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IA: Oh dear, I'm not going to be able to do that.

IB: This is Shirley Bradley and Lisa Fine at the R. E. Olds Museum and we are going to be talking with Wayne Nunnheimer about Reo memories.

Wayne: ... was right, ah, you had to have 30 years in in order to realize anything. You didn't ah, ah, when the government got through slashing us, I meant the first thing, let's say that I retired at 550, see that was suppose to be my pension. Okay, the ah, the government says oh oh oh oh we got a loophole here. We don't have to pay your union incentive, well what do that mean to me. \$300 went right down the drain off of that \$550. Then, they said well, you got 30 years in, so you are sitting prettier than the rest of them. I mean because you got your 30 years in, see, the poor fellow that's got 25 years in say, maybe 25, 26, 27 maybe not quite 30

IB: Close enough.

Wayne: see, what is he going to get at the age of 62 or 65 if they prorate him like they did me. When they took away the \$300, but it didn't hurt in a way. I mean because I'll tell you why. The contract read this was \$550 until they put you 6 foot under the ground. Alright, now, so they put you 6 foot under the ground, alright now I said what happens when I get to be 62? See I mean, we had ah ah, well ah, the retirement of 30 and out regardless of your age if you was only 49.

IB: Yeah.

Wayne: It didn't make any difference.

IB: Didn't matter, yeah.

Wayne: That's right. You still got your \$550, see, I mean you got your \$550 until, until they put you 6 foot under the ground. Well, alright. Ah, going to tell you. Alright, the government well, anyway, what happened to my pension when I was 62. Say I elected to retire at 62, they ah, then oh, what's it called,

IB: Maybe this is a good spot to stop and get the paperwork out of the way, I think.

IA: Yeah, is that okay with you, Mr. Nunnheimer?

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: Okay.

IB: It will give you a minute to think about it. And we'll come back to it.

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IA: We want to take your tape off, Shirley, just for a second.

IB: Yes.

IA: Okay, usually what we do at the beginning when we start is just to get some background about the people who worked at Reo. You know, where they came from, what their families were like. Um, first of all if you were born here in Lansing or if you came from somewhere else before you worked at the Reo.

Wayne: Well, what do you want to know first. Where I was born?

IA: Were you born here?

Wayne: No I was born in Bay City.

IA: Bay City, Michigan?

Wayne: Yeah. Bay City, Michigan.

IA: Ah huh, were your parents farmers up there or did they work in a factory?

Wayne: No my dad worked at a foundry during the World War I.

IA: Ah huh, in Bay City?

Wayne: In Bay City, yes.

IA: Okay.

Wayne: And in 1918 when I come along.

IA: Oh I see. Okay. It was 1918. So you were a happy baby.

Wayne: I was a World War I baby. I was a World War I baby.

IA: Okay. Um, were your dad's folks um, from the United States?

Wayne: Oh yes.

IA: They were from here.

Wayne: They were, while they was born in Indiana. My mother was in Belding, Michigan.

IA: Oh, your mom was from Belding?

Wayne: Ah huh.

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IA: Okay. Okay. And did you go to high school, go to school in Bay City?

Wayne: Yeah, well no, no, no. When I was an in ah, hum, still well before I went to school they moved to Lansing. But anyway, ah, let's see. I didn't go to any school, no in Bay City, no.

IA: No you moved before that.

Wayne: That's right.

IA: Why did your parents move here?

Wayne: Oh, that's a good question.

IB: Maybe there weren't any jobs in Bay City, is that possible?

Wayne: Well, there were jobs there. Ah, ah, my father was training in a boiler factory, I mean that's a, he was working for 25 cents an hour. When they were making good money during World War I I'm talking about see. He ah, he did ah, he was working for 25 cents an hour and apprenticeship, you might as well say it was an apprenticeship.

IA: Right. He was learning the trade.

Wayne: Right, well how come I don't know why they moved to Lansing.

IA: Maybe he had a better job here?

Wayne: Well evidently he did, because well 1918, you see, the war was over then, wasn't it?

IA: It was just ending.

Wayne: Yeah. So evidently he come to Lansing

IA: He came when you were very small.

Wayne: Right, okay, he must of come to work at Reo then because I was only in the grade school then. I was in the grade school when we

IA: Here in Lansing.

Wayne: Here in Lansing.

IB: And your father came and worked at the Reo?

Wayne: Yeah I think he did, yeah I think he did, he worked because he did put in ah, what was it, 40 years anyway.

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IA: Your dad worked 40 years at Reo?

Wayne: Yeah. Yeah, you see ah, from World War I up to ah, 1937 ah, he worked at Reo see. He worked at Reo. Alright, at that time, Reo was going to go broke that time too. If it hadn't been for World War II they would have.

IB: Ah huh,.

Wayne: They would have went broke, they would have went out of existence you see.

IA: Yes.

Wayne: And ah, so my father was there, I mean he was still working. He had 21 years in at that time, now maybe you can figure up now, but

IA: Twenty-one years when World War I,

Wayne: From World War I up to 1937, see or pretty near the outbreak of World War II.

IA: Okay, you guys must have moved here right after you were born.

Wayne: Well, yeah you are right there.

IA:

Wayne: Because as I say, and when I went into grade school, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Street.

IB: Oh Kalamazoo Street.

Wayne: Yeah, Kalamazoo Street School, when I went in there, then, of course, I went to West Junior.

IB: Yeah.

Wayne: Then to Old Central, that's where I graduated. I mean I graduated out of Central.

IB: What was your dad's name?

Wayne: William.

IB: William Nunnheimer.

Wayne: Ah huh.

IB: What did he do in the plant?

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Wayne: He was a sheet metal layout. I can't tell you too much about it, well I can tell you something, I meant ah, say you wanted a cabinet put in here on you know I mean say it ah, he would ah, go lay out the plans. Lay out the plans on how to make it, see.

IA: He was very skilled.

Wayne: Right. He was in skilled trades, I wasn't. I never no, I mean even working at Reo, I mean I'm just a common laborer, I'm just a common laborer.

IB: He was there during the big strike then, or just right after.

Wayne: Right, right, with the sitdown.

IA: The sitdown in '37.

Wayne: The sitdown strike in

IB: Did you remember anything of that? What that he might have said

Wayne: Um, I can remember vaguely ah they had to stay in the plant, see, they locked all the doors and they stayed in the plant and you fed them through the windows.

IA: You were a teenager then, you were probably still in high school.

Wayne: Well huh, I must have been. Because I don't remember how old I was at that time.

IB: Did you go down with your mother to feed him through the windows?

Wayne: Well I must of. (laughter) Because, I mean, he stayed during the day, naturally, I mean they all did.

IB: He did, he participated in it.

Wayne: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

IB: Was he in favor of it? Or did he do it because he felt he had to?

Wayne: Yes, because at this time, the union was not noted. You see, I mean they were fighting to get the union in here, yes.

IB: And he wanted the union?

Wayne: That's right, yeah, because ah, well ah, let me tell you something. The Reo used to be called the Olds Soldiers Home. You know, if you got a job there it was easy. You know, not like General Motors, I mean put somebody on the line over in General Motors and you I

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mean you know, car one right after the other. And Reo was a little different. I mean that's why they got the name of the Old Soldiers Home.

IA: Who called it the Old Soldiers Home?

Wayne: Don't ask me. (laughter)

IB: Maybe everybody huh?

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: That's interesting.

Wayne: Well

IA: Did the workers call it that too?

Wayne: Oh sure.

IA: Oh okay.

Wayne: Because even if the General Motors, you know, they'd say you worked ... oh you work at the Old Soldiers Home, huh.

IB: Because things can't go on the line similar

Wayne: Why sure, it was so much different you see, but Reo was trying to get a union started during the sitdown strike. They were trying to get

IA: If it was so easy, why did they want the union for?

Wayne: Well it was easy and it wasn't. They had time study men that would get behind the posts and watch you work. They figured that your job was a little bit too easy,

IA: I see.

Wayne: so if they say what can we do to make it harder. See.

IB: How can we get more production out of this person.

Wayne: Right, that's right. That was the whole thing in a nutshell was trying to get more production out of everybody.

IB: Did work change a lot in the '20's, that the men were upset about or maybe they were worried about the conditions from the '30's, you know, laid off and bad times.

Wayne: Well that I can't tell you.

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IB: You don't know. You don't remember your dad saying anything about those things.

Wayne: No.

IB: Okay. Okay.

Wayne: No.

IB: You didn't mention about the time study.

Wayne: Yeah, that's right, well that was the reason the union got in, yeah. They wanted a close shop. That is ah, ah,

IB: The management wanted a closed shop?

Wayne: No, no, no, no,

IA: The workers.

Wayne: workers

IB: The workers wanted a closed shop.

Wayne: wanted a closed shop because you see then, you know what that means, don't you.

IB: Sure.

IA: Yes. Only the union in there. Only union members.

Wayne: Alright. That's right well you had to join the union, whether you wanted to or not.

IB: Right.

Wayne: Or you didn't have a job. See I understand ... if you understand what a closed shop is.

IB: Yes.

IA: Yes.

Wayne: Alright.

IA: I do.

IB: And um, did your dad thing things improved after the strike, when they got the union in?

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Wayne: Yes it did, because they had stewards in, I mean if you had a problem, you could go to the steward.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: And he could go to management, then you see, they would go to management.

IB: Right, so you had recourse

Wayne: That's right.

IB: for your grievances.

Wayne: Yeah, you are right. Yeah you had ah,

IB: Okay. Um, did your dad ah, and your family when he was a worker there participate in, you know, the activities at the Reo

Wayne: Yes.

IB: in the clubhouse and the sports teams and the band and all that.

Wayne: We didn't do that, no.

IB: Okay, good

Wayne: Yeah,..... ah, that's why Reo was always noted as kind of a family group.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: We had picnics. You say the clubhouse was there, we had activities there because I can remember when I was in grade school, ah, going to movies every Wednesday and Friday. Being able to buy 1 cent candy or 5 cent candy bars.

IB: Oh pretty good.

Wayne: (laughter) I could remember that.

IB: And the concession, they had a concession there.

Wayne: That's right, yeah. That was when they had penny candy and 5 cent candy bars. See I mean they were not 40 cents, you know.

IB: And they were bigger candy bars too.

Wayne: Yeah. And that way, you see, okay that's I went all through school. Then I graduated in 1937.

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IB: The same year as the strike.

Wayne: Right. Now wait a minute.

IB: Yeah, that was the

Wayne: Can't be right then.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: That can't be right then, the strike was before that.

IB: The strike was March '37.

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: March '37.

Wayne: Because ah, ah, the strike was over

IA: When you graduated?

Wayne: Well yeah,

IA: Well you must have graduated later that spring?

IB: Yeah,

IA: Did you remember the Lansing Labor Holiday when everything closed down downtown?

Wayne: Yeah. I can remember that. I can remember

IA: That was the same year as the strike.

IB: Were you downtown at that time, maybe from high school?

Wayne: Not unless they wanted a band.

IB: Oh you were in the band.

IA: You played in the band.

IB: What did you play?

Wayne: I played the trumpet, yeah.

IB: You played a trumpet.

IA: Oh great.

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Wayne: Yeah I started in the seventh grade, yeah, seventh grade learning to play and instrument.

IB: Going back to

Wayne

IB: I'm sorry Mr. Nunnheimer,

Wayne: Alright.

IB: Going back to the clubhouse and the activities there besides the shows, do you remember going there for anything else?

Wayne: Dances. Yeah, they would have dances there.

IA: You went there as a teenager for the dances?

Wayne: I don't know as I ever went

IA: Oh but you know that other people did.

Wayne: Yeah that's right, yeah. And I don't know if my father went, I mean he could have went with mother. Ah,

IA: How about sports teams and things like that, baseball, because the Reo had a real good city league team?

IB: Your dad didn't play on the team or anything.

Wayne: Oh no, no, no, the only activity he wanted to just go in the clubhouse for taking me to the movies, yeah.

IA: Okay.

Wayne: Because you see, I mean you had to have a pass in order to get on into the movies, you know.

IA: And then it was free.

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: It was free.

Wayne: That's right, and then it was free, yeah. But you had something to show that you was a Reo worker

IA: Right.

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Wayne: Of course, I don't know how many passed their cards on down to somebody.

IA: Did your mom work outside of the house?

Wayne: Well, if you call playing the organ.

IA: She played at church?

Wayne: Yeah. For eight years.

IA: Um, well that's work.

IB: That's where you got your musical ability, right?

Wayne: That's right, well and my father played the trombone.

IA: Oh he did?

Wayne: Yeah, he was in the band. They were both, in fact, that's

IB: In the Reo band?

Wayne: No, no, no, no, he was in the high school, I mean, ah,

IA: Oh okay.

Wayne: and if you want to go way back into history, my grandfather was captain of the Salvage Army.

IB: Up at Bay City.

Wayne: No, Bellevue, around Belding around..... He was one of them ones that they made him travel. My mother said she had, when she was in school, had to get her lessons after she quit playing the piano for him. Yeah. Yeah, she says she spent many a time well as I say, I mean, ah, at that time, Salvage Army well I mean if you could just carry a tune, you was called a singer.

IB: Oh is that right?

Wayne: She says I played for many a people that didn't know what they were singing. Now if she played it for eight years down at the South Baptist Church which was my home, that was my church too. Because I was still in grade school when she was playing the organ. So that was

IA: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Wayne: I don't have any.

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IA: Oh you were the only kid, huh.

Wayne: I'm a spoiled brat.

IA: Wow you had a lot of attention.

Wayne: I'm spoiled, according to my wife.

IA: Well now that may or may not be true. (laughter)

Wayne: She came from a family of nine.

IA: Oh my, oh my.

IB: So she did thing you were spoiled.

Wayne: So that's why she always said I was a spoiled brat.

IB: Does she still say that?

Wayne: Well yes and no.

IA: Did your mom and dad own a home?

Wayne: Oh yeah.

IA: They did?

Wayne: Yeah, we bought a house at 910 West Hillsdale, which was a nice neighborhood, but not now.

IB: Yes it was then, that wasn't too far from R. E. Olds, thought.

Wayne: No, and by then '37, up to '37 see, I mean that's because dad could see the handwriting on the wall about Reo going broke, see.

IB: Oh he could.

Wayne: Well then at that time, he had a brother that ah, worked for the Bureau of Engraving in Washington.

IA: Washington, sure.

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: The Mint.

Wayne: Yeah. And ah, he was visiting us and he said, dad, he said well pa, he said you got so many years of ah, experience in sheet metal work, why don't you write into the government and ask them if they've got a

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job. So he did. Well it come back and said yes. If you want to go to Norfolk, Virginia.

IA: He didn't want to go.

Wayne: (laughter) Well, he didn't want to go, but gee whiz that was the only option they had. So, he said he couldn't get into the Olds, I mean he couldn't get in General Motors.

IA: They just weren't hiring.

Wayne: That's right, they weren't hiring at that time, see. So, he did go down to Virginia.

IA: He left the family.

Wayne: Yeah. Oh yeah, he left me here, because I say, I was just out of high school,

IA: Right.

Wayne: got a job at Arbaugh's making \$15 a week.

IB: Oh what did you do at Arbaugh's?

Wayne: I was the helper on the furniture wagon.

IB: Oh the furniture wagon, oh to deliver.

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Oh okay, okay.

Wayne: Yeah, I had at first though I had just a Saturday job there working in that bakery, you know they had a bakery down in the basement.

IB: Yes they did down in the basement.

Wayne: Yeah, well I was just helping them stock the shelf and if they got to busy I had to wait on customers see. But anyway, ah, that ah, I was making and then finally this fellow that was the helper on the furniture wagon quit, so ah, DeVries, that was Andy DeVries, he was the employer. He said to me, well he said do you want job, do you want a job, he said well I said well sure, I'll take a steady job. That would be a steady job see, I mean I was just working Saturdays. So, he says you have to work on the furniture wagon. I said okay, that's alright, so I did. But \$15 a week, but the driver was only making \$35. He was only making \$35, so

IA: Those were good wages for that time though, \$35.

Wayne: Well I guess they were. I mean I didn't realize it, I mean ah, I guess I just took it that that was the average wage. I mean of everybody.

IB: Sure.

IA: It wasn't easy to find a job in 1937 either.

Wayne: No.

IB: No it sure wasn't.

Wayne: As I say, okay getting back to my father. He went down to Virginia and he looked the job over, it was a shipbuilding, you know what I mean in the Norfolk Navy Yard and ah, he looked the job over and I thought gee whiz it is .. nice a good job, so he wrote back, he said I'm going to take the job, he says I'll start looking for a house and here I was just out of high school. So he said to me he says, he said well, you haven't got a very good job there at Arbaugh's there, and he said ah, he said why don't you come on down and bring mother down. I mean why don't you come on down here I mean and ah work, try to get a job in the Navy Yard here. So, I said well what have I got to lose. Nothing. So, I ah, we made arrangements to move. We got all the arrangements to move and ah, we well the first stop we made, I mean, with my uncles... and my uncle told dad to get I mean and the government. So after that, why then we went on down to Virginia then where dad was. Well, he had a house in the meantime, and so I applied for a job. Didn't have any experience, I mean there was nothing. So dad said well, why don't you go in as a sheet metal helper. So I did and I got my job in 1937, see.

IA: Down in Norfolk?

Wayne: Yeah. Down in Virginia, so well as you know, the average just pretty near the war was just breaking, I mean it was getting serious you know, it was getting a little serious.

IA: Right.

Wayne: So it wasn't much of a job for me to get a job at the Navy Yard, see because they wanted the ships. They wanted them first before they ever contracted ah, trucks for Reo, you know, I mean before the Army ever got into trucks. So, well, we worked there oh I worked for the government and it was a good paying job, but if we'd have stayed here in Michigan, we'd have been moneywise better off. Because they were working Sunday, they were working Sundays for double time. The government don't believe in paying double time.

IA: At least they didn't then.

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Wayne: No they didn't.

IA: Now they have to.

Wayne: Yeah. So we worked for time and a half. We worked for time and a half?

IA: Was that job union down there.

Wayne: Oh no.

IA: So that's the difference.

Wayne: No, that's right, there was no union shop down there.

IA: Right.

Wayne: So, I come back for a vacation just like, you know, during well let's say it was in 19 ah,

IA: Had the second World War started yet?

Wayne: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah, you see, because they you to your job.

IA: Oh they needed the work.

Wayne: Yeah, you see, I mean after ah, about 1940, '41, you were folded see.

IA: I see.

Wayne: Even here in Michigan.

IA: Right.

Wayne: Yeah, even in Michigan. We are talking

IA: I'm trying to check to see if this is working at all.

Wayne: So,

IA: Is it going? Can you see the tape rewinding?

Wayne: Yeah. They were, well I see you were put into your job. So, ah, but ah, after a while, we got to um, well as I say about '42, see I had, in other words, my war years were from 1940 to '44.

IA: Down in Virginia?

IB: Yeah Virginia.

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Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: Or three years and then three or four years in there see, but anyway, anyway I got back up to Michigan for a vacation. And I went to my aunts. I went to my aunt there and then stayed there with them see. I got to find out that gee whiz you guys were working for double time down here on Sundays you see.

IA: At the Reo.

Wayne: Yeah. So, I went back and I said to dad, I said boy the money And ah, I told him I said they are getting double time for Sunday up here. So actually ah, well, of course, you was actually to your job, but ah, my mother ah, she never ... in the state of Virginia, I mean it is kind of damp.

IA: Hot and humid.

Wayne: It is hot and humid, yes. Especially if you go to Virginia Beach.

IA: Yeah.

Wayne: I mean ah, you can get sunburned with just the wind blowing. So anyway,

IA: So she wasn't

Wayne: Anyway, no, no, so my dad went to the head of the Navy yard there, I mean a captain, they called them admiral, anyway, we used mother, he used mother as his excuse to get back to Virginia you see, I mean you get unfrozen from your job.

IA: Because her health was perhaps

Wayne: Yeah, maybe I shouldn't be saying this.

IA: Oh that's alright. I don't think they are going to come along and fire you.

Wayne: But when it come to me, that was a horse of another color.

IA: Oh.

Wayne: Yeah, they said to me, they said well whoo, you are single, what's the matter with you? I mean they said you are not married. Why do you want to move? Why do you want to leave here? I told him, you know, I said well this is not a long story, but anyway I'll cut it short. But anyway they wanted to know why I wanted to go back to

Virginia, I mean go back to Michigan. They said well, they said ah, ah, you are single and I said ah, I said now wait a minute. They said well wait a minute, he said you what are you going to do open up a bar. Boy I, I was a little teed that time. You know. And I said to him, I said I said would you like a new car. Oh sure, sure. I said well so do I. But it seems to me like something has happened up in Michigan there that is the automobile state, that something happens that they can't make passenger cars anymore, but they are making Army trucks. Oh, he said, he said oh, he said then you intend to get a job at the Reo, or not Reo anyway, but he says on the military. I says yeah. Okay, he said I guess I'll let you go then. He then released me you see. So that was in

IA: ... you were going to do military work up there. Yeah.

Wayne: So that was in 1944, okay, then ah, or 19 see '40, I had 30 years in okay, what was in 1940 I think it was then, yeah. That I mean I went to work at Reo.

IA: In 1940 you started in Reo in 1940?

Wayne: Alright lets see. I retired in '75,

IA: And you had 40 years in?

Wayne: No 30, so that would make it '40,

IA: '45.

Wayne: '45, yeah.

IB: The war was almost over.

Wayne: Yeah, it was. Yeah that's right, it was. Because we went back, because I went back into making ah, Reo trucks.

IA: Oh regular trucks.

IB: So you came back to Reo and you, Lansing and you got a job at the Reo.

Wayne: Right. Yeah.

IB: Didn't have any trouble

Wayne: So did my father.

IB: He came back to the Reo.

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Wayne: Yeah, there is where he got more than, see he had 21 years up to '37. Then he worked the balance of 40 years I'd say because ah, how was it there was Reo give us a father and son 70 years of good living. I think that is what was printed one time. I've forgotten now

IB: You mean the seniority between the two of you?

Wayne: Yeah. And the senior yeah.

IA: You had 30, so he must have had 40.

Wayne: Forty, yeah, he did have 40, because you are right. I know he had more than I did, anyway.

IA: His seniority then carried right on. They didn't take

Wayne: Well that's what they did. I mean because ah, ah, well the old ah, the employer that was in doing the employer was he used to work with dad, you know what I mean, they worked with dad, I mean and they ah, so they did let my father pick up the 21 years and go on.

IA: Great. Gee I think that is wonderful.

Wayne: Yeah it was. And me I was just ah, ah, well you see well I did make ah ah ah I jumped from a mechanic I mean from a helper to a mechanic. That is what they used to call your ah, they called you a mechanic that you mean you was a regular sheet metal ... sheet metal worker.

IA: Is that what you were when you started in Reo in again in 1945, a sheet metal worker?

Wayne: Yeah, well he got, dad he say ah, you better try and get in to ah, put in a good word for me. He says put it in for the sheet metal shop.

IB: Okay, and that's where you were in sheet metal?

Wayne: That's where I went, I first had a job, yeah. It is ah,

IA: What did you do there?

Wayne: I made ah, well at first, ah, well see we had pieces of metal just like this one and we had a template we put over top of it. Alright maybe it has some holes in it. And ah, you were suppose to prick punch them holes. What they were going to do later on was somebody else was going to drill them holes, drill them holes out, see.

IA: You marked where they had to be.

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Wayne: I had to mark where they, that's what they call prick punching, yeah.

IA: Okay.

Wayne: Yeah, I had to prick punch this template from this template see.
Well, then

IB: This was for the trucks?

Wayne: Yes, that's right. Then they were making ah, ah, well they were still making military trucks too. Yeah. But ah, after for, I see when did they start making ah the regular commercial truck?

IB: Probably '46, '47.

Wayne: That's right, I mean yeah, yeah.

IB: So they had to finish up their military contracts.

Wayne: Yeah you are right, they were still, because ah, alright, when I got to ah, I mean after this here prick punching deal, they broke me in on what they call a spot welder.

IB: Spot welder.

Wayne: Right, yeah. It is a machine that comes down with two copper points, I mean, and heats your metal and glues it together in other words.

IB: Oh okay.

Wayne: That's what it does, yeah.

IB: That's interesting.

Wayne: Yes it is. I mean well it was quite fun. Well they put me on making fender braces for the commercial truck. I had three different types, I mean to make. See I mean three different types to make. Well, that lasted, I don't know how long, but anyway finally they said well, we are going to ship your job up to Department 28. That is is another spot welding place, I mean they had just a few there. They had a few spot welders. So, I got shipped up to 28. Well I had the option to go with the job or stay where I was. Well, I kind of liked the job, so I went with it.

IB: And you were making pretty good money there of what you were doing?

Wayne: Huh, Reo never did pay an awful lot. I mean, but we did get within oh, 30 cents, 40 cents of General Motors anyway, you know, in that hourly, we can ah work of work see. Ah,

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IA: You wouldn't think about going over there though for the better wages?

Wayne: Pardon, for the

IA: You never thought about leaving Reo to go to General Motors to get the better wages?

Wayne: No, because they had seniority that was pretty safe. That is, if when it came to a lay off, see.

IA: You felt more secure at Reo.

Wayne: Yeah, you are right, yeah you are right, you see, I mean that's the reason why I never changed, I mean was ah, I had a good job and gee whiz it seemed like you got five years in, six years in, seven years, pretty you had 10.

IA: Sure.

Wayne: See. You go over to General Motors I mean you start from the bottom again.

IA: Right.

Wayne: See. So, anyway, anyway, in Department 28 I was still making my fender braces. Ah, then ah, military oil pan job came along. And ah, my foreman, old Joe Corey, where he is now days, I don't know. I don't know whether he is alive or not, I think maybe he is in Detroit. Anyway, that is water under the bridge.

IA: But it is interesting to know who you worked for and with.

Wayne: Well, Guy Hack was my very first foreman.

IA: Guy Hacks?

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: H a c k.

Wayne: Well I think that is the way he pronounced it, yeah. Of course he's gone now, I mean he is gone now. But he was my first foreman, you see, and he knew what day, you know, I mean we worked together. I mean we they worked and then ah, Guy Hack became foreman then see. During the war and then he became foreman. He moved up see. So, he knew my father. So that's really, it was a big boost to get me in there first. At first, you know. But, as I said, they were higher than, they said if he had one arm.

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IA: Oh so they really wanted workers.

Wayne: That's right. Yeah, because it was kind of hard to get workers. I don't know ah, well, let me put it this way, good help. It was hard to get good help, dependable, dependable help.

IA: What did your dad do when he came back to Reo the same thing he did before?

Wayne: The same thing he worked on that sheet metal layout.

IA: Sheet metal layout.

Wayne: Yeah. He was on the sheet metal layouts.

IA: Did he ever become foreman?

Wayne: No.

IA: He didn't.

Wayne: No. Because ah, see after oh let's see. No he never did and he just accepted the job. He never wanted the responsibility.

IA: Right.

IB: And he was happy doing what he was doing?

Wayne: There was ah two many foremans you know, I mean that were made foremans that were going well, we got his rubber hose through.

IA: They got fancy, huh?

Wayne: Well no,

IB: A little resentment maybe?

Wayne: Well, no, I wouldn't say resentment, no. But, they were fly by nights or I mean or thought they knew more than

IB: Oh I see.

Wayne: What was required, you know, I mean so well anyway. That's why they said the remark that they got their rubber hose They was cheap, see.

IB: Oh, cheap

IA: That's right, that was a discount.

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Wayne: Yeah. Yeah. See that was a cheap, that was a cheap place to buy suits. See.

IA: Yeah, yeah.

Wayne: So. Well alright this off hand job came along. It was to put a baffle in there to separate it, I don't know, well anyway and they brought in a new spot water(?) which was called, I mean it was like a sewing machine, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing

IA: Oh a new machine.

Wayne: Bing, bing, ... all you had to do was hold the pedal down.

IB: Oh and it did a roll.

Wayne: That's right it went just like a sewing machine.

IB: I see.

Wayne: Well, who was to get that job? They asked me if I wanted it. I could have turned it down, but I tried it out. And I was kind of fascinated because you started this way and went on the edge of the pan across the bottom and up again. See. Going just like a sewing machine you see.

IB: Down one side, across the bottom and up the other side.

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Ah huh. Making those holes.

Wayne: I thought it was quite interesting, you know, I mean see the machine, all you had to do was step the pedal.

IA: Was it automated? It was a smart machine, right, I mean it was a new kind of machine.

Wayne: Yeah. No you had to set it.

IA: You set it yourself.

Wayne: That's right, you had to set the ... and the and the sewing machine.

IA: I see.

Wayne: I mean you could make it slow or you could make it fast or I mean, ah,

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IA: So you had to learn more about the machine.

Wayne: That's right, yeah, it was a new machine that they brought in, you see, it was a new machine they brought in.

IA: Did they only bring in the one or

Wayne: That's right. Because ah, at that time, you know, they didn't, weren't making so many military, it was a, it was filling up the order you know, well we may get another order for 50, 100 or 500 you know, military trucks.

IA: Right.

Wayne: So, anyway, after ah, well they wanted to know if I wanted the job. Well I stayed with the job for oh, I don't know a long time. Because it kept me busy. Because I mean that was a job. It was after they got, after I got through welding it, and they put it on to a test to fill it up with ah, air or then they put soap on it on where I welded it to see if it leaked.

IA: Oh.

Wayne: You see. Yeah, that was something that I had to learn ah, as you said maybe those were about an eighth of an inch apart. I had to learn how not just to put it all in one spot. Because you could burn through it.

IA: Sounds kind of tricky.

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: You got to learn the right touch.

Wayne: Yeah you are right. Yeah, that was it.

IB: Did it take long to learn that?

Wayne: No, because ah, at the time you slowed the thing down, you slowed it down and so you could get your rhythm. I mean you could get the how it was to be run through the machine.

IB: Ah huh, and all you had to do was speed it up.

Wayne: Yeah, that's right. After you got more acquainted with the machine let's say, the faster you could go.

IB: Oh sure.

IA: Did you have a production

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Wayne: Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am, yes ma'am you had so many to make in an hour. That's right. So, ah, let's see when did we, when did we outlaw piece work.

IA: It was in the late '40's.

Wayne: I was saying, I can't remember when, but I know we it was one of our contracts, I mean we wanted to outlaw piece work.

IA: Right, I think it was in the late '40's, sometime right around there.

Wayne: I think so too, because ah, I don't think ah, White was owner. I don't think White was owner.

IB: Yeah it was still Reo.

Wayne: It was still Reo under Reo, yeah it was still Reo.

IA: How did you feel about that? Were you in favor of that change to the hourly or would you have rather

Wayne: Oh yes, yes.

IA: You were in favor of it?

Wayne: Because, oh yes, everybody was because if we had well the old-time rater we had he is dead, so he can't (laughter)

IB: He can't come back and

Wayne: No he can't go back on us now. to me because you know, because we had to do everything we had to do to ah, make a decent rate. Ah, we had to figure, ah, rate .. if you could. If you could, but you know a lot of times you couldn't because he come back with a rate that you could stand there eight hours and you still couldn't make it. I mean you would just be there all eight hours working all the time. Not saying that you got your 10 minute break or you had your coffee break or nothing you see. You couldn't make your rate.

IB: He said it to

Wayne: Of course your foreman would say well how come you can't make the rate. You know.

IB: Maybe we should find somebody who can.

Wayne: Yeah. Well, that's right, they say well what can we do, I mean, you know, we'll get the rate setter back up here again. Well, maybe he'd give you a break and maybe he wouldn't. Well, the rate setter that

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we had he knew my dad and he knew me then. I mean from my dad, see.

IB: It kind of helps.

Wayne: Yeah. I mean ah, he knew that's why I said we were a family. Everybody knows everybody see, everybody knows everybody, you see, and then I say it, even on them picnics we had a good time. I mean, of course, ... Reo, but other than that they done it for the workers. See. They done it for your workers. I mean that's why we were calling it a family. Well anyway, getting back to my old paying job. Well after I had the thing, and could make the rate, see I could make the rate then. Somebody had the bright idea, let's move this job over to the motor plant. Here we go again. Do you or do you not

IA: Want to go with us.

Wayne: Yeah. Because I said, you know, well I kind of like, well they said alright let's do it this way then. You go over there and ah, you and the job and they will give you somebody to break in. Then you can come back here. You can come back to your department. Okay, I swallowed that. I said okay, that's good. Good governors, I went over there for three months, four months, five months pretty near a year.

IA: No change.

Wayne: Still no, no, no, ah,

IA: They didn't give you anyone to break in?

Wayne: No.

IA: They liked what you were doing, they didn't want to ...

Wayne: Yeah, you are right, that's what I said, they like what ah, well, I was responsible, I mean I was dependable, I was yeah. And I didn't like the lower plant anyway. Because that floor that they had over there was laid in little like bricks, ah wooden bricks.

IB: Wooden bricks?

Wayne: Yeah. And they got, of course, the motor plant was always, that's how come they claimed that we contaminated the ground.

IA: Really? Why is that?

Wayne: Yeah. The motor plant, because we used oil, we had oil on the floor or we had

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IA: It soaked down through?

Wayne: Yeah. Yeah.

IA: Oh.

Wayne: So that's why, that's why they said that we, you know, contaminated the ground over there.

IA: Oh ... the Reo in that corner.

Wayne: Where is now, yeah.

IB: That's where the motor plant was.

Wayne: That's right, when the motor plant was there it runs all the way to the railroad tracks. It went all the way back to the railroad track, yeah.

IA: Okay, okay.

IB: So you didn't like working there because of that floor.

Wayne: That's right. I didn't.

IB: Was it hard to stand on, you mean it was slippery?

Wayne: Well it wasn't slippery, it wasn't that dangerous. I mean it wasn't that dangerous, but you just well yeah you were though, I mean you come home and had shoes on,

IB: Oh and you are all covered with oil and you track in the house.

Wayne: She'd meet me at the door and say hey little boy, take your shoes off. (laughter) Well, as I say, pretty near a year went by and ah, oh I went to the foreman and I said hey listen, I think I've been over here long enough. Of course and ah he finally agreed with me anyway and so finally I finally got my break in fellow. Well I got back to 28, well we had ah, yeah, I still got well besides my fender brakes, I made subparts for the cab, you know, but maybe the vent door they had in the side of the hood.

IB: Oh okay.

Wayne: And maybe the glove box door, I meant you had different jobs, you see.

IB: So it was a variety.

Wayne: It a variety, that was the difference between working for Reo and and General Motors. General Motors you had, you put a bolt in hole number nine or bolt 99 in hole 99.

IA: That was it.

IB: And you did it forever.

Wayne: Yeah, that's right. If you done it right forever, right. Reo, we had a variety, a variety of jobs. They well, well it kept you in your tool, I mean ah, but it made it nice for well the foreman, if he liked you, you know what I mean, because he didn't learn the jobs. See you may have a template, I mean a jig, we call it a jig to put your material in, you see, I mean and you pour in the piece that jig is suppose to do.

IB: Oh I see.

Wayne: See. We had, it made it nice for the well like me, I mean, when work got so slack, I mean, it was out of, I had five um, five or six men under me. I had to set up their job and get the material in and get the right jig and ah, they would show you how to run it, see show him how to run it. Now on the job and then I'd turn them loose. Well if they made the mistake it was their fault not mine. I mean if I, of course, if I didn't explain it right enough, well I mean they they could blame me. But ah, anyway, as it got down to this point where ah, ah, well where I was only one in the department

IB: Who knew what was going on.

Wayne: Yeah that's right, I mean I knew those jigs from time to time you see, the foreman didn't, well he relied on me to do it, see.

IA: Right. Right.

Wayne: He'd say well you run 99B3 on that job. You know, he's say we got the stock and we got the stock out in the stockroom, I'd have to go out and see. The only thing is that we'd have a record where that stock would be, you know, so I didn't have to run over the whole floor looking for that. I decided to go to, they said it was in Bay 3 or Bay 4 or

IB: That's where it would be.

Wayne: Yeah, that's where the material to be run see.

IB: Then you'd get a stock handler to bring up what you needed.

Wayne: Well I done it myself.

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IB: Oh you did it yourself.

Wayne: I had to be my own truck driver, own truck driver and and ah, setup man. I was termed as a setup. So,

IB: Was your father still working there at this time, while you were going through these changes with the Department 28?

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Department 28 and the motor shop.

Wayne: Oh yeah. Yeah, he got moved around from the, do you remember there used to be a fire barn on the corner of Baker and ah, Washington.

IB: Washington, yes I do.

Wayne: That was ah, well they finally tore that down and give it to the Reo. Well, he worked there for quite awhile, then they moved his department up to the ah, ah, I was going to say, the press ah,

IB: Pressroom?

Wayne: the pressroom, yeah. And they made, of course, in the meantime I think the lawn mower came down in there. See the lawn mower.

IB: Oh yes.

Wayne: See the lawn mower department came down in there. And ah, ah, ah, you see but that is after the military was really done. Is when the lawn mower moved in, I mean they started making lawn mowers. They started making lawn mowers. They would have had a good market if Sears Roebuck wanted them to make lawn mowers,

IA: Oh they did?

Wayne: but, Sears Roebuck said we got to put the name Sears on your ...

IB: Oh.

Wayne: And Reo said no way buster.

IB: We are proud of what we do and we ...

Wayne: That's right. And now I told you before they experimented with a remote control lawn mower.

IB: Oh they did?

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Wayne: Yeah. They had one, they finally the engineers they finally engineered a remote controlled that you could stand on your steps, run that lawn mower around the thing you see.

IB: I'd like that.

Wayne: But, this here the rug, the rug come in when they started figuring how much it was going to cost

IB: Cost to the consumer.

Wayne: Yeah, they said we can't do it. So, they made about, I don't know how many they made maybe five, maybe 10.

IB: Oh so if they are around somewhere they are collectors items then.

Wayne: I got my doubts but you are right. Ah,

IB: But they made power mowers.

Wayne: Yeah, they made power that's right.

IB: And push mowers too?

Wayne: Yeah, because they made the Reo type, remember the old, the Reo type, yeah, but ah, before they came out with, no they never did make a rotary.

IB: Oh they didn't?

Wayne: I didn't think so, no.

IB: We've got several lawn mowers out here in the storage, I think, and we

Wayne: Because they put the motor on top of that Reo.

IA: Yes.

Wayne: And they, I don't know. Because that was not in my department. I mean, I was no where

IA: Sure, well that's okay.

Wayne: I was no where ah, the only time I got there was I'd take a walk. I went down there just to see what they were doing, you know. To see that line and then the lawn mower. So,

IA: Did you go through any grievances while you were working at Reo?

Wayne: No.

IA: Through the union? You didn't.

Wayne: No. No, I didn't. No, because after we got ... piece work, ah, you worked on that, but you had a leg to stand on. I meant you didn't have to really tear into it. You know, I mean as you say make so many pieces an hour.

IB: It was

Wayne: Even after we outlawed the piece work, I mean you tried to get a job timed out, they still wouldn't give you a break. They'd go, as I say, I meant whenever they timed a job off you know, they... well maybe I did overrate that job. Well they would try to come up and back to you or when you was running that job, just to see how you were running it, see. And then he'd say hey, you are doing that different than the way that it was timed. Well, what are you going to do when you've tried to beat the time rate setter.

IA: Yeah, yeah, and they said you changed the rate

Wayne: Of course, you would see it, you are trying to get it rated and what, he might see well you could do away without moving that piece over here.

IB: Wasted motion.

Wayne: Yeah, he was smart enough to see that. See.

IA: Ah huh, we talked to a guy who did that, Calvin Chamberlain.

Wayne: Well this wasn't the fellow we had.

IA: Oh okay. He was one of the time study guys there.

Wayne: Yeah, well I know, but there wasn't a good word put in for any of them.

IA: No I know, people have said.

IB: Yeah.

IA: I have heard that.

Wayne: And we had he rated the job and arc welding. We had, now you know the difference between arc welding and ... welding. Arc welding is when you have to put a rod in the (muffled) ... and you run a bead along this way.

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IB: Okay.

Wayne: See you have you got to have a helmet with
ah, see through, you know.

IB: A visor.

Wayne: Yeah, 'cause that was too bright of a light to watch.

IB: Right, okay.

Wayne: Well anyway, we had one of them mark welders we had to come
up there..... job and he said ah, after the rate setter got
gone he said ah, you know how many pieces you got to do an hour. He
told him. The rate setter he'd been running this job before they got
it rate, you see, and he says he says you mean to tell me I got to
put out that many. He says you are crazy. He says you go deer
hunting. He said I'd like to know where you are going. He says I'd
put a bullet..... (laughter) the one
that said that is still alive. Well, of course, it wasn't no hush
hush, everybody knew it. I mean

IA: We've heard some stories

Wayne: Well he said I'd put a bullet past your ... (laughter)

IB: Oh dear. But you said even though sometimes the rate setters weren't
fair, for your job too, you didn't, you never put a grievance through
for the union.

Wayne: Well no because ah, the time I got, I got a poor paying job that I
didn't even rated, bring that outlawed piece work, I mean they'd
outlawed piece work, but they still wanted to know how many pieces
you could do an hour.

IB: Still live production.

Wayne: That's right. Just so you couldn't come up there and sit down on the
job, and say hey,

IB: But you thought production was fair?

Wayne: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

IB: doing it later.

Wayne: Yeah, that's what I was doing, yeah. Because maybe I could make it,
but still in all, that isn't the way to look at it. How about that
poor fellow that has to take your place, you know, I mean say that
ah, you have to give up that job. I mean and he runs it, you know,

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and he can't do what you do. Now we had some women down in the pressroom that that nobody could keep up with.

IA: Is that right?

Wayne: They had nimble fingers, they had nimble fingers. I mean they weren't all thumbs. See. Well, they had one down there

IB: I bet the guy didn't like that.

Wayne: Yeah, there was one girl down there that and she was really a humdinger and they didn't see, they didn't want hurt her or get her on the job to be rated.

IB: Oh because then they'd have to do what she could do.

Wayne: Right. You are right, they didn't like falling into their laps some day see, I mean, so but we did have one girl down there, I mean we didn't have too many girls. I think there was only about three or four girls that worked in that press department. Because that is a dangerous place.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Yeah, it is.

Wayne: And I ah, that machinery that we had down there, I think it fell off Noah's Ark.

IB: Yes, very old machinery.

Wayne: We did, I mean they were dangerous. Even though they had a safety department there, they came down and said why you should put, say you had a strap ... to your arm, you put the piece underneath there and maybe something happened that before this arm would drag your arm back, this strap you would come up with minus the fingers.

IB: Oh dear.

IA: And you didn't have guards and things maybe across the

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: where your fingers couldn't slide.

Wayne: As I say, I mean they tried to make them

IB: As safe as they could.

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Wayne: Safe as they could, but there was some machines that you just took a chance.

IB: Yup, yup I understand that.

Wayne: Stuck your hand under there so, so anyway, well I stayed in department, well wait a minute, 28 I was then transferred again over to Baker Street what they used to call the old enameling room

IB: The enameling room?

Wayne: Yeah, when they had, when they was making passenger cars.

IB: Okay. That's where they did the painting.

Wayne: Well yeah, they done very little ah, dip tank ah, parts, you know, I mean run through a dip tank.

IB: Ah huh.

Wayne: But they did run some of those, I mean for that passenger car, but ah, I don't know, I mean it just, I don't

IB: Would that have been for the parts of the passenger or for the body itself?

Wayne: The body, no, no.

IB: This would have been for the parts?

Wayne: No, they never did, they never did rustproof their bodies to good, I never thought, but of course, that was a truck. But I mean, '36 was the last passenger car that went down the line.

IB: Right.

Wayne: And that was too much of a handmade car.

IB: It cost too much.

Wayne: It cost too much. The ah, ah, the machinery to build the thing it was too old, I mean, they never modernized like General Motors, see.

IB: Didn't put the money back into the shop.

Wayne: That's right. That's how come they didn't make a passenger cars. That's why that fell through.

IB: Ah huh and people weren't buying cars much in '36, '35, and '36 either.

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Wayne: Well my dad had one and I was, I was king of the road to have that thing. I mean

IB: Was that a Reo?

Wayne: Huh?

IB: Was that a Reo?

Wayne: Yes.

IB: Ah huh.

IA: Your dad had a Reo.

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: Oh great.

IB: What model did he have, do you remember?

Wayne: Well the ah, it is the one that the starter was on the clutch.

IB: Oh, oh, that's right, push that down.

Wayne: Yeah, you push the clutch in see, you push the clutch in and then that was your starter?

IB: Oh gosh that takes me back.

Wayne: Yeah, me too. Because I mean ah, I was in high school then too. I mean you know, and ah, oh boy if you owned a Reo your dad must have been worth money.

IB: That's what your friends thought?

Wayne: You are right, you are right, you are right. Yeah.

IB: That and prestige.

Wayne: Of course, ah, see the Reo and the Buick were two of a kind. They were ah, in other words, ah, ah, if you went down and you didn't work at the Reo and didn't get any discount, you went down to buy a Flying Cloud, Flying Cloud, they called them Reo Flying Cloud.

IB: And that was the deluxe car.

Wayne: Alright. And they'd say okay, you have ah, Flying Cloud \$1,000. Well, \$1,000 in that time

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IB: That was a lot of money.

Wayne: That's when you could buy a Ford for \$777.

IB: Oh.

Wayne: You remember the signs we used to see up on the highway, \$777 the Chevrolet was \$777. The ah, let's see the Ford oh I guess it was the Ford and Chevrolet. That's right, they were running ah, .. Chrysler now, I mean

IB: Dodge, Plymouth?

Wayne: Ah, I think they had a Dodge, but I don't remember the price of that. All I remember is the Ford and Chevrolet. They were \$777.

IB: Is that right.

Wayne: Okay. My dad could buy that Flying Cloud with his discount for \$777. So, you see, that's why dad bought the Flying Cloud.

IB: It was a nice employee discount.

Wayne: Right. And you see when when you see you could buy that for \$777 instead of \$1,000.

IB: You bet.

Wayne: Well,

IB: Oh so he was driving something that would help me.

Wayne: That's right. I ah, well I ah, to ... truthfully, but I mean I was the one that put 20,000 miles on the car by myself. (laughter)

IA: How long did that car stay in the family? A long time?

Wayne: Yeah, because that kind of a car you could put a plow on the back of it and put it into low gear and it could plow a field.

IB: Because they were higher up off the ground for one reason.

Wayne: No it was just the power.

IB: Just the power.

Wayne: Just the power.

IB: Would that have been an eight cylinder.

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Wayne: No.

IB: Six?

Wayne: I don't

IB: Probably a six.

Wayne: Six, yeah. I don't know. You know, wait a minute the Royal was an eight either, I don't think think the Royal. You know the Reo Royal, that was way out of class. I mean you had to be a banker or lawyer or something

IB: To afford one of those.

Wayne: Right.

IB: My dad said that those cars weren't all that safe, the Royals, because they weren't balanced right or something. If they go around the corner the doors would fly open.

Wayne: Well that's something I didn't know.

IB: He didn't have one mind you, but that's what the workers thought.

Wayne: Because I know, I mean if you owned a Reo Royal I mean that was money, I had forgotten how much they did sell for.

IB: Well they probably were like a Cadillac is today.

Wayne: Yeah. But I mean this Reo Flying Cloud you could plow a field all day long just by throwing it into your low gear.

IB: Isn't that amazing. Hum.

Wayne: So.

IA: Did you ah, yeah, ...

Wayne: Well I'm just about the end of my story here, I mean

IB: Okay, well we got some more questions anyway.

Wayne: Well anyway because I mean when I went up to the old enameling room, that's was my last move and ah, I got down to being the last man in the department.

IB: Oh you did?

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Wayne: Yeah. I had five or six men that I was setup man for. But, as time went on ah, sales just dropped off, I mean they couldn't, I mean ah

IB: Did you retire before the company went under?

Wayne: Yes.

IB: You were, it was '77 it was before they closed their doors?

Wayne: You are right, yeah. I had ah, one year of the good pension.

IB: You did?

Wayne: That they guaranteed \$550 for now on out, you know, I mean they guaranteed me that was just the one year. Of course, I wasn't the only one, but I mean everybody that had, because after that the union said anyone that has got 30 years in better get out.

IB: Take it now.

IA: Take it while you can.

Wayne: Well take it out, yeah, get it now. And, of course, you had to sign up your wife at the time to, if you wanted her on your pension. You see it cost me \$13 to put her on. But she got the \$550 after they put me under. She carried on see.

IB: She would be your beneficiary.

Wayne: Yeah, but they had to be decided

Side B

Wayne:

IB: Yeah, we are going.

Wayne: Okay.

IB: Um, I just wanted to know, you talked about your dad taking you when you were a kid to the ah, clubhouse and picnics and all the other activities. Did you continue to do that when you were working there too with your family after World War II?

Wayne: No.

IB: You didn't do that.

Wayne: That kind of phased out.

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IB: That worker activity.

Wayne: Ah that's right, yeah. When the war came along.

IA: That kind of changed it.

Wayne: That changed things, that's right. I meant even at the clubhouse, I mean they didn't have dances or ah, ah, well they had a Reo dance band I think, I thought you said they had a Reo, just the employees, you know what I mean formed this orchestra.

IA: I see.

Wayne: But I think that dropped off. I mean the war changed a lot of things, you know, I mean that ah,

IB: Those people were working three shifts then too, that might

Wayne: You are right.

IB: They may not have had time to go.

Wayne: You are right, ah, ah, your activities were limited, you know. Of course, you had better than we did down in Virginia. You fellows there didn't have a part time getting a B card or I mean your B stamp

IB: For gas?

Wayne: for gas, yeah. Even tighter. Boy did we get tired trade your car off and find something that has tires....

IA: Was that B card just for gas or was that could you get tires with that too?

Wayne: No you couldn't get tires. That's where a lot of the black market came in. I'm talking about Virginia now really. And I'll tell you another thing. You didn't have to paint your headlights have black.

IA: Down there?

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Here in Michigan, no I never saw that.

Wayne: And your taillight, head taillights had to be the rear had to be half.

IA: Is that right?

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Wayne: Your traffic lights were crossed like this. I mean just a cross, that's all you could see.

IA: Imagine because you

Wayne: Because, well we were on a seaboard town.

IB: Yes, where you could be conceivably attacked.

Wayne: Because we were, that's right.

IB: And the ships were important war productions.

Wayne: That's right yeah.

IB: Cripple a shipyard.

Wayne: Of course, yeah, I mean that my navy yard experience wasn't good. I mean the only thing I didn't enjoy was when we had to make those LST bolts, you know, they came up to shore and dropped down the ... and then we all run out, you know what I mean, we had to ah, well let's see I worked on ah, one, let's see we built ah, six at a time, ah, no four at a time in a dry dock. You know, I mean with the dry dock is, you mean when you ship in, you let the water go in and you run your ship in, then you ah, let the water out, but then it holds it, it holds them up, there is a thing that holds the ship

IB: While you are building it.

Wayne: Yeah. Well why you are cleaning the barnacles as they call it.

IB: Cleaning the barnacles off your hull. (laughter)

IA: Ah when you were small, did you remember hearing WREO the Reo radio station in your home? Did your dad have a crystal set?

Wayne: No, we had

.....

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: I don't know that.

IB: A cadillac of radio, back in those days.

Wayne: Yeah, that's right, I remember we did used to have earphones, I mean I can remember, yeah, you are right. We lived in Chestnut Street then. We lived on 711 Chestnut Street.

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IB: On the north end?

Wayne: Ah, no that would have been south.

IB: Oh it would have been, okay.

Wayne: Yeah, it would have been south of ah, Michigan Avenue anyway, so

IB: Okay.

Wayne: Yeah. Because that's where I went to Kalamazoo. See I mean that's when I went to Kalamazoo.

IB: And your father was closer to the factory at that end of town?

Wayne: Ah he was what did they say he walked 2 miles and a half and he walked it every day, day in and day out, rain or shine. I think it was wait a minute I'll back up on that. It is when we lived on Hillsdale Street, that was further away yet. He used to walk to the Reo every day.

IB: You were down somewhere near the R. E. Olds house then weren't you? Where he was on Washington and Main.

Wayne: Main and Washington and Main yeah.

IB: Do you remember seeing the house?

Wayne: Yeah. Yeah.

IB: Did you ever see him ah, come out with one of his cars or

Wayne: No, no wait a minute who are you talking about R. E. Olds?

IB: R. E. Olds?

Wayne: R. E. Olds? No.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: No I never even went to that garden that he had, you know, the rose garden or something.

IB: Ah huh.

Wayne: No, I don't know, we were I don't what you are saying, we were at the time we kind of didn't care or what, I don't know.

IB: But, of course, he wasn't there at the shop in the later years.

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Wayne: No he wasn't, no.

IB: He

IA: He was away a lot.

IB: Yeah, he was away a lot, but he had even totally written the business off as far as his personal involvement in it years before that.

Wayne: So,

IB: He was quite a figure around town, so I thought....

Wayne: But while I was working in the 42 or 28 or 42, Department 42 you see White bought it because he wanted that golden engine that we planted, that we made for the Army. That was, everybody said that was a motor out of this world. Everybody

IA: Trucks?

Wayne: For the trucks and we put it in our two and a half ton trucks, see. Well when White tried to ah, get, he tried to buy it, so I mean they bought it really, I don't know who sold this. But anyway, White wanted a two and a half tone truck, because all he had was the bigger job, you know.

IA: Oh really?

Wayne: To make the five ton, you know, the big White. He wanted a two and a half ton truck. So, ah, now wait a minute maybe I'm getting ahead of my story. We bought out Diamond Reo in Chicago first I think before White, because White didn't have that two and a half ton truck, but ah, Diamond, the Diamond T the Diamond T ah, ah, didn't have a two and a half ton truck either. Reo was about the only one that had the Reo, the two and a half ton truck. The light truck they called it. That was a lighter truck.

IB: A lighter truck.

Wayne: Yeah. So I think Diamond T was bought out before White bought us. Because he wanted going

IB: Oh the Golden Commet.

Wayne: Yeah. So, he wanted to put all them two and a half ton trucks you see the Reo, the White and Diamond

IB: Diamond T.

Wayne: T, but then when they changed that name to Diamond Reo.

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IB: Okay.

Wayne: When Diamond T came up here, when they moved the whole factory up here, they so 'cause it was funny to see White, Reo, and maybe a Diamond, well White and Reo and Diamond T truck going down the road trying to race each other. (laughter)

IB: You probably never knew what your heading in your checks were going to say.

Wayne: No.

IA: Um, when you were working at Reo, did the union, UAW have besides just the basic stuff they did for the bargaining and the organizing for the contracts, did they have other activities that you participated in at all?

Wayne: No, none that I can recall.

IB: Down at the union hall or

Wayne: Well no. No, because the things run fairly smooth during the war, see. Ah, let me put it this way. When you say well, let me put it this way. Maybe ah, weren't quite so tough on us. When the war was on, let me put it this way, because Reo got so much for so many pieces see. So, they wanted production, I'm talking about rate setters, I mean they wanted production,

IB: Right.

Wayne: so they might have been more lenient during the war as I say. Now getting back to just say the union, they didn't have as much trouble with management see.

IB: Right, right, everybody was working together in the war.

Wayne: Right, yeah.

IB: Yeah.

IA: How about after the war.

IB: Right that's what I was going to ask. How about after the war though?

Wayne: Well we had, we had .. piece work, I mean well I mean we were certain ... pieces you had to run, but if you didn't make it, why you can say well what are you going to do about it.

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IB: For some of the work that I've done though, I've read that the union used to sponsor trips down to the stadiums in Detroit to see the baseball games and they'd have sometimes they'd have movies down at the labor temple and different kinds of activities for the workers, not just

Wayne: You wouldn't know that would be before the war though would you?

IB: Some of that was before the war.

Wayne: Well that's what I'm, I'm trying to say, I mean I

IB: You didn't know anything about those kinds of things. Okay. Alright.

Wayne: But during the war years things seemed to be running pretty smooth, you know, I mean there was no, you didn't have to have a steward saying well what can we do about this job. I mean I'm doing the best I can and my foreman is jumping down my back.

IB: Did you have three-year contracts?

Wayne: Pardon?

IB: Did you have three-year contracts after the war with the union?

Wayne: Yeah. Well we had ah, yeah that's right we did have three-year contracts, that's right.

IB: And they were renegotiated every three years?

Wayne: No, no, no, no they weren't negotiated until they run out.

IB: Right. But then they were new negotiations.

Wayne: Well, yes, that's right. They would bring up something different or maybe they wanted to do something different.

IB: Were they on par with the levels at the Big Three, GM, Chrysler, Ford?

Wayne: We tried, we tried to, we tried, yeah. We couldn't come up with ah, well we couldn't come up with General Motors. I mean we can't, as I say we, the difference in the wages we might got within 30 cents of them.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: See.

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IB: Okay.

Wayne: There was a, we were the underdog.

IB: Of course, you weren't producing as much and making as much as the Big Three.

Wayne: That's right. Yeah, you are right there.

IB: What about, I've heard off and on through the years that the union has kind of told the workers who to vote for during a presidential election, I'm wondering

Wayne: No wait a minute you

IB: Well no, no, um, I'm just wondering

Wayne: Let me put it this way. That's the truth. That's the truth. I ...

IA: But you could have done whatever you wanted. Right, wouldn't you

IB: But they tried to persuade you.

Wayne: Oh that's true, very true.

IB: Oh sure I didn't mean they forced you.

Wayne: Well, listen, alright I am the chairperson of Local 650.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: Alright. I go to these meetings. Alright what do they talk about? Alright they say let's do something for John Miller, let's get John Miller this and we can do this I mean or we are going to ask for this. What about poor Diamond Reo? Well that's too bad buster. You haven't got any bargaining power.

IB: Was it the small guys.

Wayne: No, because we went broke.

IB: Oh.

IA: Oh.

Wayne: We had no bargaining power. I can't say to the head of our ah, ... well what can you do for us? They come around and said nothing.

IB: Because you don't count much anymore.

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Wayne: You got to go through legislation. If you want anything.

IB: Okay, so the fact that Reo was quiet may have been because they didn't have a whole lot of power in the union as a small company with not very much

Wayne: No they could have been. I say they could have been operating today.

IB: Yeah.

Wayne: If we hadn't have sold to Cappaert.

IB: Okay.

Wayne: That one man why? If he comes in here and he said well I'm not making any money here, or there, ah, whose fault is it? Mine. It is mine. Alright, let's look at it another way. He hasn't got board of directors, he hasn't got any stockholders, he hasn't got ... to say hey, I'm not making any money. What's the matter with yeah.

IA: He is off in his own little world.

Wayne: That's right. That's right, that's why I'm saying if we had to ... see he bought us for I think it was \$16 million. Alright, and the time he bought us he ah, he was in Service was making the money hand over fist, parts, service parts, anything, service, truck servicing, I mean all of that. Alright, he got back his \$16 million, he got back that all. Then he got to working, he said well, golly he says I can make a lot more by just saying hey let's just shut the doors. Now whether that was his philosophy I don't know. That's mine. I don't know. Now whether he thought, in other words, he was a multi-millionaire on paper only. Because you know he asked the government to give him \$8 million. I think it was. Anyway they said now if you can come up with this certain amount of money, we'll give it to you. But he couldn't. He couldn't come up with that money. You say well where is he now, how is he \$8 million I mean how come he is a millionaire then. He had holding share, holding shares, holding shares, but that's all.

IB: Yeah and he was taking from one to pay the next.

Wayne: Right.

IB: So on down the line.

Wayne: Right. So that is why I'm saying that Reo could have been operating today if it hadn't been for him.

IB: Yeah.

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Wayne: ... today right today he still owes that ah, owes our retirement fund \$2 million.

IB: Oh he does, he'll probably never pay it back.

Wayne: Well he is dead now.

IB: He is dead, huh.

IA: Cappaert is dead?

Wayne: Yeah, yeah.

IA: That must have been fairly recent then?

Wayne: Well I've forgotten when but it hasn't been too long.

IA: Within this last year?

Wayne: Oh, no, I'll go back further than that, I mean

IA: I would think that with his estate then the heirs wouldn't they also fall

Wayne: Well I don't know, we are still in bankruptcy court, we are still in bankruptcy court.

IA: Still fighting now.

Wayne: Yeah. And what I'm going to get, I'll bet you I'll be lucky if I get 10 cents on the dollar.

IA: Because the lawyers will have to take their cut for that?

Wayne: Well, with one, we always get a letter every once and a while from the bankruptcy court saying that well this lawyer so and so, this lawyer so and so they got to have \$2 million, they got to have some

IB: In order to continue to play.

Wayne: Yeah, sure, they are just depleting the whole money I should say.

IB: So there is a fund that is being drawn for for this suit?

Wayne: Well, if what's left yeah. It is what's left.

IB: I see. What did you think Mr. Nunnheimer what do you think is the biggest change you saw in all the years that you worked at Reo?

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Wayne: Well the biggest change I would say was that it made it nicer for the workers.

IB: Over time?

Wayne: Yeah, by having a union.

IB: Okay, and that

Wayne: They had a leg to stand on. You had a leg to stand on. And before the union come in here, before the union came in here you had to bargain with ah, the owners.

IB: Right. Or ... management.

Wayne: Right. No, I meant you see when I made, ah, I shouldn't say it, but it makes it too easy.

IB: Oh, you think it does?

Wayne: Well it made it too easy. I tell you why. Well you might get some boy or some worker in there that don't want to work, he don't want to work,

IB: Yeah, or not work as hard.

Wayne: That's right. Yeah. Alright, if they jumped on him, the management I say, I'll go to my union, get my union up here.

IB: Yeah, did that happen more and more over time do you think? That kind of attitude?

Wayne: Ah, no of course not during the war, but

IB: Later on?

Wayne: after the war, yeah, after the war when you are saying on your own. You are on your own now. I may still say it the workers still come out ahead. I mean yeah. They had a leg to stand on. I mean, you can always go to the union and the union will say well wait a minute in the contract you said you would do this and you would do this. See, the union had a contract was their right to say them see.

IB: That's right.

Wayne: They say you are violating the contract.

IB: Did you notice any difference in safety for the worker after the union came in? Did they try to make sure that some of the, I know you were talking about the machines being obsolete and whatnot, but

do you think that they helped at all for personal safety for the workers being injured on the job because of their machines or

Wayne: Well they tried. I can't say that they didn't. They tried to make them safe I mean but it was just what are you trying to do, trying to make a new out of an old.

IB: Maybe they are the ones that put the safety straps on and that kind of stuff.

Wayne: Yeah, before the union came in, yes. I'm not too well I'm not too familiar with that because ah ah, I wasn't around dangerous machinery.

IB: Ah huh.

Wayne: When ah, well presses I know they were really dangerous. I mean you had to watch, watch them like a hawk. Because they were you never knew when what time that dog instead of a catch in it, it would catch

IB: Oh.

Wayne: it may go around you see.

IB: And it keep on going around.

Wayne: ... see. Yeah. We didn't have the safest machinery.

IB: What about sick days before the union and after? Were you allowed to have before the union were you allowed if you were sick did you have so many sick days a month or before the union came in and then after it came in maybe you were allowed to have sick days?

Wayne: I don't know. They always told me that they said I bet if you was sick you'd be crawling in here.

IB: Oh gosh. (laughter)

Wayne: That was just me personally. That was me personally. Because I never took off. I'll bet you you could count in all my 40 years, ah 30 years rather, I'll bet you could count on hour one hand

IB: How many days you were

Wayne: How many days that I wasn't there. Or even being tardy. The only time I was tardy was when the snow got up this deep

IB: And you couldn't get there.

Wayne: Yeah. You remember those snows that we had?

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IB: Yeah, we used to have some snows didn't we?

Wayne: That was the only time that I was late. I never, I never refused time to go in, I would go in. It may be noon.

IB: But you'd get there.

Wayne: Yeah. They said I'll be you'd come in if you had to crawl.
(laughter)

IA: Mr. Nunnheimer, we know um, you are married, right, because we met your wife at the union hall

Wayne: Ah huh.

IA: Christmastime,

IB: Yes.

IA: Um, did you have any children? Do you have any children?

Wayne: Ah huh.

IA: One.

Wayne: One boy.

IA: Just like in your family, you were the only boy.

Wayne: That's right.

IA: That's right.

Wayne: But I don't think we spoiled him.

IB: Spoiled him. And when you were working at the Reo, did you live in Lansing?

Wayne: Yeah.

IB: Most of the time in the area too?

Wayne: All the time.

IB: Okay. And did you

Wayne: Oh wait a minute I'll take that back. Yeah, well wait a minute I said from 1940 to '44

IB: You were in Virginia.

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Wayne: Yeah. I was in Virginia. I was in Virginia. Not married.

IB: But when you were working here in Lansing at the Reo, once you were married,

Wayne: Oh yeah.

IB: did you own your own home?

Wayne: Oh yeah.

IB: Yeah?

Wayne: We do now, ah huh.

IB: Did you live out on the south side?

Wayne: Yeah.

IA: Live with your family? Okay, I'm set, anything else for you, Shirley?

IB: No I think I'm finished.

IA: Did we keep you long enough?

IB: Did we keep you too long, thank you very much Mr. Nunnheimer.