

HILLORY WEBER

Q How long have you been in the plant Mr. Webber?

A Thirty two long years.

Q Did you have a gray mustache at that time?

A No I was younger and pretty I have to say and very ambitious to work because I had a family to take care of. As a matter of fact I was 23 years old when I started.

Q Tell me a little bit about yourself. What was your life like when you hired in?

A I got hired in in 1953. February 27, 1953. In fact, I just drove up from New Orleans and there was a sign saying help wanted and I didn't know what they mean by help wanted. So I drove up to the security guard and asked him if they were doing any hiring. The security driver said all they needed was a hilo driver. Well I was driving a hilo in Louisiana for Johns Mandivel and I didn't know what a hilo was. I didn't know it was the same thing. So I told him I never drove a hilo before, but I was a fork truck driver at Johns Mandivel. So he said just a minute and he made a telephone call and a little old gray haired man came to the guard gate and brought me into the plant and he asked me if I ever drove a hilo before. I says no, but I drove a fork truck. In fact, that's the job I was on. And he never told me it was the same thing. So he brought me in the plant and put me on the worse hilo he could find. He brought me in the body shop where there is slippery sheet metal. So the first thing I done was check the oil and the water and the gas and I got on the hilo and started it up and I raised the mask all the way as high as it could go and I tilted it all the way back and got off the hilo. I started looking at the forks. So he

asked me what are you doing that for. I says well to see if I had a load up in the air with the hilo drift forward. To me it was a safety check because if you got a load on it and it tilt forward the hilo would turn itself over. So then he said he never seen that before. I think you got the job. So I got on the hilo and made every move he wanted me to make and they started me to work that same day at 10 o'clock.

Q Where was this?

A This was at Wayne Assembly. So he started me to work that very same day. It was about four to five days, as a matter of fact, it was Wednesday before the following week when they brought me an application and told me to sign it. No physical examination, no history of my life and all I done was sign my name and he asked me for the social security number. I gave him that. I worked at Wayne Assembly until 1964 when they opened the truck plant. Now on my application when I did get a chance to see it I applied for electrician and I never got the job. They wouldn't give me the job. Reason, because I was black. The only reason because I was black. They told me I had to have a UAW journeymen's card before they can give me the job and then ten years experience. I already had the ten years experience and letter of recommendation.

Q You had that from Louisiana?

A Had that from Louisiana. Then the company told me I had to have a UAW membership card from the solidarity house. I went there and they told me that before I could get a UAW card I had to have the job at Ford's. I goes back to Ford's and the Labor Relation there was Gonzalez, Dick Gonzalez, and he told me that I had to have the card. So it seems to me that I was

getting the run around from the UAW and the run around from Ford. Only because I'm black. I'm convinced that that's the reason.

Q What were the conditions and what was going on in 1963-64 to make it so clear to you that that's what it was? Or what in your childhood when you were in Louisiana made it clear that was the reason that it was?

A It was all indicates that the blacks have the worse job. They was only ones in the body shop. They was the only one on the final line when the whites was in trim, cushion and all these nice, soft, easy job. When I went there blacks was nothing but hilo drivers. There was no inspectors. There was no security guard. There was no black supervisors. There was no female with good position, good jobs. So all that indicates to me that it wasn't ready for blacks to have the equal opportunity on employment. Then when I goes to Michigan Truck Plant I went through the same thing again with Joe Wyatt and Jim Burgraff. In fact, Joe Wyatt told me to my face there would never be no black in skilled trade as long as he is there. So okay Joe Wyatt was made out of a liar. There is black in skilled trade and I did manage to stay there as long as, longer than Joe Wyatt because he got fired for unknown reason. But the truck plant was worse than state penitentiary. They were so hard for people, they fired them, they brought them in one day and fired them in two days and they were suppose to give them three days to learn the operation. They were so hard up for people until they went to Milan State Penitentiary and got people to work. From the penitentiary they were busing them by school bus from prison

to Ford Motor Car Company and the prison quit. They would rather be in state penitentiary than to work at the Michigan Truck Plant. It's a shame for me to say that, but that's the truth. And now some 33 years later I'm just beginning to have a pieced of mind. Ford Motor Car Company caused me to have arthritis by working me in a damp, wet place. Ford Motor Car Company also responsible for my high blood pressure. Ford Motor Car Company is also responsible for my marriage, the wife and I couldn't get along because of the pressure that I had from receiving from the Ford Motor Car Company for things that I really didn't do and things that I did do that they didn't even catch me, but they penalized for the things that I didn't do. For the things that they thought I done. I'm not saying I'm no angel. I knows all the tricks. I've been in the woods a long time, very long time. I know the game they play. I can think like them, but thank God I knows all their tricks. And working in an automobile factory back in the time when I started was hell. In some places it is still hell. Well that's about my life time at Ford Motor Car Company. I'm ready now for to be interviewed.

Q Let's just continue. I think you are raising a lot of interesting points. What kind of relationships were going on during the time you hired in among workers during the 1960's? What was the union doing? Just share some information like who were the first people you met when you went over there and walked into that plant at Wayne Assembly?

A Well people that I first met, believe it or not, was Chester Olsen. He is now retired and now is a bargain committee person. I met Chester Olsen and I think that he was a swell guy.

A lot of people didn't like Chester, but heh that is their problem. I met Edsel Ford, which was a bargain committee person. A Leon Coin, also a committee person. I met Jimmy Coleman, our district committee person. I met Jeff Washington Sr. which was a bargain committee person and when you met people like that they more or less done their job as a union rep. It was different because you had leadership in those days that really cared. They was more interested in their job than what they are now. I'm going to say something here that the union really isn't going to like, but frankly I don't give a damn whether they like it or not. It is the truth. At that time the committee man come in, he punched in and he stayed in that plant all day when you needed him. He was there. They had a paging intercom and if that committee man was in the plant you would pick up the mike and you would say three times Leon Coin, Leon Coin, Leon Coin will you come to such and such area. See such and such a person. That committee came. He new where you was. He couldn't escape because everybody in the plant heard that you paged your committee person. The union stopped that. The union themselves got together and told the company that they did not liked to be paged, because evidently they might be in some meeting, they might be even out of the plant on lunch or something like that and that would show the people that they're not in the plant because everybody heard them being called over the loud speakers. So I think it was a good thing, but they did not want it. They eliminated that. They stopped that. Now your committee man has a right or privilege that the company give them they make one ring in and they don't have to ring out.

It don't have to be at six thirty in the morning when production start. It could be any time-ten or eleven o'clock-or don't ring in at all. Ring out when it is time to go home and escape the responsibility in the plant. Now the union is responsible for a lot of other jobs leaving the plant and going elsewheres. The reason they're responsible for most of these jobs leaving the plant is because they are not doing their job. Their not on the job long enough to see whether the man has a problem or not. When the foreman calls the committee person at the Michigan Truck Plant he calls him and he has a little meeting with him and then when the committee person goes to the complainer on the floor he knows what the foreman told him and he uses what the foreman said instead of finding out what the employee has to say. I think that is wrong. I don't think the committee person should go to the supervisor. He should go to the person and find out from this person what's going on and take side with the person that's involved with what the foremens is doing to him. Instead of penalizing the guy before he even hears what he got to say. A lot of this is going on at the Michigan Truck Plant. This didn't happen at the car plant. The committee man went right to you and if you was wrong he would advise you that your wrong, but when he got to labor relation he knows how to fight the case. He completely changes everything around in your favor. This don't happen at the truck plant. All you hear is the company has the right and people are sick and tired of hearing the company has the right. Anybody telling you you got rights to do anything they want to do but is it right what they are

doing to you? I think they need a big change with the UAW. It's not like it used to be. They got a thing going on now they call E.I., employment involvement, that's for the company.

Q Why do you think they instituted it? What's it for?

A It's to eliminate man power. This is why I said the union is responsible for jobs leaving the plant because the E.I. is correcting all the mistakes. In other words, it is educating the company to the things that your capable of doing that he didn't know that was there. If you go tell a man how to do his job and you can do it faster this way or you can do it better that way, that's taking the job away from you. I mean you take like the robot. Okay a lot of people are pleased over the robot because it's jobs that they don't have to do and the robot is doing it. That robot don't pay no taxes. It don't take no break. It's hurting the economy so far as the working people. You won't have social security because there won't be nobody putting it in there. There is going to come a time when there are going to be more people retired than what is working and there is nobody to put the money back in there. So the bottom got to fall out.

Q Let me take a big step back. When you were coming up from Louisiana what were your folks doing, what kind of work were they doing? What about your brothers and sisters? What was life like then to sort of plant the seeds that have given you the kind of caring attitude that I know you've had over the years that I have known you and other people when they talk about Hiliary Webber? What were your folks doing and what was life like when you were coming up?

A Well my dad was an electrician. He had his own company. My brother had a line of trucks. He was in the trucking business. My mother, she did nothing. She was a housewife. My sisters didn't work. They went to school. They went to college. As a matter of fact, there was four of us - two girls and two boys and my dad didn't believe in his wife working or his daughters working. So I come up from a good family and my father always told me don't let one man have five things and you working right beside him and you ain't got one. He said somebody is a fool and don't you be that fool. Here's a man making the same amount of money that your making and he's got a package of cigarettes and you got to ask him for one. One of you all ain't a man. He never say that I wasn't a man if I didn't have it. He said one of you all is not a man. So I had a good father and he told me don't ever keep anything in. Even if it costs you your life don't keep it in. He said that would kill you. Anything bothering you find somebody to talk to and get it out of your system. And that paid off for me. I did just that. I don't care who he is or who she is I'm going to tell her what's on my mind. Whether she likes it or not it is better for me to hurt her feelings than for me to keep something inside of me. But I'll also say this it's a good, good feeling to have 33 years because you know that nobody can fire you unless you fire yourself. What I mean by firing myself...if I steal it is company rule and policy automatically discharged. If I'm fighting, automatically discharged. That's what I mean by firing myself.

Q You were born in what year?

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A In 1929. October 11, 1929.

Q That's when the stock market crashed, wasn't it?

A That's right.

Q And here you are in 1986. Was it a small town in Louisiana?

A It was New Orleans.

Q What made you come up north? What dreams did you have? What did you was going to be up here when you came up here?

A That's a very good, good, good question. I'm very glad you asked me that question. It was on a Thursday...I was on the afternoon shift and I was driving down to the warehouse with a load of asbestos shingles and I saw this piece of paper blowing in the wind, one of the doors was opened on the side of the building, so I stopped got off the hilo. Only that time it was a fork truck. Got off the fork truck and picked this piece of paper up and it was a check. It was a check stub and all and the man name was Boudreau. Frank Boudreau. He was also a fork truck driver. Now on this man check he drew \$210.

Q 1963?

A 1963.

Q That was some serious money.

A Yes. Now I was so excited I don't know whether that was over-time or what. Anyway, I looked in the hourly rate section of his check and it said \$1.75 an hour. On my check it said \$1.10 an hour. So I wanted to know from the union why was this man making so much money.

Q You had a union back then?

A We had a union back then. We had a lily white union back then. He told me in plain English that a nigger is not suppose to

make the same amount that a white man does. That is the best thing he could have said to me. That following week I went into the office and asked for my vacation. They gave me a two week vacation and I drove to Michigan. I didn't even know how to come to Michigan. I didn't even ask.

Q No family here?

A I had a sister here. I got a road map and said I want to go to Chicago. I mapped it out to Chicago. I didn't even know how to read a road map. A man showed me how to get to Chicago. It was the only map he had. So when I got in Illinois I was educated then and I knew how to read a map. I got a U.S. map and I rode myself all the way to Detroit, down Michigan Avenue from Chicago. That is when I saw the sign saying Wayne, Michigan. The Wayne Assembly said help wanted. Anyway, it is because I found that check I moved to Michigan because I feel that there was somewhere in the world that I would get paid for what I was doing.

Q You thought it was different up here?

A Well believe me it is a little different. Not too very much for black. A black man is still treated as a second class citizen. Here the white man would make you think that you just as good as anybody else, but he don't believe that himself. He will tell you this, but he don't live up to what he tell you. I'm not saying that all white people that way. I'm saying the one that I knows that is that way. It is still the same way and there is very little difference. Believe me. There is job that they still don't want black to have. Say for instance, the body shop at Michigan Truck Plant, this is something that a lot white don't know and I think the good

one that knows it will speak up to it. There is Sam Vanacook. There is Harris, I don't know Harris first name. They don't want no black supervisor in the body shop. They had a man in there by the name of Jim Pakus. They got rid of him because he was black. They had another guy named Olsee. They got rid of him because he was black. They had another guy, a foreman, by the name of Calhoun (I don't know what his first name was) and they got rid of him because he was black. Now we got a skilled trade foreman by the name of Linwood Cook and they have given him a helluva way to go because the man don't get excited. He don't hoop and hollar. He walks up to you like your a human being and asks you would you do such and such a thing and they don't like that. They are trying in all kinds of ways to get rid of the guy. The lose production and they blame it on him, but it ain't gonna work. I'm not going to let it work. If they get rid of him I'm going to go straight to the plant manager and let them know what is going on. Which I think is something that should stop.

Q I'm asking questions. You are sharing and I'm looking around the room and I see a tenants award. I see a father of the year award. When you came up in 1963 were you married?

A This was 1953 not 1963.

Q You were about 23 years old then?

A Yes. I had a wife and three kids down in New Orleans. I went back down and got them six months after I came here.

Q Where did you stay when you came up here?

A I lived with my sister in Romulus. I lived with her until I got my family up here and then I went out and rented a home.

Q Out here near the plant?

A Out in Romulus. I've had a helluva an experience with the Ford Motor Car Company. I was hated. Oh I wouldn't way hated, I would say disliked because I spoked up for myself. The reason I spoked up for myself because I was the most important person in the world. It was me that they was mistreating. It was me that was doing all the wrong things too. I used to get so mad every time Jim Burgraff would give me time off and it took time for me to realize that what he was doing to me was he was educating me. And the biggest mistake I made...every time he would give me thirty days I would go to some part of the country. He gave me a thirty day trip to the Bahamas. I stayed there seven days. He gave me a thirty day trip to Hawaii. That's when I made my mistake. I had a picture made with me and a Hawaiian gal and sent it back to him and said thanks for the vacation in Hawaii Jim Burgraff. Every time he gave me thirty days he couldn't prove that I done whatever he said I done and I got paid for it.

Q The union was there to protect you?

A At that time we had a pretty good rep. We had people who really cared. For instance, Bill Humphrey. Bill Humphrey really cared for his job. Bill Humphrey done his job. He was delegated and he done his job and every grievance that Bill Humphrey wrote for me we won it. I'm the only person that I know that can sit down and say that I had thirty days twelve times off for things that I didn't do. Things that they thought I done. Things that they blame on me that they couldn't prove. I remember the time that I asked Don Bect to go to the bathroom. He told me to go ahead. I went to

the bathroom and I got time off for being off the job without permission. What would you call that? I want somebody to tell me what you would call that? Is that hate? Is that jealousy? Or what is that? I never could figure that one out.

Q That happened pretty often in the plant to you and a few other folks? It seemed like in that period and even into the early 1970's that there was a union on one side and some of the workers in the plant who cared about what was going on. Then there was the company trying to intimidate those and the grievance procedure. Now there is no grievance procedure. I think that is real true. Why do you think it changed? What do you think is going to happen ten years from now?

A Ten years from now I don't think there is going to be a union. I don't think there will be a union because the company is already running the union. The union is just there and the company does anything they want anyway.

Q Why do folks go along with it?

A People seems to don't care like they used to. They'll tell you we don't do things like we used to. We can't stop progress. This is progress. We can't stop them from doing this. I feel together you stand, divided you fall. To me everything out there is divided. Everything is divided. The only time you would see a committee person is when there is an election going on. Like they're fixing to have delegates for constitutional convention. Now you will see around asking you do you have any problems. What changed a lot of things in the plant is Mr. Calloway. He changed a lot of things. He made you felt like you was a human being instead

of a machine that you program to do that and do this.

Q Who was Calloway?

A Calloway was the plant manager. He turned the whole system around and got rid of the click. There was a buddy buddy click there. There was people there was made special to harass people like Collins and Sadock and people like Joe Wyatt. Calloway got rid of all those people. Somehow he knew who the people was that was causing the problem. After those people was eliminated the plant smoothed out. They make you feel like heh they cares. They even give you a Christmas dinner. They used to give you breakfast in the morning. When Calloway was there you had a wake up wagon come through the plant with donuts and coffee. Calloway left and the wagon left. Now they are going to put monitors all over the plant so that the plant manager can or don't have to have a special meeting with you he could talk to you by the telephone on his video recorder machine. This is a big step up.

Q You think that is a step of progress?

A I think so because...

Q Why are they important to you to have them come in now? It is a big change with video monitors all over the plant.

A Yes that is a big change. That is in everybodies favor because the man you can't ask him them stupid question like some people would ask him. The people that can explain themselves ask questions and what comes out of your mouth you judge by it. This way he tell you what is going on. He would let you know what Ford is doing and he can do this from his office. I also heard that Henry Ford himself will come in

and talk to the fellow workers. I think being around something like this you would get more credit than seeing the man. In other words, just like a song you don't like they keep playing the song over and over again then you begin to say somehow or another I'm beginning to like this song. You'd have more knowledge of what is going on because from my understanding they will let you know everything and all the details and everything that is going on through these monitors. Like for instance, model changeover and what they going to do down in this area and certain things that your not aware of you go home today and tomorrow you come back and your whole line moved and you didn't know anything about it. With these monitors you would know everything that is going on. That's the part I mean that everybody will benefit by it in a sense. Like there are a lot of things going on there now that people don't know. Like the plant is going to go down for six weeks this year.

Q You are going to have a six week changeover?

A Yes.

Q What are they going to do?

A Well from my understanding they are going to move a lot of things around and extend a lot of the lines and they are debating on a four door Bronco. I don't know whether they are going to get it this year or for the next year model or not. They are making preparations for it from what the write out is about it in the maintenance shop. Now with the monitor the man he will tell you these things. You would know a lot more than what you know through these monitors.

Q It seems like that will help people understand what is going

on and become part of the Ford Family which is what the E.I. program is about. So they'd be one big happy Ford family and the union working with the Ford family to keep the plant running. Still there is a shift laid off at the plant. There is only one shift running. Do you think that because you work in the body shop, how has the body shop changed and what changes will take place over the next five to ten years?

A In the next ten years there will be no gun welder repairman. They are going to combine this all as an electrician. They are going to make the electrician take the tips out and change them and they'll have a set up man. I think they'll have one set up man and this set up man will more or less rebuild the guns if they're needed to be repaired.

Q Explain to me what you do. What kind of work do you do actually? What does a gun welder do? A lot of folks don't know what a gun welder is.

A A gun welder repairer is responsible for all the spot welder guns. All the Lindy welder guns. In fact everything that welds he rebuilds the gun, changes the tips and maintain the gun and keep it in good working condition.

Q Do you repair the robot?

A Only the guns on the robot. The robot is a machine that you can program to do other things other than weld. You can take that same robot and put it on the sealer deck and it will seal the seams. You can take that same robot and put it in the paint shop and it'll paint.

Q There aren't many robots in the truck plant. Do you think they will be getting more? Is that a good development?

A I don't like the robots. I think it is man replacement and

it is going to hurt. The federal government is way ahead of the American people. He knows that my unborn grandchild will not have social security. So he start this IRA, just like when they started social security...your own insurance for when you get old that you would have some money coming in to survive off of. So now since the social security is going to die, it's going to kill itself.

Q What kind of life do you expect for your future grandchildren?

A If they don't get into some kind of skill they are going to have to have because there is going to come a time that an automobile is going to be made strictly out of plastic. It is going to be mold and come out one solid piece. This is what I see. I see this. I don't even know if that is their future plan. I think that an automobile is going to come out molded in one piece. The only thing you're going to have different is the hood and the trunk. Those are the only two things that I see different, everything else is going to be one solid piece. They aren't going to need the skill that they are using. In other words, it is going to be built like a cardboard box, all one piece. You just stack it on top of the frame or whatever or just put an engine in it and four wheels. There won't be no jobs.

Q The automobile plant for years has represented in one-sixth of the American population was working in relationship to the automobile and the fact is auto workers have made those that have been able to keep their work and get through that gruesome situation you talked about, made a decent wage and the guys in the plant made some serious money this last year and these last few years. You have been there 33 years and on a financial view you have a nice home, cars, TV, VCR, stereo.

It has provided that kind of security for those that have been able to get through it along with certain planning on your part obviously. Next generation doesn't have this kind of jobs. I guess what I'd like to ask about is because I'd like to move a little away from the plant to more about when you moved to Romulus. You stayed around Romulus and the communities around the plant for these last 30 years?

A No. I bought a five family flat in Detroit. I moved to Detroit in 1961 and I paid for this property in 1971. I paid everything that I owed on it in 1971. Then in 1979 I went the cleaners to put some clothes in the cleaners. In fact I told my wife and my kid who was eighteen years old that I was leaving home. Well the kid made eighteen years, but I was wrong about three days. I left three days before he was eighteen because I was a little off on his birthday. So I went to the cleaners and have been ever since. A lot of this is because of the Ford Motor Car Company. I would work overtime and I was accused of being out with some woman that I really didn't have and I was accused of things that I know nothing about because I was working these hours trying to survive. Trying to make a better living for my kids. Then I moved to Inkster and bought this home that we're now in in 1981. Now I have three more payments on it. So yes I have made a good living at Ford Motor Car Company, but I caught hell to do it. If I wasn't a strong person I would have been folded up, but thank God that I'm a very strong person. I'm not bragging I'm just happy that I am a strong person. So I raised eight kids. As you can see on the wall they have awarded me with all kinds of plaques. My kids think the world of me.

Q How old are they?

A My oldest is kid is the only one I can tell you about is 35. Kid number two is 34 and that's about all I can go. My baby is 21. The ones in between I would have to ask them or ask their mother.

Q What are they doing?

A Two are at Detroit Edison. One is a general supervisor for Detroit Edison. One is an electrical lineman, journeyman lineman and my youngest son is a butcher at Thorn Apple Valley. The one that is on strike. I got another daughter who works at General Motors at the High Tech Center. I don't know what her classification is. I'm the type of father that if the kids don't tell me something I don't ask them. I'm the type of father that if the kid was to walk in the room and not say nothing I don't say nothing. I never was the father what's the matter you can't speak I'm your father here. They don't say nothing, I don't say nothing. They talk to me I talk to them. I have been questioned about that. Why don't you make the child do this or why don't you make the child do that? I never made a child or any of my kids do anything. I didn't have to. I told them what I wanted and I got it. I never pried in none of their business, but I always told all of my kids the door of communication is always opened. Any time of day or any time of night you need me. The only way I know you need me is you tell me, you let me know that you need me. I'm not going to volunteer to say do you need me. I have a beautiful family. My biggest problem was Ford Motor Car Company when it started my marriage to go haywire.

Q What were some of the special times, special holidays with

the family that you would like to share?

A I used to enjoy Christmas. I really enjoyed the Christmas holiday better than any other holiday. It was a pleasure buying the kids what they wanted. The biggest kick I got out of that one day my oldest boy wrote a letter to Santa Claus saying he wanted a bicycle. So I took my son to Sears Roebucks and said pick the bike you want. He said I don't want you to buy no bike I want Santa Claus to bring me a bike. I said son I am Santa Claus. There is no such a thing as Santa Claus. Love me don't love Santa Claus. The bike you want, you pick it out. He picked the bike out and we loaded the bike up. We brought it home and help me put it in the attic. I said watch Christmas day your momma will have this bike under the Christmas tree and tell you Santa Claus brought it. Now don't tell her nothing. So that Christmas day the bike was under the tree. He looked at me and smiled and started laughing. She said what are you laughing at? He said nothing and that boy still didn't tell his momma that he's a grown man. So I really enjoyed that and I knew that I could trust him. I never told my kids that there was a Santa Claus. I always told them that there wasn't.

Q What was Christmas like when you were a kid?

A It was something to look forward to. People was more friendlier and cared for each other. They went from house to house, eating and drinking and having a merry good time. You didn't have to worry about people coming into your house and seeing what you got to rip you off. You didn't have to worry about who was in and out your house during them days. Everybody

cared for people. You could walk down the street with a pocket full of money and nobody would bother you. If you got into a fight it was a fist fight. There wasn't no knives and guns. That's what you call the good old days.

Q When did that begin to change? Why do you think it changed?

A The economy changed a lot of things. I blame the economy on everything. It's just like crime...the federal government could stop crime overnight if they wanted to. They want crime to go on. They want to do everything but stop crime. It's easy to stop crime if a guy commit a crime. I got to say a young man. Take this young man and put him either in the army or the Air Force or some branch of the military for the time that the jury would sentence him for. No they don't want that boy. They want the kid that you raised, sent to school to be a doctor or lawyer and send him over there and he come back a murderer and thy're going to teach him how to kill. You are going to teach him all the things that the other kid is doing out in the street that you don't want. If they would leave that nice boy that wants to be a priest or wants to be a doctor or lawyer or professor let him be that. The guy that went out there and killed somebody and you're going to give him life, give him life in the army. Let him do the killing he wants to kill. Let him kill. Give him a gun and let him go out there and shoot. Let him serve his country. This way the nice decent boy can stay here and change society. There won't be no bad guys holding you up and killing you if he is in the army. That's one way of breaking it up. Here you take a child and send him to school and you want the very best for him and then Uncle Sam is going to make him register to go to the army.

You've got another guy who went right along with your kid and stoled and killed and everything, they don't want him. But he's got the same amount of education that your child got. They want your kid because he never committed a crime. They are going to teach him to kill somebody that he don't know, he never met, the person never done him nothing and the one that wants to do the killing he goes to jail. When the jail get over crowded they turn him loose and he come back and kill some more. I'll die saying take the criminal off the street and put him in the army. Now if an old person commits a crime put him in jail. You don't got to worry about feeding and clothing him like this young guy who is going to shack up with some gal on welfare and then you've got to take care of him. I don't think they want to stop crime.

Q Why don't you think they want to stop it?

A Too much money in it.

Q What do you mean?

A The court make money. The attorney make money. They don't want to stop crime. They can stop crime if they want to. They're trying to take a freeze on hand guns. I don't think they should do that for the simple reason you can go to Ohio and buy your hand guns. You can go anywhere in the south and buy your hand gun. Who's going to have them? The one who is going to commit a crime. You're a law abiding citizen and you don't do nothing wrong, so you're going to give up your gun. You aren't going to use your gun or you won't buy your gun. The criminal will know that and he's going to come in and he know you ain't got nothing so he's just going to walk in your house and take over.

Q What do you think caused all the crime?

A The economy. No job. If a man had a job he wouldn't have time to go out and steal. If he ain't got no job and he's got a family well he's got to habit; he's going to support his habit or his family. He's got to do wrong. This is what I didn't understand about some of the southern white people. They won't give the minority an equal opportunity to have a job, but what do they expect for him to do? No money or no place to stay, how is he going to survive? What is there for him to do? You give me a good job and you don't have to worry about me because I can take of my family just like you're doing. But if I ain't got no job...my woman wants some nice clothes too. I want a decent automobile too. I've got to pay my taxes whether I got a job or not. How do you want me to keep my own? The city is going to take it if I can't pay my property tax. I can't have electricity if I ain't got no job. No utilities I can't pay, but you want to lock me in a little world to criticise me, to say that I'm dumb, that I'm not qualified. I don't want nobody to give me nothing just put the opportunity there for me.

Q Were you born the year of the depression? The year of the crash in 1929? You were coming up and were pretty young during the 1930's when unemployment was 25% around the country. I don't know what it was in the south. It was probably much higher where your folks were still living. You were living outside the city on the land. There wasn't that same kind of problem then.

A Well the reason there wasn't that same kind of problem then was because there weren't as many people. Well mostly your

southern people knows how to survive. A black person can survive better off of nothing than any other race that I knows. There is black people in the world that is poor and don't know they're poor. They don't even realize that they are poor. The only time they realize they're poor is if they leave where ever they at. Say for instance, they visit the north and see your home and see how your are living. Then they go back to thinking, well hell I am poor. But being there they didn't know they were poor. That just like me I wouldn't work on the assembly line, but if that's the first place I worked and couldn't do nothing else I couldn't make that statement that I'm making, I wouldn't work on the assembly line. Okay? The person back in those days wouldn't do the things that they're doing now. People those days had too much pride to come and ask you for a hand out. If the people didn't get together themselves and give them something they wouldn't ask for it. It just like the women wouldn't ask for a date. The woman wouldn't ask a man for a dance. Now the woman ask the man for everything. Well that's the way it was back in them days. Now back in the 1930's I didn't know anything about the economy. All I knew is I had to go to school. It's been atleast ten years ago when I realized that we were poor. When I was at some people house and they were eating peanut butter and jelly and the lady said how would you like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I said no way. She said why. Well I told her a little story. I said the reason I don't like peanut butter and jelly is on Monday I had peanut butter and jelly sandwich to go to school. On Wednesday I had jelly, peanut

butter and bread. On Thursday I had bread, peanut butter and jelly. On Friday I had a combination of peanut butter, jelly and bread. I said that that was every week. I don't want no peanut butter and that's when I realized that hell we was poor. I never thought why was I eating this peanut butter and jelly because I wasn't trained that way. I was trained to eat what they give me. I brought my family up the same way my parents brought me up. There wasn't no five different meals on the table for breakfast. There was three or four different dishes on the table for dinner and it was the same thing for supper. See in the south you have breakfast, dinner and supper. I brought that here with me. In the morning if there was a dish that my father said he wanted...you see my mother would ask "Papa want do you want for breakfast?" He would tell her. That's what we all ate. There wasn't one child saying well I don't want that, I want cereal or I want this or I want that. You ate what Papa wanted for breakfast. You ate what Papa wanted for dinner. Dinner was at twelve o'clock. It wasn't at four o'clock like dinner is in the north. Dinner was at twelve o'clock. Supper was at five o'clock. If you wasn't at that table for dinner you didn't eat. You couldn't walk to that table no five or ten minutes later. Of course, Momma would sneak you something after Papa was gone. You couldn't walk into that table late. I don't care what you were doing. The same thing at supper. Now breakfast was a little bit different because some of the kids went to school before Papa got up. Them was older than me because they were more or less in high school. So most of the breakfast was just me

by myself.

Q So you were the youngest of four?

A I'm the baby. I'm the youngest of the four.

Q Do you go back down very much? Is any of the family still there or alive?

A Well when I first come to Michigan I used to go every year and sometimes twice a year, but after my mom died I didn't care for the south anymore. To me I had nothing to go back to. Now I go once in a while. I'm planning on going either this year or next year.

Q One of the things that is unique about the auto plant is that there are many people who have moved from the south, both black and white, and work in the plants. That is sorta not happening now because folks aren't moving up from the south. It's because the way the economy is and the way the auto industry is. Does any of your family want to go back to the south or are they pretty much northerners now?

A They are all northerners now. There is no way that you could get any one of my kids to go to the south. My ex-wife is talking about going to the south whenever she retires, but she hasn't worked in at least five or six years now.

Q Did she get laid off?

A No she just quit. I guess she is on disability, I don't know. Like I said they don't tell me, I don't ask.

Q You were one of the few workers in the plant, that I know, who wears a free south Africa button. You're always looking for some good discussion or sharing some of your opinions. So I know you have thought about the changes in the last twenty years. What was it like in the plant? You say you came up

in 1953, so the civil rights movement started during 1954-55-56-57. Martin Luther King's march was in Detroit during 1963. How did different folks respond? How did different workers respond to that? What did it mean to you?

A I have say this to people and it took them some time to understand what I was saying and I'm going to say it to you the same way I have said it time and time again. But I'm going to do it just a little slight different, okay? I believe in God. I believe that there is a Jesus Christ. I believe that he died for my sin, okay? But I personally believe that Martin Luther King was my Jesus Christ. He opened the doors of opportunity for me. There was no black in no skill trade before King died. When Martin Luther King died there was black place on every job in the United State of America, every job. If King hadn't died blacks would never be in skilled trade today. Blacks wouldn't never have been airplane pilots, flight attendants, working in banks, clerks, policemen, judges, attorney and a black sign up to run for the president of the United State. King to me is my savior, but I believe in Jesus Christ. Now it could be an act of God that King came along. I don't know. But I do know this George Washington, the president of the United States and Jesus Christ didn't change anything. Abraham Lincoln and Jesus Christ didn't change anything. Abraham Lincoln was suppose to have freed the slave and had a slave himself. Abraham Lincoln was suppose to have freed the slave and he had a slave woman in there and had children by her. So Jesus Christ and Abraham Lincoln didn't change anything. We'll skip all them in between. Jesus Christ and Jimmy Carter didn't change anything. Kennedy didn't change

anything, but Jesus Christ and King did.

Q What do you think is going to happen over the next ten to fifteen years?

A I would say in the next twenty years there won't be as much racial prejudice as there is today. I can see where the white girl alone is changing things. For the simple reason she is having these little chocolate babies. She loves her little chocolate babies and she is going to protect her little chocolate babies. If any white guy marry her, he is going to love that little chocolate baby. The more this happen the quicker racial discrimination will fade away, because there will be no white race, no black race. It will be a tan. A chocolate colored race. I won't live to see it, but it is coming. The black girl is marrying the white man. Back in the 1950's the white man wanted a black girl but he didn't want to be seen with her. Now he don't give a damn who see him with her. The younger people is changing this. The old die heart is going to die out and the young people are going to change it. Now the poor blacks and the poor whites are the damn fools. The rich man don't give a damn about nobody poor whether he black or white. If I had the money I could live in Bloomfield Hills. If you had the money you could live in Bloomfield Hills. If you ain't got the money you yourself can't live in Bloomfield Hills. So with the rich man it's money. With the poor ignorant people it's the color of the skin.

Q Say a little more, explain that to me.

A The poor man is watching the other poor bastard. He don't want him to have more than him. He don't want him to have the same

opportunity. He wants to be the superior race. Especially some white wants to be the superior race. Some white it don't make them no difference. All they want to do is go to work and come home and you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. I'm not talking about that guy. That's the good guy. I'm talking about the one that's how can this guy that is sweeping the floor driving a Cadillac. Because he brought his money home and he is saving it that's how he is doing it. He might be eating pork and beans and hominy grits. But he he is doing it. That shouldn't bother nobody. Today if you take care of your own affairs you'll be too busy to worry about what somebody else is doing. And that's your biggest problem in the world. Worrying about what other people are doing. Even in the automobile factory I have heard two white guys arguing about the overtime, because one guy has worked seven days ten hours a day and the other guy has worked seven days eight hours a day and he wants to know why he got the overtime and always getting the overtime. Well see that shouldn't bother him. That shouldn't bother him at all. I mean if he is worried about overtime all he has got to do is go check the hours. He don't have to ask this man why is he working. I mean that shows right there that somebody envies the other one. I mean if you got something that I want I might ask how you go about getting it because I feel if I got the same opportunity it's my fault if I don't have it. It's not your fault that I don't have it.

Q Talking about opportunity, do you think that there will be growing opportunity for people?

A Yes.

Q If someone said what is your dream, what is the American dream, what was it when you were growing up for you? What do you think it is now for your future grandchildren?

A If my grandchildren don't have no education my grandchildren will be in trouble. Because you got to have a college degree to pick up garbage and when you go and take the test and they don't ask you anything about garbage, they ask you something about the space shuttle and if you ain't got no education to know something about the space shuttle you ain't going to get the job picking up garbage. There is no jobs interview that they ask you about the job. They want to know if you got the experience to do the job and you don't even know what the job consists of. They want you to have a years experience on all jobs and you just getting out of school. So my goal is the job that a kid wants or the desire or the dream that the kid wants he better learn that in school before he get out of there.

Q You are working seven days a week now eight hours a day. What do you do with the time you have left? What have been some of your interests or involvements?

A Well right now I'm an electrical contractor on the outside. I do electrical work on the outside. I only take jobs at my convenience. I let the customer know that I'm working at Ford Motor Car Company. I don't know why I say Ford Motor Car Company, I guess because I look at a lot of old English movies and they say motor car so I guess that stuck with me. I let the people know that I work at Ford and a lot of times I don't feel like doing anything but staying in bed and lets mother nature wakes me up. That's the only way I'll do the job. If

they'll let me do it at my convenience because I don't like to tie people up. I do a lot of electrical work on the side. I love it. I wished I had got it in the plant, but I guess I'm better off not having it now because the opportunity I have as a gun welder repairman I wouldn't have as an electrician. I won't put that on tape.

Q Do you think you'll retire in the next few years? Are you going to stay there?

A I have been running this through my mind. I want to buy me a motor home and I want to travel all over the United States in places where I haven't been. I want to see what they are like. Right now I'm just beginning to make money. They took a lot from us and in return they give me some of it back. For instance, they took my PPH days. That was twelve a year. Let's say that's \$1,500.00 okay? They took a floating holiday which was on December 13th. They froze my hourly rates, okay? They given me this back as a profit sharing, okay? So if they give me say \$1,800-\$1,900 then I would say they are giving me the money they took from me. If they give me less than that then I would say that they're taking me to the cleaners. What I'm driving at is they are now beginning to pay me to come to work. They are beginning to pay me some of the money that they took away from me. In other words, I'm just beginning to make money that I can see. Just at the time of retirement. I'm 56 years old. I would have to wait until I'm 62 to draw social security. I don't have to live to draw social security, but I still want to enjoy myself the years that I have left. I also want to sue Ford Motor Car Company because they got all my young life. I'm quite sure they have

made more off of me than I've made off him.

Q I'm sure of that. Do you think you'll be living in twenty years?

A I would say roughly I will go to about 80.

Q Alright, you have got about another 25 years left. What do you think will be some of the concerns, not so much you as an individual will have to face, but what are some of the issues or concerns people that are going to be in the plant are going to have to face whether it's in the plant, whether it's in Detroit, whether it's in Romulus or in the United States?

A He is going to have to be flexible. He is going to have to know how to more than one thing because there ain't going to be no special classification. In other words, like now the electrician has got to wait for the millwright to unbolt the motors lose. The electrician will disconnect the service off. The millwright will come there, take it loose, take it out, put another one there and bolt it down and the electrician will come and tie it back up. It's going to come that the electrician is going to tear it loose, put it there and tie it in. It is going to come to the time where even the pipefitter is going to do the gun welding work, like the water holes and air holes, and the electrician is going to put the tips in. I think there is only going to be an electrician and a pipefitter. I don't think there is going to be a gun welder repairman and a tool maker.

Q Is that good? Does it matter?

A That's not good at all.

Q Why not?

A That's eliminating man power. If you got to do four mans job then you eliminate three. That's going to hurt. You see a

lot of people are talking about what they are doing in Spain. They don't have no modern machinery in Spain. When they're building a highway you have men with a shovel. You ain't got two men building a highway. One man running three different machines and no hand work at all. You don't have that. I was in Madrid for fifteen days and they was tearing down an old hotel. I was there a whole fifteen days and they hadn't tore it down yet because they hadn't men on the top knocking it down with sledge hammers. There was no ball on the crane like you do here. So we would say those people are dumb.