

SWE STORYCORPS INTERVIEWS

Anne Lucietto and Ledo Lucietto Interview

November 7, 2008

Society Of Women Engineers National Conference

Baltimore, Maryland

Reuther Library Oral History ID: LOH002110.8

This oral history interview was recorded November 7, 2008 at the Society of Women Engineers National Conference in Baltimore, Maryland as part of StoryCorps, a nationwide initiative of Sound Portraits Productions to record and collect oral history interviews. A copy of the audio recording of the interview has been deposited at the Walter P. Reuther Library and Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University. The interview may be used for research and educational purposes only.

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Anne Lucietto and Ledo Lucietto

Anne Lucietto is an assistant professor of engineering technology education research at Purdue Polytechnic University. She received a mechanical engineering degree from Marquette University and began her career as a principle engineer at Commonwealth Edison in 1985, working for five organizations during the next 25 years, including Driv-Lok Inc. and Fermi National Laboratories. During this time she also taught engineering, mathematics, physics, and business as an adjunct faculty member at Waubensee Community College and Oakton Community College. She left industry to pursue a Ph.D. in engineering education from Purdue University, which she earned in 2014. A Fellow of the Society of Women Engineers, Lucietto has been an active member locally and nationally, including serving as national treasurer.

During their SWE 2008 StoryCorps interview, Anne and her father, Ledo Lucietto, reminisced about Anne's experience growing up in her family's machine shop; asking her father how things worked; and taking toys and household appliances apart. Ledo explained that other men at the time didn't understand why he supported his daughters pursuit of college. They also discussed the Italian American neighborhood in which they lived.

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ANNE LUCIETTO: My name is Anne Lucietto. I'm 45 years old.

Today's date is November 7th, 2008. We're in Baltimore, Maryland at the Society of Women Engineers Conference, and I will be talking to my father.

LEDO LUCIETTO: Name is Ledo Lucietto. My age is 80, 80 years old. Today's date, oh, November 7, 2008. Baltimore, Maryland. And I am the father of Anne.

AL: So we're here because I wanted to get—find out more about when I was growing up. So tell me when you first thought that I should be an engineer? (laughs)

LL: Well, I have to say it was right around that you were probably five years old. You started to ask me many, many questions, and the questions were all related to—first it was, "Do you think I can do the work of an engineer? Do you think I can be an engineer?" [01:00] And my answer to that was yes. And then, another question that came up was, "Can a girl be an engineer?" And I said, "There's no question why there should not be—any problem with being an engineer." So then from there on, we started to go. [To facilitator] And the funny part about it all was the fact that she started to talk about becoming a mechanical engineer.

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And the big story started, "How do you do this and how do you do that?" And if I did not know the answer, I would turn around and hunt and search in order to get some information so I could tell them to the best of my ability and as true as I could go. And it was a constant story in the car, no matter where we went, and how we did it. Coming home from work, I had two girls and the same conversation over and over again. [02:00] And today, I got to the point where I'm very, very proud of the results, and if I had to do it over again, I would do it the same way.

AL: So what did you tell us when we were little about all of the things that we could do? Do you remember those conversations?

LL: They—well, I did say you could be an engineer of any sort, and you could become a doctor, or you could become anything that you wanted to do, and it's just a matter of putting it in your mind and do it. And I said, "Don't give up. Once you start, don't give up." And it was hard for them to get over the first hurdle. And after that, it was pretty much go. And that was the way that story went.

AL: So when I was a little kid, what did I do that made you know that I should be an engineer?

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LL: Oh, you were interested (laughs) in taking stuff apart. That was the funny part about it. You'd take it apart and "Daddy, how does it work? And Daddy, can we put it together?" I said, "You took it apart, you put it together." [03:00]

AL: So what did I take apart?

LL: Oh, little toys, little things. It was very elementary. And then one day, you started to look at a clock and you wanted to take it apart. You did it, and I put it together for you. (laughs) That's how that went.

AL: So what else did I do when I was a kid?

LL: Well, you started to get a hold of some tools and you started cutting wood and started doing things. They might not come out exactly square or otherwise, but we managed to get it to go. Now, I don't know what happened to that stuff. So that's how that inspired me to keep helping you, both of yous.

AL: So why don't you talk a little bit about what you were doing when we were little and what I used to do when you were doing that?

LL: Well, are you talking about when you became of age?

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AL: When—no, when you were—when you were working at your shop.

LL: Yeah. Oh, I'd take you with me and you'd watch the machines run, and you'd look and you'd ask me a lot of questions, and there were times when I couldn't do much because I had to get that job done, get it over with. [04:00] I couldn't spend the time. So I remember that. But then, I also remember another time when you did get quite a bit older, you would come to work with me and then you'd want to do something. So then you would be packaging parts, if you remember the packaging parts.

AL: Yeah, I do. (laughs)

LL: A hundred to a bag or whatever, or maybe looking them over to find out if they're all okay or not. That, I remember. It was really a comical thing.

AL: Who else did we go to the shop with?

LL: With—with who—

AL: Way back when I was little, really little.

LL: When you were little, well, I just held you by one hand and walked in there and looked around and—

AL: Do you remember the apron hanging in the shop?

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LL: The acorn. Yeah, I remember that.

AL: No, the apron?

LL: Oh, the apron? That one there, yeah. That was my father's apron.

AL: And what was he originally?

LL: Originally, he was a mechanical engineer and he worked at that profession for many years, until he started his own business. And he was in—he owned the Venetian Marble Company, and—which is gone today. [05:00] The Depression wiped them all out. And then, he had the—worked with the Henderson [?] Engine Company, and that was over on Clybourn Avenue in Chicago, and that folded up because of the Depression. And then finally, he wound up—got a job and stuck with it, because he was afraid to lose. He had two kids—three kids at home, and he didn't want to be without a few bucks. That's—he had to work, and that was it. But that was sure heartbreaking to see what happened with him because of that.

AL: And then when he retired, he came and hung out with you guys at the shop.

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LL: Yeah, that one there, he used to come to work. And I'll never forget the time—he'd come. He wouldn't—"No, I don't want no money. Just keeping busy." So I'd come, keep him busy. And now, he would come up to me that one day and he says, "I'm going outside," he says, "I got to get a little fresh air." [06:00] And we were near a railroad track, so he took out some cardboard and laid down the cardboard. And I turned around and I said, "Look out there, he's laying there." And this guy come up from the train and he says, "This is a dead man." I said, "No." I said, "That's my dad," I says, "He's just sleeping." And the police came, you know, and I says, "What's up?" He said, "Well, we're going to have to haul him in." I said, "Haul him in?" I says, "I'll wake him up for you." So I grabbed him by his hand I said, "Pa, hey, come on. Wake up. Wake up." So then he turned around and he woke up and said, "What's the matter?" He said, "What's this police guy doing here?" He said, "What's that train doing there?" The train stopped on the track because they saw him. Because we had this piece of ground on the side of the shop that was a pretty good size piece of grass there, right along the railroad, you know? And he was lying there, and I tell you the truth, it was funny, comical. (laughs) The police saw him lying there, he said, "We got to haul him away," I said, "No," I

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says, "I'll wake him up." [07:00] So then, he got back on the microphone and he said, "No, don't send the ambulance." And that's how close—if we wouldn't have walked out, I tell you something—we would have been looking for that poor old guy. Yeah.

AL: So what did he do at the shop for you guys?

LL: Well, he just kept us occupied. And he said, "Let me run a machine," or he'd make a part, or he'd make part of a tool or something. And that's how he spent—he didn't want to work heavy anymore.

AL: No.

LL: You know? But he did make tools. He did spend the time. They weren't finished, but I had to finish them or my brother finished them, but we were doing it.

AL: And I was there some of the time, wasn't I?

LL: And you were—and you were there many, many times. I tell you, it was really comical. And then, you'd go and say, "Hey Nonno." And you said, "What is that?" Nonno, that means grandpa. "What is that? What are you doing?" [to facilitator] And that's how she would spend the time, maybe have lunch with us or something. And then when she got

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tired, I had to take her home.

AL: And then he hung up his apron.

LL: Yeah, well, he'd hang his apron right by the door. [08:00]

AL: And you guys had it there until the day you sold the shop.

LL: That's right. It was there. In fact, I think I might have brought it home. I think, I'm not sure.

AL: I sure hope you did. (laughs)

LL: Yeah, so—(laughs) Yeah, that was—

AL: I know that's one that I looked at, and—

AL: You used that.

LL: No, I looked at it. I wouldn't touch it because I knew that was when he hung it there that last time, that was—that was him.

AL: Oh, you—oh, I see, OK. Yeah, so anyway, that's the way that went. It was great.

AL: So what other things did we do as kids that made you think that I probably would end up as an engineer?

LL: Well, if you remember, we'd go to the zoo, and the zoo was

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not quite the thing for you. You wanted to go to the science and industry museum. And we had to drive a good hour in order to get to it, but we went there as many times as we could. And if you remember, we used to go up to where the machine shop was and all those other pieces of equipment, and [to facilitator] she would spend a lot of time asking me, "I want to know what this is and what that is. And how would they make it?" That was the funny part, when you said, "How do you make this?" [09:00] You'd get a factory to build that stuff, you know? So—and that's just how that worked out. It was great. I enjoyed doing it. I never—your sister did the same doggone thing, you know.

AL: Yeah. (laughs)

LL: (laughs) I really—it's a laughing thing because when I remember back, those are memories. I really like every one of them. It was fun.

AL: So when you laugh, what are you thinking of?

LL: What?

AL: What are you thinking of as you laugh?

LL: When I laugh, what I think is the results. You became an engineer.

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AL: Yeah. Right.

LL: You know?

AL: And where did I start when I left high school and went to college, that rebellious 18 year old that I was?

LL: [to facilitator] Anne, she went over to Saint Teresa's in Winona, Minnesota, in the medical—in the medical department. She got in the class—

AL: The music, right?

LL: Well, music, too. And you've got a heck of a voice, so that's quite nice. But I have to tell you one thing. If you remember that Saturday we came up here, you were dissecting this rabbit. [10:00]

AL: No, it was a cat.

LL: Oh, was it a cat?

AL: It was Eleanor the cat.

LL: Okay. [to facilitator] And she said, "Daddy," she says, "I don't want to do this no more." And then from there on, then she went to Marquette [University]. She went over to Marquette, and she excelled in what she was doing. She wanted to do that, and she became a mechanical engineer. So

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all that strength that we spent at the time, it was worth it regardless, whether you were going into medicine or not. That was well worth it. So, those are the memories.

Sometimes I, shall we say, tear with joy, you know? So—.

AL: Do you remember when we were kids, we used to ask you how you'd make something?

LL: Yeah, all the time.

AL: And then the problem was we went to other people and started asking them that, and boy did they get frustrated.

LL: Yeah.

AL: Remember those?

LL: Yeah. Those are the things that I never forget. It was really great. So, and I'm really happy that I did everything like that because this way, it really inspired you to keep going. [11:00] You know, that's where the—the most important thing, that's what it was. And then I'd work on the car. That one there, too. If you want to follow that one there, that was something. You take a car apart, "What is this, Daddy?" Yeah, it'd add on two hours no matter what I did. You'd take a starter out, "What's that for? What happened to it?" You know? And that's how it was. And the

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starter was easy to take out and put back in. But I had a problem. I'd put new brushes in, and then I'd turn around, and you fought like heck to get everything in place. You had to clean it all up, put it up, and the car ran after that, you know? But the thing that was really bad, sometimes, you'd take something apart and I'd sit there and wonder, What in the world did you do here? And then I'd talk to you and [you would] say, "Well, I took it apart. Daddy fix." Remember that phrase?

AL: Yeah, but did you ever watch, when you fixed it, what I was doing? [12:00]

LL: You were watching every move.

AL: I was watching real careful so I could take it apart and put it together myself the next time. (laughs)

LL: Right. You were very careful, very careful watching every move. So that's how we did that. Yeah.

AL: Do you remember when you guys taught me how to adjust the carburetor in my truck?

LL: Oh yeah. Yeah. It was tough at the beginning, until you turned around and really found out that this screw would work better if I turn it this way or that way, until you

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got it down to a balance.

AL: So we literally took the carburetor out of the truck and brought it in the shop.

LL: Oh yeah, we took it out. I had trouble with it. So we took it out, and we took it out many, many times until we finally discovered it was a hole in the casting, so I had gone down to get a new—a new kind of part.

AL: New casting. Yeah.

LL: New casting. Yeah. And that was all taken care of after that. So—but that was a big problem because when you'd stop the truck and turn the key off, and you'd go away for awhile, the car—truck wouldn't start right away. You had to wait. And then after that, we got that fixed up, the carburetor worked well. [13:00]

AL: So what happens when I go to—when I go to the car place and I tell them what's wrong with my car?

LL: Well, they don't want to mess with you.

AL: (laughs) They don't believe me half the time.

LL: Oh, they don't!

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AL: And then, they come back with their eyeballs popping out going "Yeah, look at that."

LL: You know more than they do. That's the funny part about it.

AL: It's pretty scary, and it's because we took the cars apart, isn't it?

LL: Yeah. That was all the experience. Past experience. It was—

AL: It's too bad they don't make the cars like that anymore.
(laughs)

LL: Well, it's going to get a lot worse if you really think about it.

AL: It's true. It's true.

LL: So yeah, I'm waiting for the hybrids to come out, if they're ever going to come out. You know, because I have to say, Are they going to come out? Because there's a few of them out there, but I really don't know if they're going to make it. So yeah.

AL: Right, right. So what else did we do?

LL: Well—

AL: You got to think a little bit, huh?

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LL: For recreation, we played bocce. Yeah. We made wine. And every—

AL: Right. Do you remember how you related all that to science?

LL: Yeah, we used to talk about it that way.

AL: Bocce, we talked about the physics behind it. [14:00]

LL: I remember you wanted to know the science in making wine. What happens to it after the grapes are crushed? It goes into fermentation stage.

AL: Right, and then we had to figure out how that all worked out. That was kind of fun.

LL: (laughs) Yeah, and everybody liked to drink my wine and nobody wanted to help me make it.

AL: Yeah, but remember when we were making it and you told us about fermentation? We thought maybe it was like it was rotting.

LL: Yeah.

AL: It was pretty gross. (laughs)

LL: It was a long process. The first stage, actually seven days. Eight days? Seven days? And then after that, then

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you—you go on a little further and then it's time to put it in the barrel or carboy.

AL: Yeah, but coming from an Italian family, that's what we did.

LL: Oh, that's the way it is.

AL: And Nonna and Nonno did it, too. Remember that?

LL: Yeah. It was a family tradition that was handed down. And it stayed that way and it kept going. And it's still going.

AL: Right. Yeah.

LL: So, I'm glad you enjoyed it. See what it does, it makes you more knowledgeable on what's going on. So— [15:00]

AL: Right. But then people think you're a know-it-all.

LL: We are. But I really don't know it all.

AL: No, that's good. See, that's the sign of intelligence, right?

LL: I guess that's what it is. Yeah.

AL: (laughs) When you realize what your limitations are.

LL: The what?

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AL: When you realize what your limitations are.

LL: Well, there's a limitation to everybody.

AL: Absolutely.

LL: You know? If you know that, then you're in good shape.

AL: I think so. (laughs)

LL: If you don't know then I'm sorry, but there's an awful lot of people missing the ball game, let me tell you something. They raise their kids as wild as you find them, you know? And then they say, "Boy, are you lucky." Yeah, you're lucky all right. You work at it. And that's the part.

AL: Yeah, we've had a lot of that.

LL: Yeah. So—I don't know.

AL: Yeah. I've been told many times I'm lucky and I tell them, "You know how hard I had to work for that? You know how messed up I was coming out of high school going into music and biology?" (laughs)

LL: Yeah. You know, I really thought—remember when I told you about music? It's a good thing to know and a good thing to enjoy, but very few will make a good living. [16:00]

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AL: Right.

LL: And the few that do make a living, they're way on top. But in the middle? Unh-unh.

AL: It's difficult, I know.

LL: You struggle, struggle. So anyway, that's the way it goes. Anyway—.

AL: So what else? Think about—think about when I was a kid and what were some of the other things that we did?

LL: What we did?

AL: Do you remember before I went to kindergarten, everybody—and I was the only kid in the family?

LL: Yeah.

AL: Do you remember what everybody did with me? (laughs) I was probably the only kid who could read and do math and everything else at that point.

LL: You struggled like—you wanted to learn your mathematics. Because if you remember what I used to say, the most basic thing is your mathematics and your English, and some history. And when you look at some of the people you deal

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with, even if they're 30 years old, they don't know what's going on, you know? And especially when it comes in to a lot of this stuff. So we talked about it, that's all.

[17:00]

AL: That's right, and we did it, too.

LL: We did it. We did it. And if I ran it up against the wall, I would research it and tell you later. And then somebody would say, "Well, we're not interested in that. I'd say, "But you asked me about it, and here I spent all that time figuring it out." So I got educated as well, you know, when you think about it.

AL: Yeah.

LL: Yeah. Now, I'm happy. You changed so many jobs, and—but you're successful at it, so I'm not going to complain about it.

AL: So you don't worry about me anymore, huh?

LL: No, I do worry about you. You're my buddy. So, I do think about you a lot and I'm very happy you're successful. So that's all.

AL: That's good. That's good. You guys pushed me as a kid and I needed that.

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LL: Yeah, and I had—I met many of your friends and I like them. They're very nice.

AL: That's good.

LL: So anyway, but anyway, you started the—you started to work on a lathe. [18:00] I forget—I don't remember how old you were. Oh, I think 15 or 16 years old, something like that. And I always told you, "Wear your glasses, cover everything up." I said, "Be very careful, and don't push hard and just go easy. And if something is wrong, you call me right away." And that's what you did. So—

AL: But it was cool running the lathe.

LL: What?

AL: Because you put the metal in and you actually watch it change.

LL: Yeah. So—

AL: And it's your hands that do it.

LL: Well, you have to be careful not to get them on your hands.

AL: Well, no, I know. But I mean it's you actually controlling the machine and making it happen, and that's the cool part.

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LL: Yeah.

AL: Did you ever notice that I always followed you around the shop watching and then I'd play around?

LL: You followed—I thought there was a magnet hooked up to me and to you.

AL: (laughs) Yeah. When you got tired of me, I went over to Uncle Lambert, (laughs) and I'd just bounce between the two of you.

LL: Yeah. So anyway, yeah, we did a pretty good job on that. I really enjoyed. [19:00] If I had to do it over again, I'd do it again.

AL: Yep, same here.

LL: I would have no problem with that.

AL: Same here. It was pretty cool.

LL: So I only have two girls, and I struggled with both of them, but then it got very easy and you finally made up your minds. And then you both reached the pinnacle of success, if I have to say it that way. So I have to say, I'm proud of both of you, and I have no questions about that.

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AL: Took a little while, huh?

LL: Well, it was a little while. It took a little work. But it's worth it, it's worth it. Because I look at some others, I'm sorry for them, you know? So what bothers me is so many people don't want their children above them. And me, I know I never felt that way. I wanted my children above me.

AL: Well, we pull you with us.

LL: So, you know. So, anyway. So what else was there?

AL: Can you think of any other little stories from when I was a kid, things we did and stuff we did?

LL: Well, we'd go to Grandpa's farm, or we'd go traveling to Canada, and go see Niagara Falls. [20:00] Oh, there's one I'll never forget, it just come to my mind. I drove all day long to get to Pennsylvania, because I wanted you to see the Liberty Bell. And you know, driving all day and then I was supposed to go straight north. It was tough. So I got to the place, and there I got in there. We parked the car out on the street. I knocked on the door because the door was locked, and this gentleman, this watchman turned around and he opened the door and he says, "We're closed." And I said, "No, mister." I said, "I traveled all day long for my

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children," I says, "and I just couldn't make out at all." I said, "Now you tell me it's closed." I said, "By how much?" He said "Twenty minutes." And I said, "Listen," I said, "Can't you kind of break the law a little bit, bend it?" And I said, "All I want them to see that we went to the Liberty Bell." [21:00] And so anyway, he opened the door and let me in, and I went over there and I got my kids out of the car and the wife, and then I—they saw the Liberty Bell. He said, "We just brought it down today and it's going to be moved tomorrow." So I remember telling my kids, I said, "Go ahead and touch the Liberty Bell."

AL: Right, and the man told us to stick our finger in the crack.

LL: Yes, and there was a crack with a peg in there to keep it from cracking any further. And I said, "Put your finger in there." I said. [to facilitator] And so both of them put their finger in there. We came back a week later, and he told us that it was going to be across the street in a new location. I didn't even believe him, you know?

AL: And it was, wasn't it?

LL: Yeah. We came back and there it was. And now, what I'm proud of, you touched the bell, put your finger in the

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crack, then when we came back a week later it was across the street and we saw it in its new location.

AL: So we were really like the last civilians to touch that Liberty Bell before it went into keeping. [22:00]

LL: Exactly. Exactly. Nobody knows it, but this is really what happened.

AL: Well now they know.

LL: Now they know. (laughs)

AL: Do you remember where we ended up that night?

LL: Did we go to Canada or—no.

AL: No, we were on our way to Rhode Island, but we stopped in New Jersey. We did not continue on because you were tired.

LL: Yeah, well that was a long haul.

AL: It was a long haul. Do you remember going to Rhode Island?

LL: Yeah, I remember going to Rhode Island.

AL: What did we learn how to do in Rhode Island?

LL: Fix my sister's wiring on the outdoor lights.

AL: So what did I do?

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LL: You helped me.

AL: Yeah, I held your tools, remember?

LL: Yeah, you helped me.

AL: So what did I learn how to do then?

LL: Electrical work. So—.

AL: You do know I do quite a bit of electrical work in what I do, right?

LL: Yeah. Well, you were able to do that anyway. You put a wire in and tighten it up on the screws. Oh, I'll never forget that. There was a lot of things we did. I just don't remember them all, I tell you. It was really—really a joke. You know what? I'm surprised that we wound up doing that repair work and Uncle Richard didn't do it. [23:00] But I think he was busy as a professor over at the University of Rhode Island.

AL: He may have been gone. Right.

LL: So anyway, what are you going to do? I mean, it was just a lot of work. And then from there, I never—after we left that, we were going to go to Canada. And we took off and we went through New York. I was so shocked to learn that the

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State of New York was so big.

AL: (laughs) It would be in that direction.

LL: It was over 500 and some miles, you know?

AL: It's a long ways.

LL: But the funny part of it is we got in the middle and there was a convoy. Do you remember that convoy?

AL: Yes.

LL: There must have been two or three, 400 hundred trucks moving a bunch of guys up in that—there was a fort up there and I don't remember the name of it, but we were heading for Niagara Falls. That one there was a long trip. Man. [24:00] We got to Niagara Falls it must have been about 10:30, eleven o'clock and we were going to get to Kitchener, Ontario, which is another—and it started to rain. I couldn't maintain that speed anymore because I was tired.

AL: Yeah. It slowed us down.

LL: Well, we were going 35 miles an hour, you know? So anyway, we had—

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AL: So every—every time we went to Canada, any time anybody needed anything, who did they go to?

LL: Uncle Peter.

AL: They went to you.

LL: It was me?

AL: You. Whenever you go somewhere, they need help, they go to you.

LL: Oh, it was me.

AL: You're at home, they need you.

LL: Yeah. So anyway, we did what we—

AL: Do you realize—do you realize that when it was you, I wanted to be that way?

LL: I know you always were—

AL: I wanted everyone to come to me.

LL: You were mimicking me. You wanted to be there and learn whatever you could.

AL: Right, but I still wanted everyone to come to me, just like they came to you. (laughs)

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LL: Yeah. And then when you wound up, you stayed for two weeks or was it a month in Canada?

AL: I was up there for a month.

LL: Yeah. [25:00] And you helped them out.

AL: Absolutely.

LL: So. No, you were a good—you remembered everything. You did quite well, you know, what you did. So—.

AL: But see, that bit with everybody coming to you and always asking you what's going on and helping them out and what have you is what I really, really wanted to do. And the other thing is I learned later on that when—I was following you around like a magnet.

LL: You were!

AL: And I did that all the time. It wasn't just at the shop. And did you ever realize that I copied you in just about everything you did?

LL: Everything.

AL: And do you realize I walk like you, too?

LL: Yeah, I know. I know that.

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AL: I'm told, when you walk. (laughs)

LL: No, you did—you followed my footsteps and I thought it was great.

AL: It's pretty cool.

LL: So at least—at least I showed you good things.

AL: Oh yeah.

LL: And you didn't learn bad things from me.

AL: No. And that's why I wanted to do this interview.

LL: Yeah. So then another thing—I don't know, I just enjoyed it. That's all.

AL: I know you did.

LL: Hey, remember—remember the bicycle registration? [26:00]

AL: Yes. Go ahead, tell the story.

LL: You came home from work—I came home from work and you came home from the bicycle registration and you said, "Daddy, I want your bike." And you took off. You went back in town again. They said, "What's this doing here?" You said, "This is my dad's bike." So they gave me a number, too. So it's

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on the bike.

AL: Right, so we both have stickers on our bikes. (laughs)

LL: Right. And then you took your mother's bike over there and got that registered, so that was pretty good. We never had a problem with the bikes being stolen. And I don't—no, we never had trouble with that.

AL: No, but you know what I did when my bike didn't work, don't you?

LL: Yeah, you'd take it apart, and fix it.

AL: Yeah. And then I'd go ride it some more.

LL: Yeah, and then it'd break again. Then you say, "What's the matter?"

AL: I got really mad when I was in Milwaukee because I rode it on the beach. That was really stupid. That was dumb.

LL: On a beach? It was very dumb.

AL: I got sand in the bearings. Oh man, you have no idea; I got really good at replacing the bearings on my bike. (laughs)

LL: You learned all by yourself.

AL: I did.

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LL: Well, you knew how to do it before. [27:00]

AL: Well, I got a book from the library.

LL: Yeah, but you learned one thing, though. You don't ride a bike on the sand. You know?

AL: No, I learned that lesson. So I didn't ride it on the sand anymore.

LL: You learned how.

AL: No, I just stayed away from the beach. It was better that way.

LL: I know. I said—

AL: Because the wheels go too far in the sand. (laughs)

LL: But I said, "You learned how." You don't go into the sand. You can't ride the bike on the sand.

AL: That's right. That's right. That's right. But you do realize I needed wheels, right?

LL: That's right.

AL: Because as soon as I could get around, I needed my wheels. Do you remember? When did I start riding my two-wheeler all over town? Remember that?

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LL: Yeah. Yeah. I remember that. I'm trying to remember the age.

AL: I think I was about 12 or 13.

LL: Twelve, or I was thinking—

AL: Because I think when I was 12, you said, "You can't leave the street," and I was really ready to hang myself. It was terrible. And then when I turned 13, boy, me and my bike, we were all over town.

LL: Well, I'm concerned about safety. I don't want to come home and find my kids over there. I don't want to say, "Hey, she's gone." That I wouldn't like.

AL: And then what happened when I got my driver's license?

[28:00]

LL: Oh, you don't even talk about that. When you got your driver's license, you drove me crazy. You know—

AL: (laughs) And you know why? And you know why? Because I thought cars were cool, and I knew how they worked.

LL: You'd come around the corner and I told you to slow down, I think you put the gas on.

AL: Well, that was a stick shift and it was a snowstorm.

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LL: Yeah.

AL: I got what I deserved on that one. The whole neighborhood came out, and I got to hear about family members who hit vegetable carts in Argentina.

LL: Yeah. You ran the car right into the snowbank.

AL: Snowbank. (laughs)

LL: And then we couldn't get it out.

AL: So that was another one of those lessons I learned. I didn't put the car in the snowbank again. You realize that, right?

LL: Yeah.

AL: Yeah. And again, I started to copy you and your driving.

LL: You do drive the way I do.

AL: I do.

LL: And I'm glad you learned the right way and the good way. You haven't had any trouble, have you?

AL: No, not at all.

LL: Right, so the only thing I get a big kick out of is the

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fact that you go in to buy a car—they're all pushing four wheels, four-wheel drive. [29:00]

AL: Right.

LL: I don't believe in them.

AL: I don't, either.

LL: You get a good setup and you drive properly, and never get stuck.

AL: You're okay. Yeah, it's a crutch, I agree.

LL: You figure in all the years I've been driving, two times I got stuck. Once, a guy helped me out, and another time, we had handled it another way. So you see, that's what makes the difference.

AL: So, you knew I was going to be an engineer.

LL: Who is?

AL: Me.

LL: Yeah. Oh, I knew you were going to be an engineer. And you know how many turn around—how many people said to me, "What do you want to—what do you want to send her to college for? She's only a girl, only good for making babies."

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AL: Well, I did pretty good, didn't I?

LL: Yeah. But I'm saying, that's all they said. And people were not happy about me—

AL: Well, that's a very—that's a very common stereotype, unfortunately.

LL: Yeah, I know, but I always tell them, it's my money and I'm going to worry about it.

AL: That's right. So we did what was right for me, and it worked out, and you're happy. Okay.

LL: Yeah. Oh, I'm very happy. [30:00] So—

AL: That sounds good. Okay.

Facilitator: May I ask a couple of questions?

AL: Sure.

F: OK. (laughs) I was wondering if you had any more memories of your grandfather's apron.

AL: You know, it's funny. He used to wear it all the time when he was in the shop, and I was trying not to make my dad cry. He hung it up and he got really sick and then he died, and I was—I'm trying to think. It was right after my —I

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think it was fifth or sixth—it was right after my sixth birthday. I had just graduated from kindergarten and the whole nine yards, and every time I went in the shop, I wanted to cry.

LL: Because of Grandpa?

AL: Nonno. I missed him so much.

LL: Oh, okay.

AL: And then when they got ready to sell the shop, it was really hard on me because I knew that apron and I—and I told the two of them, my dad and my uncle—they were in it together—and I said, “Keep the apron, I want the apron.” [31:00] So I don’t know where the apron went, but hopefully, one day I get it. But that was the one thing I kept looking at going, “Nonno is still here.”

LL: Yeah. It was hard because, see, you know, even I have to tell you the truth. My dad was a wonderful man, and my mother was a wonderful person, you know? [to facilitator] And really, I came from a good background, and I instilled that on them. I tried to, anyway, and so I think I did a good job in bringing the kids up and I really enjoyed that. To me, that’s a great pleasure, because we know people that

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are—they have their children but they're savages, they're wild. You know, and then they turn around and look and say, "Boy, are you lucky you went to school." And that's the word that I get from a lot of them. So, too bad I didn't bring that letter I got from someone just recently. I just—I turned 80 and I got a letter of accomplishment, you know, what I did and all that. [32:00] It's a fantastic letter from a person who—I like her. She's a nice lady. So there's nothing I could do. You read that letter. It was—yeah.

AL: I did. She's always sort of looked at you like an uncle.

LL: I know.

AL: Because you and her dad were best friends when you were little. And I—

LL: So, you see, I spent a lot of time with this family. And their father, I hate to say it, but didn't want their children to excel. I'm sorry to say that. And I wanted my children to be above me, smarter than me. And as you progress in life, you know, in education, that's just the way it is. That's the way it should be. There's no question about that. Just keep going.

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AL: Yeah, you do everything for your kids to try to make them better than what you got.

LL: Right. What I did, I tried to do for my kids. I don't care.

F: Is that what your father did for you?

LL: Yeah. Pretty much, it was transferred down. Because, you know, you learn it from them. That's all. [33:00] And I think what was a big learning period was the fact that when my father lost everything in business because of the Depression. The Depression destroyed him. I hate to say that, but it really, really destroyed him. So I know we tried to pick up as a family, that much of the money that was lost in Chicago. And like he said, the lawyer said, they wrote these things up in such a way, you'll never get a dime out of them. So we quit. We quit trying. You know, we tried, but it's the way it goes. So I hope we don't ever repeat.

AL: Just kind of as a cap, remember when I went for my interview at Caterpillar?

LL: Yeah.

AL: What did you tell me?

LL: Oh, (laughs) she sent you to Caterpillar. [to facilitator]

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She got one—one call, and I said, "You're in."

AL: And what did I say to you? Yeah, yeah, maybe, who knows?

LL: Yeah, you were—that right.

AL: Because I didn't want to jinx it, right?

LL: She said—yeah, you said, "Oh I don't know." [34:00] [to facilitator] She says, "We'll wait." Or something to that effect. She didn't believe it. I said, "Hey, you got her, you're in." I said, "I can tell by what you said, by the way you said that to me, and my experience, you had that job."

AL: Do you remember when I called you and told you I got the job? What did you say then?

LL: I said I was happy for you.

AL: No, you said, "I told you so."

LL: Oh well, I did tell you so.

AL: And you never ever said that in the whole time I was growing up. It was so funny when you said that. I thought it was cute. And then what did I tell you about my first day going in on the job?

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LL: You know, I went through a lot in this little period here.

AL: I know that. I felt like Nonno was with me.

LL: Really?

AL: Like it was supposed to happen.

LL: Well, it was meant to happen. You tried. You applied, and you tried, and you got it. And that's all I got to tell you. But the way you said that to me, the combination of words, the way you put it, I don't remember exactly, but it said to me Annie is in. [35:00] I told you, I turned around and I said to your mother—you didn't know this—I said to your mother, I says, "Annie is going to be working for Caterpillar," I said, because (laughter) it was just my experience of knowing people, conversation, to put the words together. And that's what I did. So anyway, I was so sure that you were in there, and you just kind of said you didn't know. And you didn't know.

AL: No, I didn't, but I had hoped so. But you don't want to say yes when you don't know, right? (laughs)

LL: Oh no, you never admit it to something that's not there.

AL: Exactly.

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LL: And then when you got the job, you called up in jubilee, says "I'm going to be working for Caterpillar." So I was genuinely happy. It was real nice.

AL: Oh, I know you were. You're always happy when I succeed.

LL: So yeah. Well I was more concerned of [there] not being work, and you got it. So—and I know you'll handle it. You do a great job there. So anyway. What else did you want?

F: What was your father's name? [36:00]

LL: Luigi. We used to call him Louie or Louis. He's quite a—
(laughs)

AL: He was funny. You know what? He used to take his wine in a bag, and they would go down and all those old guys from down the street—I remember Nonno Marko, he was your godfather. But we would go sit there, me and all these old guys, and they would sit there talking in Italian and drinking their wine and having a blast. And sometimes, I'd chitter-chatter with them and sometimes I would go and run and play with the geese. Do you remember that? And then I came home one day with ripped-up tights and Nonna was about ready to cry because she thought you guys were going to be really mad at her. (laughs)

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LL: There it was. Yeah, but you—when they used to go to the park, there was about six or seven guys, they were all Italian guys making their own wine. And the funny part of it is they'd all bring a gallon of wine, sometimes they said only half. So they'd bring a gallon of wine.

AL: In a paper bag. See, that's why I never thought the guys on the street with the paper bags and the bottles was all that wrong. (laughs)

LL: So then they would play bocce ball and when they got through with one inning, they turn around and have a glass of wine. [37:00] Then, they'd go and shoot another one, see? And I never saw my dad come home loaded or my godfather. None of them got loaded because they took—it wasn't a, you know, bowl, it was a little glass of wine. And they went—.

AL: Oh yeah, and I'd hang out with them. It was fun.

LL: And the funny part of it is in the—the cops used to ride by with their cars, you know, and stop and say, "How you guys doing?" "Okay. You want a glass of wine?" They'd say, "No, I can't drink on the job. I can't drink on the job." And so there was one day—one day, one of those guys came along and

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they had taken off the hat with the star, and he came walking in from that parking lot on the side over there, right off of [Horton?] Avenue. He came in, "Well," he says, "I'm unarmed." He says, "I'll have a glass of wine."
(laughs) But he had taken the hat, the star, and he had no gun, no nothing.

AL: Basically went out of uniform. Yeah.

LL: Yeah, out of uniform. [38:00] That's pretty much the way it was. See, whenever they had free time, they had a minute to go, they used to find those guys, you know?

AL: Oh yeah. Well, we'd go sit on the front porch and they'd collect on somebody's front porch, too. But the park is what I remember as a little kid. Yeah.

LL: Park, yeah, but I remember what happened, too. You'd turn around—my father would grab you guys, one hand on each side, both kids, and they'd go in there. And my wife, your grandmother, would dress them up in good, clean clothes, nice. When they came home—

AL: (laughter) And then, we went and played in the pond, the park. It was great.

LL: Yeah. You guys, you went—you went to the lagoon.

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AL: Yeah, it was wonderful. We had a blast.

LL: And then, we came home—

AL: Oh boy, did we get in trouble.

LL: [to facilitator] They were in mud, and poor Grandpa would be in all kinds of problems.

AL: That would be Nonno would be in all kinds of troubles, yeah.

LL: Nonno would be in a lot of trouble.

AL: And Nonna would be hanging her head and darning as fast as she could. Yeah.

LL: Oh, she would wash the clothes. [to facilitator] The dirty clothes they had before was cleaner than what they had on.

AL: Yeah. (laughs) [39:00] So I hung around with those guys. What kind of influence do you think they had on me? Because I hung around with them before I had any siblings, so I mean, that was—I was around for awhile.

LL: Oh, it was fun.

AL: It was cool. Very, very cool, the old Italian neighborhood in Chicago.

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LL: That used to be a strong Italian neighborhood, then it started to break down a little bit. Then you have quite a mixture. Yeah.

AL: Sure, it changed. They all have. Yeah, they've all changed, absolutely. It's good.

F: Well, I guess to wrap up, if your grandfather and your father was here right now, what would you say to him?

AL: Wow. (laughter)

LL: My father? That poor guy would break in tears and be so happy.

AL: Oh, he'd be thrilled because this year, I'm getting the fellow [award]. I mean, just—it's kind of the pinnacle of membership in the society [Society of Women Engineers].

LL: Oh, he'd want to be—he'd want to be—he would come and join you here.

AL: Oh yeah. He'd be thrilled.

LL: I don't know how we'd get him there, but we'd get him.

AL: Well, you know, realistically, he'd be 120 something, because wasn't he born in, like 1895, or '4 or something?

[40:00]

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LL: Ninety-four, '94. So that would make him how old? Oh, he's over 100 and some years old.

AL: Yeah, about 120, almost, yeah. That's something, isn't it? When you think about it.

LL: Yeah. I tell you, those are days I—will live with them forever. I can only think if when I'm gone, that I can only have them keep repeating, I wouldn't mind them at all.

AL: No. We'd have to—we'd a lot to tell him, though, because he died in 1969, so that's a long time ago. Wouldn't we?

LL: It's quite a while.

AL: Yeah. A lot of catching up to do. (laughs)

LL: Well, I wouldn't mind spending time to catch up with him.

AL: That would be very cool.

LL: I'd love—I would love to have my dad with me now.

AL: It would be very cool.

LL: So that's—when you come from a harmonious family, it's just a pleasure to be around. So, and I want to be with my kids for as long as I can.

AL: That's good. We want you here.

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LL: Yeah, so I don't know. How much more—how much more can a parent do and give to his children? [41:00]

AL: Nothing, it's all giveback, now. We take you on trips, remember that. (laughs)

LL: Yeah. They go out of their way to take me with them, you know?

AL: Yeah, it's because we like you.

LL: Do you really?

AL: Yeah. (laughs)

LL: I know, I realize that. I appreciate that, too.

AL: That's good.

LL: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW