

BERNARD CLIFFORD

Q Why don't you tell me what you do in the plant? Exactly what is your job?

A Okay I am a spot welder and I run big spot guns. I am a utility man too so I do a lot of different jobs. I don't have to do the same job all the time.

Q What does a spot welder do? And what does a utility spot welder do?

A Spot welder is big piece of copper and metal and they take all different kinds of shapes and basically they have two points that come together and get real hot and melt metal together at that point and weld the job together in the body. I work in the body shop. Right when they first build the trucks.

Q What part of the trucks do you work on?

A Well I usually work on Broncos. Almost always work on Broncos and they put the basic body together and then it comes to my line and I do like the finishing welds and I do tailgates which is a real bitch.

Q Why is that a real bitch?

A Because they weigh a lot. We just got a horse for them, but it took since we first started building those Broncos in 1978 we have been bitching about it, picking them up and we finally got these hoists.

Q And you have been lifting tailgates, you and another person or were you by yourself?

A Just by myself.

Q And what do they weigh?

A 75 lbs.

Q How much do you weigh?

A 160 lbs. It is a good work out.

Q Good work out?

A Good work out. I don't mind doing it one day, but doing it more than

like I don't know...I don't like doing it more than one day at a time.

I am a utility man, but I don't usually ever have to do that.

Q What does a utility man mean?

A Well I used to relieve and I give people breaks, but my job got eliminated by the robots so now I am just a utility man and if they need someone to cover a job I do that.

Q Is that a pretty good job, instead of working the line straight?

A As far as I am concerned. Some people don't think so, but I think so.

Q Why do you think so?

A Because I hate working the same job all the time. I have worked there fourteen years and I try never to work the same job two days in a row.

Q Really have you been successful?

A Pretty much. When I first hired in I had to work in the grind booth which was a real shit job for seven months just because I was new. You remember that you worked down there. After that when I worked on the old Broncos which was a good job because it is an off of the line job, I got to build up stock and I got done early and I got my own free time which I like, but then I learned all the jobs.

Q Do you get paid for knowing all the jobs?

A Yeah I get paid more for knowing all the jobs?

Q How much money do you get paid?

A Not much, 10-15¢ an hour, something like that.

Q So over a week that adds up to?

A \$4-\$5.

Q Five dollars a week.

A Something like that.

Q So that is what they do with the new contracts where they are

eliminating a lot of the classifications. They are giving people bonuses for knowing many jobs. So you already know many jobs so you would probably be getting the rate at which they'd be paying which is all of \$5.00 a week. It is not even cigarette money, right?

A Right.

Q It is really getting off the steady job.

A I used to do it for the same as everybody else because I never liked doing the same job and I try to get a classification when I first worked there and they said well we can't get you a classification, but we can get you a steady job everybody and I said no I'll just do this.

And then after a while I got a utility job.

Q You said that you lost your job to robots, how did that happen?

A Well actually the robots eliminated a number of jobs and so we didn't so many relief men and I was low seniority relief man so I didn't get to relieve anymore.

Q How many robots do they have now in your department?

A Well they have six up in my area and then they have six more back on the floor pans.

Q How many people would you say were eliminated? How many jobs were eliminated from those robots?

A You know I really don't know. Maybe six, not as many as the robots. It takes more robots to do the jobs. Plus you got to have an extra man for when they screw up and he has to go and pick up welds. I do that a lot. I pick up welds for the robots.

Q You mean if the robot misses something you catch it?

A Yeah.

Q Do the robots miss a lot?

A Yeah every day they, you know, they are just machines and they screw up. You can't always get them to you know they don't want to shut down the line to fix the robots so they get a guy to come in and do

the welds.

Q They just can't go over to the robots and tell him to do better.

A Sometimes they can. Sometimes they can program so it will be all right, but sometimes it takes more effort so they got to wait until the line is down to do it.

Q I see. How did you end up in the plant?

A Pure bad luck. No actually it was really a good...my exwife was pregnant with my first daughter and I had worked at Ypsilanti State as a child care worker and I lost that job and she was ready to have the baby any time and I was just out driving around looking for work and I saw the truck plant and I said well what the hell. At that time they hired new people every day and so I was one of the lucky ones.

Q What year was that?

A 1972.

Q Spring of 1972?

A In the summer, July of 1972.

Q So you have just got fifteen years now?

A I am starting my 15th.

Q You are not from Ypsilanti so why don't you take a step back and did you think you would work in an auto plant when you were coming up in Midland?

A No. I really never thought too much about the auto plants. I am from Midland and they have Dow Chemical there and maybe you would work there, but I never even you know autos were in Detroit and I never even thought about it at all working for them. I worked to school. I went to a lot of different schools. I went to Ferris State and Western and Eastern and I graduated from Eastern and what I always

wanted to do was psychology, some kind of psychology and I just got a job in the truck plant because I needed the job. I hadn't finished and after I started working at the truck plant I finished my degree, but I still haven't used to it for anything.

Q How come?

A Well you can't make much money with just a Bachelor's degree in psychology as you can in the truck plant and the truck plant is real secure. I mean it is big money and got a lot of benefits and stuff and I haven't had the motivation to do more yet.

Q I remember when you used to tell me you would be getting out next year.

A This has been a temporary job for fourteen years. I still think about as a temporary job. Even if I stay here for thirty years it is still going to be a temporary job.

Q Why is that? You don't want to define yourself as an auto worker? You want to do something else? You want to keep that option open?

A I think you should never give up your dream and if you do you are in trouble. So no matter how much I think I have to stay there and I don't have any choices I won't quit that dream.

Q Your dream of getting out?

A Right.

Q What are the benefits you are talking about? Describe them to me. What does that mean to you? How have they helped you?

A Well I got medical benefits. I got two kids and that has helped me a lot with me and plus like I have done a lot therapy too and insurance has always paid for it which is it too expensive to do if you don't have insurance or you know you don't quite have all the options you do

and the money is great, but...

Q What did you make last year?

A \$35,000. I'll probably make \$40,000 this year. Money is kind of irrelevant because it doesn't matter how much you make you always exist on what you get you know. If I made less money I would live with it. I am used to it and I make \$40,000 so I spend \$45,000 now.

Q Still running in debt.

A Yeah. I am working on that, but I still haven't succeeded yet.

Q When you hired in the plant in 1972 what was your first day like, do you remember?

A Actually I had it made for the first four or five months that I worked there. I hired in as an inspector's aide. They were doing a major changeover and they needed extra inspectors so they got these temporary people and the first two months that I worked there it was great. I just got to write up metal or something and I only worked eight hours a day most of the time and it was real easy and I got to go around and talk to people. It was kind of interesting and it was big money for little work. After that job got over with they sent me out to Willow Run Airport where they had all these trucks where they had to change carburetors and stuff on them to meet the governments EPA emission things and I got to drive trucks and stuff. I had to work a lot of hours then, like twelve hours a day and like six to seven days a week. It was a lot of fun and I love to drive and I got to drive around and hotrod the trucks and it was pretty fun. Then they finally sent me to reality...to the body shop and I got stuck in the grime booth which was really nasty job. I had to put on the door

hinges and grind all these spot welds where there were burs and things from the gun.

Q What do you wear to protect yourself? What do you actually do to grind? Do you do it by hand?

A No we got a hydraulic or whatever it is, air pressure grinder which has a wheel on it and we put a piece of grinding paper on it and heavy duty sandpaper and it spins and it grinds it off.

Q I know it sparks.

A It throws sparks and a lot of dirt. I got metal in my eye about four times. It wasn't too serious, but it was kind of a hassle. I finally got some good goggles to protect my eyes, but it took me a while to get them.

Q How come?

A I didn't bitch enough. I just blew it off a lot. So after that and I really hated that job. Actually I did a lot of drugs and stuff while I was on that job. I was very young and kind of stupid.

Q What kind of drugs did you do?

A Mostly speed. Speed was the drug of choice. It gives you a lot of energy and you don't feel depressed and stuff until the next day and then you got to do it again. I did a lot of speed for about a year or so and finally got smart and decided it wasn't good for me and I quit.

Q Was that common in the plant?

A It seemed like it was kind of common then. Yeah. It was common with the younger guys not with the older guys.

Q There were a lot of younger guys then. Were you working afternoons or days?

A At that time I was working afternoons. I worked afternoons for about

the first year.

Q Weren't you afraid of getting fired if you got caught with drugs or anything like that?

A No. I never worried about it. I mean I wasn't opened about it either. I didn't advertise the fact that I did a lot of drugs, but I never worried about it. It hardly ever crossed my mind actually. I smoked dope or anything because you can't work and smoke dope. I only drank a little bit. Speed is a good thing.

Q It kept you doing.

A Right. It kept me going.

Q It kept you to the grinding booth. Were you meeting friends and people there that you were hanging out with when you started?

A I always had a few friends. Like you were my friend. We never spent that time together outside the plant, but I always talked to you and stuff. Actually, most of my friends were like that. Were just friends in the plant. Like one friend who lived near me. Actually he lived in the same building so...

Q Al?

A Yeah Al, so we went to work together and we hung out together out of work too.

Q What ever happened to him?

A He was living right down here. He got remarried. He got divorced and remarried and his wife is an artist and she does this weird kind of art. He was working construction the last time I saw him and he always hated the plant. He worked there for three years and he finally quit. It is a smart move on his part.

Q Maybe we all should quit. I always wish I hired into Chrysler where they closed down the plant. Then you don't have to choose to get out.

A Yeah, it would have been nice for somebody to force me to quit.

Who was this guy? He works on the Bronco in my area?

Q In your area before the line, sort of the last job before it turns around.

A Before it turns on in my line. Oh Larry. They call him Larry you know. Bill Coscky, I thought it was Bill Coscky.

Q No.

A And he is Yugoslavian?

Q Yugoslavian. He was off for about three weeks in the spring.

A Yeah I know him. Did he go to Yugoslavia, right?

Q Yeah. So what did it look like when at that point you were with your first wife and two children.

A One child. I liked really hated working the plant then. I really hated it. I just tried to think of ways to get out of it and it was real depressing and I was depressed an awful lot. Doing drugs did n't help either.

Q You don't think it helped?

A No it made it worse. It increased the depression and I really felt like a failure because I had gone to school for a long time and I didn't finish school and I was working at this really lousy job and I hated and it was really fucking boring and I wasn't too happy with my wife. I liked daughter, though, she was great. After a while I was split up with my wife, after about a year, you know. She never seemed to understand how much I hated that place. She always just wanted me to go to work. She liked the security of it and she didn't seem to care too much that I worked there or that it was like real hell to me.

We were going to split up when Heather was a year old. We kind of agreed to split up and then we kind of worked it out or decided we would and after that I started going to therapy because I didn't feel

like I was doing what I wanted in my life. I was really unhappy.

Q Did that help you adjust to the hell?

A Well actually it helped me adjust. It didn't seem so bad.

Q What was so bad about it being there? What was so boring?

A It was just boring because you had to do the same thing over and over again and that I really hated. Like the jobs I had it was hard to talk to people and stuff, so you didn't have too much conversation with anyone. There wasn't anything but the job and the job was a real drag.

Q How come you couldn't talk to folks?

A Well I wasn't close to anybody on the line. I was in this booth and the next job was the door hanger which is outside the booth and so to talk to him I would have to quit my job and go down and talk to him and then go back and try to catch up on my job, which I did a lot. The job was not so hard that you couldn't run it in the hole and then get out. I did that a lot. But still it was just a drag.

Q So how did you pass the time of day? What did you think about?

A I would think about what I wanted to do. That was a long time ago. I was real different then than I am now. I was much younger and real immature and at that time I figured somebody owed me something I think. I had a bad attitude actually. I figured somebody owed me a good job, decent job that I liked you know and that working for it that was what I was putting myself out for was not in the cards. I really didn't feel I should have to do that you know, make any kind of effort to get another one. Then I was real unhappy and depressed a lot and that made it all worse.

Q Just stuck it out.

A Yeah I stayed there because like I needed my job. I had my daughter

and I had responsibilities of mine and I figured it was better to stay than to just quit and not have anything.

Q Now you have been there and it is fourteen years later and how is your view of working there changed? What is like now day to day?

A Well a lot of times it is still boring, like I move around a lot, like it isn't like that when I always had the same job, but now I am always doing different jobs. I goof around and talk to people and you know try to do things to pass the time. There are a lot of people in there that who are interesting and they have things to talk about. You talk to them about stuff.

Q Give me some examples.

A Well there is like Burell. He is real smart and he knows a lot of things and I worked with them a lot and we are good friends.

Q You used to be friends for a while and then you had a....

A Yeah we had a falling out. We got to become friends again.

Q So what do you talk to him about?

A Well he is real interested in wines and stuff and he talks about that and food and I talk about...I love movies and I always talk about movies and we talk about politics and our families and what is important in our families and what is going on in our families and that kind of thing.

Q So that makes it easier that you have some people at your work to talk things about with and stuff.

A Right. Plus you know it is just work. I just think about it as work and I don't let it bug me that I am working you know. It is just working and there is no problem.

Q So what do you think has changed in you? Do you just accept that is what you are doing now or....

A Yeah, well, my attitude, it is just like I don't think about it being so bad. It is not so bad, you know. I mean if I was doing this...if I wasn't really doing something I really like it would all just be work, you know. It is just work and I don't mind working. I am a good worker.

Q Do you have a good record at work?

A Yeah I got a good record. I don't miss any time and I got written up maybe one time for anything.

Q Didn't you have your picture in the Ford World?

A Did I have my picture in the Ford World?

Q With the three other guys coming up with that idea, weren't you with that...

A No, no, no that wasn't me.

Q Now you do have your picture there in the employee involvement. Tell me a little about that.

A They have this thing called employee involvement which is suppose to get the workers feel like they are part of the process of the production process, you know, that they have some input in what they are doing. Which I think is real sound. It is a good idea, good psychology and you know, it was something that I thought when I first went in there knowing what I do about psychology and stuff...the way the plant was run it was real bad, bad management and the workers all felt like they were not part of the process and that nobody gave a shit about them and it was kind of like a war, you know. There was management on one side and the workers on the other and to get one to do the other you had to like bring out the guns and hold it on them to get them to do it. So that was real bad, short term kind of

management practices and so when I got into this new program of getting workers involved and I am always a little leary of anything, you know, because management always talks a good line, but to implement it is another thing. Anyway some of the other guys asked me to be the E.I. leader. They needed an E.I. leader, well initially you could be an E.I. leader if you wanted, if you wanted to join you could and if you didn't you didn't have to. The thing was that nobody trusted management so like only a few people were in it and most of the them were suck asses and stuff. So management saw that they weren't getting people involved so the union finally got together with them and they said well you have the guys pick an E.I. leader. Before E.I. leaders were just like appointed by the foremen or whatever you know. So nobody trusted them of course. So they decided to let the guys pick an E.I. leader and one of the guys said well I think you would be good at it Bern, why don't you try to be an E.I. leader and I said all right. So then they had a little meeting and all the guys who were interested went to this meeting and they said who do you want to be your leader and who wants to be leader and I said okay I'll do it and a couple of other guys said they would do it and then they had to kind of vote on it and they gave it to me.

Q What do you do?

A What do I do as an E.I. leader? They have meeting once a week. There is an E.I. leader from each zone and he goes to this meetings on Thursdays at 9:30 and they discuss problems that they have on the line and...

Q What kind of problems?

A Well like something is, like we put on tailgates and the tailgates were not fitting right and some of the guys on the line had ideas on how to make them fit right so we brought that up. A lot of it is like people got these rubber floor mats to walk because the cement floor is

a real bitch to walk on and guys wanted rubber floor mats so I, they have a budget they give us and we got to buy floor mats and clocks. They wanted clocks, I don't know why. I don't want a damn clock. Some of the guys wanted one so I got a couple of them.

Q They wanted clocks in the area so they knew what time it was?

A Yeah that is right. We got a hoist for the tailgate job.

Q That comes from E.I., it doesn't come from the...

A Well the hoist from tailgate job came through this thing, I can't remember what it is called, but it makes jobs better.

Q Ergonomics. Stress related to save money on back problems.

A Right. They got money from that. We initiated it through E.I.

Q So you think it is a pretty good program?

A I think it improved things.

Q How? What does it do?

A There is a lot less animosity between the workers and the management and we got a few things done like getting the hoist and the floor mats and stuff and people feel more like they are a part of what is going on. They are not just ties to the machine. They are not P-ons.

Q Do you think people's self respect is...

A Yeah I think it raises your self respect somewhat. I think so. I think it is good in that way.

Q How come the union couldn't do those things? Self respect used to come from the union, right. A long time ago.

A I guess it did. I don't know. I never had too much self respect. Actually the union is working more with management now so it is not such an adversary relationship anymore. I think an adversary relationship is bad. I think it is bad because it is us against them and nothing gets done and people have a lot of bad feelings. People

on the line, the whole time I have worked there have always had bad feelings.

Q Bad feelings about what?

A About management and about what their place is and they didn't have a lot of respect, well a lot of it is they just didn't feel like they were important and management reinforced that feeling.

Q How did that come about this change? Why did it change?

A Why did it change?

Q Why did they go from uh...

A Oh because it wasn't working.

Q It worked for...

A It worked in the past, but things changed. You had to compete with the Japanese. The Japanese built a better product. They had better worker relations. Because American psychologist taught the Japanese how to build cars and stuff, but the Japanese culture is different too. It is more loyal, loyalty oriented. Anyway they weren't being successfull building cars and trucks with their old management program so they had to change them. Either change them or lose their business. They realized that I guess.

Q So you are pretty glad about the changes? What kind of changes would you like to see in the future in terms of the E.I. program or company-worker relationships or union-company-worker relationships? If you were ahead of the E.I. program what would you like to see happen?

A Well I just think they should implement more what they talk about. They talk about a closer relationship between management and the workers and eliminating the barriers between them. So that everybody

feels they are part of the process you know. They are just as important as anybody else, you know. They need to do that more. It is, there is still a lot of the old shit that goes on and it takes a long time to...

Q What kind of stuff still goes on?

A Well there is still some hostility and animosity between workers.

Q How does that express itself? How do you know when a foreman is being hostile and how do you know when the foreman is putting the new psychology E.I. entrapments?

A Like you act like an asshole, he bosses you around or writes you up or you know. It is like he takes an authoritarian position and when you know he talks to people like they are people and asks them their opinion and tries to work with them. If there is some kind of problem he tries to work out the problem rather than solving it himself, but he didn't know whoevers involved who is doing it that way.

Q I see. What kind of discussion did they have about the robots coming in?

A Well they just told us about when they were going to put in the robots. We talked about it a lot, what jobs would be eliminated. Not very many jobs in my area got eliminated at all. Hardly any in fact.

Q But did they speed up the line?

A No they didn't speed up the line either.

Q They just put all this money in with robots and they haven't gotten anything out of it?

A No, no they got jobs eliminated in the back, but not in my area. There is still the same number, in fact, right now there is more because they are building more Broncos. They put into two more people on my line.

Q Have you gone to any of the other plants and seen any of the other

plants and how they have functioned?

A There may be a union appointed me to the education committee because they saw how the guy was doing it and they didn't like the job he was doing. He didn't come into work a lot.

Q You took over what's his name job?

A Vlasko. Yeah and they asked me if I wanted to do it. I said yes so I got to go to Wixom where they build the town cars and that just a couple weeks ago. That is pretty neat, that is one big plant.

Q What was different at that plant?

A Well you know, it is just a lot bigger than our plant. The lines are a lot longer and there is more room to do things. They build high class cars there and I guess they spend more money.

Q Aren't there more robots in the body shop?

A I didn't get to see the body shop. We were only there late and they were going to close down the line. Actually, we just went there to see...they built these education facilities, you know, they got classrooms and stuff there and we went there to see them.

Q Are they talking about doing that in our plant?

A Yeah they are going to do that in our plant.

Q What are they going to do?

A Put in some classrooms and stuff, right where the merry-go-round is now I think.

Q What is the purpose of this? I didn't know you were the education coordinator for the Michigan Truck Plant local 900?

A I'm just on the committee. I am just one of the people, I don't know, it is a pretty new job to me so I don't know it curtails. I get off the job like once a week maybe which is nice for the day.

Q You get a whole day?

A Yeah I have a couple times and it is great. I get to talk a lot with Sarah. You know Sarah?

Q Yeah.

A She is real nice.

Q What do you do, okay? What's his name is on it, the guy from chasis, Dave.

A He's on that?

Q Yeah he is on it.

A I didn't know he was even on it.

Q So you are on the education committee and you work with Sarah. I mean that is one of the benefits, but I don't know anything about the program.

A They got a lot of money for education. You can get \$1500 a year which they have had for a long time, but now they got new programs. They got these computer classes. Everybody wanted to learn about computers so they got a class and they got teachers and you can sign up and go to class and learn about computers. I guess they got, people are interested in small engine repair so they have a class for that. They go up to the schools, like Wayne Westland schools and set up some programs and have them bring in a teacher and teach people what they want to learn or you can like, I went to this, in fact, there is this orientation class where people want to go back to college and you know they had some teacher come in and talk to us. We had it for like six or seven weeks and we had this lady teacher come in and she talked about being an adult and going back to school and what it entailed and what you had to give up. What you needed to know and all that.

Q Did you find it helpful?

A Well I think it was helpful for other people. I already got my degree so I know about going to college you know. These other people really didn't know that much and I think it was helpful to them.

Q Was there much participation?

A Yeah there was a lot of participation, a real lot.

Q What kind of folks were going back to school or thinking about it?

A Well they were quite diverse bunch. Some of them were, a few of them were like even had already been back to school a lot and working and some had never and always wanted to go to school, but hadn't got to do it and you know some were just thinking about going to school. They were from different backgrounds too. We had a couple Jamaican guys there and some southern guys, you know people from all over. There was about 20-25 people in there.

Q You know I am using the program? I am taking classes at U of M. I started the computer class, but I made the mistake by doing it on Saturdays.

A Yeah you didn't want to do that.

Q Well I did it, but then I was out of town on one Saturday and then the family came in from out of town the next Saturday and I was sick so it didn't work out, but it was a good program. She didn't show up one time or the electricity went out one time.

A Yeah I have been trying to get into it, but I haven't been able to get in. I am suppose to get in in October.

Q You'll probably get in the next session.

A Yeah.

Q When do you think that you will retire from the plant?

A I hope not. I really hope not. At least not in the capacity I'm in now. I don't want to be working on the line. They had that one job and I really wanted it, which was the...you know what's his names job...you know Andy Well's job.

Q What is that?

A What the hell did they call it? I can't remember it.

Q Alcoholics specialist.

A It is something, it is a referral. What he is suppose to be is a referral for people who have problems with like alcohol or like smoking or emotional problems. He refers them to...they can talk to him and then he'll refer them to an appropriate agency.

Q A union social worker?

A Yeah, yeah and I was the most qualified person for the job since I have a degree in psychology plus six hours of graduate study, but I wasn't a big union worker. I wasn't black and I was out of luck.

Q So it went to a union friend?

A A union friend right. They guy is a good guy and I think he does a decent job. It seems like he does and that he is concerned. They told they did a bunch of interviews and they told me that I was the most qualified person, but basically I wasn't going to get the job. They didn't come right out and say it, but other people told me that, that I wouldn't get it because I wasn't active enough in the union.

Q What did you think about that?

A I was pissed off, you know, because I really wanted that job. I knew I was qualified for it and it was in my field and I could do something worth while I thought and they gave to someone else because of his connections.

Q So you think you might get a job like that or hope you might get a job like in the future?

A Yeah it is possible. If I got a job like that that would be all right.

Q Maybe you would be the education director.

A Maybe.

Q Now that you are on the committe there.

A It is hard for me to be active in union shit. I don't trust them guys anymore than I trust anybody else.

Q How come? Haven't they been important in uh...have you gotten any grievances

or has the union helped you at all since you have been there fifteen years?

A A little bit they helped me. I know we wouldn't make the kind of money we make and all those kind of things if it wasn't for the union and I know the union got all that stuff, but I really had never had to deal with the union that much because I know how to get along. I know how, I don't have problems with management. Generally, I am a good worker. I don't bitch about shit. If I got a bitch I take it to my boss and he usually straightens it out for me. I know how to communicate with people and I am not in the mood to fight with anybody. Once in a while the union the fucked me around once or twice. When I wanted to be a utility man, well I worked as a utility man for a long time and they kept giving me utility classifications for ninety days you know and I said I wanted a permanent classifications you know and they said well you have to coast the job and then you can be on it and they'll give it to you. I said okay do that post the job and then the union representative we had at that time was a real bum and he never did it.

Q Who was that?

A I can't remember. Gene Montie. I didn't like him at all, but he would never post a job or anything. Actually he was going to sign the classification over to me, but the union would not let him because they hadn't posted it. He also wouldn't post the job so I could sign up for it. That is like my one memorable dealing with the union and finally I got the job you know. They got a different union representative and he let them give it to me.

Q Has the union changed much over the fifteen years? Have you seen much change?

A I don't think it has changed much. Now they are more amiable I guess or there is less hostility between union and management. I guess

they feel their power has been eroded somewhat.

Q What do you mean?

A Well I don't they feel like they had, because their work forces shrunk so much and we are losing jobs they don't feel like they had the power that they had or they know they have to go along with the technological changes and things and it is better to be on the winning side than to be out in the cold. I think that is it.

Q What is the winning side?

A Well it is just good to have a job you know, they want to keep their job.

Q Rather than?

A Rather than like just having their power completely eroded and be eliminated.

Q Do you think that is a real possibility if they would go along?

A I don't know. I am not sure if it is or not. The union is still quite powerful, very powerful. I don't think that they are like somebody out there waving their arms. They have a lot of power.

Q To do what? How do you see? What do you see them able to do?

A Well they can, like they can stop production, you know. If they want they can and they have the power to do it you know. I think that the company realizes that the union is there and they are not going to get rid of them and they have to work with them. Just like you would work with like, if you were the Detroit Tigers and you had to work with Kirk Gibson, you need Kirk Gibson you know, you are going to have to go along with what he wants. I think they see it that way too.

Q And do you think that has helped the spirit of the plant, the way folks get along, the quality of the work, has that changed as the relationship between the company and unions changed?

A Yeah I think it has changed. I think quality is a lot better.

Q Is it?

A Yeah it is quite a bit better. Any time you get people to be a little happier they are going to do a better job. There are still a lot of people who think yeah they are assholes and fuck them and that kind of thing, you know, management and people in management who do the same kind of thing, but there is...I see changes in a lot of people where...and basically I think everybody wants to do a good job. Most people do anyway. They like to feel like they tried and did their best and they did a good job even if they don't like the work. I hate the work, but I always try to do the best job I can because I you know...

Q You hate the work, but you still try to do a decent job.

A Yeah I try to anyway.

Q How do you know that the quality has gotten better?

A I'm not sure, statistically....

Q What was the situation when women hired into the plant, for you and how they were treated? Did you work next to any women in the body shop?

A I have. I remember when they first hired women, that was like just a year after I started there. They didn't have any women when I hired in and then like a year later they started hiring them and actually I think most of them got treated all right. People were respectful, I think, generally.

Q So do you remember any instances or stories or anything that you...

A I never saw any incidents of like sexual harrassment or anything

like that. There were never a lot of women in the body shop because it is hard to work in the body shop. They put some women in there and a lot of them quit. The ones that stayed were pretty tough.

Q Do you think women should have been in the body shop?

A Oh sure. Yeah I think they should work anywhere. As far as I know they can handle it. If I can handle it, I'm not big you know. I pretty strong, but I'm not real big. If I can handle it anybody can handle it unless your weak or small or something. I knew a lot of women who worked there did real hard jobs and did them okay. I figure they should at least be able to try anyway.

Q What about some of the situations around when people are always stealing in the plant? There is a lot of drinking in the plant? How have you experienced that?

A Well I don't know. I don't see people stealing that much. Maybe people take little things once in a while.

Q What do they take?

A Oh I don't know. Maybe they take a cigarette lighter or something. Some little things. I never take anything, I take a bolt or something if I needed it. I don't believe in stealing. I don't figure it is worth losing your job anyway.

Q A lot of people do lose their jobs over stealing little things.

A Well they do lose it, but then it seems like they always get it back.

Q What are you laughing about? What are you thinking about?

A Ducky.

Q Yeah, what happened with him?

A I don't know. He got caught stealing something. He got caught

three times and then he got fired and he got his job back every time.

Q Is that what you think the union does and the company agrees to that? How do you look at the company when they do that?

A I don't think that is good you know. I figure if a guy gets fired for stealing...my understanding is they have to give up a lot of grievances and stuff to get this guy back like short term, he is not short term, but short suit people who have legitimate grievances for some guy who is a crook you know. My understanding is they are not going to do that anymore. I don't know if they will or not, but that is what I heard from the union. I don't think that is right.

Q Why don't we get away from the plant for a little while and why don't we get to the rest of our....

A Actually the only time I think about the plant is when I am in the plant and otherwise I don't think about it.

Q You don't think about it at all when you are outside?

A I divorce myself from it.

Q Do you come home and discuss it with Janice?

A No. I talk about like maybe when I talk to somebody there, but nothing about the plant that much you know.

Q Why is that?

A It is not very important.

Q You spend ten to twelve hours a day there how can it not be important?

A What I do, I mean like my friends and stuff are important, but the work is not that important. It doesn't mean anything to me. It is boring and I used to be really upset that I work there and it is a

pain in the ass and I used to come home and bitch to my exwife about it, what a drag and I hate this shit. I felt like I wasted a lot of time bitching about it and it was something that I had no control over you know. Either you live with it or you quit you know.

Q You decided to live with it.

A Yeah I live with it and I don't let it bother me. I try not to anyway. Once I get out of the plant then I have a life here.

Q What do you think about when you are driving to work in the morning.

A How fucking tired I am.

Q What do you think about when you are driving home from work?

A I think about what I am going to do that night you know, what I got plans for.

Q What do you usually do when you get off of work?

A Well we go out to the movies. Jan and I have different schedules and like her weekend is Monday and Tuesday and mine is Saturday and Sunday, so actually we have four day weekends. That is the way I look at it. We do things on Monday and Tuesday nights. She is off and I'm off and I am pretty fresh then too. I am not too tired from working and...

Q You mean you go out on a Monday night and go to work on Tuesday morning?

A Yeah.

Q You must be pretty tired?

A Sometimes. A lot of times I take a nap when I come home. I take a nap for an hour and then it refreshes me pretty good and then I can do something. I always stay up too late and I never get enough

sleep. This is part of it.

Q I always see you and you said you slept two hours you know. Especially during the summer when you used to go swimming and stuff. How do you make it on two or four hours of sleep?

A It is hard. We have to make it up. We have been doing better. Since my kids have been gone I don't have to spend so much time with them and I usually can take a nap, sometimes two or three hours. Lately I have come home and like Jan is working and I take nap for two or three hours and then she'll get home and we will spend some time together and then I will go back to bed late, but I will end up getting six or seven hours of sleep. Hopefully.

Q Just waking up a couple of times?

A Yeah.

Q You are on lay off now for change over, what will you do with two weeks off?

A Well we are going to go and take a little trip up north and see the trees and stuff next week for three days. So we are going to take a little vacation. I want to do some work on the house. I've got a bunch of things to do. I got to strip the paper off in the bedroom and the bathroom, pain them, get the stripping for these doors. I have got all kinds of work to do around here.

Q Just bought the house?

A Right I just got the house.

Q First house right?

A First house, right.

Q What made you make that decision?

A Well we figured, Jan and I have been living together for quite a while and we figured it would be a better investment for the money

to have a house and it would be nice to have a house and it worked out that we could get this house. I wanted a more stable environment for my kids. They left, but you know I wanted that. Especially I bought in Ann Arbor because I wanted my kids to go to Ann Arbor schools. I wanted them to stay in Ann Arbor schools.

Q How come you like Bruce Springsteen?

A Because I thought he has something to say you know. I like his music. He has got a lot of energy. I thought he said something for not just the working man, not for the common man, but he sort of is the voice of the working man. I like his image. I especially like his older stuff better than his newer stuff. I really like his image.

Q What do you like about it?

A It is like if you listen to his songs it is like a picture and you see things going on and there is all this action. It is like hot summer nights and rock and roll and driving your car around and having some fun and it is about people's relationships and things and you get a real picture of things. I just love his image. I just think it is great.

Q Did you go to his concert when he was in town?

A Yeah. I seen him a couple of times. I didn't go see him when he was at the Silverdome because it is too big, but I've seen him in smaller places and he was always great.

Q So you grew up in the 60's?

A In the 60's right.

Q 60's and rock and roll and drugs and do you think you have changed a lot since then?

A I am more mature. I don't think my attitudes have changed much.

The things that I believe in and the things that I think are important I think are still the same.

Q What are they?

A Oh family is important. It is real important. Having a social awareness of what is going on around you, what you can contribute, that is important. Just enjoying life that is important and I like the idealism of the 60's and I hope I haven't lost it.

Q Do you equate the idealism of the 60's with the dream of getting out of the plant?

A Yeah, yeah I think that is an extension of that.

Q You grew up in Midland...let's go way back when okay?...in 1948.

A Well originally I was born in Bay City. My dad got this job at Dow and we moved to Midland and got this old farm for like \$2,000.00. My brother and I were just talking about it the other day, 89 acres for \$2,000.00.

Q Really.

A A whole house.

Q Do you still own it?

A Yeah. Well he sold a lot of the land and he built a new house, but he still got quite a bit. I don't know at least 50-60 acres. It is all woods.

Q So you grew up on a farm? Tell me about how it was growing up. Tell me about the city of Midland.

A We lived out in the country and we got this house when I was five so I don't remember a lot before then. My dad always wanted to have a farm. He worked at Dow, but he liked the idea of having a farm. So we had a small farm. We had cows and pigs sometimes, one or two. We had a horse and it was kind of secluded. The closest

neighbor was like $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away. The house was all surrounded by woods, on every side with a road that goes through the middle. I had my brothers and sisters and those were my basic friends.

Q How many brothers and sisters?

A I had three brothers and two sisters. We are all like a year apart. Except for my oldest sister is like a couple years older because of the war. My dad was in in World War II. He was gone away for a couple of years. Good Catholic family.

Q Good Catholic family, right.

A I went to Catholic school in town so I didn't have a lot interactions with the kids who lived around me. Most of my friends were from town. That was kind of bad socially.

Q How come?

A It left me disconnected from people I think. I just had my family and all of my friends lived quite far away you know, so you had to drive a ways to see them.

Q Did you take your horse to go visit them?

A We had this spunky horse who was wild. He was real old and it had a humped back and...

Q You couldn't ride her?

A You could ride her, but she was real stubborn and if he decided to go home she would just go home and there wasn't anything you could do to stop her. She would through trees and stuff and you would get wacked and fall off.

Q What was the horse's name?

A Dusty.

Q Dusty. I work next to a Dusty now on the trim line.

A I had fun when I was a kid. My brothers were all a year apart. I

have a brother who is a year older, one is a year younger and one is two years younger. So we are all real close together in age and we always hung out together. We did things together and I am real tight with them.

Q You were saying you helped them repair the roof and then they will help you.

A Right, right. My dad is real handy. He built his own house. He can do anything, fix cars. He had to fix his own cars and stuff and he built his own house and he does plumbing and all that stuff.

Q Do you do any of that stuff?

A I don't do much of it. I never even learned how to do it. He always did it all.

Q He did it all.

A Yeah, I regretted that. I didn't learn that much, but he came and helped me fix it up when I first got it, the house and he is going to come and help me do the roof.

Q What kind of work did your dad do?

A He was a foreman for Dow Chemical. I don't think he worked in the production line. He did work in production a little bit, but he hated it.

Q What about your mom?

A She's basically, she stayed at home most of the time when we were young. She worked a little bit. She never liked working much outside of the home. She is kind of crazy too.

Q Kind of crazy?

A Yeah it is hard for her to function in the real world. She is a

bit of a hyperchondriac. She is not a real stable person.

Q That must have been difficult. Did you know that when you were a kid?

A I guess I kind of sensed it. She is not like dysfunctional, but she is kind of borderline sometimes.

Q That's hard. Are they both alive and both still living in Midland?

A Yeah.

Q What about your brothers and sisters? Where are they and what are they doing?

A Well let's see, my one brother he just finally completed college.

Q He has been going for ten years right?

A Twenty years. He is an artist and he has a degree in commercial art and he got it and he just got a job recently in Detroit, working for like entertainment you know. The guys who make the books and you get coupons and he stays here like...last year he stayed here like for three or four nights a week because he lived up north in Midland and he needed some place. He stays here once a week now, on Tuesdays. He stays here with me. He goes home once or twice a week because he likes to be close to his family. It is a long drive.

Q His wife and kids are up there?

A Yeah. So he finally is getting his act together and it took him a long time. He was pretty un...not unstable, but you know he didn't have a job and he never kept jobs for long or anything and he got laid off a lot and stuff. He married a real nice lady and she helped him a lot, like finish school and get some direction in his life. He has got a couple of nice kids. My brother is a year older than me is a surveyor and he lives in Lansing and he's a

Vietnam vet. He is a little crazy because of that, but not bad just a little bad.

Q When you say a little crazy because of the war?

A I don't know it made him real nervous. He is the nervous type and he didn't like Nam. He got hurt in Nam and it was a real bad experience for him.

Q You didn't have to go?

A I got out of it. I cheated and lied and I got out of it.

Q How did you cheat and lie?

A I did drugs. I put needle tracks in my arm and showed them that I was a junkie. I took speed, never shot it up, just took speed. Actually what I got out on was high blood pressure because I was taking so much speed it raised my blood pressure. I had a heart murmur when I was a kid and they asked me if I had a heart murmur and I said yeah. They checked my blood pressure and they said it was too high and I had go to the...I was going to Western at the time and I had to go to the medical center and get it checked for three days, twice a day. So I had to take speed for three days and it was hard to raise my blood pressure because I'm great. My pulse got real high and they threw me out. They gave me a 1-Y on it and I never got retested.

Q Why didn't you want to go?

A Because I was against the war and...

Q How come?

A I didn't think it was right. I always thought it was wrong and I didn't feel I owed it to anybody to get my ass shot off for nothing. I lost a few of my friends.

Q You have friends who were killed in the war?

A Yeah a couple of them. My brother was gone and he told me don't fuck and come here ever. I was really opposed to the war so I didn't go.

Q Why do you think your brother went and you didn't go?

A He is more conservative than I am. He would go along with things more.

Q But he didn't want you to go?

A No, no. Later he regreted doing it and he said he was sorry. He was never in favor of the war, I don't think, but he thought he should go you know, so he went. I didn't.

Q Do you regret not going now?

A Sometimes I regret it.

Q Why? How come?

A I am not sure.

Q Talk about it.

A It is just that a lot of people went you know and I'm still never in favor of the war, but I don't know somehow it is not real rational, it is sort of like I feel like I missed out on something that other people did.

Q Do guys talk a lot about that at work over the years?

A There is a lot of Vietnam Vets in the plant. Guys like Rayez, you know Rayez, the little Chicano guy? I think he suffers from delayed stress, myself, from Nam and probably cultural stress too because he is a Chicano you know. He is from Texas and he grew up in a real different culture. I don't know he has some kind of problem anyway. There are a number of other people who are Vietnam

who I have talked to about the war you know and what went on and what it was like and that.

Q And when you talk with folks what do you think their main concern, main theme is that they talk about? I sort of know what you mean when you say you, sort of a freaky way, wish you had gone and you would like to have known what happened and how you would have responded. I don't know can you say anymore about that? I mean what is the part of the Vietnam Veteran's culture that you sort of romanticize about or you...

A They seem like they are bound together all those guys. They all do that and that is one experience that, like one really, really different experience that binds them together and I don't know...

Q Comradeship.

A Yeah.

Q You have that with your brothers.

A Yeah.

Q You don't have it in another form.

A Right. I don't know, I never get any static about not going which is interesting...you know from Vets. You know they say heh I don't blame you. Almost everyone said that was the smart thing to do you know.

Q They weren't angry they didn't think you were a punk or something?

A No one has ever said that to me. No one who was ever a Vet said that. They thought I did the right thing or at least they verbalized it that way. They might have thought different personally, but they never said anything different.

Q When you left when you were eighteen you started going to Ferris and Western.

A Right.

Q You married Connie and you knew her from Midland?

A Well I met her, after I started going to Ferris State, my first year I was there...she was a friend of my sister's and I met her one time when I came home and I knew her for a couple of years and we got married when I was like twenty. She was eighteen. A real mistake.

Q When you say a real mistake what do you mean?

A We were both too young and I was not happy. It was just something that I felt like I should do.

Q Why? How come you felt you should do that when you were twenty years old? You were involved in the 60's and people weren't getting married that much? Were your friends getting married?

A No, no.

Q Why did you think you should do it?

A I don't know, probably my Catholic upbringing had a lot to do with it and...

Q You mean if you wanted to screw you had to get married?

A No. If you supposedly loved somebody or if you were with them for a long time. I was twenty years old and I should get married I guess and part of it was I figured I could get my exwife away from the situation in her family and that and maybe she would be different and things would be better between us. I thought things would change you know. I never had that good of a relationship with her, looking back at it, but I thought things would change if we got married and we got out on our own and they didn't.

Q They never do do they?

A They only get worse.

Q Yeah. You have two great daughters?

A Right two daughters.

Q Heather and...?

A Amber.

Q How old are they?

A 14 and 11. We didn't have kids for like four years. We were married for like four years and we didn't have kids until we had Heather, which was good you know. I was glad I didn't have kids right away. Even still I was still pretty young when I had Heather and there was a lot of responsibility that I wasn't equipped for and my wife wasn't equipped for it.

Q What do you mean that you weren't equipped for?

A I wasn't responsible enough you know.

Q What does that mean?

A It was real hard to take that responsibility. I had to force myself to do it.

Q To do what?

A Things like take care of a kid and deal with kids you know and...

Q Change the diapers?

A Not so much that, but I would say I was real unhappy at the time, extremely unhappy and I wasn't happy with my marriage. I wasn't happy with work and my life is not going anywhere and I was real self-centered I guess and it was hard and I knew I had this little girl and then she needed me as a parent you know, but I really worked at taking care of her. It wasn't an easy thing to do you know.

Q What did you like best about being a father?

A I liked my daughter. My daughter loved me. She really cared about me and I really liked that. Some person who just cared about you

with no questions asked and I knew I did a fairly decent job despite of the fact that I wasn't emotionally that well equipped for it. I felt I still did all right, you know, I made the effort I had to make.

Q When you look back now after fourteen years of being a father from your first marriage what do you think you have learned as you sort of enter a new relationship?

A Well I learned that you have to be happy with the person you are with. You can't try to change them or make them different and that is real unfair to that person. You either like the person for who they are or you don't hang around with them you know and I enjoy my kids a lot more you know. I think I am a lot more mature. I don't think about myself so much and I can think about them. I like seeing them grow and doing things and learning things and stuff. I like to help them out.

Q What do you want for them when they are twenty years old? What do you hope they are or are able to do?

A I hope they are able to see what they want to do. I went through my life not really knowing what I wanted to do or have any idea of how to get what I wanted anyway. I want them to be able to do that. Do what they want to do and not figure that there is one set game plan in life either, that they can change the situation and that they'll just be happy you know.

Q What do you think they have learned from you? The good, the bad and the ugly?

A The good, the bad and the ugly, ha ha. They learned, what did they learn...they learned...I think they know how much I care about them and I hope they learned to be a little responsible about things and

I think they see me as different than other parents. I am considered for radical than other parents and I am more into having a good time. I think it is important that you can be able to enjoy life and I hope I have taught them that. That they just don't have to always go along with the way things are suppose to be, you know, you can maybe bend the rules a little bit and you should question, at least question, what's going on around you, don't just accept everything blindly and that everything isn't written out for them you know.

Q What is your biggest fear for them growing up in the 1980's and 1990's, adulthood in the year 2000, yeah it would be...20 years old then 25 years old then?

A My biggest thing, fear is, you know they have had problems when my exwife and I split up. I think it was very emotionally hard for them especially for my younger daughter Amber and I hope that she overcome that, work it out some way so that it doesn't effect her life, so it doesn't keep her from doing what she wants to do with her life or being able to deal with life. That is the thing that I am mostly afraid of.

Q Would you want her to marry someone from the Oklahoma GM plant now that they are down in the southwest?

A I don't care who they marry, as long as they are a nice person and they are happy with them. I hope they don't marry anybody because they feel like they had to or they should, sort of like I did, but I hope they make better judgements than I did when they get to be twenty or twenty-five.

Q What do you want to be doing in the year 2000?

A I would like to be doing something in psychology, that's what I

would like to do. I would like to have some kind of job related to working with people, helping people deal with their lives. I think I am good understanding people. I have a lot of empathy and I think I have a lot to offer.

Q Have you applied for any jobs at Ford's or...?

A No not really.

Q You might get pushy and talk to folks. I understand they are looking for people who know how to talk to people.

A Yeah that is my understanding.

Q They have engineers who cannot talk to each other. They need people to translate.

A Right.

Q So you might you know, you never know, you never know what is out there. Do you think that you would get it in the auto industry or...?

A It is possible, things have changed a lot so there are some things opening up. Fourteen years ago when I hired in I never thought that there would be the kind of jobs, like Andy Well's job I never thought there would be a job like that you know or any kind of possibility. I really should get out and talk more to people and try to get to know more people so that at least have some avenues open.

Q I know I asked Charlie when he was having the education program, UAW Ford's, for to get the job that Sarah has and they didn't hire anybody from inside the plants. You have to be outside the plant to get the job.

A She don't make money to me.

Q She seems interested. I don't know how it is to work with her.

She seems on top of it.

A I think she is one of the best people they could ever hire for that job. She really cares about you and she thinks people are important and she really makes an effort. I think they did real well getting her.

Q But you said she doesn't make the...oh she doesn't make the kind of dollars that we make?

A Right.

Q Oh yeah they only make \$20,000. I would have taken that.

A That's all you make anyway.

Q I made \$26,000 last year.

A Oh did you.

Q But I would have taken that, shit yeah for a decent job. When Janice gets angry with me now she says what do you mean you are going back to school and make \$10,000 less. I said thank you we've really advanced here. What do you think the auto industry is going to look like, what do you think the truck plant is going to look like in fifteen years, the day you retire...the day you are suppose to retire?

A I really don't know you know. It could be pretty much the same it is. It is going to change some. Technology is going to change it.

It might be out of existence you know. They might close it down.

Q Are you worried about that?

A No. I don't give a shit if they do or not.

Q What would you do?

A I'd go get a real job. I would be forced to. I would be concerned if I really thought it was going to happen you know. I would worry about it then. I would say well I really have to go look another

job. I have got to do something different, but in some ways I would think it would be a God send you know to get me off my ass and go do something I really wanted to do, or make an attempt at it anyway. I think most people don't think about it that way. Most people feel it is their life and it is real important to have that job. To me it is not that important.

Q How come you think differently?

A Because I have got an education and I know I can do other things. I am still young enough to do a lot of other things and it's not my only avenue. I plan on being something different anyway. If that happens it would only give me more of an incentive. Do you mind if I have a cigarette, will it bother you?

Q No it won't bother me. In a minute I'll even take one from you in a minute. Being someone who has lived in Michigan all of his life, you were raised in Midland and that was sort of a chemical area which also now has gone down to the southwest and Midland is ready to close up most of it's production.

A Well that nuclear power plant really screwed them up. It gave them a lot of jobs for a long time. It was great for their economy, but they finally closed it down and that hurt their economy there.

Q What do you think, I mean you were sort of lucky, you came up in the 1960's and you got a job in the auto plant and make good money, good benefits, pay for your school, health and you even get retirement...what do you think is going to happen now...are you glad your daughters are out in the southwest now in terms of the possibility of jobs?

A Actually they are in Washington.

Q Oh they are in Washington.

A Their mother was in Arizona, but she moved to Washington. I hope they don't stay there and I hope they come back here.

Q So they will be closer to you.

A Yeah. I think there will be work here. It will be different kind of work. I wouldn't want them to work in a factory. I always told them never to work in a factory, don't do work you don't want to do, you know just for the money it is not worth it.

Q What do you think it is going to mean the fact that there aren't young people coming into the factories anymore?

A Well, I don't know...it just means that their jobs are going to be different. They might not make as much money. Then again, they might make more doing something else. Industry is kind of dying out everywhere. I don't know, things are becoming much more technological. Maybe a background in technology is helpful. There is a lot more service jobs, a helluva lot more, that's what they say. People will have to do that. I don't know if they will make that kind of good money, but they will do all right.

Q What do you think about the president? What do you think about the international situation? Or any of that kind of stuff, Central America?

A Okay, I basically hate Reagan. I think he is like a dinosaur from another age.

Q What do you mean?

A He has a lot of simple solutions to complex problems and he likes war I think. He doesn't mind bringing out the guns and the army and that shit he has done in Nicaragua, it is like outrageous. He conned congress to go along with him when I don't think the majority

really wants to.

Q Where do you think he is successful?

A I'm not sure, I don't like him. I don't know a lot of people who really like him.

Q Aren't there a lot of guys in the plant who like him?

A I'm not sure. They don't really say. Some guys say they like him, but then they don't always say it. There is not, I don't see him having a big following, but he has it somewhere. Somewhere he has a big following who agree with him, but I don't know where they are at you know. Probably in management or something.

Q Do you think there is a difference of views in the people of management and the people on the line?

A I think he is a republican you know, he is for big business and big money and those people like him. They think he is doing all right.

Q Do you think guys on the line now that they get profit sharing and involved in the company and see themselves as one family and not sort of the working man vs the management, they are apart of that one big business now? I think there is a contradiction there of how people have acted, yet they are also against republican at times. So how do you feel?

A I'm not sure about that question. I don't know how they think about it. I still think they think that it is republicans against the democrats. Republicans are in favor of big business and that is really not in their best interest, they don't think, they don't feel, even though it may or may not be. They don't think it is true.

Q Do you see much difference in views between blacks or whites or Arabs or other folks?

A Actually no I don't see a lot of difference. I think they think a lot alike even though there is still a lot of racial kind of stuff going on in the factories.

Q There is?

A It is not so overt like it used to be, but there is a lot of racists around and there are a lot of bad feelings like towards Arabs, maybe moreso than against blacks you know.

Q How does that show itself? How do you know that?

A Just the way they talk about Arabs you know.

Q I see.

A They say derogatory things about them. They say they are taking our money. They are really against those guys like Kadafy and those guys. They think he is terrible. Most everybody thinks he is you know. I think they don't understand too well the situation in the middle east. I don't think they have much interest in it actually and it doesn't really involve their lives, but they don't like this big terrorism thing and the Arabs...I think they go along with Reagan on that moreso than on other issues. I think they sort of agree with him on that. I think they think we should go bomb the shit out of Kadafy or whatever. They think that is okay.

Q And do they take that same kind of anger out on Arab workers?

A No actually people are much better than they talk I think you know.

They have attitudes and stuff about people, just like they have attitudes about blacks, they have attitudes about Arabs, but when it comes to dealing with the person individually they treat him much better than their attitudes would dictate.

Q What about when a black or an Arab is not around?

A There is always kind of racist talk and stuff you know. It is just talk.

Q What do you mean it is just talk?

A I don't think it would manifest itself into action that much.

Q Did it used to? Do you think it is worse when you first hired in?

A To some degree yeah. It was worse, I think so. I think people are...well just having to work with blacks and stuff and finding out that they are people has changed people's attitudes or with anybody, Arabs or anybody you know. When you grow up in a situation when you are not involved with those people it is easier to have a certain attitude towards them.

Q When you were a little kid, (jumping around just to feel out the picture a little), and you were at Christmas and you were a good Catholic family what did you do on Christmas when you were eight years old? What was favorite Christmas when you were a kid?

A My favorite, I don't know, we didn't get a lot for Christmas when I was a kid because I had a big family and my dad did not have that much money. I loved Christmas. It was great. It was exciting. You know you were out of school and you knew you were going to something. We always got something and I got some things I liked you know.

Q What do you remember?

A I don't have that good of memory of my youth that much. A lot of it wasn't happy I guess and I kind of blank it out. I remember being with my brothers and doing things with them and that was what was fun.

Q What about Christmas now?

A We don't go to church. I never to go church anymore.

Q You used to be go to church every Sunday probably?

A Right every Sunday. I went to Catholic school and I had to go to church everyday you know. It really turned me off to go to church.

I am kind of antireligious. I hate like the fundamentalist religions. I hate those guys being involved with politics and stuff. I think they have real warped ideas about what religion is about and stuff.

Q Are some of them in the plant?

A There is a few.

Q Do you ever talk with them?

A Not too much. I know there is a few fundamentalists in there, but again I don't really talk to them that much. I try not to antagonize them. I guess I'm like that. I don't like to antagonize people.

Q Not like me?

A Not like you, you like to antagonize them. I'm not good at that. Good for other people out of their stupidity.

Q I don't see the stupidity. I really that by sort of getting them a little hot under the collar you can get a fuller sense of what they believe. Most people generally control what they say.

A Right. If you get them hot then they will say more what they really believe.

Q They will say more what they really think about Kadafy, what they really think of Reagan or what they really think of this.

A I think I can get people to say what they mean without getting them mad. I don't like people being made at me. I have a hard time dealing with people being angry at me so I try not to get them

angry you know, but I can get them to talk about what they really think and be honest about it. I think I can anyway.

Q I don't know what else do you want to talk about, anything else? Is there anything else about work, your life, what's important?

A Work is not that important to me. It is not important. I don't think it is important at all. It just brings in money and it is something that I have to do and I try to divorce it from the rest of my life. I do other things. I like to go to movies and concerts and I like my life outside the plant and I enjoy doing things like playing golf, ball or whatever.

Q Do you play softball? You used to play softball with the guys after work.

A Well I used to play on a team actually, not with the guys at work, but when I used to live in the apartments...when we worked eight hours it was a lot easier. I had more time and more energy. I played last year on a coed team in Ann Arbor and that was kind of fun, but I was kind of tired. I was taking care of my kids by myself for four years when my wife was gone.

Q You raised your kids by yourself for four years?

A Right and that took up a lot of my time. They went to live with her now so I have more time for other things.

Q Why don't we spend a little time talking about that. You and your wife split up five years ago?

A Right.

Q And you had the responsibility of your kids for those four years? How did you manage it? What was a day like for a single parent, single father? When most people talk about a single parent they

think of a single woman.

A Yeah, well Jan has been with me for quite a while, but she didn't always live with me. First couple years I had the kids she had her own place and I had my own place so I had the kids all to myself and I would come home from work and I had to make sure that school yet well, make sure they got something to eat which I still can't cook for shit. I would just take them to Mickey D's a lot.

Q Mickey D's?

A McDonald's you know. Take them out to eat somewhere. Buy them something out to eat or just make something real simple.

Q You were saying you would come home from work.

A Okay I would get up in the morning and I was always tired because I never got enough sleep and it was too early in the damn morning. I would have to get up in the middle of the night.

Q What time would you get up?

A 4:30 and go to work. I always went to work because I needed the money and I couldn't get by without it so I would go to work, do my ten hours and then I would come home.

Q What time would that be?

A That would be like 3:30-4:00. I used to get out earlier when I was a utility man. I got out earlier and that was nice. It helped a lot actually to get out like at 3:00 a lot of times when everybody else got out at 4:00 and so I could get home earlier before the kids did.

Q That is because you would get your break at the end?

A Yeah I would get my break at the end right. And I could be home in

time for the kids to come home and make sure they got something to eat. Try to get them to like pick up some of the house or I would clean up the house and maybe I would take a nap for a little while and maybe an hour or a half hour or something.

Q How old were the girls when you got full custody and you took responsibility?

A Heather was ten and Amber was seven. Heather was pretty mature and she took on a lot of responsibility that she probably shouldn't have, but she took care of her little sister and she would get her little sister off to school. Help her get her off to school and stuff in the morning because I was never there.

Q Nobody was in the house when they went to school?

A No, no not at first. I had the lady across the hall...she was supposed to come over and check on them, but she was real irresponsible about it and didn't really do that much. She was there if they needed her for anything, but she really didn't do that much. Heather mostly took care of it. Fortunately they were both going to school so they were gone during the day most of the time.

Q So how would they get up in the morning?

A They had an alarm. I would call them alot. I usually would call them every morning.

Q So you would take a break and make sure they would them. I see a lot of folks on the phone at 7:15 or 7:30 sort of the plant calling home.

A My job was good because I was a utility man so I could just take a break any time I wanted to go upstairs. The union thing is right there and they got free phones and I would run upstairs and I would

call and make sure they were up getting ready for school. Actually I would usually call twice because Heather got up at a different time than Amber. She went to junior high and Amber went to...initially they both went to the same school, but like the next year she started going to junior high. So I would call them at different times and make sure they are both ready for school, had lunches and things.

Q Do you feel guilty that nobody was home with them?

A A little bit, it bothered me. I tried to stay in touch with them as much as I could. I had people around who they could call in case of an emergency.

Q What kind of people, family is not here?

A You know I was with Jan and they could get a hold of Jan most of the time. She would come over and help them out if they needed. Like Pete Hampton he lived right near me and his wife helped me out a couple of times. If I needed somebody to go pick up a kid at school and Jan couldn't do it or whatever. They lived close to school. They lived close so they could walk home.

Q What happened if they got sick?

A A lot of the times they just stayed home by themselves you know. If Amber was sick when she was real little I would have Heather stay with her. That didn't happen too often fortunately and they would want to sometimes get out of school, but I always made them go anyway.

Q I always thought that no job should start before the kids go to I'm serious, that should be a rule, a national health family rule that work should not start until the kids are in school.

A Yeah that is a good idea.

Q Not so complicated. It could be done. It would cut into some of their scheduling or something, but there is no...you know people only work an eight hour day, you could still get your two and three shifts in without any problem. Because so many folks in the plant have that problem.

A Yeah. Especially when we start so damn early. I don't even understand why now because we only have one shift and we could start any time we wanted to you know. They insist on starting at 5:30 in the middle of the night. As far as I am concerned it is the middle of the night. A lot of guys like to come in then because then they get out early.

Q Well they get out for dinner.

A Right.

Q The thing of the day is so fucking long, if you got an eight hour day you might have different attitude.

A An eight hour day would be great. Energy wise it would be really great. I always like working eight hours. It is like a vacation. It is a lot easier. Actually when we get an eight hour shift I feel like I'm off almost. I like that. I would take care of the kids and I would make sure they would get to eat or stuff. Sometimes when Jan and I would go out I would get somebody maybe to watch them. Heather was usually old enough so they could take of themselves and I would just call them up and make sure everything was all right. I would try to go to their schools and make sure I knew what they were doing, especially Amber because she had a lot of problems.

Q I remember she had some serious problems for a while when she was accused of vandalism or something.

A Oh, oh Heather...that was when she lived with her mother. She lived in Tecumseh. They lived in Tecumseh with their mother for a year when we first got seperated, or it was like for six months. Their mother didn't work and she was having a lot of problems and Heather was pretty upset. She broke into a school and helped this friend of her's destroy a school and we had some shit, I got some shit over that. It actually worked out okay and there were no serious repercussions and then Heather came to live with me and her mother went to Arizona. It was more stable for them then. It was better for them then I think except they didn't have much contact with their mother for quite a while and that was hard on them, real hard on them. Especially for Amber my youngest daughter. She took it real hard that her mother wasn't around and I had her therapy and then I went to therapy because I figured it was more my problem than her problem, how to deal with her you know, how to help her deal with it, it was really my responsibility. That worked out pretty good. I have an excellent therapist. He helped me a lot.

Q Do you sometimes feel like Woody Allen?

A Yeah with all of his therapists right. So many therapists...maybe I hang onto it, maybe they are my crutch sometimes. I think they are in a way, but they can be real helpful and after a while...Jan spent a lot of time with us even though she had her own place she still spent a lot of time with us and she was there a lot of times when the girls were home you know. Even before she moved in and

then what she had in this apartment was leaks, it rained in her bedroom and stuff and so she couldn't stay at her house so she stayed at mine and after a while she got out of the lease and moved in with us. She has been really helpful with the girls. She helped me a lot. She actually took on too much responsibility too much at times and I had to really work on it not letting her take on that responsibility. It wasn't hers, it really was mine which is hard to do at time, but working all the time and stuff I didn't really have time for the girls. It was great having her around, but it really wasn't her responsibility.

Q And then just recently your daughters went back to living with your...?

A Their mother. She seems to have straightened out her life. She had a lot of problems for a while, but she met some guy who seems all right and she married him and she is more stable now. They went to see her and they decided they wanted to stay with her for a while anyway so they are going to stay with her.

Q It is pretty out there.

A Yes. I have seen pictures out there. Their mother has sent pictures before and it is really beautiful.

Q It is a lot nicer than here.

A It is nicer than here?

Q Oh it is much nicer. It is beautiful.

A Yeah they are not too far from the oceans and mountain air is right there and it doesn't snow. It is a different climate. It doesn't snow much and there are big trees and stuff. It is more like the UP I think.

Q Yeah, yeah.

A They seem to be kind of happy with their situation.

Q How do you feel about your daughters, not having them any more?

A Well it is real sad for me and I really miss them. I miss having them around and it is nice not having all the responsibility all of the time. It is kind of a burden off, but I would rather have them around and have the responsibility, but this is what they wanted to do right now and it is important that they have a relationship with their mother. So I try to look at it that way, that it will be good for them.

Q What do you talk about on the phone with them now?

A What they are doing and how school is going. They just started school out there and I talk about school and they get to do...it is nice out there like you know they have gone fishing and stuff and gone up in the mountains and they went to the ocean and we talk about that. We talk about their friends. They don't have too many friends, but they haven't been there that long.

Q This just happened last month?

A Right they just went last...in August, the middle of August. So it has only been a month. They have been there a month. It is easy to have long conversations with them. You should see my phone bill. I try to keep in touch with them and I call them a couple times a week and we write them letters and stuff.

Q You should send them tapes.

A Yeah that would be good. Actually we have one of these things, but we need to get it fixed it got broke.

Q You can get a tape recorder for \$20.00 and send them tapes. That is what my mother does for her grand kids.

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A Yeah that would be neat.

Q You could sing a song. All right, that is about it. I think we pretty much covered life.

A Okay, I hope so. It was fun and I enjoyed doing it.