

REYES, RAMON

Q You say you're from Texas? What was the name of the city in Texas?

A Elsa, Texas.

Q That's where you were born and raised?

A Yes sir.

Q What kind of work did your folks do?

Usually my Mom and brothers and all them, you know migrant working. We went from Idaho came over here to Michigan, from Michigan to Ohio, from Ohio back home to Texas.

Q How old were you when you were doing this?

A Around from, I say about 12 years old up to about I say about 18 year old.

Q Eighteen years old. So really on the road, where did you go to school during those days?

A You didn't go. You went from I'd say around close to October to about April and that was it. You usually skipped one year or two. Basically from my family you skipped from one year to two years. And that's about it. My Dad he works in the oil fields in Texas, but having ten kids in our family that wasn't enough.

Q Ten kids?

A Ten kids in our family. That's a typical Mexican family.

Q You consider yourself a Mexican? A Mexican American? You were born here, so you were born here in the United States?

A Right.

Q So you're a American of Mexican descent basically?

A Right, so I consider myself a Mexican American. More of an American, cause I wouldn't know what to do in Mexico. Most people say hey, you know go back to Mexico.

Q You've never been there?

A What am I gonna do there? You know.

Q We'll start, we'll move forward and then we'll come back. That's one thing I didn't know. When did you hire in at the Ford plant?

A 72 in July.

Q We have about the same seniority. I came about December 71, so we have about 15 years each. What was it like that first day? You remember?

A Shit. Ah, what do you call living in terror. Disgusting. I was really leery.

Q What do you remember?

A The only this is I tried my damndest, my hardest. Cause I really wanted to make it cause I had a brother working there at the same time and just like certain pride, he sure as the hell didn't feel like quitting or anything like that cause it would be kind of like down grading towards your family, you know cause here's your brother he made it and went through it and then here you are, it would be kind of embarrassing you know for your brother, to say hey you know, your brother didn't make it so something like that. That's what kept me on, cause it was really hard.

Q What do you remember that was so hard? How old were you?

A Hell I was 23 already.

Q 23 already?

A Yeah, I came here for college vacation, you know I say I'll go up north and go there and work in a factory, come back and buy a new car and then I'd continue to go to college. When I got started working I was making this big money. I thought it was big money. It was about \$267 a week. Something that was unbelievable back home. Back home if you made \$100 a week you were doing great. So I said hey even if I continue going to college and graduate from college I'll never make this money. You know what the hell, I

might as well start now. So I did, and I regretted it ever since.

Q Everybody says I'm not staying the whole time, and they're all there. Why do you say you regretted it?

A I should have just went back home and continued on. Maybe somewhere down the line my head would have snapped, you know, I say hey and been productive and just, I feel that the assembly line is very unproductive for yourself being. It's productive for maybe you do alot of work and you do accomplish building trucks and everything, but for you, you are limited and you stay and it limits you in the ability of what you can do. So you stay there and you stay there, forever and ever I think. That's what's gonna kill me in the end. Especially now.

Q Where did they put you the first day?

A Where did they put me the first day? I was doing the fan job in the engine line. With all them pulleys and everything.

Q You were saying that you hired in on the engine line 16 years ago?

A Right. Where was I? Where did we left off?

Q That's where we were. You were just talking about the job you were doing the day you hired in. They put you on the fans. How long did you stay on the engine line?

A I stayed there for about six years, I pulled out the muscle in the elbow, the inside of the elbow. I pulled a muscle right there and they tried to get rid of me.

Q What do you mean?

A You know how they, if you file for workmans comp they usually try to fire you and I went through a whole bunch of hell for that, for filing for

workman's comp. I

Q You got hurt on the job?

A I got hurt on the job and then they tried to get, you know, tried to fire me. So I got, eventually I... They tried to fire me, gave me time off, eventually they sent me to the sealer deck and from the sealer deck, it was giving me just terrible headaches there. I didn't like it there at all. From the sealer deck, I wound up in the body shop.

Q I remember when you worked at the sealer deck. They tried to give you the wiping job. Go back, how did you hurt your arm?

A By pulling on the alternator to, say you have to put a certain amount of pressure on the fan belt, and then you know, like you tighten up the fan belt with the alternator so you pull on the alternator and you tighten up the alternator that you know, tightens up the fan belt. By doing that enormous amount, for six years and it eventually got to me.

Q So did they fire you? They wouldn't give you a job? They wouldn't accept that it was company related? How did you win you battle?

A I did't. It just faded away. Eventually...

Q Did you go to court?

A No I never went to court. My lawyers and all that...

Q They had lawyers?

A Yeah, but they never did anything. What happened was that eventually I got myself into a job where nobody bothered me and they needed somebody to do the job. Nobody bothered me, I came to work everyday, nobody bothered me, eventually they left me there. Eventually they thought that it was all swell and that he is a damn good worker, all we need to do is leave him alone. So they did and hell...after awhile they ruined my back again. Putting me on a

damn job where I was bent down all day. It's called the bracket job. Nobody wanted it. I couldn't walk.

Q What did you do? Describe exactly what you did?

A Yeah, you got on top of the Broncho, got inside the Broncho and you bent down to put the brackets on there and eventually you got...

Q Brackets where?

A The brackets on the side, they're called insulation brackets. After you put those in there, you know, you'd climb out, in and out, in and out.

Q Every job?

A Yeah, eventually I was, my back just couldn't handle it. I couldn't even walk and I wound up with about two years off from work on medical.

Q Did you get paid?

A No just medical. Just medical.

Q How did you make it during that time?

A Man... I made it cause I was single at the time and I didn't need that much money to live on. But, like I said those two good years just completely out of my pride, you know, I felt like I was dead for about two years. It kind of got me a little bit smart. I started listening to the radios and all that, how they were trying to eliminate people that were too long in medical and all that kind of stuff. So I decided I am going to have to go back and that is when I decided to go back. When I went back, I went back. I really... I decided to go back to work and bear the pain. I just like experimented with myself. I just went in there, started working, as soon as my back started hurting me I went to medical and they put pads on there, came back to work soon as it started hurting me I just did that back and forth, back and forth.

Eventually, I hurt it for you know every other day and then eventually every Friday. That happened for a long period of time, every Friday, by the time Friday came along my back was shot. And then it just quit hurting. I worked back to health.

Q You worked it through. So you don't have back problems now?

A No back problems or nothing. I just turned around and said I'm gonna do it. I sort of got, if I hadn't gone back to work and really worked the hell out of my back, my back wouldn't have ever....I would have been still sitting around here with my back hurting.

Q So you made it stronger, is that what you're saying?

A You ain't kidding, 100%. I haven't missed, ever since then, that year I missed about three days and I got married and everything, my first kid and all that. All within a year, and then that was it. I didn't haven't skipped any more days since then.

Q That's been what, three years ago, four years?

A Three years. I've got just about perfect attendance.

Q Really. So you get an award for perfect attendance? What do they pay you?

A Five hundred dollars.

Q Five hundred dollar. So you get that when you come back?

A Yeah. January 14.

Q What are you going to do with it?

A Pay bills man what do you think? I don't know. I get I count it as my money and my wife don't, you know, she don't bother me about it. I just count it as my money. The deal is my money is kind of like goes for us, so I end up using it in the house or something like that.

Q I see you do alot of work around the house?

A Yeah, I do it.

Q You do all the wood work and expansion and stuff?

A Yeah.

Q You put alot of time into it? Is that what you do on weekends?

A I do it on weekends, sometimes when I'm really busy I do, I work ten hours, come back over here and I really get into it.

Q What have you done here, for example what have you done here, what did you do in this room?

A The whole house has been completely gutted out and I put in insulation and redesigned the rooms and everything. This house used to be about three bedrooms right here and then a small living room so you can imagine I tore the whole thing out.

Q It's about three times the size, at least.

A Oh, at least. I even, as you can see, I don't have a ceiling up there it's all the way up to the top. It's kind of like, something I wanted to do. I was single at the time so this house was basically made for a single person.

Q What does that mean?

A Living room, party. One bedroom, a small kitchen, but now that my family has grown I screwed up so now if I wanted...I still don't want to bother with the livingroom, so I have to go up, so that is when I tore the roof off and I went upstairs.

Q You built a couple of bedrooms upstairs?

A Not yet, but I already built the ...the rough-in. So all I have to do now is finish it off. Maybe I'll finish it off, I should finish it up by spring.

Q You work in the body shop, what do you do now? Day in and day out? What

do you do?

A It's called a hallo job. A hallo job is when you reenforce the roof on the rear end of it, the rear part of the roof. They call it the hallo job, because it looks like a little hallo. You put about so many welds with it...

Q How many welds do you do?

A I put about 40 spot welds on it.

Q By hand? You don't use the robot?

A Yeah, no we don't us the robot. I think the job is going to be eliminated by August. They're gonna use the robot to put the welds that we're putting in. So we'll be gone.

Q What do you feel about that?

A I feel like I'm working to destroy myself. The harder I work, the more accomplishments I make, I come into work everyday, I think I'm a hell of a good worker. I'm working towards my end. I feel like the more I work, the more I accomplish the more profit they make and they use that same profit to buy robots to clear me out. That's what's happening.

Q So why don't you and the folks on your line stop working so hard and demand that the robots not come in? Why doesn't that happen?

A Because we're in a certain age, they have eliminated most of the kids that were on, let's say, when I was 21, 20 years old, 18, 19 those years, when I didn't really care very much. I was in the radical area, they're kind of gone. That fighting, it's not there any more. And everybody that's with me right now, they about 35 years old, we all got about 15 years in and we're kind of scared. That's what it is, we're damn scared. You're afraid to say anything cause you might wind up in the street, you've just blown away 15 years of your life.

Q What do you think you have? Do you think you'll get a job somewhere else?



A I don't have no plans for finding another job for any other place, I say Ford Motor Company is gonna be it. There ain't gonna be no more. It's....somebody..eliminated from Ford Motor Company, I don't know what I'm gonna do. Thinking very seriously, like you said maybe getting out. Start a group and who knows, buy weapons that's the only thing that's left. To me that is what is gonna happen anyway.

Q What do you mean?

A Revolution. To me, revolution is the only thing that is gonna cure, it's the thing that is gonna stop this bullshit about, you know, either put that much pressure on the people to do the work, slave type work, or get the hell out of here. And I think it is gonna happen. I honestly believe that this country is gonna go down, just like the countries in South America and all that, productive countries in S.A. like Chile, Peru and all that. They all had the same problem, they were industrial at one time and then they had too much world competition as they called it, the U.S. comes in and buys off alot of stuff and everything and shows them what to do, when to work and anything and all of a sudden the people just, they wind up on the streets.

Q But this is America, this is the home of GM and Ford Motor Company, aren't they gonna take care of the workers here?

A That's a joke. I don't think so. We'll find out maybe within the year of the...maybe in a couple years, see what happens in Pontiac. What happens in Pontiac is what if people keep an eye on what happens in Pontiac and whatever happens in Pontiac is gonna reflect at Ford Motor Company.

Q Why in Pontiac?

A Well, you know, that's where G.M. is starting out their bull, you know, that is where more than likely they're gonna tear the shit out of Pontiac when they

leave. When they start moving everything out, Pontiac is gonna be a disaster area.

Q What doesn't the union do anything about this? How have you seen the union change since you've been there?

A The union has been just hoping I think, during the process with it's modernization, they have their hands tied in a way, but in a way they're also in this bullshit where they think Ford Motor Co. is gonna take care of the worker, or at least the union. I think they're right now, handing in Ford Motor Co.

Q How are they doing this?

A Well, for one thing they're, when they came out with this bullshit of EI, employee involvement. That's where the worker eventually hangs himself, you know, they gave him alot of rope and people that are completing for, I don't know, some sort of a glory or something or other and you have these people walking around checking everybody.

Q What do you mean, checking everybody?

A Well you know they walk around...

Q How does it work on your line? Tell me exactly what happens on your line?

A Well the guy walks around and looks for trouble areas. Like say, something should go wrong in your area, he comes over and investigates it, asks you a few questions, you know, more than likely how would you repair the job. By not thinking, you give him your information, the guy takes you information. Him by not thinking, or him by coming out with certain ways to make everything run smoothly, you know, thinking that that will put him on, you know like on top of the pedestal or something and he'll be promoted or

something or other. It's psychological. He turns around, gives the information to the supervisor, supervisor comes back, does whatever the adjustment they might have to do and runs the line a little bit smoother. Hey, they turn around, I'm not saying that one particular job is gonna make the job run smoother, but it's gonna make the job run faster, but if you have a lot of little problems solved everyday by these people. You have them constantly, constantly solving problems for them, they turn around and just run the line faster.

Q What kind of problems?

A Small problems that could probably slow down the line, such as little areas where they breakdown all the time. Places where they hesitate, like the line is going and let's say it gets stuck or something like that. They are constantly getting stuck in that area. The guy tells them how to fix it and everything then runs smoothly in that particular area. And it's happening all through the plant. Now this has been going on for at least, I say five years. The five years that I have...just take how fast the line has changed since that five year period. You're talking about from five years ago, the line was going about 41, now it's going 49.

Q You doing the same amount of work as you were then?

A Almost, it hasn't really changed that much. The sealer bay hasn't changed that much either.

Q We're getting robots in next week.

A Yeah, you're talking about last week, next week we're getting robots. You're talking robots where the line was still running 49 jobs an hour. You're talking about 8 free jobs. That's disgusting.

Q If that didn't happen you wouldn't be competitive with the Japanese?

A Yeah, they run and they don't give a damn about their...I don't know anything about the Japanese. That's one thing they hold against us all the time. They say we're not competitive against the Japanese. We don't know how the Japanese eat, we don't know how they live. We don't know their financial problems. We don't know anything about them. Who knows, maybe they're slaves. Maybe they don't get paid a certain amount of money. Maybe they get tortured if they don't go in there and work or do whatever they have to do. They're constantly being threatened, I think they are constantly being threatened by just the idea of saying, if you're not a worker and Japan, hell, you're kind of like in one of the top paying jobs, you know. If you're not an autoworker either you have second best or you're downrated, if you're not an autoworker. If you coughed any problems or anything all they have to do is knock you off that division and you're in deep shit.

Q So you don't go to any E.I. meetings or ?

A I do attend E.I. meetings. They give you an extra 30 minutes.

Q They give you an extra 30 minutes?

A Well you come in 30 minutes early and you just sit down and...

Q They pay you?

A They pay you. The deal is our meetings are different. We discuss not what happens in the plant. We discuss what happens, what is going on in the international world. We just sit there and talk, for 30 minutes and that's it. I made my point one time, it was when we were all discussing on jobs, we were discussing on all the little things that we could do to improve our area, and that's when I spoke out against it. I said what the hell, we are gonna be eliminated completely, you'll talking about...That's when they were gonna eliminate 8 people from our area. I said why in the hell should we help

them? Why in the hell should we help them, are we fucking crazy or what? They said....just like right now, they'll telling us that they're gonna eliminate, from 20 down to 6 people, in the whole line from where I start to where I end.

Q This is in the body line of the Broncho?

A No, just in the woods area. They're gonna go from 20 to 6. You tell me if I gonna help them? I'm not gonna be around. I'll be somewhere in chasis somewhere. You know what I mean? That is absolutely stupid.

A And you think most people help because they're afraid?

Q Most people help because they are not thinking. They don't think of the future. The future is great. I got 15 years in, Ford Motor Co. is gonna take care of me.

Q What do you think of Japanese imports? What do you think of the auto crisis? What do you think caused the auto crisis?

A Oh man. The auto crisis, well for one thing you have to admit the oil did a nice number on us. The auto plants weren't prepared. They had a whole lot of gas hogs. The Japanese had the small cars and eventually people started buying small cars. They dumped the big car. Now it could be a different story. It could be a nice turn around. The big cars going up and small cars being left behind.

Q Small cars go to Mexico. Across the border from your home town?

A Yeah. I think going to Mexico and everything is not just, they're not just going over there for labor, I don't believe. They're going over there for alot of different things.

Q What do you think?

A Polluting the water, the air and all that other bullshit.

Q What do you mean?

A Regulations.

Q The regulations here?

A Regulation here and regulations in Mexico are way different. You're going from an extreme amount of government restrictions here, in the U.S., to absolutely no restrictions in Mexico. Where they can just dump all kinds of chemicals in the river and nobody gives a damn. That's what they'll doing.

Q Do you have any relatives over there, that you here from?

A Yeah, I have relatives in Mexico.

Q Do you see or hear from any of them? Do they think anything about this?

A No, nobody says anything. No what I mean? You know, a plant a comes in hey, they only see jobs. They only see that they pay good. Which is about .90 an hour. They only see the good stuff that comes from this. They don't see what we know here, like what happens to the Rouge, what happen to the Detroit River? You can't even swim in it. You're difinitely not suppose to drink water off of there, anyway. In Mexico, you get all these people that drink water out of the rivers, they drink water out of these lakes. This is how they do it. They just go down there and scoop up water and take it home with them, they use it for bathing and they use it for drinking water and everything. I say if they continue having the United States, how should I say, some of the factories over there without regulations, they'll regret it.

Q What would you do if you were Owen Beber? President of the UAW at this point?

A I'd ask for international strikes. All...stop the country for awhile. Say, you're going to fast, let's slow down and reorganize. See what the hell is going on. I don't think the U.S. is prepared themselves. Everybody is talking about the worker, the autoworker is not prepared, but the country is not prepared.

Q Say a little more.

A The country is not prepared. They are making this big change, to lose all their big factories, out of the US they're losing them one by one, so quick, that they're not prepared. It's is gonna be disastrous. It's not just the auto worker any more, it's the whole country. It's gonna lose out in the long run.

Q Who do you think is responsible for this?

A I think it's like a snowball. Somebody wants to stop the UAW, wants to stop the unions and it has snowballed by going back to Japan. Hey worker, we don't do what the Japanese do. How come they're are successful? How come they don't have any union? How come they don't have this? You know, all these other little problems which are not all that big of a problem, cause we've been living with them for almost 30-50 years or something. All of a sudden they can't handle it anymore. All of a sudden they decide to go the other way like the Japanese. The Japanese, they don't care about their sewage. According to television some of the people complain about their sewage system, it stinks, the whole country stinks. Their pollution in their rivers and everything is disgusting. Everything is all...people live in cardboard boxes and stuff like that. How in the hell can you go from what we are doing right now, which is everybody, almost everybody has got a home someplace. If not you can get a home. We always had jobs someplace. There are people who have to work in they're own houses in order to make any kind of money. They went from one extreme to another, which I think is a big mistake. We are not prepared for it and neither is the country.

Q What do you think this means for your family? What does it mean to your children?

You look at southwest Detroit, an area that is gonna be devastated more when the GM removes its two plants here, right? It's almost gonna be a ghost town this side of town.

A Yeah it sure is.

Q Here you put all this money and all this time into a beautiful home. Not wood paneling but real wood you've put up, you know? You've done some serious work here. What does it mean for you? All this change?

A I'm just sitting here hoping. You're hoping nothing goes wrong. That somebody will realize it and just start turning the clock back or something. To me, I am prepared a little bit for myself, for my wife and my kids, but that ain't...

Q How do you prepare?

A In a way, by right now saving up. Not owing on the house. Not owing any bills.

Q The house is paid off?

A A long time ago. This is stuff, let's say, you want to put yourself in a position where, I've placed myself in a position where I don't owe nobody. That's gonna help me a little bit. Because I can still function, I can still go out and do something. I can still hustle a little bit. To me it's not just me, it the rest of the neighborhood. Whoever has...there are other people out there. There's other people out there that are gonna destroy me.

Q What do you mean?

A By that I mean, see you can have it made, but there are other people out there that don't have it made and they don't care. They are gonna rip you off.

Q You're talking about crime?

A Crime, itself. It's gonna rip you off. It's just gonna destroy you completely, sooner or later. It gonna happen.



A Right now I can't go to work without feeling, you see bars in my house. You see, I already got ripped off, just this year alone. I got ripped, my microwave, my stereo. It doesn't look like much, but damn it the microwave cost me eight hundred bucks. I was just ready to kill for that son of a bitch, I ain't kidding you, and stuff like that. It's not me I'm worried about. It's everything in general. You generalize everything, that middle class people are the ones that kept everything functioning really good and it's really dying. Percentwise it's going down, down, down... It is that middleclass people, they don't like build it up again. We're not gonna junction. Usually, in Mexico, South America and everything it's usually a war between the rich and the poor. That's what's gonna happen here. Pretty soon it's gonna be rich and the poor.

Q Your neighborhood here in southwest Detroit. Are most of your neighbors laid off or are they working in the auto plant? Steel mills? This use to be a big Great Lake Steel area, everybody use to work at Great Lakes around here.

A Well, usually a lot of retired people, other people, unemployeed, welfare and we've got a few auto people here and that's what is keeping us up, really. People that work in the auto factories and Great Lake Steel, we still got a quite a few of them here.

Q Mostly Chicano, Polish and Puerto Rican?

A Yeah.

Q Talking about that, how do you as a Mexican American, how have the relations in the plant been for you? Do you get along? Do they call you names?

A Constantly.

Q What do they call you?

A Well like you said, they... My oldest brother fought in Korea, my other brother fought in Vietnam, I fought in Vietnam, my kid brother fought in Vietnam, when

we got home they still called us wetbacks. The name calling will never change. it's either, I don't know, they just like to pick on somebody and I happen to be let's say one out of five Mexicans in the whole plant, or something like that. How they give me hell.

Q Is it vicious?

A Just tacobender and all that.

Q Does it bother you?

A It doesn't bother me anymore. It used to bother me when I was a kid, but it doesn't bother me anymore.

Q Do you think you got hardened to it? You decided they were just joking and it wasn't a big thing anymore? What?

A I think it's like you said, the people there they just are like you and anything that they do, the majority they're just like you. Sometimes, to pass the time they just like to get on somebody, and usually they get on me or someone who is a little queer or homosexual, they look for an excuse to give you hell.

Q Whose they?

A People in general. I give people hell before. As a matter of fact I give people alot of hell. That's to make time go by. You just can't go in there with an attitude that hey if somebody calls me a wetback this guy is gonna die. It doesn't happen that way. People that call you a wetback will call you it more if you complain about it. So...it doesn't bother me any more.

Q Do you think people don't like you?

A If people don't like me, it's not because I'm a Mexican, but because of my belief. I am a little hard. People, maybe it is because I am a little hard. I don't believe alot of shit. I don't believe like, like let's say, mushy, washy country bullshit. Waving the flag when all is bullshit. I don't believe in all that. A lot of people there do, hell yeah. There is alot of people there do, they're extremely "All American", all that bullshit. If a guy is a little homosexual, hey I say

you're just a fucking queer. I'm a little rough the way I talk. People don't buy that. They might dislike for that, but this is the way I am. This is the way I was brought up, you know what I mean. The way I talk I think really turns off alot of people, but it's not because I'm a Mexican. Sometimes I wonder, you know, if it is, supervision might be the one that is a little discriminative.

Q How do you know that? How do you sometimes feel that?

A Well, when someone tells you ...Motherfucker, son of a bitch...It's kind of hard not to wonder sometimes. I've been called that two or three times and but I don't know.

Q Black foreman or?

A White. Some of these hard core rednecks around there sometimes they seem to have a tendency of being a little bit discriminative. People don't realize that being colored don't mean jack shit and that...

Q Do you think you have worst jobs because you're Mexican?

A I think I got the shaft a long time ago, not because I was a Mexican, but because I just didn't give a damn. The harder you are against the company, the harder..you know they try to break you. So you go from one hard job to another and that's all there is to it.

Q You were in Vietnam? When were you in Vietnam?

A Yeah, I was there from 1970-71.

Q Where were you stationed? What is the most difficult memory you have?

A I didn't have really that difficult of a time. It's just not like in the movies. People have a tendency I think that if you went to Vietnam, you're fighting constantly. And it's not true. Maybe you'll have two or three experiences

during the time that you're there, let's say for instance, you might wind up a whole year without seeing one fight. Maybe that last one would be it for you. You could be going home and then just before you take off somebody blows you right out of the sky. That is disgusting, you know going home and all that. It has happened. That is what Vietnam is all about. You didn't know when, you didn't know where, all of a sudden you're gone. A lot of people see these damn movies and hey this guy has been through a lot of hell. Hell, somebody went through that much shit, I don't know how much luck can anybody have, you know. You can not go into a country and start fighting constantly, cause you ain't gonna make it. One, two, three battles and you're gone.

Q So Rambo...

A Yeah, Rambo is a bunch of bullshit. There are a lot of movies, that should if somebody should make a movie, when they do make a movie make it an area of one week. I can see where a person goes into combat for one week and gets out of it. But not the whole year, if you go into constant battles of one year long, you're gonna die.

Q You were there for a year?

A Yeah.

Q Where were you stationed?

A I was stationed between Chulea (?) and then Dulang (?) in a little town named Tenfut (?). We called it something else, but...Tenfuck. It was a nice little area. We didn't get invaded that much, we had a lot of people around us. A lot of South Vietnamese soldiers and they kind of like protected the Americans there. We just happened to be there. There were some big guns, so we needed a lot of protection. Once in awhile...we had four, two eight inch, and two 175s. But, I think special operations are the ones that kill you, when you have to go there and look for people. You know if you shot anything or killed anything during the middle of the night. That's what's scary, man.

Q You enlisted or did you get drafted?

A I got drafted. To me the only way you can go... It isn't that I didn't want to go. I waited for the draft. I sat around and waited for the draft. It came and I went. I didn't have no protest, no nothing. I wanted to go in there and do my best for two years, and come out and that's it. That's the way it happened.

Q What do you think, being a Vietnam veteran and being in the country, what do you think about stuff around Central America now? What do you think of the Vietnam experience?

A Well, like they say political war in Vietnam is coming to South America, I know for a fact that if you're gonna do something, do it. Do away with it and finish it and forget it. That's what we are doing now, we're playing around, playing footies, footies and all that crap. For instance, they're going into Nicaragua little bit at a time, destroying their land, destroying...they're sitting there kind of like aggravating. They're killing themselves. Not making no point whatsoever.

Q Whose is they? The US government?

A Not just the US government. The contras. The contras are just going in there, they're aggravating the hell out of the country, and that's all they can do. Understand? So this is going to happen within, it's already been for how many years. What, five years? Okay, this is going to continue on for the next fifteen years. What the hell have they accomplished? Nothing. They're just gonna sit and take it for the next fifteen years and kill off alot of people and the whole country is never gonna start. If they want something done, if the Americans wanted something done, do it, either go in there do what you'll gonna do and finish it off and start the whole thing all over. Or keep your mouth shut.

Q What do you think it should be? What do you think the US government should do?

A I really don't know. I really know much about either side, you know, to really make my point. But, I'm saying if the US is gonna get involved, do it 100% or keep their mouth shut.

Q Is that what you learned from Vietnam?

A That's what I learned from Vietnam. That's what I've learned about war altogether. To me if you're gonna do something, do it or shut up. And the US is not doing that. They constantly prolong the shit. Eventually everybody get's sick of it. When everybody gets sick of it another piece of the US heart goes down the drain. That's what's gonna happen. It's deteriorating. The country is deteriorating. Go in there, do what you are gonna do, come back and the country gets stronger.

Q So you are concerned with America being a strong nation?

A I am.

Q At the same time, you say America is not prepared for what GM and Ford are doing?

A That weakens up the country. If man doesn't have a buck to spend, it weakens the country. Understand? We're doing it within ourselves and we'll also doing it in the foreign. What the hell is happening to us in the foreign..most countries around the world..How many countries right now are willing to say that they trust our president today. When the people here in the US, over 70% right now are saying right now the president is a big liar.

Q You mean after the Iran stink?

A Yeah, after Iran. He sat up there and lied like a son of a bitch, you know. Slowly we are deteriorating. Pretty soon, I'm not saying, maybe it might happen within the next 10, 15 or 20 years, when everybody is eventually out of a job and are walking around like a bum. All the stores are closed, like you said, my area is going to look like a ghost town. People are eventually gonna pick up a

rifle. And say to hell with it. When you ain't got no government, anything it's great. That's where we're leading. The Japanese, right now, can not defend their own country. If the US should ever pull out from the Pacific, Tiawan can take care of them, you know, that's how stupid Japanese are. The Japanese are so industrial, are so involved with their industries, that they are completely don't have no sense of defense, whatsoever.

Q Being born in Texas, close to the border of Mexico. How far?

A Seventeen miles from the border.

Q What are your memories when you were eight years old? What do you remember? Before you went migrant. Do you remember Christmas? What is your first Christmas you remember?

A Oh, Christmas was really great. I'm not kidding you. It's just like everybody is walking around. We didn't have to go to school. That's one of the greatest things. We sat around and barbecued most of the time. Enjoyed the family and enjoyed our plans, our old neighbors just walking around. Only one kid in the neighborhood got a present, every year. The rest of us we sat around and ...

Q Is it a town or city?

A Small little city. Our neighborhood use to be like, my family had ten kids, the next family had six, the next one was thirteen.

Q They were all Mexican American families?

A Mexican American families, no whites what so ever. We were separated by the tracks. One side was Mexicans and the other side was all whites, that's how it was. I lived on the Mexican side, being Mexican.

Q What kind of work did the Mexicans do? Migrant work?

A Migrant workers did most of the field work. Worked out in the fields and everything.

Q What did the whites do?

A The whites, most of them did either teaching, in the schools and all that. They kind of controlled the whole area. They were about ten percent. And the ten percent took care of the ninety percent. They got all the good jobs. They took care of themselves pretty good.

Q What did your father tell you about those kind of relationships? How did he prepare you for getting run over.

A My dad was so busy working, he was working about 70 miles away. He'd come in sometimes during the weekends and sometimes he'd come in on a Wednesday, spend Wednesday with us and then went off to work, came back on the weekend. But that was my dad, he traveled back and forth.

Q Is he alive now?

A Yeah he's still alive. He's 75 years old.

Q Do you see him?

A Yeah, I see him every other year so far.

Q Has he seen your children?

A He has seen my boy. He hasn't seen my little girl yet. This year he'll see my little girl. It's like, the discrimination was disgusting back home. To the point that...if you're white you had it made, if you're Mexican you're gonna have to struggle like a son of a bitch to make it. Back in 1969 is when it started. Like a small little revolution we had there. It's like kind of like the blacks, we followed the same steps as the blacks, and wound up with a little bit of liberation there. Now, it's like the other way around. You've got 90% taking care of 90%. The 10 percent of whites are leaving.



Q Were you active in the ...?

A Yeah, I was active when I was in high school, but then the army and all that, I just got out of all of that bullshit. Really, I came here to get away from all that stuff.

Q Have things changed there?

A Things have changed there one hundred percent. I'm not saying for the better, but they have changed because, the whites did take care of the area. They did take care of the area because they had connections up north. You get all these Mexicans over there controlling the area and we don't have the same background, you know what I mean. Let's say, Ethago county and Starr county right now are the lowest in the whole state, property wise. It's the highest in all the country. Not property values, I'm sorry the poverty level. It is the worst in all the country right now.

Q It's controlled by Mexicans now, but it's poorer than ever.

A Yeah, poorer than ever. When I go back home, it makes me sick. I swear. Some of the houses...when I lived there it use to be nice, now it's like downtown Detroit. All the ghettos. The people are just ready to call in the bulldozer.

Q Do you feel that living up north and leaving that behind you that...I mean do you feel like your treated as a full citizen of the United States now?

A Yeah.

Q You probably would never have said that, right?

A Well, my dad didn't give a damn either way. He could go to Mexico or he could stay here. He didn't care. People didn't care really, if they were Mexican or American. When you grow up and everything, you've got to choose a country. And when you've got to choose a country, hey, we're Americans. After all, we

got drafted. We've been to war, we've done everything. For us not to be call Americans, it's almost like a sin, really. It's disgusting. People come over here and tell me that I'm not an American. I say you're crazy, man. How the hell can you tell me that I'm not an American and you are. Here I've spent, my brothers have spent, my uncles have spent and heaven knows how many uncles I have. We have all spent sometime in war, and you are telling me that, heaven knows I got about 3-4 generations in my end living in Texas. How many generations do you have here? Which is probably one or two. That's it. To me this is people I have to deal with almost everyday. People, just because of the way I look. They don't consider me 100% American. To me I'm more of an American than hell everybody.

Q Being there fifteen years, why don't you give me a picture of your day. What is your day like? What time do you get up? What do you do on your breaks? What do you do to pass the time of day?

A I usually just go in there and ...

Q What time do you get up?

A I usually get up around 4:00 in the morning. I rush through everything.

Q What do you mean, you rush through everything?

A Well, you know it's a thirty minute drive from here to there. Looks.....it takes me about an hour to get dressed and get going in the morning. And eventually I drive out of here about 10 minutes till.

Q Ten minutes to five?

A Ten minutes to five. When I get over at work, I'm barely make it on time. I

Q What time do you start?

A 5:30. But the deal is I try to get at 5:25, if I can make in there all the time, I feel great. Because, I hate to spend another five minutes on the job. Alot of

of people, they turn around and go in there and go in there a half an hour early. I think those people, there is something wrong with them. How in the hell can you go from here for another half an hour just waiting to start work. So I get out of here, try to make it there about 3 minutes till. If I can it to punch in around 5:27 I'm doing great.

Q What do you think about during the day? When you are on the line?

A All kinds of things.

Q Give me an example?

A Usually, the current events. You pick up a newspaper and you read all about bad news. All that. You kind of go into a big dream, I think. All through the day. Thinking, thinking about things you would have done to the country. You know.

Q Give me an example?

A Oh boy, last week I didn't have time to read last week, but lets say the Iran scandal. You know, after awhile you do get kind of fed up with it. At the begining, you try to figure out more than likely who was guilty and who was not guilty. So, you read up on it for a little bit, and you find out the president had to know. How and the hell did he know and stuff like that. He got involved in it a little bit too much. It really blows your head, when somebody disagrees with you.

Q Do people disagree with you? Do you talk with people about this?

A Hell yeah. We talk about it and argue about it all day long. Especially, the guy working right next to me. He's a Reagan fan. And I am kind of a, I did not like president Reagan. I think he's a disgusting liar. I've always thought that, ever since he was first elected.

Q This guy still supports Reagan?

A Still supports Reagan. I don't know if he supports Reagan or he just does it to make me mad. I don't know. So he... Things like that, you'll start like ... Qadafy (?) for instance, when Qadafy got blown away. Stuff like that, you'll wind up for about two and three weeks just discussing Qadafy with your own mind. And I'm saying with your own mind, it stays with you. Just let it blow and let it go. You daydream about it all day. What would you have done? Would you have done less? Would you have done more? And stuff like that. Every week there is a new topic. You just go with the flow. Because the job is so simple, your mind isn't even required. Your brain has a lot of time to think of all other kinds of garbage.

Q So you keep yourself busy pretty much?

A Yeah.

Q You keep your mind pretty busy and your body is doing the job.

A Right.

Q Is there a lot of drugs and alcohol over by where you work?

A There used to be a lot of drugs and alcohol and everything. But it's going away fast.

Q What is happening? What has happened to the folks?

A Either, mostly people have gotten to the point where it's the age barrier. Once you become about 30 years old, your mind is kind of like growing up. You grow up around 30 years old. That is what I think. That is what happened to me. I used to be a constant drinker. I drank...

Q What do you mean, a constant drinker?

A You know, you come in here pick up a six-pack, put it in the refrigerator and start drinking and watch the football game. Stuff like that. Now, this year, I

say maybe I have a six-pack, me and my buddies will sit down and drink one beer apiece. Now, I've got two friends that come over here and watch the football, will drink one beer apiece and then the rest of the beers will stay there until the following year.

Q Week?

A No until, I'm talking during the summertime. They'll come and say you still have those scuzzy beers in there. I'll say hell yeah. I think I still have a beer in there from last years super bowl. I ain't kidding you. It's probably all yellow by now and really disgusting tasting by now. This is how much I drink now. Not because I have quit, but because I have grown up. There is stages in your life and you have grown up. And this is what I am talking about, taking advantage of that particular stage. We are more responsible at 30, at 35 we are extremely responsible. Around the age of 40, hell I don't know, I never been there yet. If the trend continues to go the way it's going. I am saying the majority of people right now or 37 or 38 maybe 39 years old, they are very responsible people. Everybody around 30 now are just starting to quit drinking, they're just starting to stop doing all the drugs and they are being real responsible. And that's what they are taking advantage of.

Q Who are they?

A The company, I think somewhere some asshole analyzed this bullshit, prior to anybody and said hey, we don't want a whole bunch of fucking kids any there. So they completely eliminated that 18 year old, 20,21,22,23,24,25,26. They don't want them there no more.

Q There are no kids there, that's for sure.

A Yeah, what do they have? They have people from a long time ago, they hired and they are begging right now to come back. Everytime they get them, hell, if

you don't behave yourself, boom you'll be out of a damn job. So what do you got? A responsible person. They screen out all these people that are coming back and if you're no responsible they kick you out even before you get in.

Q Who do they kick out?

A Let's say. When they call people back in here, they say you've got to up to the interviews again. It's not like, well I got seniority and all this bullshit. You say I already came in to work, let's say you got about...you come into work a couple of days and then take off 3 or 4 days, like somebody I know. Like myself a long time ago. I used to have a good time and everything. They don't want them people no more. They're out.

Q So that's changed?

A That's changed 100%. So when we come in here and you got responsible people and responsible people coming in, drugs and alcohol is fading away. Eventually, I'm not saying that it will completely fade away, because you've got some real ignorant son of bitches where I work at. But they aren't that many any more. As jobs get thinner and thinner alot of these people are gonna fade away, deeper and deeper. And pretty soon, like I said they might monitor some of the people that are left. If you are talking my area used to be 20 people and now they're gonna have 6. 6 is alot less, a small number to monitor than 20.

Q Out of 20, 4 years ago, how many were drinking pretty seriously?

A Ah shit, everybody. Remember the parking lots? Couldn't even drive your car cause beer bottles were all over the place. Wine bottles, you know all kinds of liquor bottles out there. People use to go out on their break and they used to sit out there and drink beer in the summertime. You don't see that anymore.

A *You don't see that either do you?*

Q *No.*

A *It's because of our age barrier, I think it's our age barrier.*

Q *It could be.*

A *You think about yourself, for instance, now and think about yourself then.*

Q *Sure.*

A *I'll be God damn if somebody takes me and gives me a beer at work. I say, hey I came here to work.*

Q *What do you think the auto plant is gonna look like in ...What about the women in the plant? You've had women in the body shop?*

A *Yeah, we've have had women.*

Q *Have you had any difficulty working with any of the women? Do you think they hold their share?*

A *I don't think women have ever...This job requires alot of masculinity, you've got to be pretty masculine. You got to be pretty strong. And this bullshit about...If women are gonna come in let's make it even for everybody.*

Q *What do you mean?*

A *I don't want a women to come over and take a small, a light job just because she's a women. If there are gonna be light jobs then make it light for everybody. You understand. Nothing against women or anything, but if the job requires a little muscle and everything, it should be for everybody. Not just for men.*

Q *Have you had women work on your line that can't handle the job? What was it like?*

A Yeah. What they do is like they give them the lighter jobs. It's automatically. A women comes in and they give them the lighter job. I know that in the sealer deck it doesn't really matter cause they are all light jobs, but they're fast. And women can go in there just great. But where we are at, man ain't no way in hell they can put them up there with a big gun on the top of the damn thing, when you are having problems with it. And you've got to be pretty damn masculine and if you're not hell you'll be in deep shit. You'll be on the road.

Q Do you consider yourself a pretty strong guy?

A I hold my end. I weight 180 pounds. I'm only about 5'6½."

Q You're built like a full back?

A Yeah. I think I am. Half ass anyway. Short.

Q Let's talk a little bit about, Where did you meet your wife?

A I met her at a Mexican festival.

Q Here in Detroit?

A Wyandotte. I ain't saying it was love at first sight. It just doesn't happen that way.

Q What is her name?

A Diane. We met then and then we started dating, and that's about it. Like I said I was single. I just had a good time. We knew each other almost three years before we got married. We got married, hey it was all business.

Q Have any kids? Two children now?

A Yeah, two kids already.

Q What are their names and how old are they?

A Ramon,, Ramon is almost 3 now, he'll be 3 years old in January. She'll be, she's only a year, she was a year in September.



Q That's the same day as my son's birthday. September 20th. He's two.

A We've been married for four years already.

Q What do you like best about being a father?

A Everything. I'm not kidding you.

Q What do you like? What? Changing diapers?

A Well, everything in general. You can't basically put it in one, cause if you put it in one thing alot of things here...Take one of those beams and hang yourself on it. I think in general, it's the responsibility of being a father. Work, love for your kids. Sometimes you don't have time to play with them. Sometimes you just you're so tired and everything, but it's great. I get home, I bring the kids in, cause my wife works. Me and them, we sit here and play with the dog, we do all kinds of stuff. Give me a bigger headache. Hell, even those headaches are just part, they're part of it.

Q Your wife also works outside the home?

A She works at the unemployment office. So when I lose my job all I have to do is go and call my wife. Say I'm unemployeed.

Q Your living a very different lifestyle than you did when you were a kid?

A Yes I am. Quite a different lifestyle, but not that much different. I still basically, associate with alot of Mexicans. I still go to Mexican restaurants. I think it's my wife that differs, she is the one that took the big sacrifice. She is the one that gave up her restaurant. Really it's my wife who should do this interview. She's the one that really sacrificed. She is sacrificing because of me, I think. If she didn't do it because of me, we'd probably be going out to eat somewhere in Lincoln Park, somewhere in the suburbs.

Q Where is she from?

A Lincoln Park. We go to Mexico Village almost all the Mexican areas.

Q They have good restaurants?

A Yeah. We go to some of those little rinky dink restaurants here, it all depends on where we want...Let's say we want to go for a nice soup or something, we go to Polinkas (?). We get nachos, we get, you know we got certain restaurants and they deliver so we get here we just order some stuff and bring it all the way to the house. My wife is the one who did the sacrificing.

Q What did you get her for Christmas this year?

A Oh my wife? Oh, she got a Royal Dolphin.

Q A what?

A A figurine. That red one over there.

Q Where are they from?

A They're from England. About \$150.00-\$175.00 on average.

Q Really. About \$175.00 a piece.

Q They probably wouldn't get ripped off if some people came in, they wouldn't. They wouldn't know what in the hell they worth. You know?

A Don't say shit about that, that'll drive me nuts.

Q You know? It's not like a stereo you can sell hot so quick, you know?

A Yeah.

Q They stoled my furniture so I shouldn't talk.

A What?

Q People stoled my furniture out of my house.

A When?

Q Tables and chairs, they were somewhat antique.

A When?

Q A few years ago. Yeah. What did you get for your kids? For Christmas?

A My wife got them so much junk. It's hard to explain.

Q Okay. Naw, that's okay.

A You would not believe a carload. I'm not kidding you. A carload full of presents.

Q Was it difficult for her parents to accept you? Being a Mexican American?

A Hell no! No problem. I had no problems with my wife's family. In fact, it kind of got her into...I think they like it. They like it. My father-in-law and me, we do most of the jobs around here in the house. He comes over and helps me out.

Q It's an amazing amount of work.

A We do alot of work together. We did the walls. Right now the walls, the walls are, you know those little bad areas are from where we had to tear out in order to put in. That door right there was too small, so I put that one in there. That door is gonna be nice. Whenever I finish it.

Q Is that what you do on weekends? You go out to eat. Work around the house. Play with the kids.

A Usually, you sit around the house. I have no desire to go anywhere.

Q Do you go to church?

A I go to church on Sundays.

Q The whole family?

A Yep, the whole family. I have alot of problems with my kids too.

Q What church do you go to?

A We go to St. Francis of Sisi(?). Which is about, down the block from here. That's about it.

Q Is mass in Spanish or English?

A English. And Polish by the way. My wife is the religious one. I myself am not all that religious. But...I kind of figured, hey she does alot of sacrificing for me so I kind of blend in. You can't be 100% for yourself, so I blend in with her so...anyway..what the hell...it's doing me good.

Q What do you mean it's doing you good?

A It's doing me good. I feel better when I go to church. So what the hell...as long as I feel about going to church and everything, I'm going to continue doing it.

Q Did you go to church as a kid?

A Not really. Not that much. My mom just didn't have any time for us. You know, having ten kids in the family she didn't...

Q Where are those ten kids? Where are your brothers and sisters?

A One...They're in...I got three brothers in Texas. One in Mexico.

Q Tell me what they do as you run through the list.

A Oh,, one in Mexico, he's kind of like mentally retarded, so my aunt took him when he was a little baby. He was about 4 years old when she took him. Cause she didn't have any kids. So,, she took him in and till this very day my mom wanted him back, but she didn't have the heart to go and take him back,, you know my aunt she's been taking care of him all them years and he's about 30 right now.

Q Is he your baby brother?

A No. My baby brother is at home in Texas,, he won't leave Mommy yet. He still is there,, him and his wife. My other brother is a registered nurse. I got another one that is an accountant. They all live in Texas. And then my sister,, she lives in San Antonio,, Texas. I envy her more than anybody else

to tell you the truth.

Q How come?

A San Antonio is beautiful. God dammit, it's the kind of city I wish I would have stopped and stayed there, instead of continuing on to Detroit.

Q Why? What is so beautiful about...I've never been there, what's it like?

A God! It's nice. The temperature is constantly around...maybe in the winter time it might get down to about 40. It doesn't snow. It's just great. San Antonio is a great city to be in. And I got a brother in Ohio.

Q What does he do?

A He works for GM. He is a little bit worried about, right now. He's got about fifteen years too. So...

Q Is he the one that was also in Vietnam?

A No. He went to college. My mom kept him out of the service. Kept him out because during that time she kind of like...kind of liked the favorite, you know, the big guy, weighed about 180 lbs, 6 foot. Solid muscle. He is real quiet. So my mom kept him out. Kept him out by constantly putting him in college and all that. He graduated from college, he wound up over here at Ohio working for GM. They hired him as a foreman right off the bat, but he didn't like it he wasn't making much money so he went into regular work.

Q On the line?

A On the line. He is making more money there so what the hell.

Q And the others?

A One brother, I got right here, he works for the city of Detroit. He's a welder. Right now he is working at Great Lake Steel and the city of Detroit.

Q Two jobs? Two full time jobs?

A Yeah. He's killing himself.

Q He must be making 80 thousand dollars a year.

A I don't know how much he's making, but it's killing him. And my sister Erma, of course, she lives over here in Taylor. She's pretty nice.

Q What does she do?

A She's a secretary for some Mexican organization over here in this area. I really don't know what's the name. I never did get into it.

Q You're not active in any of the Chicano organization?

A No I kind of figured I don't have the time.

Q Did you enjoy working all the overtime you work?

A No I don't. But I can't do anything about it.

Q What do you mean?

A What do you mean. They're gonna have overtime where we work whether we like it or not. It's been like that for since the day I started working there. I must face reality. But, I don't like it. I wish the hell I only had 8 hours everyday, I would have enough time for my kids. I would have time to do my little hobbies. I mean heaven knows, I'd like to have gone and flied a plane or something. I would have time to go out and go for more training or college or something.

Q You went to college for what?

A I wanted to be a Biology, a marine biologist. Turn around and

Q That why you got the fish tank, huh?

A Kind of like that. I enjoy, I was one of those damn biology freaks when I was a kid. But I never did get anywhere. I wound up with this job right here and that was it.

Q Are you concern about you security at all? Financial security? Most of your

and yourself included have come along way from being dragged around the country by your dad to ...

A It wasn't my dad who dragged around the country.

Q I didn't mean that negatively.

A It was my mom.

Q It was your mom. Your dad stayed in one particular field. In the oil fields.

A Right. My mom traveled us around the country. She didn't even drive.

Q How did you get around?

A Well it was just like extra money. You understand? We drove from one side to the other.

Q Your mom took you in a car, with your brothers and sister, the whole bunch of you?

A We went to Idaho, we hoed beets. What you do is you sort them out. You cut a certain amount of beets and you leave one there and you leave on there. Well anyway, we did that for about, at least from April to about May. Around June you clean it all up, weeds and all that, you cleaned them all up. You waste a little bit of time, cause then you had to come over here to Michigan and pick cherries, around July. You pick cherries in July and then you came to ...I'm losing my mind. You picked cherries in June and then you picked cucumbers over here in around Alma, Michigan. And then you came all the way to Ohio, around Defiance, Ohio and you picked tomatoes. You picked tomatoes until around October and then you went back to Texas. Started school again.

Q Your family did that, your mom carried you around from 12 years up to how many years did you do that?

A Till I was about 18.

Q So figure six years, and she was able to send a number of your brothers to college. She made a life. It was hard, but it was a life' right?

A Right. It was just like extra money that we needed for college, money for clothes and all that. My dad, even though it was a good salary. In comparison, to some people that were not making over a hundred dollars a week. My dad was making at least, about a hundred and seventy five dollars a week. That was great money. The problem is is we had so many kids that..

Q Is your mom still alive?

A Yeah. She alive and working like crazy. My dad is still working like crazy. They're retired. He is retired and everything.

Q What was your dream when you were a kid?

A I had no dreams to tell you the truth. I don't remember.

Q What did you think you'd be doing when you were this age?

A Never this. Never this. I always thought that I would be a professional person. Either some sort of a mechanic or something like that. I never dreamed there was an assembly line work.

Q You never thought that that is what you'd be?

A You never thought there was. That was something I never knew anything about. And that's what I ended up doing.

Q Who were your heros when you were a kid?

A Heroes. What do you mean by that? Like Roy Rogers?

Q Whether a baseball player or president, a rock star?



A I didn't have that many heroes. I just don't remember that.

Q Who do you look up to now?

A Nobody. Myself. I am more...like if I don't do it, ain't nobody gonna do it.

Q What do you want for your children?

A Everything.

Q What? Twenty years from now, what do you want them to have accomplished?

A All I want them to do, I want to send them to college. I'm hoping that Blanchard, you know that they're coming out with this text book give, about that two thousand dollars, you know at least your kids are guaranteed a four year college or is it two year college? I don't remember. But that is what I want.

Q That's the most important thing to you?

A Yeah. I want them to go to college. I want them to find out themselves. I am going to pay more attention to my kids than my mom and dad did to me. Understand? Maybe they had ten kids, but I only have two. I gonna be on them 100%. I am not gonna slack off.

Q What is your biggest fear?

A My biggest fear for the kids would be that they might turn out to be just like Daddy.

Q What do you mean?

A You know. Like hell just don't care. Not being a real caring person, when you are a kid. Lets say at that particular time, I could care less about school, I could care less about that, you understand? You were...maybe you were aggressive when you were a kid. I never was aggressive in school. I never tried my very hardest. I could make the grade. I made the lowest grade just about, just to pass. I'm hoping a little better for them. I want

them to take it all. I want them to quit making the same mistakes that I made.

Q Which mistakes?

A The mistakes, a lot, a lot of mistakes and maybe that's the reason we're still kind of like, that's why we end up at Ford Motor Company. That's one big hell of a mistake, right there. Right now I'm too old to be starting over. I'm too old to be starting over. I don't want them to waste their, I don't want them to spin their wheels just in that particular predicament. I get scared when the job market is gone, when this is gone. The job market the way it is going and the way it's gonna be I feel fearful for my kids. I feel fear for not just my kids, I feel for everybody's kids. I'm afraid that if this continues I'm not gonna be able to accomplish what I want for the kids.

Q Let me ask you, your parents found it necessary to work you eight months of the years, right?

A Yeah.

Q Because things were tough. Extremely tough. You won't have to do that with your kids. Assuming you're able to work, do you think you're more optimistic about the future for your kids than your parents were for you? You see what I'm getting at?

A I think so. I'm more optimistic. Not because of the...my parents had ten kids they had to worry about. And they had to worry about all their educations too. The older ones need to go to college so they...we as kids and everybody, we provided that. Hell, we all graduated except my retarded kid brother. But all of us graduated from high school. That was a great accomplishment right there, I thought. You also have at least half of us, not even half, four of us graduated from college. We have a couple professional people. My sister, my brother.

Q What is the auto plant and the Michigan truck plant is gonna look like the day you retire? Do you think you're gonna retire from the truck plant?

A I'm hoping I do retire. I certain feelings that I'll never retire from Michigan Trunk Plant. I may retire from Ford Motor Co., but not from Michigan Truck.

Q What do you think will happen?

A I think that they will eventually get rid of everybody. They are gonna automatize everything. Automation is the thing that they got in right now. They think they can eliminate everybody. I think us being the last...I think we're the about the last unless they shape up a little bit more. Understand what I'm saying? We are probably the last people that they will let us retire from there. We haven't been laid off really, because we've got about fourteen years in. But I think we're the end of the road. I think they are gonna carry us all the way through. It might happen then I might not. But we're gonna go through with it and then they are gonna hang us. They're gonna string it along until we're gone. If they beat the union, which it might happen in about a few years.

Q What do you mean beat the union?

A Pretty soon they are gonna stop and beat the union.

Q Wipe it out?

A They're gonna wipe it out. They're gonna wipe it out by offering the people a little bit more than the union has got to offer. And then they get rid of it.

Q What do you think of that?

A I think we're in deep shit. We'll be in deep trouble, cause then retirement

may not be. Say in thirty years, that was our goal, retirement. So maybe it'll be thirty-six, maybe forty years.

Q What do you think the biggest benefit of the union is? What will we lose if we don't have a union?

A I think the biggest benefit we got is either our medical and the retirement. That's the biggest benefit of all. Protection is almost of it is a law. Like if you get in trouble or something or other, they didn't follow certain steps or certain things you know you have to accomplish, you know...protection, it's there, the protection is there, but something you really need is your benefits and a little bit of security and your retirement. Your retirement is one hundred percent, cause you look forward to it and without that, I don't think we'd be working there. If I didn't know I would retire in thirty years I'd be gone.

Q You'd get out now.

A I'd get the hell out of there.

Q Let me ask a question. What do you think of the Japanese building plants here like the Mazda plant coming in down here?

A They can go to hell.

Q What do you mean?

A They can go to hell with that bullshit. They're using our labor, our money our everything and they're gonna use everything that we have even our...we buy our own products and everything and all they're gonna do is just rake it in, rake in the money. That's what American factories have been doing to them for years, they've been doing it to all the South American countries for years and now here the Japanese is doing it to us. That is stupid. I wish to hell they would just get the fuck out of here. I'd don't want nothing to

do with the Japanese. They own about 50% of the damn steel industry and they can come in...they take the steel industry and then they import most of the steel. So the American worker is shot, so what the hell, they so what ever the hell they want, they control the whole industry. Once they're in here, they are just like cancer. They should just kick them the hell out.

Q Whose they? Who should kick them out?

A The government. The government should say hey we're sorry we don't do that kind of shit. Get the hell out of here. I think all the other big companies are making a big mistake by joining with them. To me that is what is gonna happen. They are gonna control from Japan. Just like we control from right here, from Detroit, they are gonna control from Japan. What the hell is gonna happen. And do they care what happens in the United States?

Q Whose they? The Japanese?

A The Japanese.

Q Does Ford Motor Company?

A No. Does the Japanese care? Here is a country that bombed them in 1945. Do you think they give a damn what happens to us?

Q Does Ford Motor Company give a damn?

A They care to a certain extent.

Q You trust them a little more?

A Yeah, a little more.

Q You trust them a little more. You'd rather be working for Ford Motor Co. than Mazda? You think they'll give you a little bit better break?

A Yep. At least they'll give me a retirement. You think the Japanese won't give me no damn retirement. The Japanese might give you a rope.

Q What do you think the biggest concern for America's future?

A The biggest concern for America's future is to me the elimination of the middle man. Of the middle class. It is slowly dying.

Q Do you consider yourself middle class?

A Yeah I think so. I know so. I can still survive on what I make. A lot of people can't survive on what they making.

Q What do you make? What did you make last year?

A I made about 36,000 dollars last year. My wife works, so that gives me a little bit more.

Q Does she work full-time?

A Yes.

Q So you made about 50,000 dollars last year?

A But what I'm saying is, that's not it. I usually don't count my wife's. I count my salary. If I continue having a middle class wages, or at least 30,000 dollars that gives you enough money to survive. Understand? If you have that, because I can still hire somebody to do a little bit of work here a little bit of work there and I'll keep the economy going. When those windows were put in, I paid somebody 1,600 dollars to put in the windows. I found it a good deal. Hell. Hey, why not? Go ahead. I paid 1,600 dollars and that kept the economy going. Understand? If I couldn't pay this guy, what the fuck is gonna happen to the country? If I was in a wage bracket where I have to do all my own work, what do you think is gonna happen to the country?

Q So that is how you make the distinction between middle class and working class?

A Right. If people that pay other people to continue the cycle are the ones

that are gonna be chopped off pretty soon. They are gonna fade away. And as soon as they fade away the whole system falls.

Q What do you consider your Dad and Mom?

A My mom and dad were middle class at their period. They were a little less than middle class because they were not, they depended so much on their kids, I think. They depended on us in order to survive. If my Dad had had a couple less kids we might have been pretty well off.

Q You might not be here. You might not have been one of the kids.

A I want to be one of them. You understand what I'm saying? The middle class people are the ones that keep the damn system going. They're the ones that buy cars. They're the ones that buy everything going. Without the middle class. If you have everybody on welfare how far, how fast do you think we'd be going down?

Q What is your biggest concern about Detroit?

A The biggest concern for Detroit would be the crime right now. They are gonna have to do something about it. They are gonna have to slow it down a little bit. But in order to slow down crime you are gonna have to come up with something else. People are making money out of crime. So if you knock off crime you are gonna have to give them something else to make money from. All these kids are making huge amounts of money by being in drugs and stealing and all that.

Q Middle class kids?

A Yeah. From the middle class. The only middle class that is left here is like I said you can almost...the people across the street have about one hundred thousand dollars in the bank. Them, the people next door etc...You can almost pick them out. That make over thirty thousand dollars a year.

The rest of them all are on welfare people. And when we go to work, guess who takes over. They come over here. They steal and then turn around and sell, probably my microwave has already been sold for a hundred bucks. That stinking, disgusting son of a bitch. That damn microwave cost me eight hundred bucks. Understand what I'm saying? If the United States can keep a good balance of the middle class we'll be okay. If Detroit can only get them more jobs here. At least for the damn kids, we'll be pretty good.

Q What are you gonna do when you get to work on January 5th.?

A Same old shit. Same old shit.