buildings during the war they started in the pressed steel building, assembly plant, aircraft engine, and they are still in there.

I: During the war what kind of numbers were they compared to the men.

R: Oh, it's still low. They were supposed to supplant men that went in the service, you know. But they were enough to raise hell. Because

at the end of the war they were low seniority and started out in the street.

I: Were they pro-union while they were working during the war generally or can you characterize them as opposed to men.

R: Not really. There was never a woman's committee or a group of women as such. There is now. There is a women's committee there now. I don't know the importance of it. They don't seem to make enough, a lot of noise. The women involved in the, the women involved during the strike in the original days of the Local 600 were the women's auxillary of Local 600. They manned the soup kitchens and did this and that.

I: Were they actually working in the plant or were they spouses?

R: No, they were not, they were spouses. No, they did work in the plant.

I: And do you think that workers generally socialized when they got home or outside the plant?

R: Well, more so than others just through athletic activity alone because we sponsored bowling teams, baseball teams and whatnot and you know how guys go to a bar after those games and whatnot, sure they did.

I: Yeah. By looking at the Ford facts it looks like the baseball teams were an important activity.

R: They were. I'll tell you the Union spent a lot of money on uniforms then there was a specific reason. They can make tee shirts and caps available because they wanted them worn in the shop. They wanted exposure. They wanted UAW exposure. So wherever they could get a ball team together they would inssue UAW shirts with the department name on it and whatnot and encourage to wear them in the plant. It was a reason, sure.

I: Do you think it was effective in--

R: It was very, very effective early but the company maintained their athletic program all during that period. And we had guys playing for both. And of course they could have more elaborate prizes if they had the money. At one time the company offered to sponsor a joint program UAW and company, the union refused. They wanted separate games. And sometimes they were sorry because that athletic equipment began to be quite expensive.

I: Yeah. So did most workers generally live close to the plant?

R: I can't say that for the Rouge plant because of the large number of Negroes and there are none in Dearborn yet.

I: Where did they generally live?

R: On the east side of Detroit or In Takster. That was another reason that Blacks were pretty hard to organize. Ford adopted the whole town of Inkster. He established the welfare system out there and everything else. Predominately black town.

I: Yeah, I was reading in the biography of Bill McKie about that. He just vaguely refers to it. Did Ford sort of renovate the city and fix it up?

R: Yeah as I say he just about conducted a welfare system out there before there was any national welfare or city welfare or anything else.

I: And McKie's book also refers to something about the Blacks in the plant having to pay back out of their wages, money for the Inkster fund.

R: I don't know whether it was so much of that going on. For instance, guys were told to buy a Ford automobile through this or that dealer

and you will be assured of a job as long as you are making payment on the car. You know there were those kinds of things going on but if you had any hospitalization you go to the Ford hospital because while they are all separate legal entities there was tie and even today, well Benson died and I don't know who is, there was always a member of the family, chairman of the board of the Ford Hospital with different things.

I: So the Blacks that lived in Inkster were generally more favorable to Ford.

R: Yes.

I: Did that sentiment continue on into the 40s and 50s too?

R: I don't see any of it now, nowhere. It diminished entirely after the UAW got in there. I said there were other opportunities for them to get new leadership in that still wasn't open to them when Ford opened other jobs to them. No supervisor's job, no good salary job. That's not true now. They are all over. Of course, Ford had to do that anyway because of the change in times and the way the Blacks put on the demonstrations and everything else. You can imagine, well you know between 11 and 12 percent of the total population of this country now and they spend billions and billions of their, they are not all unemployed, they spend billions and billions. And when you operate a single industry like Ford's was automobiles, and they threatened you with a boycott now a total boycott would have meant your total profits. Same when Ford had a newspaper in Dearborn called the Dearborn Independent and at one time the old guy was a little bit silly in some matters you know like he said history is bunk. He never learned from history he made the repeated mistake. He ran a series of

articles in there and this publisher was an executive from Ford Motor Company and on the protocol of Zion is that the name? Yeah. Anti-Jewish.

I: Oh yeah. Not in favor of a Jewish homeland you mean?

R: No. Anti-Jewish. Anti- all Jewish bankers were the trouble--

I: Anti-semetic.

R: Yeah. Well the Jewish organizations warned him; he kept on, they told him what was going to happen. Sooner or later, you don't see them anymore at your age, they used to have newsreels. Most of the big film companies had weekly newsreels. They just kept updating them. Every goddam time you saw a car wrecked there was a Ford car involved in most of the film, the kids Jewish and you saw more Ford cars involved in a wreck. The implication was they were not safe to drive. And they started a drive against it. Mr. Ford dropped that Dearborn Independent and gave a public apology and everything else.

I: Was this after the war or during?

R: Before.

I: Oh, before.

R: This was before the union.

I: Well, Local 600 has been characterized as being a stronghold of the left-wing. The left-wing having more power than in other unions. Can you describe the different factions of the left-wing and how strong you felt it was in the Local?

R: Well, I never looked under my bed every night to see if there was a communist there with a bomb. Maybe you asked the wrong person because I think that was the attitude of most of them. The amount of communist members in Rouge plant were very, very few as far as I have

ever been able to find out. Oh, I have been accused of being a communist or not paying my dues and you know those dead things that are done. No, most of the guys, if you were in favor of civil rights and all this and that well, you were a left-winger.

I: But who else besides the communist party made up that left-wing. Just individuals who are more progressive of any other party?

R: Well, yeah. There were a lot of socialists. Hell, Walter Reuther was a socialist once so was Victor _____ brothers. Most of the original UAW leaders were. A socialist in the union at that time under Walter Reuther were not of the left-wing. He was clean. He was after the communists. And as far as I'm concerned that was just a whipping boy. Let's see what was, during the war when Russia was getting the hell beat out of them, not before that they made a pact with Germany remember, for a short time they made a pact with Germany. And there was no cry for a second front to go in and save France. No big cry in this country. And then when Germany attacked Russia all you could hear from the communists was second front and invade France and do this and that to take the heat off of them. Make Germany put troops over there. That was seized upon. Anybody that was for a second front was automatically communist because the loudest screamers for it was Russians. I think that was the start of the really big tag.

I: How did the communists act in the plants during the war?

R: They were among the best organized, but they never, there were very few communists who identified themselves with communists. They either kept their mouth shut or, I was chairman of a left-wing caucus in Rouge for years, and I never asked a guy when he proposed something,

no matter how screwy it was, because the rumor was always, we were just a front for the communist party. Because somebody told me they used to have caucus meetings in the hall down on Sylina Street before they would come and invade us enmass on our caucus and present their program to us. Well, I never asked them who they were, who they identified with, we took the subject matters they presented as such and debated them and went with them or against them.

I: Would you say that those progressive caucus meetings were very democratic?

R: Oh very. Very. In fact Local 600 was built on democracy. They got too democratic I tell you because they had to strike and put limits on the amount of money little boards of authority could give outside of the labor movement itself. Because anybody with a good cause, he thought, was a good speaker, and whatnot could come in and overwhelm everybody they vote him a couple of hundred dollars, vote him a couple of thousand dollars and they had to put limits on. Even executive board which is the elite presidents of all the buildings plus local officers has a limit of I think the last I heard was outside of the labor movement, $200 donation. Anything above that has to go through the finance committee of the General Council, get research and looked over good and a recommendation made to the General Council which is the highest authority. Oh they were running hog wild before. Because boy we had a lot of money to begin with that dollar a month when you magnify them by the numbers.

I: What kind of causes were you contributing to?

R: Now the most outstanding one I can remember and it's a guy you have already interviewed I'm sure he wouldn't mention, it was not

outstanding, one of the things that brought about this clamping down on the rule you had to go through a finance committee and everything else when Tito in Yoguloslavia was appealing for goods and arms and whatnot. It was Shelton Tappes that made a motion to donate a fully supplied ambulance to Tito. Oh my God you would have thought the house was coming down. We voted for it. Joe McCusker was president of the local at that time and a real right-winger, refused to sign the check. And I wasn't personally involved but somebody had to go to the international union and tell Joe McCusker to sign that check because it was properly authorized by the highest body, the General Council. And they ordered him to sign that check or they would authorize it from higher up. Such things as that had come under a little better control.

I: How much money was donated to Tito?

R: Oh, the figure he originally mentioned was fantastic. It was cut down to, well at that time it was, but what would an ambulance cost in those days, cars were a lot cheaper than they are now, $82,000? I don't know, I'm thinking of figures.

I: Oh. So after the rules were changed did it prevent these types of donations to more progressive causes?

R: Yes. Well, it held down the amount and a lot of other things because as I said anybody with something to promote or a cause that was dear to him, could be, it's not associated with a labor movement at all. He'd just go in there and make a wild-eyed speech and get up and propose this and that and half the guys didn't know what the cause was or this and that but he's a nice fellow so go along. And that's a hell of a way to run a finance.

I: You were talking about the communists before and that they were good organizers. What about other ways that they conducted their union management relations? Do you think that they were more tough on grievances or more likely to strike?

R: No, that's a lot of malarkey. As a matter of fact we had a real left-wing president, Paul Boatin, in the motor building once and Ed Lock was president of the tire plant. Walter Reuther got us involved in a five-year contract to reopen the contract and get us a wage after the wage freeze was over following World War II, he signed a five-year contract. It was just a pact of peace with the Ford Motor Company for a very nominal sum of 5- or 10¢ an hour and when the war was over we were saddled with that thing. We wanted to break it. We didn't know how, no strike pledge and all this and that. Walter Reuther got elected president in '46 and that was the year I think that GM established the cost of living formula. They established it there. We used some damn excuse that the companies weren't living up to the formula or they were computing the cost of living based on the consumer's index wrong, I forget the specifics. We insisted they reopen the contract an they refused. Now the international union couldn't advocate strikes, they signed the no-strike. But they encouraged them you know. But Walter Reuther at that time said it's a living document and sure we've got to sign agreements. It's a living document and conditions change and this and that, we were operating under war times and oh he could speak. And we started to pull a series of shutdowns in the Rouge plant building by building and these two well-known communists chairmen of two buildings and theirs never went down.

I: Do you think that was because it was war time?

R: It was after the war.

I: Oh, after.

R: After the war. I don't know, it seems to me a guy who was a communist instead of throwing his power around or acting like your Red communists acted, they were afraid of sticking their neck out too far. And sometimes they just weren't as militant as other people were. Of course I can say that about the communist parties all over this country. I don't remember them ever leading any revolution or any power-play movement or bomb throwing all this and that, that was attributed to them I don't know because, if you can name any event where they led a revolution or what not, tell me I don't know of any.

I: No, not in this country. So do you think that they generally stayed away or expounded on their socialist commitment in the shops. Did they talk that way to the workers or did they just think about it while they were there?

R: Individual workers. There was never any meeting I was ever at where communist or socialist speakers got up and advocated the elimination of the capitalist system and nationalized industry and this and that. Whether they were afraid of getting ruled out of order at a union meeting because really that's not to be done in the union, it's to be done in Congress or wherever. But I never heard anything of that. Oh, some got up and made comparisons, this couldn't happen there, it couldn't happen here.

I: How about the way they advocated that the union members vote for example in 1948 when Henry Wallace ran for president, was there any activity on the part of the ____?

R: Well, of course there was no communist party. Of course we didn't do too well.

I: How much of the left-wing advocated a vote for Wallace, did most of them?

R: Oh, my building went all out. Of course, we were in violation of UAW policy, but at that time we had a president named Virgil Lacey who was quite a gutsy individual. And I can remember something he started. Tommy Thompson was president of the local union for four years through 1949 and he was on the national negotiating committee that went in and negotiated a proposed pension plan for Ford workers and Dick Leonard was national Ford director. Well they made this mistake and Walter Reuther said you will never get that under me again because he got a pension plan. They went in and came back with two proposals. One you could get a wage increase, where one you could accept a pension. They still call it a company paid pension you know, a noncontributory plan. What you would otherwise have in wages goes into your contribution pension plan. So it is just a myth that it is a company paid plan. Anything you get when you work for a company is company paid if you want to look at it that way. But the workers turned it down. And Thompson run for reelection said had put an assessment on workers of 50¢ a month to build what he called a fighting pension fund to publicize the need for a pension and all this and that. that went on for, it came out to $5.50 every member had contributed to that at 50¢ a month. And he spent more money returning that then it would have cost him to put it to better use. But he was a political animal he promised the workers he would return their money if they didn't get a pension. Well, you can imagine to return $5.50 and what the mailing

charge was, and searching the files for those deceased and to their _____. But anyway Virgil Lacey started a fighting fund for Henry Wallace. Everybody that gets their $5.50 check make the contribution to Henry Wallace campaign fund.

I: This was Thompson's idea?

R: No, Virgil Lacey's.

I: Oh, Virgil Lacey's.

R: President of the tool and dye unit. No Thompson he returned the money. He didn't want anybody to think he stole the money or got it under false pretenses. He returned it. As I said it cost the Local a hell of a lot of money for him to return it. I remember at the fundraising drive for Henry Wallace down in Detroit Olympia stadium it was packed and somebody announced, they introduced Virgil Lacey, collecting money from the Ford workers the fighting pension fund is now going into the Henry Wallace fighting fund for Democratic President or Progressive party president, president of the United States, they didn't mention Progressive. And he got quite a few dollars.

I: Was there a Because of the heavy progressive vote?

R: Not really. I don't know if the total would have done it. Dewey was pretty popular at that time. He was born in Michigan and they made him the hometown boy and everything. Well, he won his reputation as a prosecuting attorney in New York and he never lost that homeboy feeling. This state was always for the organization, of unions, was always Republican anyway.

I: Who Do you think that the workers voted for, against Truman too? Voted Republican?

R: Well, not in the numbers they do now. Oh, they blasted _____, I'm ashamed of the votes Reagan got.

I: Why don't we talk a little bit about World War II and about the conditions inside the plants. Was there a lot of plant turnover and a lot of new people coming in and out of the plant all the time?

R: Sure. As I told you that was the introduction of women in the plant and guys going to the service. A lot of trouble started when they came back.

I: Did all that turnover mean anything for the feelings of solidarity in the units?

R: No. Those women joined right in there. As I said all during the war we had a no-strike pledge on and frozen wages and whatnot. There wasn't a hell of a lot of things we could do. We made a lot of noise and whatnot about working conditions but there was nothing we could to to put muscle on and force them. That was a bad period for labor.

I: How about the labor supply. Was there a shortage of workers or oversupply?

R: I never see any. Well, of course, the women came out, women coming into the plants because sure in hell what the service men were paid then couldn't keep the woman at home with any kids. They had to go out and work. Don't you remember Rosie the riveter?

I: Oh, yeah.

R: They were out making money, they weren't just out making pin money like women now. That helped hold the wages down you know. You know and women keep screaming about making, what, 58 or 65 percent of a man's wages. So many of them will take part-time jobs as pin money and they're not too concerned about union wages or anything else,

because their husbands are making money. Most of them are, of course that hurts the ones that really have to work and keep a home up because their wages are dragged on to. And that's never been true in the UAW. There was never a period when women didn't make the same wages.

I: They had equal pay for equal work?

R: Yeah. That was true then and it's still true.

I: And would you say that there was a problem with speed-ups or were there enough workers to perform the work that they didn't need the speed-up during the war.

R: Well, of course it wasn't auto production we were in. We were making tanks, we were making amphibious boats, aircraft engines. The only thing similar to auto production was the jeeps and whatnot, you know they're pretty much the same. But was there emough manpower? Yeah, or women power because everything was cost plus. He didn't mind over hiring. I'll tell you one thing he hid a lot of skilled workers in that tool and dye building that could have been put to better use somewhere else where there was a shortage. Just because of the cost plus. I saw grown men actually cry because some boss would give them a big brass nut to go put in a vice saying it was a milling file and polish the thing up. They got sons overseas and everything, out here is a toolmaker working on a bomber fixture doing this and that puttering around there so that Ford could put his wages plus his profit on. They hid a lot of skilled labor. Oh, they would never admit it.

I: What do you think about the incentive issue during the war, the incentive pay issue.

R: Well, some guys wanted it because it was the only way to beat the wage freeze. The guys that didn't want it or ran on a campaign like Walter Reuther he was going to eliminate incentive pay systems throughout the industry and whatnot, yet it was under his regime that incentive system was put into the steel division in the Ford Motor Company. Of course he didn't call it incentive pay, he called it tonage. They produced so much steel over and above a certain tonage, they got a bonus. If you can tell me the difference between that and incentive pay tonage then you got the answer. But the workers wanted it, and they still want it. Now they're faced with losing it and they don't want to give it up.

I: Were you in favor or opposed to it during the war.

R: I was opposed to it. Well, I'll tell you a lot of progressive stuff that would speed up the war work and all this and that. I could never see it as a practical matter.

I: What did you think about the argument that that was the only way to increase the wages?

R: Well, that goes back as far as the incentive system is old. A norm would be set and you break that norm and you would get a part of the increase in wages. Of course, the boss got the bigger share of it because the more you make off the same machinery, the cheaper the individual cost is. The per capita cost. But the next thing you knew they combined and made a new time study and the norm went up. So it was a rat race. You could never win.

I: So that's the reason why you thought that--

R: Oh, I was against it all the time.

I: In 1952 when the international imposed the administratorship on local 600 and it removed those five people, is it, from office,...

R: Yeah.

I: What's your opinion of the course of events?

R: I was certainly opposed to it. I was chairman of the tool and dye unit at that time, president or whatever you call it and it isn't only those five they took out, they started taking individual committemen, job stewards out too who they suspected of being a communist or fellow travelers.

I: Well, how many in all do you think?

R: I don't know really, maybe 50 in the whole plant. In my unit they took out two. They took out Mack Cinzori as I've mentioned before and Tom Jelly.

I: What happened to those guys?

R: They all came back stronger than ever. It's another story. When the international union took over the local they, well anyway you call it, they were a dictatorship. They put an administrator in there. Jack Conway who was approved as administrative assistant took over the office of the presidency. An auditor from the international union took over the financial secretary's office for the Blacks, their recording secretary so a Black guy took over the recording secretary's office. _____?_____. So they put a guy in the vice president's office too. They didn't remove these four officers from the payroll. They just roamed around the building gossiping and doing this and that while on the payroll. Maybe if they had been removed from the payroll they would have raised more hell and fought a little harder but they didn't.

I: So the international was paying for these administrators...

R: Yes. Well they had control of our local dues, they were running the local out of our dues money. The dues collection still went up. It was during that time I wrote, in '52, the latter part of '52, I wrote a leaflet that got wide circulation in the plant and in other plants too, the title "I disagree." Because they were running our local newspaper Ford Facts and one of the headlines they had in there was Democracy Prevails in Local 600, workers still have a right to disagree and whatnot. I decided well I will avail myself to that right to disagree. I wrote a four-page tabloid and I headed it, "I disagree." Told them I was taking this opportunity they said was provided for all the Ford workers to disagree.

I: Did you notice the level of democracy change during that administratorship? Did they cut down on the--

R: Oh did they. They put administrator -- there is no local, no unit officer could call a meeting without the presence of an international rep. They assigned an international rep to every unit and only he could call meetings. Our elected chairman called a meeting and he'd be there and I let the guy chair and then he would tell them what subject matters could be brought on the floor and what party could vote and whatnot. But I challenged them to have an election. They did and I tell you that was the sorriest thing Walter Reuther did, if he ever took a licking, boy, it was in that one. We elected the local officers by two-thirds. I won by two-thirds in my unit whereas I've been in close elections before. But these five they removed never got back in for about five years, international held to that one.

I: Well, what about the other 50? Were they out that long?

R: Soon administorship was lifted, they were put back in office. In the case of my two they didn't want to go back in with that stigma over their heads. They were going to be accepted by the membership of not. They demanded elections and I gave it to them and they both overwhelmed.

I: Now why did the international allow those people to come back? Wasn't the purpose of the administrators--

R: They only charged five people with adherence to the communist party programs. The others were all taken out as sympathizers or legal words.

I: So how did the five that were ousted get back in five years?

R: They appealed to the international union, the way to get back was to appeal to the international convention and after that time finally somebody decided in the higher up, Reuther was president, five years was enough. Don't ask me how he established the time.

I: And did that mean they were out of the plant altogether or just inactive leadership?

R: No, no, no, under the UAW a guy could remove from office at the Ford Motor Company or any other company could not kick them out of the plant for condescending. Although the UAW went to court and fought those kind. They were allowed to stay in the job.

I: They pretty much remained active as they were and just with the exception that they didn't have the official leadership?

R: Some did and some didn't. Some were so disgusted they just dropped out. Paul Boatin come back and became president. He defeated Carl Stellato's brother for president in the engine plant. John Gallo came back and was elected president of the engine plant. Ed Lock to my

knowledge never ran for election again. A colored by the name of Davis was reelected to the bargaining committee in the foundry and Dave Moore, another colored guy, was elected vice president in the axle building, thats where he was before. And eventually became an international representative.

I: Moore did?

R: Yeah.

I: Oh, I didn't know that.

R: Oh, yeah. Ken Bannon appointed him on the staff of the national Ford department.

I: How did the House Unamerican Activities Committees hearing in Detroit or local 600 affect the goings-on in the local.

R: Well, it affected some of the individuals. I never wanted to know who was a Communist and who wasn't. When a guy was charged he had a right to defense. I remember, oh it was quite a number of tool and dye men were issued subpoenas to appear before that committee. Not all of them got to testify but they were called down there. They lost work and everything else. And I put on a drive to pay their defense bills. I guess it was Ernie Goodman's office $100 a man. I raised $1200. I never had a harder time in my life raising $1200.

I: How did you go about doing it.

R: Took my best committeemen and went man to man on their constituents. Not based on whether the guy was a Communist or whether he wasn't, was he a good committeeman and whatnot he's in trouble now... We went man for man for $1. I remember one guy I went to, Tom Jelly was the committeeman and he said the best committeeman ever was in this plant. he was crying, he handed over the $1 and he said if I thought for one

minute that guy was a communist I would spit in his face I wouldn't hand you a dime. He was the best committeeman he ever saw but he was just so anti-communist. I never saw emotions like they did then.

I: So you had 1200 contributors then, to that fund?

R: Well, maybe some people I didn't raise it all personally. The committeemen...

I: So do you think that these hearings had an effect on the influence of the left in the local?

R: Oh, sure it did, it was intended to. Some still say that Reuther and the international union invited them to do a job that they couldn't do politically within the plant to them, you know. Get their names before the general public.

I: So what happened: what was the effect of these testimonies? If a guy went up and took the 5th amendment...

R: Nothing. There was never anybody convicted or anything as a result of those hearings. And most of the guys just went down and used the 5th amendment.

I: So how was it effective in reducing the effect of the left, or the force of the left in the local?

R: That was during the McCarthy days and that just the times. My God that McCarthy really raised hell in this country. Everybody was afraid to say anything. When he could indict guys like George Marshall as being an agent of the communist party and the Secretary of State holy mackrel. He always used to go around waving a big sheet of paper. Here I have a list of 12,000 dues paying members of the communist party and engaged in the State Department and other higher jobs--he never let that list go down so you could look at it. He just

waved it you know. He started naming the names and My God some of the ones he named.

I: So do you think the Ford workers were intimidated?

R: Yes, they were, sure they were.

I: And you think that had an affect on later elections of these people who were--

R: Most of them came back, most of them did. Because when McCarthy was exposed and the heat died down and everything, people resorted to what they were doing before.

I: Now does the international union have a similar trial before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee came to town? I heard it referred to a couple of times that there was.

R: The International never had a trial. The trials were heard in the local unions.

I: Does the local union have a trial?

R: Yes.

I: Was that lead by Stellato?

R: Yes. He charged 5 of them, and of course he had no authority to remove them from office, and the trial committee was picked from the General Council and of course he controlled the General Council so the outcome was quite evident, and but before they could get to report their findings, we had a new election and the progressives took over the General Council. And when that trial committee came to report their findings which was guilty, we said we don't even want to hear their findings because half or more of them were defeated for reelection as members of the Council no longer elegible to serve on any council committee.

I: So you took the vote over?

R: I made a motion to dismiss the committee not with a vote of thanks either, just dismiss the committee, because they were no longer a committee of our body. So they appealed that to the international union. Walter Reuther ruled that was a standing committee and duly elected committee at the time and they should report to the present council. So I don't know. Oh, that took a long, long time. So then when it came back again a motion to dismiss was overruled. And they gave the report of guilty. At that time we were still in charge of the council and we overruled the committee. But it was after that the international come in and Stelleto, by virtue of his having filed the charges, well they were the five outstanding, so those were the five removed from the office by the end. His job was done for him really. I'm sure Stellato was sorry in more ways than one actually.

I: Can you give a little bit of your impressions about Carl Stellato?

R: Yeah. He was an egotist to say the least. A hardworker. And I didn't know his background. Many guys say that he was closer to Ford than anybody knew. He was a worker in the motor building. I didn't ever find it to be true. You know stories like that are told about a lot of people. Because Ford had Harry Bennett who was in charge of the goon squad for Ford had said if I can't control the union, can't keep it out I'll control it from within, you know. So one of the favorite things in any election campaign then became: He's either a communist stooge or he's a company stooge. He's working for the company or he's working for the party. And there were very many variations in twists to put on it of course. But Stellato was an international rep when he decided on, international union wanted to

eliminate Tommy Thompson who was, I suppose, as near an independent as you could get.

I: Well, can he be characterized as right or left?

R: Who?

I: Thompson.

R: He just floated in the breeze. Depending on the issue. Walter Reuther didn't control him to the extent that he wanted. Of course Stellato was international rep at that time and you had to come back and work in the plant for three months before you could run for a local union office. So he had to resign as an international rep, come back and applied for reinstatement as a worker. He was reinstated and immediately took a three months' leave of absence.

I: Where did he get his popularity in Local 600?

R: Mainly on the pension plan. And I think the first one was originally when there were strikes one in eight of workers of that struck plant got voluntary contributions from other local unions or whatever the international was able to give and it was doled out. And when the international set up a strike fund it was doled out based on need not the right. So he waged a big campaign that there should be a raise in dues but the larger portion of it should go into an international strike fund, and that that money be allocated to the workers on strike not based on need but the right because they contributed.

I: What did it mean to be based on need.

R: Well, you would have to go down there and plead poverty or do something else. You would have to go before a committee of your peers and they decide whether you needed it or not. It got pitiful. Well, either a guy was too soft everybody would get it or he was too tough

and certain people didn't get it, you know. The campaign was on the right instead of the need. And that prevailed. And as you know now, that's the biggest fund in the international, ... the strike fund. And they they left it.

I: When did he do this? This was in the late 40s, or in the 50s?

R: 50s. He didn't, he got elected local union president in 1950.

I: And now how did the workers know him--?

R: 1952 I think he put that resolution through to the international convention.

I: Where did he get his popularity just to become elected for the first time for the presidency of the local.

R: Well, the left and the right knew that Thompson was neither of their men. And we supported Percy Llewellyn at that time. He had been a former president and regional director and international sent this guy down. He came from nowhere, really but the right wing prevailed in the plant. Oh, the consensus was to get rid of Thompson both sides. But the right wing prevailed and elected Stellato.

I: How did the workers know about him, he was running on the right wing slate?

R: You hear television and radio and newspapers and whatnot. These guys running for office now learn a lot about it from Local 600 because campaigns really cost you money, tabloids and this and that, oh boy. Pictures, position papers.

I: So who had the money to put out?

R: Well, he was backed by the international union. He had professional writers behind him. Jack Conway and Victor Reuther and who have you.

I: So there were no restrictions in the Local on the amount you can spend on an election?

R: No. Never was. All you can raise.

I: What's your impression of Stellato as a union leader?

R: Oh, he was very effective, he could speak. He didn't have a lot of schooling and maybe his grammar wasn't perfect but he was very effective as a speaker. And all retirees owed, thought they owed allegiance to him. He always communicated with them through the mail or whatnot and when he got up and he was one of the first ones to advocate a local retiree's chapter with the right to vote for officers. Was never a union in the country that had that, and very few yet. And the international agreed and set up such a thing, and every local union was issued a charter for the retired members and means set up for them to vote. And they couldn't vote for an in-plant representative like committeemen or whatnot. But for officers who could effect their future as retirees in negotiations with the company and whatnot they could vote for them. So certainly in the numbers of retirees we had it became very important to _____. Carl Storetto was elected two or three times based on the majority he got from the retirees. He didn't get the inplant vote. So that drew them closer and closer. And when you get up at gate four with those thousands of people walking out of the plant listening to a loudspeaker and solemnly swear that I shall sign no contract that doesn't contain an increase for those already retired. He had their allegiance. Put two full-time paid staff members in the local union and the retirees department. Served stuff for community affairs they run into personal problems they could come down there. You know there

is not a lot of people. I have never been on welfare and whatnot and despite all my experience when people come to you what can I do, I'm in need of this or that. They forget that they contribute foundations, they certain organizations in there they can appeal to you know if they are in need of this or that. And they pay taxes to different things. So there is already established procedures; or commissions or welfare divisions or some damn thing they can go to for relief but they don't know it. And those guys down to the local union did know it and they build up their reputation for service and he did a wonderful job with retirees.

I: What was his relationship with the left wing in the local?

R: He was originally a left winger.

I: You mean when he was in the motor building?

R: Yeah he leaned that way and he was kind of like this but he was appointed by Percy Llewellyn, Percy was elected staff regional director in 1943. Carl Stellato had been on the bargaining committee and the Motor building was one of his first appointees on Percy's staff. And that was all right hen R.J. Thomas was president. When Walter Reuther got elected in 1946, he started cleaning house. Most of these regional directors thought they had the right to appointment. They never read the book real close. Walter Reuther had charge of all the appointments, and he could order: clear that out, clear that out. But he didn't have the first year he got elected, he didn't have control of the international executive board. The left wing still had almost two-thirds of the votes on the board. So he could only go so far and he really cleaned house in 1947. He cleaned out these regional directors and everything else and swung it around, he took over two-

thirds control of the international executive board and he really started cleaning staff. But Percy's successor as regional director was a Reuther man named Joe McCusker, who kept Carl Stellato on. So that raised a lot of eyebrows as to why in housecleaning he survived. Never did get the full story, or hear the justification. (break) He ran for Congressman once, you know. He had good support from the local union.

I: How close did he come?

R: Well, 16th district in Detroit--it was heavily Polish populated and the guy that ran the guy that was a congressman was John Lesinski, Jr. and his father had been congressman prior to him--it was a real dynasty. He didn't win but that was the heaviest primary election in the history of the 16th district.

I: Did he run on the Democratic ticket?

R: Yeah. In a Democratic primary against Lesinski. And there was a real goofball that Lesinski. Got by on his father's name, couldn't speak, I went down to Washington one time to plug a bill to Local of the UAW and our Local union particularly was interested in, and he heard who we were and stuff told his secretary to let us in and we asked him how he was doing on such and such a bill, well we knew the UAW in Washington office had given a digest to all the congressmen you know. Oh, he said, this is right on the floor now. What bill is that now and what's the union position on that? I looked, I can read a little bit upside down, he had the damn thing right in front of him. Claimed he never got it and _____. And it was being debated on the floor. He wasn't on the floor when we went into the office.

I: Did Local 600 take its suggestions from the international on what bills should be supported or opposed or did it have its own ideas about those types of bills?

R: Local unions have autonomy to a certain extent. They can endorse candidates or they can endorse bills there is very little difference, really when you come down to it. If the International doesn't endorse candidates or, particularly whether it's a heavy democratic district and they don't want to get involved in primaries between friends or whatnot then local unions can endorse. But once the international makes the endorsement through their Political Action Committee you are bound by it. You don't dare use a local union paper or union funds to back somebody else, that's still in effect. But on positions on major bills I can't remember any real conflict we had.

I: You mentioned that this congressman had a lot of Polish support. Do you think that the Polish workers in Ford's voted Republican for him?

R: No, he was a democrat. Carl ran against him in the Democratic primary.

I: Oh.

R: /Looks like the Free Press boy are you there./ Outstanding poles on this side that spoke for him depose themselves and knew John wasn't a chip off the old block. I'll tell you the first chance they go to dump him, they did another cause they emerged districts John Dingal (?) wound up in the same district as John Lesinski (?). Dingal took care of that in a real hurry.

I: Do you think of anything that distinguished the Polish workers in the plant form the other workers?

R: No.

I: They are pretty much the same?

R: Well, my God everybody is clanish. But your overall outlook on things, no.

I: How about the workers that came up from the South during the war. Do they have more of a sentiment for or against the unionism?

R: Listen, when they got in there and got that first big money, they weren't anti-union because they knew where it came from. They weren't that stupid. No, we never had any problem with anti-union sentiment from southern workers, never. Oh, I hear a few now here and then from our retirees, union didn't get me that, General Motors got it for me or Ford Motor Company got it for me, especially over a few beers when they feel independent. And knowing I'm a former UAW rep.

I: Can you characterize some of the leaders of the right wing faction, what were they generally like?

R: They had some very capable people. I never damned the right wing leadership as a whole. Very capable people. Paul Ste. Marie who was an organizer and helped organize the UAW and he wasn't in the building that was predominantly UAW. As I told you he was, Paul Ste. Marie was the tool and dye man. And he came out of that building where I told you they were not having any unions, and yet he was well enough known through organization and whatnot to become elected president in 1942.

I: What was his reputation in the plant?

R: He was very short. I'll tell you. After the expose when he supported that Republican governor for reelection or whatnot and he never got elected. He got elected one term as a building committeeman in tool and dye. That's when they had three per shift he got elected on one of the night shift committees. It wasn't too long after that and he

was appointed an international rep. That was the end. Of course, he died pretty young. But he never emerged again.

I: Do you think that's because of the support of the Republicans?

R: Yes. That was the easiest to tag him with because he couldn't duck it.

I: How about the McCusker?

R: They were brothers you know. Joe and I really had our differences because he was from tool and dye unit, tool on up to the tool and dye building, he was from the dye room in the pressed steel an he was part of the right wing group in the tool and dye unit and I was part of the left. And we had our differences on policy matters and what not. I respected his ability and he respected mine. Once in awhile for instance he was recording secretary and that's the third highest office in the unit. One in which he defeated me for. And we were having a regular meeting and the other guys of the convention or whatnot and he said we have a dearth of officers here, I call upon a guy with experience and a certain amount of ability brother Orr would you come ____. That's the kind of guy he was. He went over board taking advantage of the trends of the times. McCathyism and whatnot. He put the finger on people. I know he did. I used to accuse him, if you could just eliminate me from your hair you will get me. It's for the immigration committee and get me deported. And by god I was called on by the immigration committee and I know he had nothing to do with it. I was called before it. On the other hand later when everything died down, there were certain guys who were under the threat of being deported like, you remember Walter Cocker, he was born in England and he had been ordered deported.

I: He was a left winger?

R: Yeah. He had been ordered deported by what state department is that? And Joe went to bat for him and got him a stay in this country and they dropped all the charges on him. He would surprise you, you know.

I: Was that practice widely used, getting people deported.

R: Oh, yes.

I: A lot of people got sent back to their original countries?

R: Not as many as were ordered. Most of them were allowed to stay on appeal, yes. Some of them were sent back.

I: Can you give me an idea as about how many?

R: No, I can't. At that time I was trying to limit my union activity. My job was taking more and more of my time and I started to stay out of more things. It seems everything I got pushed into took up another Saturday, another Sunday, or more evenings and there only are so many. Oh, I know we had guys used that as an excuse for ratting on their former party members like I don't know if you ever heard of the name Lee Romano before--

I: Yes.

R: And he went to the Unamerican Activities Committee and his excuse to the international was he was born in Italy and he couldn't be held in contempt of court because he was subject to deportation. So he named names of acquaintances in the department. The same with Paul Boatin. He was born in Italy and that was the excuse he used. If I didn't squeal I was going to be deported.

I: Paul Boatin talked before the committee? I thought he used the 5th Amendment.

R: He was called also before the Senate. The Subversive Activities Committee, which I was. He was called the same time I was.

I: What year did they come?

R: We were invited to Washington. They didn't come here. There were five of us in the local union. Issued subpoenas to go to Washington. What year was that? I was vice president of the local union. (19)fifty-five or six is that in here? The Internal Security Committee? Walter Dorash, myself, James Watts, it was in the public works commission, there was another one.

I: So this occurred after the house committee came here?

R: Oh, yes.

I: In that committee Boatin named--

R: Yeah. He went. Jimmie Watts and I stood together. Believe it or not, Carl Stalleto was our representative, of course he couldn't pretend to be a lawyer, we didn't care for lawyers. The local union had convinced me that if I might use the 5th Amendment then the opposition would make that stick that I was a 5th amendment communist. And it would apply to that. I sweated over that decision for so long. And Jimmy Watts said he was going down and admit that he had been a member of the communist party which he had been for a month or two when he was a kid in the production foundry. What can they do to me he said. So we went down and told the subcommittee we appeared together, Carl Stellato would be our witness, he didn't maybe couldn't speak ____. Paul Boatin was down in the hall. There was another hearing. The committee split up into subcommittees of the subcommittee. And we were in there you know the rule of Congress is that the majority get the chairmanship of the committee and the

subcommittees of committees that's where I got so goddamn mad at the Democratic party then because I went to this hearing on who was the subcommittee of one chairman of the committee Senator Butler of Maryland who got elected by Red Baton Mathis out of office in Maryland and here I'm sitting there before this Republican and the legal counsel to his subcommittee was Robert Morris who used to work for McCarthy who later ran for governor of New York on that right wing party ticket, what was the name of it, that's the characters I had to go before with the Democrats in charge of the. And this one guy apparently known to them not to us come running down the hall and went in there and he whispered oh man, have we got a canary down the aisle. And I was thinking who the hell is that. Because I knew Walter Dorash was down ~~was down~~ at a separate meetings and Paul Boatin. He says this Boatin is just spilling his guts faster than we can ask him questions.

I: What about Dorash?

R: He was sitting in there.

I: And James Watts and yourself?

R: We answered questions. He admitted being a member, and I denied it, which is fun. And I started asking him who do you know to be a communist and I told him I don't know anybody who is a communist once they identified themselves to me as a communist. And I was sure glad this happened before Boatin was down there because I wouldn't have even said what I said about him. But they started asking me is this guy Karlin, I says look I was never a member of the communist party. I have been accused of this and that but I wouldn't know a communist if he identified himself. So he said did you know any communists. I

said Bill McKie reported for the Daily Worker a communist paper, Bill McKie who resigned from local union office saying that he couldn't in good conscience as a communist party member retain the office and sign a noncommunist affidavit ____. Oh yeah I said and Paul Boatin, yeah. I was on the plantwide bargaining committee in tool and dye was over in the Motor building where he was a member and he got me in the aisleway alongside the payroll all alone and told me I had the makings and he wanted me to join the communist party. So I kind of needled into Mr. Boatin. Then they asked me about attending the Western Hemisphere Youth Conference, in '43. They said aren't you a communist? How come you attended that call to the Communist party Youth Conference? And I said you know who the American sponsor to that conference was. You tell us. I said a well-known communist Nelson Rockefeller. Undersecretary was there _____. I was out in the opera house in Mexico City, President of Mexico addresses us and everything else.

I: So was there any ramifications of those hearings, the Senate subversive?

R: Never heard another thing. That's why I say I don't know of anybody. I don't know of anybody in the labor movement that ever got in trouble for using the 5th amendment. I don't know anybody that denied having membership. Your fear always was they would come up with a forged paper membership card or some damn thing. What are the donations you made. That's a mistake to let the guy take your name and put it on a piece of paper. Soviet American Friendship Committee, or American Peace Movement. All of those are listed as being communist fronts

where your name was on a lot of those. Oh I said aren't you for peace? Hell I just tried to sluff it off.

I: We were talking about some of the right wing members and we were talking about McCusker, what about Henry McCuster?

R: Well, as I told you he was one of the officers of the ACTU, that was the Association of Catholic--_____ and president of the Aircraft Engine Unit. But just as the communist party leadership never said they were communists or advocated communism, none of the ACTU members outside of those two I discovered accidentally, I guess, that they were offered to come forward and said I'm an active member. Joe McCusker used to deny it. His brother Henry was an officer, Joe denied he was ever a member.

I: Why was that? Was it unpopular with the workers?

R: With some and not with others. Joe was pretty good. He had a Scotch brogue out of his place when he was talking to a Scotchman and he could be talking to an Irish Catholic and I'll be goddam if his brogue didn't change. There were many tricks.

I: So how was Henry McCuster as a Union leader?

R: Against everything I was for. Eventually he went down to the national Ford Department and he more or less got submerged down there handling grievances and there is not much you can say political about grievances. Grievances eminate from the shop that are appelaed to from the local union, the local union gets the last crack at it that at review board with a company in it. If they can vote satisfaction their appeal to the national Ford department for possible appeal to the impartial umpire. And he was preparing cases down there for that.

I: How about other prominant right wing, Oh I guess Tom Yeager was a right wing.

R: No Tom was not.

I: No, he wasn't, he was left?

R: I always thought he was left. Some say neutral but he was never right, that's for sure. He's still alive, incidentally.

I: Yeah. I was going to have an interview with him but the scheduling got mixed up. Okay, what about some of the left wingers. Do you remember William Allen, was he that prominant in the shop?

R: Oh, that's the guy I told you was a reporter for the Worker. He was--

I: Yeah. I know. Now I'm starting on left again.

R: Yeah, he was a reporter for this communist Sunday worker newspaper. He wasn't any--

I: He never worked in the shop?

R: No.

I: Oh. So he just hung around there a lot?

R: Billy Allen, yeah. Wherever he could picking up scraps because the paper always advocated something. It wasn't always in line with what the UAW was doing, they were opposed most of the time to positions the intenational union took.

I: Did people know him generally?

R: Yes! Yes.

I: Was he popular?

R: No. More or less tolerated. He was popular with some people you can imagine. Stellato ordered him out of the local finally. Told him not to come back again or he would call the cops, or just have his staff throw him out bodily.

I: What about Tom Jelly?

R: He was a committee man under me. He was one of the original committeemen in the tool and dye unit Press Steel building. He never advocated communism or anything like that to my knowledge. In fact he was a highly religious man, still is. He's still alive too. But he was for all civil rights movements and everything else. He seemed to me to go along with a brotherhood of man concept that unionism was meant to be. Good enough for me.

I: So you mentioned earlier that some guy said he was the best committee man that he had known. Was that a general sentiment you think?

R: Oh, yeah. Tom was very well liked. Most of the time he never had any opposition for election. We used to have yearly elections. Most of the time he never had any opposition. Mack Cinzori subsequently became president of the tool and die unit.

I: How about Sheldon Tappes?

R: He was president of the iron foundry during the original organizing days. One of the first elected. He was on the original Ford negotiating committee.

I: Was he popular with the workers?

R: Well, I told you it was a large segment of foundry was anti-union and sometimes certain quarters in that building, boy, life was in danger, I'll tell you. I remember one time I went in that foundry and was lucky a bunch of us did come out. Some guys had a rope out and were going to hang them from the nearest rafter for working against Mr. Ford. But he was a gutsy fellow, a skinny little guy, you met him.

I: Yeah.

R: He was the same then. We got autonomy in '42 he was the original secretary of the Local 600.

I: Can I go back just one minute to this incident that when you walked in and those guys were made at Tappes, were those--

R: Workers.

I: Were they Black workers or White?

R: Yeah, Black.

I: Black. That was still the sentiment--

R: Well, now there were other Black workers. There were those who would protect him. But his back was right against the wall, boy and he was taking them all on.

I: So over the plant he was pretty well respected?

R: Never got elected again to president of the foundry or recording secretary.

I: After what period?

R: Forty-two, he served one term.

I: Why was that do you think?

R: Well, no he was elected in '43 with Percy Llewellyn.

I: Well, when he failed to get reelected, do you know what happened?

R: No, well we got swept out in 1944 or '45. Joe McCusker got elected president of the local and took his slate in with him. He seated W. G. Grant also from tool and dye, boy for a union, it didn't _____ the UAW, we had the leaders emerge. Yeah, there was always a skilled worker and among the top officers and the Local 600. There is today.

I: Was Grant a well-liked guy?

R: Yes. Dyemaker. He was elected in '42 as financial secretary and reelected in '43. Forty-four I think he ran for local president got

elected and then Joe McCuster defeated him the next year. That's when the right wing took over in '45.

I: How about John Gallo, what was his reputation in the plant?

R: Oh, the man that smiles. He had a ready smile, he was a likeable guy. I think he was no heavyweight thinker but he had a way with the workers and especially among the athletes. He was quite a boxer in his day, you know.

I: I remember reading one of the Ford opinions I mean one of the umpire opinions about some boxer doing a job on a Ford guy becaue there was an incident where--

R: It was not Gallo.

I: It wasn't Gallo?

R: No.

I: They dragged this guy in who was an ex-professional boxer and he was reluctant to go but I guess he went in there with a Ford guy for awhile. I can't remember exactly what year it was.

R: We had two ex-professional fighters that were local officers. A guy by the name of Joe Rivers. But he was never engaged in any incident like that either and he was a right winger.

I: How about James Watts?

R: Well, I met him in th _____ in the foundry and then they started a new building speciality foundry where they used to make small parts in the Dearborn iron foundry along with the blocks and everything else the had separated and started a new foundry, small parts were made and they called it specialty foundry. He was elected there one year but the election was challenged by a guy named Cleveland Peck who claimed he won it in the election it was stolen.

I: Was Cleveland Peck a right winger?

R: No.

I: He was left. There is two left run against each other.

R: Watts had been a long way out of the party by then according to him.

I: But he was still on a progresive side?

R: No dammit, I don't think he was.

I: No?

R: No, he went along with Reuther and Cal Stellato. At that time conventions were a year apart and Cleveland Peck appealed that report of the election committee in the General Council when it was turned down appealed at the convention. And he was upheld in the convention, but there was nothing he could gain. By that time the year's term had run out.

I: Yeah, time to vote again, huh.

R: So he said I want the expense money I want that job and the international said well what expenses did you incur, you didn't have the job. And he got nothing for all his trouble. Now that was Watts' one term. He come down on the local union staff under Carl Stellato in 1950. And he was editor of the Ford paper for years. And he went to the region under Joe McCusker. Then Coleman Young took care of him.

I: Was he well liked in the plant, Watts?

R: Oh, he was a very likeable guy. Oh, he was a bullshitter from the word go. Don't ever lend him money. He had a reputation for that too. He never stole from a white, he borrowed money and never paid him back. Man, that's what you owe us people for 200 years of slavery.

I: What kind of reputation did Paul Boatin have in the plant?

R: Big mouth, mainly. He could talk a blue streak. And he could talk Italian. And he could go to Italians and he could sell them a bill of goods and they were his campaigners.

I: Were there a lot of Italians in the plant?

R: Oh, yes. In his building, yes. I'm not going to say in any one plant the select ethnic group predominated. It was just large sections. There might have been large sections of others in there too.

I: So did workers other than Italians generally like him?

R: Oh, yes. He got elected big.

I: And Virgil Lacey, was he popular?

R: Yeah, well he ran for president of the local union in 1949. He was President of Tool and Dye unit for four years and then in '49 he ran for the president of the local and got defeated.

I: And Lee Romano?

R: He was the president under the Press Steel building in the early days in the early 40s and vice president of Local 600 for two years I believe with Tommy Thompson and they got defeated. Lee Ramano went to work for Amalgamated Clothing Workers I believe it was. Joe McCusker eventually put him on the Regent staff as a UAW rep.

I: Did he also appeal to the Italians?

R: Who?

I: Romano?

R: Very fluent in Italian. He just didn't belong to Italian clubs, fraternal clubs and whatnot, Italian-American club and this and that, so it was always a strong nationalistic base to appeal to.

I: Otherwise he was popular also?

R: Well, as I said he was president of Press Steel and that was a real big building 12 or 13,000 people. I wasn't there but he was. Nothing succeeds like success, does it?

I: How about Dave Moore?

R: Yeah. Axle Building. The highest he ever got was vice-president. But very, very vocal. You would think he was sometimes the President of the United States the way he would go to a meeting and try to take over and dominate it. Oh, my God. Very, very strong on his convictions.

I: Did people like him or did that turn the people off?

R: No, he turned a lot of people off. Particularly when he started the racist angle.

I: When was that, when he started that?

R: Well, first thing, I had heard about it, but I couldn't believe my ears one day. Alex Semion, a guy named Alex Semion--Semion, a Russian born in China president of the Axle Building, and boy they were having right wing troubles in there in fact they got defeated. And at that time the local executive board was in an old building, not the one that it's in now, and I came in the back door and boy I hear all this noise and I asked what meeting was going on and they said well it's Alex Semion's caucus in there. And I said who is talking, Dave Moore. I stood there and listened in. Dave Moore was accusing Alex Semion of being a bobo (?). Holy Cripes. If ever I heard a guy erroneously named, holy Jesus. Alex Semion was a real civil rights man and everything else and for him to say that; and blame all the problems in there Alex Semion being a bobo (?). Oh, he just went raving mad. I'm sure he must have been sorry later for some of the things he said.

But he never let you forget he was a Black first and other things after that.

I: And what about Joe Hogan.

R: Joe Hogan ran against Carl Stellato in 1952 and he was president of the Axle Building. And we were looking for a candidate and we selected Joe Hogan. He didn't want to leave the building and he wasn't a very ambitious guy and what not but we convinced him to run. And at any rate it was three candidates in the race. Carl Stellato, Joe Hogan and former president Tommy Thompson. And Hogan and Thompson got enough votes between them to force a runoff with Stellato. Hogan was in the runoff. And he just barely lost. It was a very close election. I think about that time Stellato decided he had to make some overtures to the left wing because he was getting closer.

I: This is in '52?

R: Yeah.

I: So, he was a likeable guy also?

R: Oh, yeah.

I: How about Harold Franklin?

R: Oh, he came from the iron foundry and went over to the jobbing foundry. And that was a mixture of Whites and Blacks there because they made special parts there also. And the molders jobbing core makers and molders in that plant were White or of foreign extraction, but not Black. There was a very highly skilled job. You didn't take those and put them on production line, and pour them like you do engine blocks. These were through one or two short run parts and whatnot. Pattern makers made the pattern and these guys had to do the casing on them and whatnot. There were quite a few Whites in that

foundry. And Harold Franklin ran for president there one year and boy he made a mistake. The White president, his name was Harry Gides, and Franklin accused him of just being a pork chopper. He was only in that job for the expense money or what not. He wasn't a representative of the foundry workers and this and that, he carried on that kind of campaign and finally brought a cartoon in, a leaflet, it was listed "dressed pork" and it had the animal body of a pig and Harry Gides' name, or head, dressed pork they called it. In those days anybody in the union just for the expense and what not were labeled pork choppers. That had a reverse effect. That didn't go over so good. He never got elected and I don't think he ever got elected to anything again. Now that's Harold Franklin, that's not Godffrey Franklin.

I: How about William Hood?

R: I didn't know too much about him. He was on the bargaining committee in the assembly plant. And most of the Blacks in the plant were left wing inclined, oh, not communists, and Joe McCusker when he ran in '44 for President of the Local had a hell of a time getting a slate with a Black on it and he was on the bargaining committee in the Assembly Plant. Joe put him on the slate. I think it was Joe McCusker put him on the slate for recording secretary to hae Black coloration on it.

I: Was he a right winger, Hood?

R: Yeah, some of those guys could be anything. You would have to have been there to believe it.

I: Was Art McPhaul well liked in the plant?

R: Another big mouth. Yeah he could sell the Negroes but he couldn't sell a fairminded White anything. Just sold Black. And I guess he

let it be known that he was a communist. Always taking a collection for something.

I: How about James O'Rourk? Do you remember him?

R: Yes. He was an officer in the motor Building and on the bargaining committee. He was president once. Can't remember what he used to be. He left the international union's Ford department.

I: Was he well liked?

R: Very likeable Irishman. Yeah. They had a reduction force the international union. Now O'Rourk and Stellato were buddies in the motor plant. O'Rourk got reinstated. The Motor Building was torn down by then. He got reinstated in the Rolling Mill. Just as a sweeper. Here is a guy with a couple of years of college and was president of building and international rep.

I: Was he left or right winger?

R: Right. But he ran and, he came back and ran for recording secretary the next year and defeated a Negro. Defeated Bill Johnson. And he got reelected.

I: Okay, well I don't have anymore questions unless you want--

R: Yeah. Well, I went to the international union in 1963 and O'Rourk succeeded me as vice president of the local.

I: What did you do in the international?

R: I worked for Joe McCusker, believe it or not I served at South Ford (?) Balfor plant. I was the first appeal for the grievance from Ford plants under our jurisdiction and I was the steel trades representative. I was trouble shooter, any plant in the region that had steel trades problems.

I: Do they keep those records when you have those grievance stages? When you have grievances that a plant review board or the status of the international reviews, do they keep those records?

R: Yeah. I don't know how, they clean house. My god they really pile up but yeah they are kept for I don't know how long. They're down in the national Ford department. Well, the local unions make appeal them. They had their own records too there are copies made.

I: Where is the national Ford plant.

R: 8000 East Jefferson, it's in Solidarity House.

I: Is there anything else you can think of that might be important?

R: I lived a long life.

I: Very active it sounds like.

R: Some good, some bad.

I: I guess it was pretty hard, you were talking about the taxes on your personal life, how it takes away from your free time. I guess that's a pretty difficult--

R: Yeah, it's pretty hard to explain though. In a home where there wasn't any union sentiment. This is my second wife. I didn't mean her.

I: Yeah, I remember you said she was in the Office and Professional Worker's Union.

R: Yeah, those attacks, boy oh boy, they were, you don't know how personal they could get. Have women call your wife at home and tell her you were in a bar with some woman, he's in the bar with me. Or go to a convention and come back.

I: Would that be for political reasons?

R: Well, certainly. And bust up your home, anything. Force you to resign to maintain peace at home. Anything. Of course there was only a great _____ that resorted to those tactics. I sure as hell never could interject into anybody's home life or anything else. Drinking habits, womanizing, anything else. I used to say I'm not a moralist. I won't prejudge you.

I: You know often the important side of the story that hardly gets paid attention to, is what it takes on a personal level to become so involved in the union.

R: I remember what Jimmy Watts told me one day when he and I got more on a friendlier terms; he was editor of the paper and photographer too when Joe Hogan ran against him he sent Watts out to Bellville, Joe lived in Bellville, Michigan, I guess he still does to take a picture of that bastard's home, somebody had told me he had a real palatial home out there.