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IA: Ah this is June 11th, 1992, Shirley Bradley and Lisa Fine at the R. E. Olds Museum. And we are going to be interviewing Marilyn and Cal Chamberlain. Right.

IB: I don't know who wants to start first.

Chamberlain: Ladies first.

IB: Alright you are going to start first.

Wife: Okay.

IB: Well certainly feel free to chime in, you know. We basically just ask first of all some information about your background, you know, where you were born and grew up and where you went to school and the level of the education, things like that.

Wife: Ah I was born and raised in Cadillac.

IB: Okay.

Wife: Michigan. And went to school there. My education is high school, although I did take a little bit of classes at Lansing Community College.

IB: Okay, and I think I read in the materials that we got ah, that you ah, you were an office worker, a clerical worker at Reo?

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: Is that right?

Wife: Yes.

IB: So when you were in high school did you take the um, stenography and the typing and all that stuff.

Wife: Yes I did. Yes.

IB: And ah,

Wife: And I had worked there for a number of years then stopped and took care of the children until the youngest one was in junior high. And then I started back.

IB: At Reo?

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: Where did you work before your children came?

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Wife: I had worked in ah, Cadillac at the .....

IB: So you were both living in Cadillac?

Wife: No.

IB: Oh this is before you?

Chamberlain: I was born and raised in New Jersey.

IB: Oh, in my neck of the woods, because I'm from New York.

Chamberlain: .....

IB: Right.

Wife: Both of us had been married before and this is the second marriage.

IB: Oh I see. Okay. Um, and did you come to Lansing specifically because there was an opportunity at Reo for you?

Wife: No, my um, husband came to work at Oldsmobile.

IB: Oh I see, oh okay and you just went with him and got the job at Reo. Okay. Um, did your folks have a farm in Cadillac?

Wife: No, they had a grocery store.

IB: A grocery store.

Wife: Ah huh. So I had to, of course, in high school worked in ... different places and I also worked for them for a while in the grocery store.

IB: Oh, you helping them out behind the counter.

Wife: Yeah.

IB: And are most of your jobs were office jobs?

Wife: Ah, after I graduated from high school, yes. Before that I just did odd jobs.

IB: Odd jobs.

Wife: I worked in a dimestore and ushered at the theater and worked at Montgomery Wards.

IB: Salesgirl.

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Wife: Right. Then I started working in the office.

IB: Right, because you got the training in high school.

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: I've very interested in this because my first um, before I got interested in Reo, I did a lot of work on office workers, that was my interest. And so, um, that's why I'm asking all the questions about the training, I'm real interested in that.

Wife: Once I started working in an office, I knew that I was never going back to clerking.

IB: Right.

Wife: I didn't like that.

IB: Yeah. You have more autonomy.

Wife: Oh yes.

IB: You have more control over what you are doing.

Wife: True.

IB: Right. Um, and when did you start working at Reo?

Wife: It is strange I remember it, so the late '60's.

IB: Okay.

Wife: And I can't remember the year. Okay, let's see it would have been in '66? When did Diamond Reo close?

Chamberlain: '75.

Wife: '75, well then I started in '65.

IB: So you worked 10 years. Um, and what department did you work in?

Wife: I worked in the um, service department.

IB: Okay. As a, were you a secretary?

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: Okay, and did you work for a particular boss?

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Wife: I worked for Jim Catamine.

IB: Jim?

Wife: C a t a m i n e .

IB: l i ....

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: Okay, and you were just his

Wife: Ah I worked doing just general office work to start with.

IB: Okay.

Wife: And then they divided the department and Merrill Hoffenhocker took half of it and I worked as his secretary for Merrill.

IB: Oh okay.

Wife: So when they divided that up.

IB: And you did general office work, correspondence and filing

Wife: Right.

IB: All basic, answering the phone and all that stuff, okay.

Wife: Yes.

IB: Okay. Now we heard that ah, that office employees had a union at Reo.

Wife: That was, ah, they didn't have when I hired in.

IB: Okay.

Wife: It was after I had been there awhile.

IB: Do you have any, do you remember who the union was affiliated with, because people that we've asked didn't really have very clear memories about this?

Wife: UAW.

IB: Was it UAW?

Wife: UAW.



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IB: Okay.

Wife: Yeah, yes.

IB: Alright and when it came in did you belong to it or

Wife: Yes.

IB: You did. But they didn't really do very much apparently, they I mean there was never any strikes or anything of that kind?

Wife: No.

IB: .... okay. Did they improve the conditions for the office workers?

Wife: Well in some ways yes, buddywise, and security.

IB: Oh okay.

Wife: You felt much more secure, but as far as relations with people you worked for, ah, like your boss, it didn't improve that one bit. It made it very difficult, in fact, at times.

IB: Okay.

IA: Did they resent the office workers having a union?

Wife: Well I think most in the company ....

Chamberlain: .....

Wife: .....

IB: There is something in between. Yeah.

Wife: He worked for the, without the union, he was with the company, so he is on the other side.

IB: Um, so I guess what I'm sort of hearing from you is that the relationships between the supervisory and the clerical was actually pretty good. And even before the union got there.

Wife: It was.

IB: Ah huh.

Wife: Everybody there worked together so well. It was almost like family. There was very few people that'd you ever meet that you wouldn't care to work for. But as a whole, most of them

were nice, yeah. There was a few that I wouldn't want to work for.

IB: Over at the Reo? Yeah. But for the most part you felt that that um, if you had a particular grievance or problem, you could talk to somebody about it.

Wife: With me I always could.

IB: Yeah.

Wife: There was always someone .. taking care of with a problem that we've had.

IB: Yeah, we've heard that from a lot of people. Yeah. Um, not so much by the late '60's, but the company itself throughout its whole history has had a um, reputation for providing lots of different services and, you know, with the clubhouse and

Wife: Oh yes.

IB: all different kinds of things for their employees. Did you participate in any of those ah kinds of services and you know, things. It wasn't really going strong by the way.....

Wife: I belonged to the Diamond Reo Girls Club.

IA: Oh you did.

IB: I was just going to ask you. Oh.

Wife: Yeah. And I probably should have told you, when I first went there to work, I'd forgotten, I worked for um, oh my goodness now I can't say the name of it. It is like my girl friday or

IB: That's a Manpower.

Wife: Manpower.

IB: Okay.

IA: One of their temp agencies.

Wife: And I went in to run the blueprint machine for three months and ah, then as soon as my three months was up, I quit Manpower and the next day I went to work for Diamond Reo.

IB: What kind of thing does the Reo Girls, The Diamond Reo Girls Club do?

Wife: Oh you would meet once a month at lunch ah we at Christmastime we'd of course, get together and make baskets, we'd have baskets for needy people. Oh there was just things like that.

IB: Ah huh, and it was all the office, the girls in the office.

Wife: Ah huh.

IB: Different offices around the plant.

Wife: Right. And I don't know you'd get together you'd have Halloween parties of course. It was fun, it brought you a lot closer. You got to meet so many of the women that you wouldn't have otherwise.

IA: They were in other departments?

Wife: Ah huh.

IA: We've spoken with Mildred Gibbs and she told us about the baskets.

Wife: Oh yes.

IA: And fashion shows, I think she had some pictures.

Wife: Yes, yeah. Fashion shows. Oh a wedding reception. I don't recall if that was one of the office girls got married but I remember.... book reception

IB: Did you try, were you specifically looking for a position at Reo itself when you came in '65, or were you looking for

Wife: No, no, um, my husband, well I stayed home and raised the boys. So we were here a number of years

IB: In Lansing already?

Wife: in Lansing.

IB: Yeah.

Wife: Before I decided to work. Ah, then when they got old enough I went to work, so I went to Manpower. And they are the ones that offered me the position at Diamond Reo. At that time it was just Reo.

Chamberlain: .....

Wife: It was just Reo. Ah, for well I just sat in for a girl that had been in a car accident I worked for her.

IB: As a temporary placement yeah.

Wife: As a temporary. But I liked it so well there and Jim Catamine said that he would offer me the job if I would apply. So as soon as my three months was up, I did.

IB: Ah huh, I see.

Wife: Right.

IA: Did you continue to do blueprints there when you rehired?

Wife: No. Then I worked as a secretary, which is what I wanted to begin with.

IB: One of the things that we are really interested in this and we've been hearing over and over again is how the Reo was different from working from other places.

Wife: It was different, it was family. You felt like family, we still do. Your friends are still ..... ah, we get together every year for a reunion. And the girls club that every year until last year for a reunion.

IB: Oh.

Wife: And last year was the first year that they didn't. It just had gotten to the point where people, it was too hard to get them together. And somebody had to be in charge. And ah, so everyone decided that we would meet at Coral Gables instead.

IB: Oh that's right, we went there. Oh no not Coral Gables we went to the Goldengate.

IA: Goldengate.

Wife: The women and of course, working I didn't have a chance, I've only been retired now a year. So, sooner or later

IB: So you went to the University after Reo.

Wife: Yes.

IB: Oh I see, okay.

IA: But you were there at the Reo right up until they closed.

Wife: Right up until they closed.

IA: Did you sense that the end was coming or

Wife: Oh yes. You could tell.

IB: Like maybe a couple years ahead of time?

Wife: Ah, as soon as the new group took over. It didn't take long and you could see it.

IB: Did the office employees have a pension program too as well as the other did, but and also that was

Wife: There was trouble too.

IB: It was trouble too.

Wife: Yes.

IB: Yeah, okay. Because we've heard stories about that from other people as well.

Wife: Oh well I did get some money from it eventually.

IA: Eventually after the .....

IB: What do you think made the Reo so different, besides the fact that it was obviously smaller than working at Oldsmobile or some of the other bigger companies? I mean was there anything in particular

Wife: Just a totally different attitude I believe in working together.

IB: And who made it that way. Do you think it was the supervisors or the, you know, like the higher ups in the organization or

Wife: I think it was just everybody as a whole.

IB: Ah huh.

Wife: Because everyone was so willing to work together and ah, they didn't ask you to do something that they weren't willing to help with if need be. So it was just, just a different attitude. I never worked anyplace like that before.

IB: Really.

IA: .. ideas on that too.

IB: Yeah, this is one of the things that we are both really interested in because it just repeats itself over and over and over.

IA: And that is so unusual and you don't hear that.

Wife: I'd never worked anyplace before that was like that and certainly Michigan State wasn't, although I made many friends there, there wasn't that closeness. You wouldn't get together.

Chamberlain: The Reo ... supervisors would roll up their sleeves and go right at it side by side with you.... which I .... I'd go right on the floor, take a time study if I had to.

IB: To figure out the better way to do something. Yeah. Right, that's part of it we heard. Also that it was a local, some people said because it was like from Lansing. You know, that the management didn't live in who knows where or

Chamberlain: Well there was somebody in the families you know, brothers and sisters .....

IB: That's right, we heard that one too. We hadn't ... women who's husband eight brothers all worked at Reo together with her husband.

IA: Her father and her

IB: And her father, right.

Wife: Oh you'd see so many families where the father and the son and it just kept going on down, daughters.

IB: Ah huh, now it wasn't necessarily the best paying place in town. I mean it was fair but it wasn't like you were making more money than other people in other places.

Chamberlain: There was a lot of lean years.

IB: Yeah, right, that's true too.

IA: ... some of the changes

Chamberlain: (very muffled sounding voice) And many years we just ....  
..... you cannot do it.

IB: Yeah. Okay.

Wife: Now the last, well I worked mostly in service until they brought ah, advertising in and decided instead of using an

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outside advertising firm, they would do their own. And they brought Bruce Plaxton in to do that and I worked for him.

IA: Plaxton?

Wife: Ah huh.

IA: P l a x t o n.

Wife: Ah huh. Yes.

IA: I'll save that for later on when the transcriber has to go over this and how to spell things.

Wife: Ah we typed up all the brochures that was sent out advertising that went in any magazines or whatever. Ah, at one time there was a movie and I wish I could remember which movie it was that was being made and we worked ah, in contact to the people and they used the Diamond Reo truck within the movie.

IA: Oh that's wonderful.

Chamberlain: Was it Race Across Africa.

Wife: Yes it was, the Race Across Africa. That's the one.

IB: And it was made in Hollywood using Reo trucks.

Wife: They used our trucks.

Chamberlain: The truck competed with a car.

Wife: A car.

IB: Oh I wonder if it is on video.

Chamberlain: That was really a great movie.

Wife: Yes.

IB: And that would have been in the late '60's maybe?

Wife: Probably in the '70's.

Chamberlain: .....

Wife: Because I was working for Bruce then.

IB: Huh. Um,

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Chamberlain: Was it called Africa Safari?

Wife: I can't remember, African

Chamberlain: African Safari. .... Yeah, because when we came to see the movie they gave us the ... and that letter and ....

IB: Oh my that was nice.

..... Lansing here with an elephant.

Wife: I don't remember.

IB: That would have been a nice thing to have done.

Wife: Oh yes it would.

IB: But that just reminded me of the other thing that some people have said is ah, how proud people were of the products.

Chamberlain: Oh yes.

Wife: Oh yes. Definitely.

Chamberlain: Did anyone speak about lawn mowers, they built lawn mowers.

IA: Yeah.

IB: We've heard a little bit about that.

IA: A little. Not a whole lot, but

Chamberlain: That was my territory when I first got into ...

IB: Oh was it, what did you do there?

Chamberlain: I was a time study analysis ..... and I would go in the lawn mower department, set up better methods and set up standards. .. you make so many pieces and hour and you do this and you do that and set up line balances so that each work station on the line would have somewhere close to the equal amount of work.

IB: So the work flow would be kept smooth.

Chamberlain: Right.

IB: Yeah.

IA: They were producing power mowers.



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Chamberlain: Ah yes, power mowers.

IA: That would have been what years do you think?

Chamberlain: In the late, see in the '50's.

IA: In the '50's.

Chamberlain: About '53.

IA: After the war, when they were

Chamberlain: Yeah, I think they sold the lawn mower department in 1959.

IA: That's right, we just heard that on Tuesday.

IB: Oh we did, we just did

Chamberlain: ....

IA: Somebody we just interviewed on Tuesday sprayed the lawn mowers.

IB: Mr. Bowles.

Chamberlain: Oh John Bowles.

IA: Right.

Chamberlain: Sure.

IB: Sprayed them, so we heard about them from him.

Chamberlain: I .....

IA: ..... oh that's wonderful. I'm sorry, he is not here.

IB: We had a very nice talk with him on Tuesday. Um, but since we are getting into this, let's get some of the, you said you were born in New Jersey.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IB: Okay.

Chamberlain: A little town in Plainsboro, right 12 miles out of Princeton.

IB: Oh okay. And um, how did you get here?

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Chamberlain: Well a long story. I graduated from Princeton High School and then I enrolled at Princeton University

IB: Oh.

Chamberlain: in a business course and then shortly after that I got like half a semester, ... a full semester, the war broke out so I was in the Marine Corp and I spent four years in the Marine Corp. in World War II. After the Service, I finished my Service, ah, I come home and education didn't seem to mean that much anymore. My whole attitude had changed.

Wife: Not after what you'd been through.

Chamberlain: Yeah, ..... I didn't need the

IA: Once you got through that war you probably thought you really couldn't live forever.

Chamberlain: We partied and partied that was August of '46 I got out and the little town of Platisburg(?) just went wild and we just partied and partied and partied. And I couldn't see a light at the end of the tunnel. I could see this going on forever and, you know, there is no way out of this. So I decided that I would just move over to California, go back into the Service and make that my career. On the way from New Jersey to California, I stopped in Bad Axe, Michigan, to visit my sister, Irene, whom I hadn't seen in 15 years or better.

IB: Oh my what a reunion.

Chamberlain: Yeah, so we went up there and you and I did, and visited with them for a couple of weeks and she had her husband and they had three children then. And I stayed there for a week and I ran into a girl by the name of Delores Marks whom I later on married. And my trip to California (laughter)

IA: Funny how life changes for us.

Chamberlain: And because there was hardly any work in Bad Axe, that was bean country, if you weren't a bean farmer, there wasn't much else going on.

IA: Oh okay.

Chamberlain: So I came down to Lansing and went to work at Motor Wheel. I worked there for a few months and then they ran out of material and they laid off a lot of the newcomers which was .... So then I went to work at Reo. It was hard to get in there. There was no openings.

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IA: .....

Chamberlain: Yeah, I went every day. I went to the employment office every day.

IB: Why did you go to Reo?

Chamberlain: Well, I had heard a lot about Reo and how they had such a nice family, people to work with and the product was the greatest, you know, so I wanted to work at Reo. So I

IA: What kind of job did you want to get there?

Chamberlain: Well, at the time, I was willing to take most anything to get started, but I really wanted to get in to engineering.

IA: Engineering.

Chamberlain: ..... engineering. So, finally they got to know me by my first name and then the day that there was a job opening, I got it and I worked in the engine plant.

IA: Engine plant, okay.

Chamberlain: I used to ah,

IA: What did you do

Chamberlain: I was an hourly worker. And I worked on a machine. I made gears, shapes, I made the gears, shaving, drill, so on ..... for the engine. So I worked there in the engine plant, probably oh six or eight months.

IA: And this must have been sometime in the late '40's or early '50's already?

Chamberlain: Early '50's.

IA: Early '50's.

Chamberlain: Yeah, early '50's. I started there August of '50.

IA: Oh in 1950. Okay.

Chamberlain: So I heard there was an opening in the time study department, so I went up there and I applied. And ah, later on ... called and Clyde Parker. Clyde Parker was the supervisor of the ... department at that time. So I went up there for an interview and ah, along with there had been seven or eight other people interviewed from outside the plant and inside the plant. And I

was lucky enough that while I was in there, Al Zimmer, who was the plant manager

IA: Oh yeah, we've heard about

Chamberlain: he ... he came in the office while I was interviewing. So he sat down and joined the interview which was a big break for me. Evidently I sold myself to him. Because when he got up to leave he said well Floyd, he said I guess all you two have to talk about now is wages.

IA: Oh.

IB: Oh that was .... (laughter)

Chamberlain: ... tell me to report when .. hired him.

IA: Right, exactly.

Chamberlain: That's how I got in to

IA: Do you think he was impressed with your background, you know, ...

Chamberlain: Yeah. And I worked ah, putting farm machinery together somewhat

IA: Right, you had gotten your hands dirty, so you weren't afraid of that too. Yeah.

Chamberlain: Well it sounds like a small thing, but on the jobs I was put on in the engine plant, I always tried to do just a little better. If the guy who had 100 pieces an hour, I'd get 102, 103, I worked just a little harder. And when I made up my time slip, it was always clean and neat and perfect.

IA: Yeah.

Chamberlain: ..... this is not right, what did you do, you know, correct it.

IA: Can't read this.

Chamberlain: And I was always very careful, so ..... desk they picked mine out from all of them. It was clean and neat, nice printing and it came right out the money every time. But .... anybody could of done, but I took the time to ..... and I think they liked that.

IA: Yeah. Yeah.

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Chamberlain: So, consequently, I got into time study. They sent me to school and seminars.

IA: Oh you did, where did you go?

Chamberlain: Ah, I went and took courses at LCC. And I went to ah, Cincinnati, Ohio, for a week in training over there. I can't tell you the name of the school

IA: But it was a business school so to speak.

Chamberlain: ... industrial engineering.

IA: And Reo paid for this.

Chamberlain: Oh yes. And then after I worked my way up to supervisor of the IE Department,

IA: IE stands for industrial engineering.

Chamberlain: Industrial engineering, yeah.

IA: Okay. ....

Chamberlain: They sent me to ah, Ohio again to an industrial engineering supervisory course for a week.

IA: And how long did it take between being hired on in IE to when you became the supervisor?

Chamberlain: Oh I started in '50, what year was it that I left to be the supervisor? Of course, I brought my resumes.

Wife: I wish I ... to bring.

Chamberlain: It had to be at least nine years later.

IA: Okay.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IB: I'm going to shut this off, I hear rock'n'roll music out there.

IA: Oh rock'n'roll music.

Chamberlain: Yeah, that's a good background. So anyhow, then I worked as a supervisor for several years and ah, then ah, Zen Hansen became the first, well first before Zen got there, he was the president of Diamond T truck over in Chicago. Now the White Motor Company had bought Reo, sold the lawn mower and ah, then

they were going to merge, they also bought Diamond T. They were going to merge with Diamond T and Diamond Reo. Or just Reo was then, Diamond Reo was just Reo. So they were going to determine whether ah, Reo should move from Lansing to Chicago and built those trucks in Chicago or should move the Chicago plant over here to the Lansing plant and build them here.

IA: Right.

Chamberlain: I was one of the group that was sent over there. There was myself, Clyde Wilcox, Frank McDonald, Jane Logan, and myself. We were sent over to Chicago to make an analysis of just the pros and the cons of which way we should go. And after we were finished with our analysis, it was plain to be seen that Diamond T should move to Lansing. We could handle their big cabs much easier than they could handle ours and better paint systems, many, many things. So I was in on that part ..... Diamond T to Diamond Reo and, of course, Reo then became Diamond Reo.

IB: Diamond Reo, right.

Chamberlain: So then shortly after that ah, let's see it probably would have been in the '60's and ..... must have been. Arbod Burg became my boss. That was Arbod Burg.

IA: Arbod Burg?

Chamberlain: Arbod Burg, B u r g.

IA: Okay, Arbod Burg.

Chamberlain: A r b o d ..... That guy could read and speak fluently seven different languages.

IA: Oh my.

Chamberlain: He was just a real brain.

IB: And what was his position?

Chamberlain: He was ah, ah, supervisor of manufacturing engineering,

IB: Okay.

Chamberlain: manufacturing engineering.

IB: When the Diamond Reo was merged together.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IB: Okay.

Chamberlain: I worked for him for many years and then ah, we will come along with, I guess ..... Cappaert bought Reo. Because we had a lot of lean years too and there was years there that we weren't building military trucks, we were down to five or six commercial trucks a day. So without the military, we have been down to two. .... Cappaert bought Diamond Reo and the government knew him and I shouldn't say but he was unfair with some of his activities with the government with bids and so on and so forth. So they wanted nothing to do with him.

IA: Oh I see.

Chamberlain: Reo no longer could even make a bid.

IB: Oh.

IA: Oh that is interesting.

Chamberlain: No we never, you could not bid anymore, they didn't want to see them. So consequently, that was the beginning of the end, I could see that coming. At least two years in advance I could see that we weren't going to be around, with Cappaert running the show. So ah, what are you going to do? I'm almost 58, 59 years old. And you know, I was going to be out on the street without a job, which I was. So, they brought in their henchmen, ... Cappaert, ..... supervising

IA: You were one of the ones

Chamberlain: Yeah, I made a senior, ah, I was made a senior..... instead of but anyhow that's not the point. That didn't last long either.....

IB: Every time we hear it, it still doesn't make it sound any easier to hear.

(all talking)

Chamberlain: I ..... around,

IA: Add.....

Chamberlain: (very muffled sounding) .....

IB: I we talked to a lady who said she just stood outside and cried.

Chamberlain: I can understand that.

.....

Chamberlain: I was one of the last ones out of there,

IA: Were you?

Chamberlain: I helped turn out the lights.

IB: We, also people's children said that they were sad because they used to go there as children to the clubhouse and had very pleasant memories as young people connected to the Reo. And the fact that it wasn't there was very exciting to them, you know. Their parents wouldn't drive by because they didn't want to upset their kids.

IA: We often ah, have visitors here who mention the clubhouse right away and that's like their childhood home has been destroyed. I mean they have that sort of emotional ties to it. And ... person they all say it ..... Why did they tear it down. The people that started this museum tried to get that building. That would have been the ideal place for that.

Chamberlain: Oh gees that would have been great.

IA: But the city, of course, owned the property and ah, they just kept putting ..... and finally the biggest one was what you have to completely redo the building and make it handicapped accessible. It wouldn't have taken that much, some ramps, whatever, but they made it so expensive that nobody had the money to come up with it to buy that building. And yet the city leases us this building for \$1 a year.

Chamberlain: Isn't that something.

IA: and this was .....

IB: It is hard to .....

IA: Well.....

IB: Parking lot.

Chamberlain: Something I was very proud of that I didn't mention is that we had a steering gear club, I'm sure you heard about that.

IA: Oh yeah.

Chamberlain: And I was secretary treasurer of that club for a couple three years and that was an elected office. That was good, we had



lots of activities, ah baseball excursions to the Tiger games, etc. .... remember those. (laughter)

IA: I bet they are.

Chamberlain: And then we had a meeting once a month where we'd have a dinner and a speaker or some kind of entertainment.

IA: In the clubhouse.

Chamberlain: In the clubhouse.

IB: You guys were upstairs, we heard.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IA: We've heard about the big chandelier shaped like a big steering gear and Louie Garcia was telling us about that and he said he wished he knew where that went.

Chamberlain: We had a nice bar upstairs there, you know,

IB: Ah huh we've heard about that.

Chamberlain: And a beautiful

Wife: The girls club up there.

IB: Oh upstairs in that room.

IA: In that same room?

IB: Yeah.

Wife: Ah, some times there and ah, sometimes, there was a smaller room,

Chamberlain: There was a smaller one off to the side there.

Wife: Yeah. Sometimes we .....

IB: There must have been a lot of rooms in that building. I was only ever down on the main floor, as a child I was taken there for some entertainment.

Wife: So you had the old Reo car

Chamberlain: Did you know they had the first radio broadcasting station ..... Oh yeah.

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IB: Absolutely.

Chamberlain: And that bowling alley down there at one time.

IB: I keep wondering what became of all the things out of that building.

Wife: You know Cappaert took the car.

IB: He did?

IA: He did.

Chamberlain: Oh he robbed, yeah there was a big deal about that, ..... it was a 19, what year was that, '27 ..... Reo Cars

IB: '27 Reo.

Chamberlain: He took that Reo too.

IB: Wow and he also

Chamberlain: He took a lot of old things, there was tractors and trailers back in there, engines and transmissions on there, he robbed the place blind.

IB: What was he going to do with those, I wonder?

Chamberlain: Oh, take them down to Mississippi, he had a place down there and he ..... mobile home.

IB: Oh I see.

Chamberlain: I remember once there was, we had seven military trucks ..... train that came in that day, the side track over there ... somebody parked the trucks a little too close and they got sideswiped. They were all totalled out and the insurance company paid ..... but they ended up going to Cappaert's place down south where he had them fixed up, painted the .... and sold them commercially.

IB: My goodness.

IA: It makes you wonder if he told the guys to park a little closer.

Chamberlain: But yeah, ..... (laughter) I mean those are the things you hear that

IB: Yeah.

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IA: Yeah.

Chamberlain: .....

IB: Right.

Chamberlain: But that was common knowledge.

IA: We've heard that when he came in with his special crew, what was the woman's name?

Wife: Mildred Jones.

IA: Mildred Jones.

IB: I've heard about her.

Chamberlain: She was .....

IA: Hatchet woman, that's just exactly what other people have said.

Wife: Oh yes she was, ah huh.

Chamberlain: You know, ..... I used to always brown-bag it, my lunch, I got to where I quit taking my lunch because what she would do, she would come in and sit in a person's department for maybe two or three days she would just sit in their department and watch and then she would call them into her office and give them their final check and tell them to go up and clean out their desk with Herb Wheeler or one of the plant protection people would be there to help them clean out their desk. To make sure that they didn't take anything they shouldn't.

IA: Take anything.

Chamberlain: And that was the end of it. They'd go home right then and there.

IA: She never gave you any ... and valid reasons why

Chamberlain: No notice.

IA: .....

Chamberlain: So when she came into my department, she spent two and a half days in there and I said good morning to her, that was all I ever said. I went on about my business as if she wasn't there. I think she liked that. And ah, I didn't try to make any brownie points or anything. I quit bringing my lunch. I knew

I was going to be fired and she left my department, left ....  
..... She might have been just knocking off the high  
salary ones.

IA: Yeah, I would imagine because I've heard from someone that she  
promised she would reduce the budget by so much by the first  
year she was there.

Chamberlain: And the easiest way to do that is to .....

IA: It is happening today in places.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IA: That's right.

IB: The Korean War must have brought military contracts again that  
kind of brought the business up again. I'm thinking after the  
second World War then things went down and they made lawn  
mowers, but the Korean War in '50 must have been more military  
contracts.

Chamberlain: Oh yes. Lots of em.

IB: ..... again. You weren't on ah, the lawn an hourly  
employee for very long?

Chamberlain: No, less than .....

IB: ..... so you didn't really have any contact or ... in the  
union and all that.

Chamberlain: Not to speak of.

IB: Okay, and then by that time, once you got out of there it  
wouldn't have been possible anyway.

Chamberlain: Well that was on the other side ....

IB: Right, that's right, that's right, okay.

Chamberlain: I negotiated with em.

IB: Oh you did, you were on the other yeah. The union at Reo,  
after their strike in '37 was not a very contentious  
organization from what we've heard.

Chamberlain: No. No big ... just grievances by the carload.

IB: Individual, personal grievances. Yeah.

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Chamberlain: But I think a lot of it was due to the fact that it was, I think because it was so convenient. Rather than go to the supervisor and try to settle it.... like Marilyn did, a lot of them just said, well I see my steward. ....

IB: And the steward would take the grievance on .... Were they usually perceived, I mean they were, ah, grievances about the work, the work that they were doing or were they about things like pay and

Chamberlain: Most of it was about the work that they were doing.

IB: The work.

Chamberlain: Either somebody was doing their work or they were doing work that they were not in their job description.

IB: I see, okay. Alright, that seems to be the standard.

IA: What about personal safety too, injuries that sort of thing? Were there ah, problems with personal safety?

Chamberlain: I think there was. I believe back in those days, of course, all of the factors were that way, even ..... they had .. problems and until the 1980's rolled around that ah, people began focusing on the safety....

IB: Environmental things, yeah.

IA: I was thinking too that Reo being an older factory and the last few years not putting much, probably not putting much money back into the new equipment, and was thinking about old machinery breaking down or causing injuries or

Chamberlain: Yeah, they put patches on the patches. ....

IA: As a labor historian, I'm very interested in time studies stuff, you know, because I had even read Frederick Ludlow Taylor myself. So I guess I'm just, for my own personal ah, out of my own personal interest, what was sort of the philosophy regarding ah, time and motion studies that the Reo put into practice? You were there.

Chamberlain: Yeah, a fair days work for a fair days pay.

IA: Okay.

Chamberlain: That was the general .....



IA: Ah huh, and how was the in layperson's terms, right without getting too technical, because I don't know anything about industrial engineering myself, but um, how was that arrived at between the fair amount of work that was required from an individual worker?

Chamberlain: Well figuring the schooling and the training and so on, ah, they ..... establish the percentage of effort that a person is making. In other words are they working 60 percent efficiently or you know, and once you've established that, then you go ahead and just tag the job the way they are doing that. And then you break down percentagewise.

IA: Okay and what was the incentive provided to get people up to par if they weren't performing to that level?

Chamberlain: Ah, when I first started in the time study it was the pay scale.

IA: Okay, so it was

Chamberlain: Now the ... was \$1.65 an hour.

IA: And then there was above and beyond that ...

Chamberlain: Yeah, you started getting where you earned over \$2 an hour, if you looked ..... check the job out.

IA: Okay, I see. Oh, oh, so if they were doing too well, then you had the red flag.

Chamberlain: ..... too easy.

IA: Oh okay.

Chamberlain: So if they were only making \$2 an hour and getting done at 3:00 in the afternoon

IA: Right, something is wrong. Did you ever find out about guys who um, got together to keep the rates?

Chamberlain: Oh sure, but that's another thing that quite often the operator would think that he is really pulling the wool over your eyes, the fact ..... by slowing down.

IA: Right.

Chamberlain: But a good time study ..... lots of practice. You could see false moves being made .....

IA: Going a little slower .....

Chamberlain: I think ..... when you start taking your time setting to see that it is always setting on ..... 6, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, nobody can be that consistent.

IA: Unless they are counting it out.

Chamberlain: .. count it.

IA: And take a little break.

Chamberlain: So they would know, it is a smart way to do it. That way they could set their rate and know just what it is going to be. But I would always, if I get a person like that, I would take maybe two or three cycles and then I'd interrupt them and say why is it that you reach over and ... like this .... why aren't you also, why aren't you getting ..... with this hand, do something with that. And then they started again, they'd have to get into the room and start counting. But they go through cycles ..... and as soon as I would see they were getting into it, then I'd stop them again. They end up hurting themselves. Because you'd end up probably ..... cut them just a little bit closer than you should percentage.

IA: Ah huh. So did they get mad at you?

Chamberlain: Oh sure. I was threatened.

IA: Oh no. Oh my goodness.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IA: Oh dear.

Chamberlain: One day I came out of the parking lot and ..... and I came out of the parking lot and I was standing on the curb and the traffic and I was looking over at the building and I heard a car speed up and I looked just in time to see this car swerve right towards me and I swear the door handle almost touched my belt buckle.

IA: Oh for goodness sake.

Chamberlain: And I could see who it was, I just don't want to mention any names right now. So I went to ah, plant protection and this .... (can't hear) Well anyhow and I told him what had happened. So I said if I ever get hurt out in the shop around this individual, I wanted you to know that it wasn't an accident. Because I put .....



IA: Oh.

Chamberlain: So, a few days later I was walking down through his area heading down to the framing and behind a big stack of wheels, he worked in ..... department ... wheels and ... pallets and he couldn't see me coming down the isle, but .... he ... where he could, but I couldn't see him, but I could see this chain pull above and I could see it swinging back and forth and I thought somebody is ..... and they called me and I ..... somebody was going to push something ..... so I had to keep my eyes open. So I walked right along and just when I got to the corner I stopped and there come two great big ..... right across the aisle.

IA: Oh my goodness. Good heavens.

Chamberlain: He was trying to hit me.

IA: He definitely was.

Chamberlain: So I also mentioned that to plant protection people and my supervisor. This guy had had a problem back when he was younger on a farm. He had run over his little brother with a tractor, .... falling off the tractor and run over him and killed him. And it really affected his mind. But he had taken psychiatric treatment for many years and he was went back to his shrink and ..... I believe he still had some problem.

IA: It sounds like it.

Chamberlain: I would have ..... But you know, that went on for a long time. I just stayed away from him. .... But when Diamond Reo was going down the tube, people losing their jobs and I was told ..... I walked out ..... Cal, how are you, .....

IA: Oh my goodness.

Chamberlain: So I guess ah, when the ship was sinking .....

IA: Yeah.

IB: Aside from that, how did you ..... um, .... you know, did you sense um, you know the sort of stereotypical impression of the time study person is that they, you know, they walk through and everybody looks and tries to hide what they are doing and very tense.

Chamberlain: Like he is a policeman.

IB: Right. Did you get that sense when you

Chamberlain: Oh sure.

IB: Really?

Chamberlain: Oh yeah.

IB: Yeah.

Chamberlain: Well you didn't make too many friends. But those that came there really planned on doing a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. You never had any problem with them. There was always that few like I said.

IB: Right.

IA: Yeah. ....

IB: And most of the people we've talked to, you know, obviously they are the ones that ended up staying longer, so ah, they were happy, relatively happy with what they were doing. That is exactly what they said, they said you know, you could do okay at Reo if you did your job and you were conscientious about it and you know, um, give them a fair day's work ... any problem, right.

Chamberlain: Well if you had my philosophy where you tried just a little better, whatever job you put me on I'd do better ..... help me up the ladder.

IA: Oh I'm sure.

Chamberlain: That's a good attitude.

IA: Yes it is. Wasn't it Louie who said he ..... he took the dirtiest job and tried to do it a little bit better and

IB: Yes.

IA: and tried a little harder and then he pulled himself up that way too. It is too bad we still don't have that kind of a philosophy and possibilities where you can do that and work your way up.

Wife: Because many of us in the office was the same way.

IA: Is that right.

Wife: Well you thought that way. And you always tried to do your very best, you know.

IB: That's bound to make a good product and a good feeling.

Wife: Oh yes.

IB: Do you know anything about the history of your position? Did Reo always have a time study person?

Chamberlain: From the time that I went there they did.

IB: Right, but I meant from before that, you don't know?

Chamberlain: ... when they built cars, I don't know ...

IB: You don't know anything about that, okay. I'm just curious to you know when they got that going.

Chamberlain: A good question.

IA: I could see how it could evolve over time.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Huh, no pun intended there. Ransom E. Olds, Ford supposedly stole the idea of the assembly line from Ransom E. Olds.

IB: And Ransom stole it from the Europeans.

Chamberlain: There you go.

IA: So Ransom was obviously an important person and the whole notion of according to ... inefficiency and production so I was just curious, you know, even in the early years they had somebody who was just designed as somebody in charge of looking over that kind of thing.

Chamberlain: Well just of the record when I went to work for Harley Davison after Reo went .... I went to Wisconsin, ..... and started out .... 100 percent, that's the only way to go.

IB: What is standard data?

Chamberlain: Well you take many, many time studies and establish a time for ... 10 inches, 12 inches you set up these standards to grasp and ah, assign and drop or place and you set up these charts so then you look at a job and if the guy has to reach 12 inches to pick up something, ..... so much time for that reach. And then the grasp is the part square, is it

round, is it pointed ..... and each one has a different time for grasping. So much for a grasp. And then to pick up and move. And how far he moves it and all these things are timed. And you can sit down and establish the time study standard without even going out to prove it. That's right. I mean we had a time study and the union time study was in our department. And the only thing he could argue without any standard was that he left something out. ....

IB: I see.

Chamberlain: He didn't put a brush in there, okay. And then you go out and look at the job and see well maybe he doesn't have to brush, maybe we can eliminate that. .... take a look at it ..... okay he has got a brush.....

IB: Um, at Reo, it was a worker, for example, thought that they could do the job in a different way at a better way, than had already been devised and was being done before. How did they go about changing?

Chamberlain: Well I can tell you that from my own experience. When I was working down in the plant, ah, I had to the can gears that were cast iron and we had to drill holes .... and then we had this horizontal drill..... and the drills came in from the sides and punched ... holes right between the teeth. And the drills broke off ... all the time..... change the drill, put a new drill in, pack the machine, so on. And I was the guy that was running this machine. So I said to myself, they had long shank drills and first off that's expensive, I ... move the heads in closer to the ... use a short chain drill and I think we got too much feed and not enough RPM. ... faster and keep it slower, we wouldn't probably break off these drill. So we did it. I can't tell you now how many pieces per hour the new rate was, because they could not retime it, boy it went sky high.

IA: Oh sure.

IB: Oh.

Chamberlain: But somebody looked at that and said there's a guy that has got a good idea.

IB: Ah huh and who did you tell that do your supervisor or the foreman?

Chamberlain: Charlie Butler, he is our foreman.

IB: And most of them would be pretty perceptive to that?

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Chamberlain: Oh yeah. They would come over and look at it. Because they know that was a problem area.

IB: Right.

Chamberlain: And this guy has .....

IB: I'm just asking this because you know in the automobile industry today, for example, workers say you know nobody listens to us, they don't care what we think about making things better or doing things in different kinds of ways, but obviously at Reo we've heard from other people that if the worker had an idea about how to make things better, it was listened to. And they would make changes based on what seemed reasonable and it would be better to do it that way. Which to me seemed like a really ah, obviously a more effective way to make products.

Chamberlain: Of course the old, now they haven't said it was for those kinds of ideas where you get a payback.

IA: I was going to ask you if Reo if Oldsmobile a worker can make a suggestion and if it goes through all the committees and whatever and is accepted, he gets paid a certain amount for that. That didn't happen.

Chamberlain: Never had that at Reo.

IA: It was just that you personally made the job better.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IA: Plus, I suppose in the long run it paid off because then they would think well they needed a good man to put up in this position, they would automatically think it. So in a way you got paid for it.

Chamberlain: Still it was the fact that I had some brains and could think.

IB: Ah huh. And when you signed on with the Reo, you said you would take anything that you would get, because you knew, or at least you'd heard that this was the place where you could reasonably expect to work your way up.

Chamberlain: Yeah, work your way up.

IB: Right. Whereas at other places, it wouldn't have been as easy.  
.....

IA: I wonder how many people were left on the supervision say that last year that had been there with you?

Chamberlain: Hum, there was quite a few of them.

IA: That's as people are being weeded out.

Chamberlain: There was still quite a few of them left.

IA: Ah huh, what was the attitude, they are bringing in new people, he is bringing in his own team, that's got to build up a resentment.

Chamberlain: Oh yes. It definitely did.

IA: It seems like

Chamberlain: They would not listen to us, you know. Any of our ideas was ..... They never want to make a change and do this or do that, they wouldn't. In cases where I was involved I knew what was going to happen. .... And I would say, okay, this is the way you want it done, that is the way we will do it, but here is something you ought to think about, this could happen, that could happen..... and it would happen. Something to do I remember about the engines, they came from the engine plant over a conveyor all the way down and ..... railroad tracks and ah, into the next building. And ah, ... over there, um, ..... hanging ... even overnight because they would collect moisture and get dusty and so on and so forth. Ah, ..... wanted them to change around a little bit ..... and so on and so forth, so it got full all the time and ..... we had a whole building full of things that we had to salvage. ....

IA: Oh that cost money.

Chamberlain: Well sure. But .....

IA: Oh they weren't really interested obviously in making a go of it.....

Chamberlain: That's the way I figured it.

IA: Yeah.

Chamberlain: That was .....

IA: Milk and draw.

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Chamberlain: Milk and draw, exactly. Write it off. Steal what you can out of the pension program.

IA: Frustrating for people like your husband who has been conscientious, how frustrating to work under those conditions.

IB: He must have gone home every night and

Chamberlain: ..... that is the worst thing ...

IA: You got what?

Chamberlain: I got to drinking.

IA: Somebody else mentioned that too, I don't recall

IB: We heard also about suicide.

IA: Yes we did.

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IB: The works...

IA: The frustration and the pressure and the stresses too.

IB: Yeah. Not to mention the whole community, the loss to the community.

Chamberlain: Oh yes.

IB: It was really such an important part of Lansing.

Chamberlain: It was a heartbreaker to see friends of yours that worked there all their lives and they just get fired, boom, out the door.

IB: And it was so hard to watch these people that the husband and the wife both worked there, family, and they are both out of a job. Nothing to depend on.

IA: And some ..... these are maybe not being able to get a job somewhere else. Close to retirement.

Wife: At least my husband is working someplace else, so

IA: So you were there right to the last.

Wife: Ah huh. That was hard.

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IA:               Somebody told us that one of the gals we talked to said that we were talking about the very end, did you know that it was coming. And she said pretty much what you said, you could feel it coming, but she said when she went to work that morning, the doors were padlocked, there were chains over the doors and she just stood out there. She thought, well it will open tomorrow.

Wife:            You keep hoping.

IA:               She said there was no announcement or anything, ah, they didn't come through and say to you Friday is the last day, clean out your desk.

IB:               Right, that's why you didn't bring lunch.

Wife:            We didn't know when it was coming.

IB:               Why walk out and leave that good roast beef sandwich.

Chamberlain:    ... my last one.

Wife:            Every day you went in you wondered and waited if this was it. This is the day.

IB:               It must have been for you girls in the office, it must have been new paperwork constantly and changes of orders and changes of

Wife:            As they were linking, well they were laying people off, letting people go and so all of us were having to take different jobs ..... and you would fill in where somebody else had left. Well .. the most seniority it was just working down.

IB:               Oh my dear. Whether that was an area you were trained to work in or whatever.

Wife:            Well I wasn't the last, I had ..... never worked in that area before, I had no

IB:               What was ...

Wife:            What did they call it, down where um, they placed orders, export maybe.

IB:               Oh not .....

Wife:            It was there on first floor and Shirley Crist worked there.

Chamberlain:    Planning and scheduling?



Wife: That's it. Planning and scheduling. And .....

Chamberlain: Something funny I got to tell you works out, it shows you how these experts that come in, they think they hired a group of efficiency experts to come in and help them. So they came in and interviewed each supervisor to see what he did and ... and so forth. Well, because I was in the manufacturing end of it, each morning I had to go over to engineering and each new project, new reprint and so on, and transmitters were looked at which is ..... well..... draftsmen would draft on a piece of tracing paper this part and then you drew blueprints from that .....

IB: Oh I see it is a.....

Chamberlain: Right. So, all these tracings were on the table and we would go through them and see what this change was all about. And then we'd look at the part that the engineer had designed and then I was one of the group, there was somebody from purchasing manufacturing that was me, so I was in engineering, and somebody from ah, accounting and we would decide if we were going to make this part and how we were going to buy it. And if we had equipment facility that would make ... manufacture ... problem, I'd say well ..... (can't hear) .... that is no problem. Ah if there was something to do with maybe buying new equipment to try to handle it, then the guy from purchasing might say well gees I can buy that from so and so for .. bucks I know. .... so they called that line up meeting. So when I was being interviewed by these experts, and as of course I had to attend the line up meeting ..... charge of manufacturing concern each day line up ..... so later on Fred Culagross, he was supervisor of truck lineup which is ..... next to the president of the company, you work right for the president of the company he had a drinking problem and they fired him. And now they had no ..... lineup job so we called in the expert. He knew nothing about truck lineup, not a single thing, but because I'm at the lineup meetings.... they misinterpreted what that was all about and they recommended me for the job. So I went down and interviewed with Eddie Hansen and he hired me. So I was truck supervisor of truck lineup. Boy I conversed with all the big shots in White Motor Company, all the truck dealers all across the country. I was a wheel all of a sudden. I didn't know where I was rolling, but I was a wheel. (laughter) But you see how that could happen. How a square peg could get put into a round hole and I'd accept any challenge like that.

IB: Sure.

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Chamberlain: You know, Fred Culagross could do it, I could do it. So I leaned heavily on the people that were in the department, they guided me along and I struggled through it.

IB: You were an insider, so of course, it was in their interest to help you out.

Chamberlain: True.

IB: They'd rather have you than some of those other guys.

IA: Good point. What did you say Fred's last name was?

Chamberlain: Culagross

IA: Culagross.

Chamberlain: C u l a g r o s s, I think. Culagross.

IA: Was that a pretty frequent the drinking problems with the people in supervisory?

Chamberlain: I don't think so. I think down toward the end when things got really, then it got to be ..... yeah. But not ....

IA: Yeah, okay. It was almost a repeater then that period right now ..... industry

Chamberlain: Yeah, yeah, the frustration is just really

IA: Yeah, that's right.

IB: The stress. Fear.

Chamberlain: I'm glad I'm retired. (laughter) .....

IB: All the problems coming up, schools

Chamberlain: Of course, after they really down the tube.

(several talking)

Chamberlain: I went to work for CATA ..... so I got a call from them and he wanted me to come down and work with Stan Wright. ....

(two people talking at once)

Chamberlain: job description, so I went down and worked for him. And I did this and set up some ..... got to ride the buses

down there. Then one of the fellows that used to work for me in time study, called me from ah, Harley Davison and ..... he said there was an opening over there for a ..... send your resume to so and so and so and so, so I thought about it, I sent my resume over there and ..... (too many people trying to talk) ..... then ah, .... and I was ..... and executive suite for three months. They called up..... they paid for my laundry, my food, everything for three months I stayed there.

IB: My goodness.

Chamberlain: At Howard Johnson, executive suite ..... work for Harley Davison ..... They gave me \$5,000 more a year than what I made at Diamond Reo as a supervisor which all things are relevant you might say. You'd get out there and you'd find out that rent is higher, food is higher, so \$5,000 a year .....

IB: Yeah, yeah. And how long did you stay in ...

Chamberlain: Three years.

IB: Three years.

Chamberlain: But my wife just didn't seem to like Milwaukee. I couldn't persuade her to move out there and so I had an apartment and she'd come out and spend, I was trying to wean her away from Michigan, but it didn't work.

IB: Michiganders are hard to

Chamberlain: Yup, she wouldn't hold still for it. So I resigned and came back home and went to work for ITT.

IB: Hancock?

Chamberlain: Yeah.

IB: Oh, I worked for them.

Chamberlain: Did you. Whereabouts?

IB: In Elston.

Chamberlain: So did I. I was the IE there at Elston.

IB: During what period?

Chamberlain: 1982 until 1989.

IB: Oh I was there before that, I was there in '71 and '72 and

Chamberlain: Did you know the girl that wrote that book, Not Without My Daughter?

IB: I don't know her, but my very best friend grew up with her.

Wife: .....

IB: Betty Mamundee(?) yeah.

Chamberlain: She used to work there, she

IB: She is from Elsie, she is back in Elsie now.

Chamberlain: I met her and she autographed a book for me.

IB: My friend, Bonnie ah, well Bonnie Sharkosky by that is her married name. She had her sister both grew up with her. And ah, she is living back in Elsie and I thought, you know, when the book came out, I thought isn't she a little afraid about him knowing where she is. I mean this is, maybe the more publicity you get the more eyes are turned on you and maybe the safer you are, I don't know. But it scared my friend, you know, ... her safety going to be.

Wife: I wondered about that too.

IB: And her daughter.

Chamberlain: Yes.

Wife: ... worry about her.

Chamberlain: Well he himself might not come over and do anything, but send his henchmen, because he ..... she be kidnapped again.

Side B

Chamberlain: .....

Wife: Ah when I was working in advertising, the group, Reo Speedwagon wanted to use that name.

IB: Oh the rock'n'roll group.

IA: Oh the Reo Olds

Wife: Rock'n'roll group. Well that name is patented. So they had to go through us and we, of course, ... with them for months to give them the right to use that name.

.....

Wife: Yes and um,

IA: Although it wasn't a great group.

Wife: No, they sent us their first recording.

IB: Did they?

Wife: And I had a copy of it for a long time and I can't find it anymore. But it was a terrible song. I think that's why I can't find it.

IA: They were not very good.

Wife: But, ah, but that was very interesting writing back and forth to them and um, working on that. And also, we would hear from them personally.

IA: Oh really?

Wife: Ah, because they wanted to use that name so badly.

IA: What did they call themselves before they became REO Speedwagon, after they finally got permission?

Wife: Well ah, they've changed it now, I don't think they call it REO Speedwagon.

IA: They were here in Michigan last year.

Wife: They were just here, I think it is REO, I think they've gone down to REO or REO Speedwagon for a while. But ah, yet they had to get permission to use that.

IA: What kind of channels did you have to go through to get permission for them to do that?

Wife: Well the company itself went through a lawyer and they went through all kinds of records and different things and finally agreed they could use that name. But it was with, they were only going to use it for their group. They wouldn't use it for anything else.

IA: Yeah, that is interesting.

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IB: Yeah, I often wondered about that.

IA: I have too because when I've giving tours, and I'm showing visitors our REO Speedwagons that we've got out there and they always bring that up or if I don't, they do.

Wife: Right.

IA: So and I've wondered myself how did they get the right to use the name. Just because the company went out of business doesn't mean that the patents are

Wife: And this happened before they went out of business.

IB: Yeah, that group has been around for a while.

Wife: Right. But um, but it was interesting.

IA: I've heard too, I don't know how true it is, they were going to come here two or three years ago, the .... two years ago. They were on a tour of the midwest and they were going to come in here and get some publicity stills taken with the REO Speedwagon truck out here and as it turned out they didn't, but um, I had heard that one of their first albums had one of those trucks on the cover with them, posing with it. I don't know how true that is, but

Wife: I'm not sure about that. But um, the records they sent us were just a little slipcover and it didn't have the picture or anything on it.

IA: Hum.

IB: Um, I have a couple of questions about the whole period that you worked at the Reo, um, from 1950 to 1975. Um, ... were an industrial engineer and um, might be the best person to ask this, were there any major changes in the organization of production during those years, those 20 years. It was obviously a lot of the '20's and I've done some work on that .... period in the archives over at State. Um, just the whole unit, use of the assembly line and the increasing efficiency in production during the 1920's. But I'm wondering, because I haven't done that much work on this myself from the archives, if there is anything between 1950 and 1975 in terms of .....

Chamberlain: No. The thing that stands out in my mind was really would be in the .... department, because that's where I worked ... they put in an electrostatic paint system which was unheard of, electrostatic and that was real big ... it cost a lot of bucks to put it in.

IA: How did that improve the paint process?

Chamberlain: It was all automatic.

IB: That's what I'm interested in. If they got it

Chamberlain: .... guys like Johnny.... use that spray gun and if they needed more spray they put in the electrostatic. It was all based on electric, magnetics system which is a positive goal ... the paint would spray out and it would spray out being positive ... and the negative, which is the part in the conveyor would draw the paint to it.

IB: Oh really.

Chamberlain: Oh yeah. It ..... all around the new crevices and ....

IB: That's the one that coming down the line was just automatic.

Chamberlain: Is the parts at that time. ... parts ..... and go right over to the assembly line.

IB: Were there any efforts to become more ah, automated in the process at all?

Chamberlain: I think that the conveyors as as matter of fact, I can't tell you how many miles, probably somebody ..... miles of conveyors they had. .... conveyor systems.

IB: Oh okay.

Chamberlain: That's what speeds up production.

IB: ..... yeah, but not in terms of picking up, because already by the early '70's you know, the automobile industry was trying, was getting more, smart machines and automation and things like that. I think that

Chamberlain: Now Reo put patches on the old ones.

IB: Okay, alright.

IA: They weren't going to spend any money on any new process.

IB: Somebody who was working in let's say 1955 in the plant, wouldn't have had any trouble working in 1970.

Chamberlain: Oh no.

IB: They would have been able to come right in and start all over again just like happened before. Okay. Um, how about in terms of the workers. Did you see any change in the attitudes, the types of workers um, their relation to the company, anything like that between when you started ..

Chamberlain: Oh yes, back when we were on piece work ah, every operator.... got production and they did good work. Because you didn't get paid for bad pieces, you know, and now days you do. But back then you didn't. Ah, but anyhow, as soon as we went from piece work to standard time, immediately scrapped and rework went up, okay, toward the percentage of that ...

IB: Yeah, and that was in the late '50's, in the late '40's that it switched, right?

Chamberlain: No it was in the '50's.

IB: In the '50's? Okay.

Chamberlain: And production went down.

IB: Ah huh. Okay.

Chamberlain: And a couple the production going down along with your upswing and scrap and rework.

IB: And the bad pieces.

Chamberlain: And boy it cost the company a fortune just to do the piece work done.

IB: Was that because of the union that they switched? Yeah. One of the workers we talked to, I can't remember what department he was in.

Chamberlain: Colin.

IB: Yeah, he complained about that. He said he couldn't make as much money, because when he worked on piece whatever he put into it that's what he got out.

Chamberlain: So why .... why try to.....

IB: He resented greatly that no matter what he did, he was going to make the same amount of money.

Chamberlain: No incentive.

IB: Right.



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Chamberlain: But I'm a firm believer in .....

IA: Right.

Chamberlain: I know it works. I saw what happened .....

IB: Yeah, any other change about the workers.....

Chamberlain: No nothing that comes to my mind.

IB: Were they younger, did they start coming in younger in the '60's.

Chamberlain: Not that I knew.

IB: It seems like the same kinds of groups. Coming from the same kind of backgrounds from the Lansing area. One thing I read a lot is a lot of ah, workers off the farms ... people who came from farms.

Chamberlain: Oh yeah, many of them had small farms and also worked at the Reo.

IB: Right, right. But still so little different than like Flint, and Detroit and so the work force is a little different here.

Chamberlain: And then, of course, there was the days when the government said you have to have so many minority workers.

IB: Right when did that start in the '60's?

Chamberlain: Yes, in the '60's.

IB: Yeah, do you think that made a big change?

Chamberlain: Oh yes, it did. And ..... I'm not against the minority people or anything like that, but so many of them were come here to go to work and it would take two of them to do what one older worker used to do. And ah, that was the only thing.

IB: Mostly blacks or did they start hiring Hispanics, African American, mostly blacks?

Chamberlain: Mostly blacks.

IB: How about women? Um, we already know from talking to other people that in World War II they started coming into the plant in the line.

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Chamberlain: Of course I wasn't there then.

IB: Right.

Chamberlain: That was during the war.

IB: Right, so they were already there.

Chamberlain: Yeah. And ..... women .... a good job.

IB: Yeah.

Chamberlain: Of course I'm outnumbered a little bit here. (laughter)

IB: You are close to the door. (laughter)

Chamberlain: I have no objections to ever .... a woman on the job, because they do good work. Most of them .....

IB: Were they mostly in separate departments?

Chamberlain: No.

IB: They were all integrated in the plant.

Chamberlain: I take that back, 85/80 that was the packaging department, they had practically all women over there. ....

IA: Something they could specifically handle.

Chamberlain: They were good packaging, that kind of thing women take a little bit more pain with than a guy would do.

IA: Ah huh.

Chamberlain: They worked out much better.

IA: You wouldn't be so apt to see them down on the .....

Chamberlain: Right. Yeah, nice and clean and ..... clean and the fellows didn't care.

IB: Um, I know from the old days, you know, way before World War II, the women were found in um, ah, the sewing for the seats and upholstery and things like that.

Chamberlain: Up in Department 23 the cab building, they had wiring assemblies, the ..... and they ....

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IB: .. that too. There were certainly departments where they tended to be more abundant.

Chamberlain: That's right. But they also ran the punch presses.

IB: They did?

Chamberlain: Oh sure.

IB: I'd loved to have seen that. I really would have wanted to see that. That's great.

Chamberlain: Well if worked at .....

IA: Punch presses and welders and the seat tracks.

Chamberlain: Was Ernie Ringle the boss over there at that time?

IA: No, he wasn't.

Chamberlain: ..... Dick Loins.

IA: I think. .... plant manager everyboby liked and he left.

Chamberlain: Dick Chamber was the plant manager when I left there.

IA: Oh Suzanne ..... I worked for Paul Turner, he was my supervisor.

Chamberlain: Oh yeah. He was ..... Paul, he retired just two years ago.

IB: Oh he did.

IA: Yeah, that's right he did.

Chamberlain: ... Crystal

IA: Yes, yes, he had .....

IB: Um, did you both when you were working at Reo live in homes of our own houses or did you rent apartments?

Wife: No, home.

IB: You had your own homes. Um, were they somewhere near Reo? A lot of people we've talked to have settled someplace near? You know, like in the south part of town.

Chamberlain: Seventeen miles I drove. Ah, that's where I'm living today.

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Wife: But you also lived on Delores(?) Street.

Chamberlain: Oh yes back in back in the very early '50's, I lived on Delores Street. That's where I met Marilyn.

IB: Oh really?

Wife: We lived on ... Street and I did when I started at Diamond Reo.

IB: What number on .....

Wife: Oh dear, it

Chamberlain: ... 15, 2115

Wife: Ours is 19 something and it is the first house right behind that old Christian Science Church they have there.

IA: Okay.

IB: I don't know where this is.

Wife: It is right off Mt. Hope.

IA: It runs from Mt. Hope to Baker.

IB: Oh okay.

IA: And she used to live right behind the ...

Wife: I'm on the other side of Mt. Hope on Baker. I was on ..

..... it is just south of  
Mt. Hope, the first house.

Chamberlain: That's where um, .....

Wife: It was across Mt. Hope.

Chamberlain: She was born on Delores Street.

IB: No way, I didn't know that. Do they have a little plaque.  
(laughter)

IA: She used to live on Ada Street. Right down where it dead ends.

Wife: Claims of fame.

Chamberlain: ..... (laughter)

Wife: ..... I think it was 1917 it has been so many years. Um, but that was a nice street. That was another one of these streets where you made permanent lasting friends, but we ..... it goes on. I still see some of those people that lived there. The old neighborhoods were different .... we got a mobile society now. But I was living there when I started Diamond Reo and we moved um, to the .....

IA: And how did you two meet? You didn't meet at the Reo obviously.

Chamberlain: No, we lived on Delores Street ..... because I wasn't sure just where I wanted to work and I found that I .... city and ah, Paul and Marilyn and their family moved in .....

Wife: And then one of the people that he mentioned that worked at Diamond Reo, Pride Wilcox was my brother-in-law. ... and eventually Clyde ..... fished together and

Chamberlain: And then I decided I didn't want to live in the city anymore, I wanted to get out where the kids could have some room to play ball and so on, so in 1959 and .... isn't that strange?

Wife: But we moved out when the boys got to the point where Steven had gone to Walter French for junior high and Jeff was getting ready to start and we no longer wanted the boys in the city schools. So we wanted to move out, get out of town. And ah, so we bought a house in the Williamston area, but it is just off Meridian Road and one side of Meridian Road is Okemos and our side was Williamston.

IA: And how many children did you have?

Chamberlain: Three.

IA: You had three.

Chamberlain: Two boys and a girl.

IA: And you had two boys.

Wife: Two boys. Yes.

IA: So you have a house full at Christmastime.

Wife: Oh yes we do. We have our house is full and also we have deck parties in the summer where all come, but that's fun.

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Chamberlain: We used to go over and visit with Paul and Marilyn and play cards a little bit. My wife and I do this. She passed away um, seven or eight years ago. Paul passed away

Wife: In '77.

Chamberlain: '77, see when I went to work in Milwaukee I just lost track of Paul and Marilyn ..... apart. Paul died while I was out there and I didn't even know about it until I read it in the paper .... and ah so that was it. And then one day when I was back home in Michigan and I had gone to a ball game, my son pitched fast pitch softball in Rainey Park. And ah, I went into a restaurant and had something to eat before I went to work right from the ball game and Marilyn was in there with a girlfriend of hers. And I don't know how many years,

Wife: Oh that was such a surprise.

IA: Aren't you glad you went to dinner that night?

Wife: Yeah. (laughter)

IA: Marilyn, what was your name before it was Chamberlain?

Wife: Uptegraft.

IA: Okay you are going to have to spell it.

Wife: U p t e g r a f t.

IA: Okay.

Chamberlain: That was a good question. Because ..... that name for her...

Wife: Oh you weren't with Steve on, oh he enjoyed that so.

Chamberlain: It is a small world, isn't it?

Wife: Yes, that's my oldest son.

IB: Oh for goodness sakes, well you tell him Shirley Bradleys son ... (laughter) What is he doing on the ....

IA: Oh from BOC he was one of our van drivers, but he was more than that, he organized these van drivers. They started up the expedition ..... they had to be here for two weeks, you know, well the shop sent me and I'm getting paid so okay, and with Steve's input and personality, he molded these guys into the greatest group.

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Wife: He is like that.

IA: We hated to part when it was over. He really is interested in the environment of the river and he caused these other men to feel the same way.

Wife: He is so very active in the Sierra Club.

IA: Yes he is. And that's partly what brought him in.

Wife: He's been to Washington lobbying. .... I'm pleased, mothers like to hear that too.

IA: Of course they do. Of course they do. You've got a boy to be proud out there, we like him. He still probably, ... haven't been too active in ..... the last few ... it's kind of

Wife: I haven't heard him say too much about it, but ah,

IA: But what we did is we established the idea, we established the reasons and all these watershed councils now have come from that Grand River, Looking Glass, Red Cedar and so on.

Wife: Right. Well it tickled me because Steve started out .... he ended up .....

IA: They all did?

Wife: Yeah.

IA: I'd rather, I'd rather get a canoe than a van.

Chamberlain: He was standing up.

IA: Yeah, really. You start out in a group of 200 people who don't know each other and you know, you keep your own space and we were clinging together ..... oh two more days and we got to break up and you know it will never be the same again. You are not going to have that. ....

Wife: .....

IA: Have that particular cohesiveness.

Chamberlain: Well the nice thing about I saw Steve and Jeff grow up you know, naturally ..... so our relationship was .....

.....

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IA: Everything just fit right together, you didn't have those blended family problems.

Wife: Right, because Doris .... baby-sat with my boys.

IA: Oh. So it is wonderful for them as well as for you.

Wife: It is they all know each other.

Chamberlain: And the strange part about it is that as many times as we were up to Paul and Marilyn's house, and they were over to our house, ..... I never ever looked at Marilyn as anything but Paul's wife. No I never had any little secret love for Marilyn. She was just an awful nice person and made a nice mother for the kids.

IA: My this is a great story. (laughter)

Chamberlain: I can tell you a better one.

IA: Oh oh, please do.

Chamberlain: I won \$10,000.

IA: Oh the lottery?

Chamberlain: No, WFMK Radio.

IA: Oh my goodness.

Chamberlain: That is a story that is my favorite. They send these fliers out in the Reo which