

## Interview of James Cataline

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4Interviewer:

This is Shirley Bradley. I am with Jim Cataline. We are at the R.E. Olds Museum. This is May 6. We're just going to talk about memories of REO. I'm going to start by asking Mr. Cataline a little bit about his own background; where he was born, where he went to school and that sort of thing.

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9

10Mr. Cataline:

Alright. Well I was born in Lansing at Sparrow Hospital, December 16, 1927. I started school at the Foster Avenue School out on Foster Avenue in 1932. We moved, uh, out to Miller Road in, uh, oh about 1938. And I went through the sixth and seventh grades at the old North School out on Miller Road. We moved to Eaton Rapids in June 1940; and I went on through high school at Eaton Rapids High School. I graduated in January 1945.

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While I was in high school, I worked at the A & P store in Eaton Rapids – nights after work and Saturdays. And uh, of course, that was... I graduated during WWII. At that time, uh, all of the boys coming out of high school went Interviewer: the service. The draft was on at that time. So, all we had to look forward to was, uh, the service. So, in June 1945... My dad was a timekeeper at REO at the time. He said as long as you're going into the service any day, you ought to quit the A & P store and come over to REO to work and make a little more money than you're making at the store. So, I came over to REO. At that time, they were hiring anyone that would come in the front door.

29Interviewer:

Oh, they were?

30

31Mr. Cataline:

So, I went in and uh, filled out my application and was hired the same day. And uh, went to work as a timekeeper in the motor plant in June 1945.

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33

34Interviewer:

[02:30] Someone trained you or kind of broke you in on what to do?

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36Mr. Cataline:

Yes, yes they did. Uh, they uh, at first, they put me with an older timekeeper in the motor plant. I worked with him for, oh I don't know, two or three weeks. And uh, then they gave me my own department to keep time for.

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41Interviewer:

Wow.

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43Mr. Cataline:

That was the paint department. I kept time for all of the painters. And uh, at that time, uh, uh, the factory was working 24 hours a day, three shifts – three eight-hour shifts. And uh, I worked the day shift. It seems like we worked from 8 to 4.

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1Interviewer: Sounds right. Yeah.  
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3Mr. Cataline: Yeah, I think the shifts were from 8 to 4, 4 to 12 and 12 to 8. But uh, there  
4 were so many people working there at the time – people coming and going  
5 all the time – that uh, uh, people were punching in and out for each other.  
6 And uh, you know, someone would come in and punch in for himself and  
7 his friend; his friend wouldn't show up, but uh, but was paid anyway.  
8 So...  
9  
10Interviewer: Oh my gosh.  
11  
12Mr. Cataline: One of the jobs, the responsibilities of the timekeepers, was to, at the  
13 beginning of the shift, go to the timeclock where all the timecards were  
14 and uh, make a list of everyone that had punched in. And then you went  
15 out through the plant and you had to find'm to make sure that everyone  
16 who had punched in was actually there working. And uh, so that was my  
17 first experience working at REO, was keeping track of these timekeepers  
18 and...  
19  
20Interviewer: [04:26] How long did you do that? That's interesting. How many people  
21 did you catch that really weren't working that day?  
22  
23Mr. Cataline: Oh, I don't know how many. It really didn't happen too often.  
24  
25Interviewer: [04:37] What would you do in a case like that?  
26  
27Mr. Cataline: No, you just report to the personnel office...  
28  
29Interviewer: Oh, I see.  
30  
31Mr. Cataline: ...and they take it from there.  
32  
33Interviewer: Don't pay him for today, huh?  
34  
35Mr. Cataline: Yeah, yeah, don't pay him for today. He wasn't here. [Chuckle]  
36  
37Interviewer: [04:51] And how long were you there in that department?  
38  
39Mr. Cataline: That was, uh... Well, not very long. I started in June; and the war ended  
40 in August. And uh, when the war ended all of us were sent home. The  
41 plant just shut down.  
42  
43Interviewer: Oh, it did?  
44  
45Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it did. In fact, uh, of course they knew, you know, that the war was  
46 coming to an end.  
47

1Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
2

3Mr. Cataline: And we were told that, uh, if we were home when it was announced that  
4 the war was over don't come back into work until you're called.  
5

6Interviewer: Oh.  
7

8Mr. Cataline: And that was the way it was with me. I was home in the afternoon. They  
9 knew about it, so I just didn't report back into work. In the meantime,  
10 later that fall, I enlisted in the Navy. I went in the service. So, when I was  
11 called back to work. I was in the service.  
12

13Interviewer: Oh. [05:55] And you said Uncle Sam's got me, right?  
14

15Mr. Cataline: Yep, yep. But uh, I was in the service for two years; and when I came  
16 back, when I was discharged, I went back to REO to work. And uh, of  
17 course, I worked there right up until the plant closed in 1975.  
18

19Interviewer: [06:16] Did you go back into timekeeping?  
20

21Mr. Cataline: No, no. When I went back, I went into the...this was in 1947...I went into  
22 the service parts stockroom. And uh, I worked in the service parts  
23 stockroom from '47 until uh, I think it was probably about 1951. Uh, I  
24 was offered a job up in the office...up in the parts department office.  
25

26Interviewer: Okay.  
27

28Mr. Cataline: So, that was my first taste of salary work.  
29

30Interviewer: [06:57] Oh, you'd been on...  
31

32Mr. Cataline: I on hourly.  
33

34Interviewer: ...hourly? Do you have any idea...? Can you remember what you were  
35 making as an hourly wage there at timekeeping?  
36

37Mr. Cataline: Well, I started... When I started timekeeping in 1945, I started at 75 cents  
38 an hour. And uh, you went...we went through three steps before you got  
39 the top rate; and the top rate was \$1.09.  
40

41Interviewer: Hm.  
42

43Mr. Cataline: So, we went from 75 through a couple steps and the top rate was \$1.09.  
44 When I came back in 1947, I don't remember the hourly rate, but I  
45 remember my weekly paycheck was \$50.00.  
46

47Interviewer: Well that was pretty good then.

1Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was. I made \$50.00 a week.  
2

3Interviewer: My mother worked there too; and she made \$35.00. We thought that was  
4 [inaudible 07:57].  
5

6Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. They didn't give pay increases very often.  
7

8Interviewer: They didn't?  
9

10Mr. Cataline: No, but uh, you felt secure.  
11

12Interviewer: [08:09] But that was worth a lot, wasn't it?  
13

14Mr. Cataline: Yeah, anyone that went to work there, uh, generally planned on being  
15 there the rest of their working days.  
16

17Interviewer: Retiring from there.  
18

19Mr. Cataline: Yep, mm-hm.  
20

21Interviewer: [08:23] Um, so when you went to REO the first time, you were a little  
22 over 18?  
23

24Mr. Cataline: Yes, mm-hm.  
25

26Interviewer: [08:29] And then you were 20 or 21 or something when you came back?  
27

28Mr. Cataline: I was probably 21 when I came back.  
29

30Interviewer: [08:36] And of course, your dad, you said you dad worked there. Was he  
31 there too after the war?  
32

33Mr. Cataline: No, no he wasn't. He left, uh, oh gosh he, he, he probably left there in  
34 1946, I think.  
35

36Mrs. Cataline: [Inaudible 8:55]  
37

38Mr. Cataline: Dad wasn't there very long. He had worked for the state years before; and  
39 uh, and he worked at REO just a short time.  
40

41Interviewer: I see.  
42

43Mr. Cataline: He came in there during the war; and when the war was over, he moved up  
44 north. He moved out to Bay City.  
45

46Interviewer: Mm.  
47

1Mr. Cataline: Yeah, he wasn't there very long.  
2  
3Interviewer: Well, of course, after the war there were strikes and there were layoffs and  
4 all that kind of thing.  
5  
6Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
7  
8Interviewer: Work wasn't real steady for a little while till they got another contract, I  
9 think.  
10  
11Mr. Cataline: Yeah, but it was... When I went back there in 1947, I had had a year and a  
12 half of college while I was in the service...  
13  
14Interviewer: Oh.  
15  
16Mr. Cataline: ...and when I went back there in 1947, I had planned on working there for  
17 a year or so and make a little money, you know, and go back to college –  
18 finish college. But that never happened. Once I went back, I was there...  
19  
20Interviewer: You had good employment and good...  
21  
22Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
23  
24Interviewer: [10:05] What about benefits?  
25  
26Mr. Cataline: Well, we had, you know...  
27  
28Interviewer: Like hospitalization and...  
29  
30Mr. Cataline: Oh yes. We had hospitalization.  
31  
32Interviewer: You did?  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: ...with Blue Cross.  
35  
36Interviewer: [10:13] With Blue Cross?  
37  
38Mr. Cataline: Yep.  
39  
40Interviewer: Oh, nice.  
41  
42Mr. Cataline: Yeah, you started right out with Blue Cross. That was in the early '50's I  
43 imagine.  
44  
45Interviewer: [10:22] And let me see, vacation time or overtime?  
46

1Mr. Cataline: Well yeah, we were paid time and a half for overtime...anything over 40  
2 hours. And uh, you had to work a year before you were given a week  
3 vacation. And uh, it seems like uh, maybe after about five years we were  
4 given two weeks. But then later on, you know, through the years that  
5 changed.  
6

7Interviewer: Did it?  
8

9Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. By the time I retired or by the time the plant closed, we were  
10 getting five weeks a year.  
11

12Interviewer: Is that right?  
13

14Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm.  
15

16Interviewer: And you could space them out or...?  
17

18Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. You could take them anytime during the year that you wanted.  
19 But that was with, uh, I believe we had to have 25 years' service before  
20 we could have the fifth week.  
21

22Interviewer: ...before you were allowed, yeah. My goodness. That was nice though  
23 wasn't it?  
24

25Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah, it was nice.  
26

27Interviewer: You could take the whole summer if you wanted to; and deer hunting  
28 season and...  
29

30Mr. Cataline: There were some years towards the end, I was managing the parts  
31 department and I wasn't able to take all of my vacation time, you know.  
32 We were just too busy and uh...  
33

34Interviewer: Oh.  
35

36Mr. Cataline: ...and we didn't take a full five weeks. You took what you could.  
37

38Interviewer: [11:44] Do you recall working conditions? I'm thinking of safety, uh,  
39 things of that sort. Cleanliness?  
40

41Mr. Cataline: Well, of course, working out in the plant it wasn't the cleanest place to  
42 work, but they had, you know, bathrooms – nice facilities to keep yourself  
43 clean. But the plant itself, they had old wooden floors, you know, that had  
44 been soaked with oil and grease for years. And uh, but uh, but we felt at  
45 the time we had real good conditions. We weren't concerned about...  
46

47Interviewer: [12:25] You weren't unhappy about it?

1Mr. Cataline: No, no we weren't unhappy at all. We were real content with, uh, with  
2 what we had.  
3

4Interviewer: [12:34] Did you live anywhere near the REO plant when you were a kid  
5 growing up...or later?  
6

7Mr. Cataline: No, no I didn't. When I was real young, we lived out on the east side of  
8 town out towards [Grandor 12:46] out on Frances Avenue; and then we  
9 moved out to Miller Road...  
10

11Interviewer: Oh, that's right. You did tell me that.  
12

13Mr. Cataline: And then from there, Eaton Rapids. So, all the time I worked at REO, I  
14 lived in Eaton Rapids.  
15

16Interviewer: [13:01] Who do you remember working with? I guess we'll start with the  
17 beginning when you went in for timekeeping when your dad got you in.  
18

19Mr. Cataline: Oh, Carl Ogden was the uh, was the head of the time department. He was  
20 the man that hired me.  
21

22Interviewer: Mm.  
23

24Mr. Cataline: And uh, the man I worked with out in the motor plant to train me, uh, his  
25 name of [Faye Blackledge 13:28].  
26

27Interviewer: Blackledge?  
28

29Mr. Cataline: Yeah. I think... Seemed like Faye lived in Perry. But then, uh, when I  
30 moved over to the, uh, main assembly building and took over the paint  
31 department, I worked with an old timekeeper named John Butler. And uh,  
32 oh I can't think of my own foreman's name. Uh, Jerry, uh... Jerry. I can't  
33 think of his last name.  
34

35Interviewer: Oh, that's okay.  
36

37Mr. Cataline: Yeah. But John Butler was in the same little office out in the shop that I  
38 was in. And uh, he taught me a lot, you know. He had been there for  
39 years and...  
40

41Interviewer: [14:28] What kind of timekeeping... Out here in the museum, we've got  
42 this – I don't know, 20's – way before any of us. But we've got this big  
43 old timekeeping machine with a big wheel that you turn; it punches the  
44 numbers.  
45

46Mr. Cataline: Yep, mm-hm.  
47

1Interviewer: [14:41] What kind of equipment were you using?  
2

3Mr. Cataline: Well at that time, during the war, there was a, uh, there was a little  
4 building up on Baker Street, up at the end of Platt Street. And uh,  
5 everyone coming into the plant came through that little timeclock  
6 building.  
7

8Interviewer: Oh, okay.  
9

10Mr. Cataline: There were rows of timecards and timeclocks. And, of course, the  
11 departments were all separated on the board that contained all the  
12 timecards. And uh, everyone came through this little building, picked  
13 their card out, punched the clock and put their card over in another rack.  
14 There was a rack for those not in the plant and a rack for those that were at  
15 work. So uh, when the timekeeper went into this little timeclock building,  
16 you just went to the rack of all of the cards that were punched in. And you  
17 had a list of everyone that was in your department. You just went through  
18 the cards and checked out everyone who had punched in. And, of course,  
19 you'd go over to the other side and see who hadn't punched in. Then from  
20 there go on out into the plant and find them – make sure they were there.  
21 The painters were scattered all over the plant, you know.  
22

23Interviewer: Oh, I could imagine.  
24

25Mr. Cataline: There were painters on the final assembly line; and then there were  
26 painters in other smaller departments, you know, that were painting...  
27

28Interviewer: Painting just parts that go onto the trucks.  
29

30Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
31

32Interviewer: Mm. Of course, now everything is digital, so...  
33

34Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah. Everything is automatic.  
35

36Interviewer: But, you know, people still punch in friends. My son-in-law works at GM  
37 and he's told me about that.  
38

39Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
40

41Interviewer: I've never directly accused him. [Chuckle]  
42

43Mr. Cataline: Yeah, well I heard my dad, you know, before I started working at REO, he  
44 worked midnight shift from 12 to 8 in the morning. I guess it was more  
45 common on that shift...  
46

47Interviewer: Oh, on the midnight shift?



1Mr. Cataline: ...for people to punch in for each other – than it was during the day.  
2

3Interviewer: [17:06] Is that what they called the graveyard shift?  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was. It was.  
6

7Interviewer: That's interesting because I don't think any... I don't know of any place  
8 now that has three shifts anymore, do you?  
9

10Mr. Cataline: No, no.  
11

12Interviewer: Of course, more production had to rule out.  
13

14Mr. Cataline: Yeah, you worked just a straight eight hours; and they gave us 20 minutes  
15 for our lunch – half-way through the shift. And then in the middle of the  
16 first half and in the middle of the second half of the shift, we had a little  
17 break. I don't remember what it was – 5 or 10 minutes.  
18

19Interviewer: [17:42] There a lunchroom place nearby? You didn't have to go clear  
20 across the shop? You just ate where you were?  
21

22Mr. Cataline: No. There was no lunchroom. Most people just ate, you know, wherever  
23 they worked. In fact, I remember just outside of our office, uh, was a big  
24 workbench. These fellas had torches, like welding torches. And uh, they'd  
25 set their sandwiches up on the counter, up on the workbench and they'd  
26 toast their sandwiches with their welding torches.  
27

28Interviewer: [Laughter] Oh, that's wonderful.  
29

30Mr. Cataline: But uh, right across the street from REO on Baker Street, right across from  
31 the motor plant, way down close to Cedar Street...  
32

33Interviewer: Close to Cedar...  
34

35Mr. Cataline: ...was, uh, Potter's Restaurant. These people catered to the employees at  
36 REO. Of course, this was during the daytime. I don't think this happened  
37 at night, but they prepared lunches, uh, easy to get kind of things, like  
38 goulash and chili and bean soup – things that could be served up real  
39 quick.  
40

41Interviewer: Big batches.  
42

43Mr. Cataline: And when our 20 minutes would start, there would be a mad rush over to  
44 Potters. They'd serve us... Oh, I don't know how many.  
45

46Interviewer: As fast as they could.  
47

1Mr. Cataline: Yeah, they'd serve them; and we'd be back in 20 minutes.  
2  
3Interviewer: [19:25] I wonder if that building is still standing.  
4  
5Mr. Cataline: Yeah, the building is there.  
6  
7Interviewer: Is it?  
8  
9Mr. Cataline: Yeah. It's about, uh, oh I'd say, uh, probably the second or third door  
10 west of Cedar Street on the south side of Baker Street.  
11  
12Interviewer: Okay.  
13  
14Mr. Cataline: It's a big old brick building; and it was called Potter's Restaurant.  
15  
16Interviewer: That's neat. [19:50] Um, so let's see, the war is over, you're back, out of  
17 the service and you're back at work.... Um, and so, you progressed to  
18 different departments or...?  
19  
20Mr. Cataline: Yeah, that was one thing about REO, they promoted their own people  
21 from within, you know. They would, uh...  
22  
23Interviewer: Instead of going outside and finding...  
24  
25Mr. Cataline: Yeah, give the better jobs to their own people, you know. If you're  
26 qualified for something and the job is open, they would give that to their  
27 own people and, you know, take care of their own employees, rather than  
28 going to the outside. I was working out in this parts stockroom... I'd been  
29 out there for about five years. And we, you know, we picked orders and  
30 packed orders for shipment and...  
31  
32Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: ...loaded trailers and boxcars.  
35  
36Interviewer: [20:51] With parts that were going...?  
37  
38Mr. Cataline: Yeah, these were parts shipments going out to REO dealers and REO  
39 branches.  
40  
41Interviewer: Oh, so... But they would be doing repairs and whatnot.  
42  
43Mr. Cataline: Yeah. All of the REO branches and dealers would order all of their parts  
44 requirements, you know, through the parts department. And the  
45 stockroom that I worked in was where we gathered all the parts and  
46 packed them for shipment.  
47

1Interviewer: Mm. [21:20] All over the world I suppose?  
2

3Mr. Cataline: Yes, all over the world. They had foreign dealers. We shipped many  
4 export orders. In fact, they had a separate little group that packed  
5 export...  
6

7Interviewer: Oh, they did?  
8

9Mr. Cataline: ...because that was packed different, you know, than things going to  
10 domestic dealers. All of the export shipments were packed in wooden  
11 boxes and crates; and the domestic shipments were in cardboard cartons.  
12

13Interviewer: [21:52] They weren't going to be handled so roughly or had to go such a  
14 distance.  
15

16Mr. Cataline: No, huh-uh.  
17

18Interviewer: That's interesting.  
19

20Mr. Cataline: But while I was working out in the stockroom, uh, the manager of the  
21 parts department office came up to me one day and asked if I would like to  
22 come to work up in the office. And uh, so I went up to the office and sat  
23 at his desk and he interviewed me, you know. He said, "We're offering  
24 you this job. You can come up here and have your own desk and, and uh,  
25 you'll be taking orders from the dealers and branches."  
26

27Interviewer: [22:34] Oh, they would call it in or write it in?  
28

29Mr. Cataline: They'll either call or come in the mail. At that time, a lot of business was  
30 done by mail. But uh, there were phone orders. But uh, the main thing  
31 that I remember about that interview is when it was finished, he says,  
32 "Now you can have this job if you like it", but he says, "You'd be foolish  
33 if you don't take it."  
34

35Interviewer: So, you said, "Oh I plan to take it."  
36

37Mr. Cataline: Yeah, well I thought that was great anyway, you know.  
38

39Interviewer: You bet. [23:06] So, was that a pay increase?  
40

41Mr. Cataline: Oh, yes that was a pay increase. I don't remember how much, but uh,  
42 yeah it was a pay increase.  
43

44Interviewer: And it was something new to do.  
45

46Mr. Cataline: Oh, it was something new to do and a new group of people to work with.  
47

1Interviewer: [23:20] Do you remember anybody that you worked with there?  
2

3Mr. Cataline: Oh, I remember about all of them.  
4

5Interviewer: Oh, do you?  
6

7Mr. Cataline: Yeah, [Art Krahm 23:24] was one of them.  
8

9Interviewer: Oh, you worked with [Art Krahm 23:27]?  
10

11Mr. Cataline: Yeah, Art was the, uh, assistant purchaser for, uh, the parts department.  
12

13Interviewer: I'll have to... I don't have... Well, the tapes that we do are stored here at  
14 the museum. And so, his is back here. I'm going to have to listen to again  
15 just for fun.  
16

17Mr. Cataline: Yeah, he uh, uh, Art worked for an old man named Carl Godfrey.  
18 Godfrey was the head of service purchasing; and [Art Krahm 24:05] was  
19 his assistant.  
20

21Interviewer: Oh, I see.  
22

23Mr. Cataline: The man that I worked for...his name was Judd McClernan.  
24

25Interviewer: Judd?  
26

27Mr. Cataline: Judd McClernan. He was the office manager for, uh...  
28

29Interviewer: McClernan... I'm writing these down because when Jim's secretary  
30 transcribes this, she's going to say, "How do I spell that?" Maybe it's M-  
31 C-L...  
32

33Mr. Cataline: M-C-C... There were two C's in it.  
34

35Interviewer: Oh, there were?  
36

37Mr. Cataline: M-C-C-L-E-R-N-A-N, I think.  
38

39Interviewer: All one word, you think?  
40

41Mr. Cataline: Well it was kind of a hyphenated...  
42

43Interviewer: That's what I was thinking. Yeah, I got it.  
44

45Mr. Cataline: But uh, and the uh, the head of all service and parts, uh, was Peter  
46 Hamelink.  
47

1Interviewer: Hamelink?  
2  
3Mr. Cataline: Yeah, H-A-M-E-L-I-N-K, I think.  
4  
5Interviewer: Yeah, I think so. I've heard the name before various times. I don't  
6remember now the connection, but... [25:12] They were all in the  
7department where you were?  
8  
9Mr. Cataline: Yeah, we were all in the same one big room, mm-hm.  
10  
11Interviewer: [25:19] Oh, you each had your own desk and...?  
12  
13Mr. Cataline: Yeah, we had our own desk. But uh, this was parts and service both.  
14There were a group of people in there that did service work, you know,  
15with the dealers and branches.  
16  
17Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
18  
19Mr. Cataline: And uh, we had a little group that did parts pricing – made up our price  
20books; we had another group that wrote parts catalogs; and uh, we had a  
21group that handled nothing but military parts.  
22  
23Interviewer: Oh, okay. It would be a little different, I suspect.  
24  
25Mr. Cataline: Yeah, they bid on all their, all their work.  
26  
27Interviewer: [26:00] Did they because they had a government contract?  
28  
29Mr. Cataline: Yes. They were bidding on military contracts, government contracts – for  
30parts for military trucks.  
31  
32Interviewer: [26:09] And all the parts were made in the factory? You didn't have  
33outsourcing then or...?  
34  
35Mr. Cataline: Well yeah, we did have some. We made, uh, all of our frame and sheet  
36metal parts. And uh, we made all of our, uh, we built our own gasoline  
37engines. But uh, they did buy many other parts. They bought the axels  
38and transmissions and clutches...  
39  
40Interviewer: Oh.  
41  
42Mr. Cataline: ...and a lot of the brake and steering parts. Steering gears were purchased  
43from the outside.  
44  
45Interviewer: Oh, I see.  
46  
47Mr. Cataline: Yeah, there was a lot of materials coming in from the outside.

1Interviewer: [26:54] So, when you got an order from some dealer half way across the  
2country, did you then have to get the parts from some of these  
3outsourcing...?  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Well, no. Those parts were already in our warehouse.  
6

7Interviewer: Oh, I see. They just came in for orders.  
8

9Mr. Cataline: We had a stock records group. Of course, back in that time we didn't have  
10computers. Everything was on cards and it was all done manually. But  
11uh, they kept record of all parts that were in stock then.  
12

13Interviewer: Mm.  
14

15Mr. Cataline: And uh, these of course, were parts that were manufactured in our plant  
16and parts that were coming in from outside sources. But uh, they had...  
17On their stock record for each part they had a low minimum quantity.  
18And as these girls were posting orders that were coming in for parts; and  
19they would get down to that low quantity, then they would reorder.  
20

21Interviewer: Okay. [28:01] When you were getting low, you'd order more.  
22

23Mr. Cataline: Yes, it was really a manual computer system.  
24

25Interviewer: Sounds like it worked too.  
26

27Mr. Cataline: Oh, it did. It worked good.  
28

29Interviewer: [28:12] Now you said the girls. There was a section where they had  
30boards on the wall or something?  
31

32Mr. Cataline: No, they were big books. They were books about *this size*. They had a  
33table about, well not quite *this long*; and these books were lined up on  
34both sides of this table; and there were girls on each side. And uh, our part  
35numbering system was an alphabetical system. It went from A through Y,  
36I guess it was. I think Y was the last. But uh, these books were set up  
37alphabetically. And the girls on one side had one-half of the alphabet; and  
38the girls on the other side had the other half of the alphabet.  
39

40Interviewer: Oh, okay.  
41

42Mr. Cataline: Of course, every parts order that was entered, there were many copies of  
43the same order...  
44

45Interviewer: Oh, in triplicate, huh?  
46

1Mr. Cataline: Yeah, there was a copy that went down to the, uh, down to the stock room  
2 to pick the stock by; and there was a copy that went with the order to the  
3 dealer or whoever it was going to; and there was a copy that went to these  
4 posting clerks, so that they could post, you know, all of the items on the  
5 order. They would post those quantities out of inventory. And uh, that  
6 was how they... Well that was their inventory control system.  
7  
8Interviewer: Sure. [29:42] Then those orders would go down to the various  
9 departments or down to the shipping or wherever...  
10  
11Mr. Cataline: Down to the stock room...  
12  
13Interviewer: ...and then out to shipping or something?  
14  
15Interviewer: Yep. And we had people in the, uh... Well every item on each order had a  
16 little tag written – for each item. And this was all done by hand. There  
17 was a lady that did nothing all day long but handwrite little tags for all of  
18 these individual parts. But these tags, along with the order, would go down  
19 to the stock room; and uh, the people that picked the stock would take the  
20 tags and they would go around through the stock room and pick all the  
21 parts and bring them back to a big checking bench. And there was a  
22 checker that would check all the...  
23  
24Interviewer: ...against the orders?  
25  
26Mr. Cataline: ...cards against the order to make sure everything was there. And  
27 anything that wasn't there that we didn't have in stock, they would  
28 backorder, you know. They would mark on the order to backorder it. And  
29 uh...  
30  
31Interviewer: [30:48] Now did any of the paperwork come back up to your office after  
32 the order had been filled?  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it had to come back to the office for billing.  
35  
36Interviewer: Oh, of course.  
37  
38Mr. Cataline: So that it, uh, could billed it to whoever it was going to.  
39  
40Interviewer: That's interesting.  
41  
42Mr. Cataline: It was. It was...  
43  
44Interviewer: No, really. It sounds fascinating.  
45  
46Mr. Cataline: It was.  
47

1Interviewer: And therefore, a lot of people could have jobs there. Where now, one  
2 computer does the work of...  
3

4Mr. Cataline: Yeah, yep.  
5

6Interviewer: ...who knows. [31:18] So, did you stay in that department all through the  
7 rest of your working career?  
8

9Mr. Cataline: Uh, I was in the, uh, the parts office from 1951 until probably about 1953.  
10 I was given another better job – promotion – and I went into the sales  
11 department.  
12

13Interviewer: Oh, you did? [31:41] And what did you do there?  
14

15Mr. Cataline: I was the assistant to the sales distribution manager.  
16

17Interviewer: [31:46] And who was that?  
18

19Mr. Cataline: Uh, his name was Hugh Clark.  
20

21Interviewer: Oh, Hugh Clark. Okay.  
22

23Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. And in, uh, in that position, uh, it was similar to the old parts  
24 department job of taking parts orders. In the sales department I was taking  
25 truck orders.  
26

27Interviewer: [32:10] Now you're doing the whole thing. [Chuckle]  
28

29Mr. Cataline: Yeah, yeah. My job was to take the truck order as it came in through the  
30 branch or the dealer and convert this order into an engineering order that  
31 the truck could be built by.  
32

33Interviewer: Oh, because people had specific needs for these trucks.  
34

35Mr. Cataline: Yes, they did. I don't know if REO ever built two trucks the same, you  
36 know. All trucks were built specifically for a certain job. We had a sales  
37 engineering department that their main function was to, uh, uh, set up  
38 specifications for trucks to do whatever, uh, the truck was being built to  
39 do.  
40

41Interviewer: Sure.  
42

43Mr. Cataline: And uh...  
44

45Interviewer: And Mr. Mitchell that I talked to yesterday talked about that...about the  
46 trucks.  
47



1Mr. Cataline: Yeah, he was in the engineering department; and the sales department  
2 would work closely with the engineering department...  
3

4Interviewer: Oh, it did?  
5

6Mr. Cataline: ...in setting up these engineering orders to build the trucks by.  
7

8Interviewer: Oh, so you really were part of the whole...  
9

10Mr. Cataline: Yep.  
11

12Interviewer: [33:36] He recalled one particular day when there were, I think 100 or 110  
13 trucks that were finished and went down the line that day. He said, "That  
14 was a big day", he said, because you have to think Oldsmobile was doing  
15 110 cars an hour.  
16

17Mr. Cataline: Yeah, mm-hm.  
18

19Interviewer: But he said the trucks were all different. Some of them were longer than  
20 others. They don't come down the line as fast. I thought, golly that's  
21 fascinating, because now we just, you know, everything's cut out like  
22 cookie cutters.  
23

24Mr. Cataline: Yeah. They run all the way from trucks that were just a little larger than a  
25 pick-up truck all the way up to big semi-tractor, you know, highway...  
26

27Interviewer: ...over the road. Sure. [34:25] When you said pick-up truck, he showed  
28 me a picture of something like a pick-up truck that was built here. What  
29 did you call it? Something Mack...little Mack?  
30

31Mr. Cataline: Oh, Mack Junior.  
32

33Interviewer: Was that it?  
34

35Mr. Cataline: Mack Junior, yeah.  
36

37Interviewer: I was so amazed. I hadn't known that they were... I always thought of the  
38 big military trucks and the big over-the-road trucks and, you know...  
39

40Mr. Cataline: Well, in the late '30s REO did build a pick-up truck. And that was what  
41 [Les 34:50] was talking about.  
42

43Interviewer: Mm-hm, must be. He had a picture of it.  
44

45Mr. Cataline: And then, uh...  
46

47Interviewer: [34:56] And he mentioned parcel post trucks...or UPS trucks.

1Mr. Cataline: Oh, we built many, many... These were big highway tractors for UPS.  
2

3Interviewer: Oh, the big thing that looks like a semi.  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Yeah, these were big flat front, uh, big square, yes, semi-trailer tractors.  
6

7Interviewer: Now, would that have the REO Comet engine in it?  
8

9Mr. Cataline: No, that had a diesel engine.  
10

11Interviewer: A diesel engine.  
12

13Mr. Cataline: Yeah, that was a much bigger than the REO. The REO Gold Comet was a  
14 gasoline engine.  
15

16Interviewer: Oh, okay. And this is diesel.  
17

18Mr. Cataline: Yeah, these big highway tractors were diesel. They had a Cummings  
19 diesel engine in it.  
20

21Interviewer: Cummings, mm-hm. Okay.  
22

23Mr. Cataline: In the later years of Diamond REO, United Parcel Service was one of their  
24 biggest customers.  
25

26Interviewer: It was?  
27

28Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm.  
29

30Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting, because I know, you know, through the last years  
31 things, you know, were boom and bust almost, weren't they?  
32

33Mr. Cataline: Yeah, yeah, they were. And uh, they depended a lot on the military  
34 contracts. These military contracts were real good for production too  
35 because, uh, commercial production is... Uh, the orders coming in are  
36 irregular, you know. You may get a dozen orders today and 100  
37 tomorrow.  
38

39Interviewer: Oh.  
40

41Mr. Cataline: They don't come in at a regular, uh, rate. So, for the production line, it  
42 was real handy for them to have these military contracts to fill a  
43 production line on the slow days.  
44

45Interviewer: Oh, sure.  
46

1Mr. Cataline: They didn't have to build a certain number of military trucks each day.  
2 They might, you know, build a half a dozen today and 40 tomorrow. But  
3 uh, but they were real good to fill in these gaps.  
4

5Interviewer: Oh, yes. I can see that.  
6

7Mr. Cataline: ...for the commercial production.  
8

9Interviewer: Otherwise, they'd be sending people home after two or three hours of  
10 work.  
11

12Mr. Cataline: Yeah. And they would, uh... Of course, there were people that made up  
13 the lineups everyday with production. And uh, they would make these  
14 lineups based on the age of the truck order that would come in and the  
15 availability of material in the plant to build the trucks.  
16

17Interviewer: Mm.  
18

19Mr. Cataline: As they made this lineup up each day, if they had gaps in the lineup, you  
20 could stick military trucks in there and keep a steady flow.  
21

22Interviewer: ...keep the production going.  
23

24Mr. Cataline: Keep the production going, yep.  
25

26Interviewer: [37:54] Did you stay in that sales department then?  
27

28Mr. Cataline: I was in that department about four years; and uh, we had a slow time in  
29 the economy and production. This was about 1957; and I went back into  
30 the parts department. The sales department cut back on the number of  
31 people; and so, I went back into the parts department as a parts catalog  
32 writer. I wrote parts catalog material for, uh, oh probably about four  
33 years. By this time, White Motor had bought REO.  
34

35Interviewer: [38:39] Did that make a change in what you were doing?  
36

37Mr. Cataline: No, not in what I was doing. It speeded up what we were doing. It, it  
38 added people to our department because of, uh... At this time, we were  
39 building trucks for REO and Diamond T and White. It just meant  
40 enlarging the department. And uh, the man that I worked for that was the  
41 head of the parts catalog group... His name was Mike [McGivern 39:19].  
42 He was moved down to Cleveland to take over the White Motor parts  
43 catalog operation; and I was promoted into his job. I was given the job as  
44 head of the parts catalog group.  
45

46Interviewer: [39:37] Now was that another pay increase for you?  
47

1Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah...  
2  
3Interviewer: Great.  
4  
5Mr. Cataline: That was another promotion.  
6  
7Interviewer: So, you got to go home and say, "Guess what?"  
8  
9Mr. Cataline: And uh... But things were getting busier for us, you know. Now we  
10 weren't just writing parts catalogs for REO, we were writing parts catalogs  
11 for Diamond T's and for White's. And the product line was increasing,  
12 you know. They were adding new models and the parts business catalog  
13 was, uh...  
14  
15Interviewer: [40:14] That was all done by hand, I guess?  
16  
17Mr. Cataline: It was all done by hand. Yes, it was done by hand.  
18  
19Interviewer: [40:20] Take me through a day what you were doing in this parts catalog.  
20  
21Mr. Cataline: Well, uh, they had, they had what they called, uh...  
22  
23Mrs. Cataline: [Inaudible 40:41]  
24  
25Interviewer: I know. I'm sorry.  
26  
27Mr. Cataline: That's alright. I'm thinking what the engineering department called their  
28 bills of material. These were the bills of material a truck was built by.  
29 And uh, our parts catalogs were written based on the engineering orders or  
30 the engineering bills of material because we're servicing the trucks with  
31 the same parts that go into the trucks when they are being built.  
32  
33 So uh, we would take the, uh, the engineering bills of material for each  
34 model; and from these bills of material, we'd take and list the part  
35 numbers for all the parts to build an engine, for example.  
36  
37Interviewer: Okay.  
38  
39Mr. Cataline: And we would write an engine section for a parts catalog based on these  
40 engineering bills of material. From there or beyond this, we would, uh,  
41 write to all of our suppliers – the people that build our transmissions and  
42 clutches and axels and, you know, springs and all the, uh, material brought  
43 in from the outside...all the assemblies brought in from the outside, we  
44 would get the bills of material from our suppliers. For example, a  
45 transmission. And uh, we would have a parts catalog section for this  
46 particular transmission; and eventually every transmission that was used in  
47 our production.

1 So, we went from originally having two people in the parts catalog to  
2 maybe 20 of us.  
3  
4Interviewer: Oh my. That was a lot of work.  
5  
6Mr. Cataline: Yeah, we had certain people that, uh, wrote the parts list for all of the  
7 sheet metal, you know, the cabs, the hoods, the fenders and that sort of  
8 thing. And uh, someone would work on nothing but transmissions; and  
9 someone would work on axels and...  
10  
11Interviewer: Kind of like a specialty.  
12  
13Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was. It was.  
14  
15Interviewer: [43:14] Did they ever send you out around the shop on...  
16  
17Mr. Cataline: Well we were out in the shop all the time.  
18  
19Interviewer: [43:20] You weren't just stuck in your office?  
20  
21Mr. Cataline: No, we were all in the shop, you know. We'd be writing a parts catalog  
22 section on maybe battery boxes or fuel tanks. And uh, we'd have a bill of  
23 material that listed all of these parts. But uh, from this, you couldn't tell  
24 exactly how all of this went together. So, you'd go out in the shop where  
25 they were actually...  
26  
27Interviewer: [43:44] Oh and watch them do it?  
28  
29Mr. Cataline: Yes, mm-hm.  
30  
31Interviewer: So, then you really have a visual picture of what you were...  
32  
33Mr. Cataline: Now that writing parts catalog was the best education that anyone could  
34 have.  
35  
36Interviewer: Is that right?  
37  
38Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah.  
39  
40Interviewer: Because you learned what was really going on.  
41  
42Mr. Cataline: You learned everything that was internal and um, everything that went in  
43 the truck, you know. You learned all the parts of the engine and how it  
44 operated and all the parts of the transmissions and how they operated  
45 and...  
46  
47Interviewer: Yeah, that would be an education, wouldn't it?

1Mr. Cataline: Oh, yes. It was real interesting.  
2

3Interviewer: I have no idea what goes on under a hood. [Chuckle]  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Well most of us didn't when we started.  
6

7Interviewer: No, you have to see it done or do it or something. [44:30] So, did you stay  
8 then in the...?  
9

10Mr. Cataline: I stayed in the parts catalog department, uh, well let's see... I started in the  
11 parts catalog department I think about '57; and then I took over as  
12 manager I think about in '61; and then, uh, when, uh, Diamond REO was  
13 formed out of REO and Diamond T... This was in about '67, uh, I was  
14 made general parts manager. I was given the responsibility of the whole  
15 parts department, which included, uh, oh parts cataloging and parts  
16 pricing. And uh, we had a group of field representatives who traveled the  
17 country, merchandising parts through all of our dealers.  
18

19Interviewer: [45:33] So, that was all under your responsibility?  
20

21Mr. Cataline: Yep.  
22

23Interviewer: [45:39] Did you stay in there in doing that until you...  
24

25Mr. Cataline: I was doing that right up until the plant closed.  
26

27Interviewer: ...till the end. [45:45] Did you see it coming?  
28

29Mr. Cataline: Yes.  
30

31Interviewer: You must have doing all the work you did.  
32

33Mr. Cataline: Yeah, you could. You could feel it coming. You didn't want to admit, I  
34 guess, that it was coming but uh, but everyone had that feeling that...  
35

36Interviewer: You didn't know for sure how long this was going to last.  
37

38Mr. Cataline: Yeah and that was a real bad feeling, too.  
39

40Interviewer: Oh, it must have been.  
41

42Mr. Cataline: White sold, uh, Diamond REO. I don't remember when that was... Sold  
43 that to Francis Cappaert. And uh, shortly after that, it wasn't, you know,  
44 within a couple of years, uh, we could see things changing.  
45

46Interviewer: You could?  
47

1Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. They, uh... It seemed like the structure of the company changed  
2 after White sold to this Mr. Cappaert.  
3

4Interviewer: People were...  
5

6Mr. Cataline: You didn't have a big corporation, you know...  
7

8Interviewer: You didn't have...  
9

10Mr. Cataline: What I'd like to add, I guess, is that, uh, um, just... REO wasn't just a  
11 place to work, it was the main part of our social life back then.  
12

13Interviewer: Oh good. I'm glad you're getting to that, yeah.  
14

15Mr. Cataline: We had, uh, the... Well the girls had their girls' club; and the salaried men  
16 had their own club, the Steering Gear Club. We had, uh, our clubroom  
17 upstairs in the clubhouse. Um, we'd have meetings once a month; we'd  
18 go up there and play cards and have a good meal and quite often have a  
19 speaker. Once in a while rather than having a meeting, uh, we'd got to  
20 Detroit to a football game or to a baseball or go to Michigan State to a  
21 football game. We had something going on every month. Uh, we had a  
22 golf league; and both the men and women had a bowling league. And  
23 uh...  
24

25Interviewer: Because the bowling allies were in the clubhouse.  
26

27Mr. Cataline: Yeah, well uh...  
28

29Interviewer: [48:16] Or did you go out?  
30

31Mr. Cataline: Yeah, they went out at the time. I guess years before they did have  
32 bowling allies in the basement of the clubhouse.  
33

34Interviewer: Probably they weren't what you could use later.  
35

36Mr. Cataline: Yeah, but during our years there, the old bowling alley was our training  
37 department.  
38

39Interviewer: Oh.  
40

41Mr. Cataline: But uh, we had our own cafeteria in the basement of the clubhouse.  
42

43Interviewer: Oh, you did?  
44

45Mr. Cataline: Yeah. But uh, there were family things going on all the time too. They  
46 used to have the REO Fall Fair.  
47

1Interviewer: [48:49] What was that?  
2  
3Mr. Cataline: This was a... Well, it was just like a county fair. It was where employees  
4brought their hobbies and... Some of'm had animals there and...  
5  
6Interviewer: What a great place to take the kids.  
7  
8Mr. Cataline: Oh, yeah. And the kids were a part of it. They had a Christmas party each  
9year for the kids. All of the families brought their kids; and they had gifts  
10for, you know, different age groups. Kids got to know each other; and  
11husbands and wives got to know each other. We had, uh, had a big  
12Christmas party. It was called the Charity Ball – every year in the  
13clubhouse. They'd have a band come in and, uh, we'd all get together  
14there and drink and dance and...  
15  
16Interviewer: ...have a good time. [49:48] The money went to charity or something?  
17  
18Mr. Cataline: Yes.  
19  
20Interviewer: You said you called it the Charity Ball?  
21  
22Mr. Cataline: Yes, it was the Charity Ball.  
23  
24Interviewer: ...to do things in the community?  
25  
26Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
27  
28Interviewer: I've heard about the Red Stocking Club too for Christmas.  
29  
30Mr. Cataline: Oh, yes that was, uh, Lansing City...  
31  
32Interviewer: Oh, that was a city-wide thing, not just a REO thing?  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: REO was involved in it, uh, the same as the old Newsboys...  
35  
36Interviewer: Oh, okay.  
37  
38Mr. Cataline: People from REO would take part in that. They'd come through the  
39offices, uh, selling the old Newsboy papers. But uh, families got to know  
40each other; and uh, uh, many of our closest friends today are old REO  
41people, you know, people from back in the REO days.  
42  
43Interviewer: You forged that bond.  
44  
45Mr. Cataline: Yes, mm-hm. Yep, we uh, we get together with several people from REO.  
46  
47Interviewer: Good. That's wonderful.



1Mr. Cataline: We get together with them in Florida; and get together with them up here.  
2

3Interviewer: What a loss then, when that door closed and the lock was turned.  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Uh-huh.  
6

7Interviewer: Mercy.  
8

9Mr. Cataline: We have a REO reunion every year now. And these people get together  
10 and it's just like an old family reunion, you know. They're all hugs and...  
11 It's just like a family thing.  
12

13Interviewer: It really was a family thing.  
14

15Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was.  
16

17Interviewer: I don't think I've ever heard of that happening anywhere else, really.  
18

19Mr. Cataline: Nope, nope.  
20

21Interviewer: And I just couldn't imagine how shattered everybody must have felt in  
22 1975.  
23

24Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
25

26Interviewer: One of the ladies I talked to a few years back said she didn't know for  
27 sure... You know, like you said, you kind of had a feeling but you kind of  
28 pushed that thought away. But when she went into work and the doors  
29 were padlocked on the office building...  
30

31Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
32

33Interviewer: ...she said she just sat down and cried.  
34

35Mrs. Cataline: You worked after it closed, too.  
36

37Mr. Cataline: Yeah. I stayed, uh... I worked for the, uh, the liquidating company...  
38

39Interviewer: Oh, you did?  
40

41Mr. Cataline: ...for a year after that after the company closed.  
42

43Interviewer: Because you knew about records and inventories and things, I suspect.  
44

45Mr. Cataline: Well yes, being that associated with the parts department, you know, we  
46 had... This company, uh, through the bankruptcy court bought the total  
47 inventory of the company, both the service and production inventories.

1Interviewer: Everything inside the walls?  
2

3Mr. Cataline: Yes, everything.  
4

5Interviewer: Oh, okay.  
6

7Mr. Cataline: Everything except the equipment in the plant.  
8

9Interviewer: Oh, not the equipment?  
10

11Mr. Cataline: No, they didn't buy the equipment. They just bought the, uh, the uh, parts  
12 from the parts depart-... or that were in the parts department and the  
13 production inventory, what was left over, you know, to build trucks.  
14

15Interviewer: Were there things half-finished, I wonder, coming down the line?  
16

17Mr. Cataline: Oh, there were many trucks half-finished. Down here behind the old  
18 duplex building down on the corner of Mt. Hope and Washington...  
19

20Interviewer: Oh yes, mm-hm.  
21

22Mr. Cataline: On down behind that, down towards the National Guard Armory, down  
23 there...  
24

25Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
26

27Mr. Cataline: There's a big empty lot down in there; and that was full of partially built  
28 trucks.  
29

30Interviewer: [53:25] What happened to them, I wonder?  
31

32Mr. Cataline: Well, they were sold; and, uh, Will Johnson, he had been, uh, sales  
33 manager years before. Will was given the job of disposing of that truck  
34 inventory. I imagine they were sold to former Diamond REO dealers.  
35

36Interviewer: Oh.  
37

38Mr. Cataline: And uh, you know, they probably completed them on their own and...  
39

40Interviewer: Hm.  
41

42Mr. Cataline: But uh, that lot was full of trucks that were just partially built.  
43

44Interviewer: [54:12] Your job then was to work with this liquidating...?  
45

46Mr. Cataline: I worked with this liquidating company selling off, uh, inventory.  
47

1Interviewer: Did you have to find buyers or...?  
2  
3Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm, yeah. Just use the telephone and call buyers. Uh, but uh,  
4 through this bankruptcy, a company in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania bought  
5 the rights to the Diamond REO name; and uh, bought all of the  
6 engineering and production rights through the bankruptcy court. They  
7 continued to build Diamond REOs in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for some  
8 time for several years. And uh, a lot of that inventory was sold to them.  
9  
10Interviewer: I see. [55:23] And that took a couple years, you said?  
11  
12Mr. Cataline: Well I worked there for a year.  
13  
14Interviewer: A year?  
15  
16Mr. Cataline: And uh, it was pretty much finished up when I left.  
17  
18Interviewer: That had to be odd going into that place...  
19  
20Mr. Cataline: Oh, it was.  
21  
22Interviewer: ...you know, with it quiet and everybody gone.  
23  
24Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah, the plant was just dead – nothing. We would walk through there  
25 with flashlights and...  
26  
27Interviewer: Hm. [55:51] Did very many other people have a year employment after,  
28 like you did?  
29  
30Mr. Cataline: Well there were several of us there. There was probably...  
31  
32Interviewer: To help wrap it up?  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: There was probably 10 or 12 of us that, uh, worked there for this  
35 company. Well, in fact, uh, the uh, Tom Shelley and Dewayne Eller, who  
36 had been a part of Diamond REO headed this company – this liquidating  
37 company. And uh, I think as a result of this company, following the  
38 liquidating company disposing of the inventory, I think Tom Shelley  
39 started the nuts and bolts store down on, uh...  
40  
41Interviewer: Oh, on Cedar.  
42  
43Mr. Cataline: Yeah, so whatever was left over I think Tom Shelley took into that nuts  
44 and bolts store.  
45

1Interviewer: Yeah, I remember seeing that. In fact, there was a couple other offices in  
2 that building that I... Engraving... Something engraving... Did you say  
3 Tom Shelley?  
4

5Mr. Cataline: Shelley, mm-hm.  
6

7Interviewer: Okay.  
8

9Mr. Cataline: Years before that old building was a part of REO.  
10

11Interviewer: Way back...  
12

13Mr. Cataline: Way back in the passenger car days.  
14

15Interviewer: ...when they had that tram across Cedar Street...or the cars were pushed  
16 across. And then Nash Kelvinator was there during the war, I remember.  
17

18Mr. Cataline: Yeah, and then I guess John Beam went in there.  
19

20Interviewer: Oh, that's right. Yeah, they did. Maybe it was the other way around. I'm  
21 not sure. But anyway...  
22

23Mr. Cataline: It was Nash Kelvinator first; and then John Beam.  
24

25Interviewer: They made firefighting equipment and whatever.  
26

27Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm.  
28

29Interviewer: Yeah, that's right. So, let's see here. [58:09] I guess we've kind of  
30 skirted around it, but your impressions of REO Motor Car Company as  
31 you look back... When you think about it...  
32

33Mr. Cataline: Well...  
34

35Interviewer: A good time? A sad time?  
36

37Mr. Cataline: When I look back, you know, at the years that I was there and the people I  
38 worked with and the jobs that I had while I was there and the times that we  
39 had, you know, the social end of it, uh, the friends that I have yet from...  
40 Even though the company wound up going through bankruptcy, I don't  
41 think I would have done anything any different, you know. I look back  
42 and I think, uh, there was a time in the 50's when things were real slow at  
43 REO. I was still working out in the shop – out in the parts warehouse.  
44 Uh, I was laid off; and I went to work over at Oldsmobile. And uh, they  
45 put me in the small press room over there. This was, oh gosh, it was  
46 probably around 1950.  
47

1Interviewer: Mm.  
2

3Mr. Cataline: And uh, I worked in that press room over there for six weeks. I was called  
4 back to REO and I was never so happy in my life, you know, to get back  
5 to REO. But uh, I think back and think retirement-wise how much better  
6 off I would have been if I had stayed with Oldsmobile.  
7

8Interviewer: There wasn't any retirement from...  
9

10Mrs. Cataline: [Inaudible 1:00:00]  
11

12Mr. Cataline: But uh... In 1975, well in June 1975, I had my 30 years in. And uh, it  
13 was shortly after that, along in the fall, July or August, uh, they called me  
14 up to the personnel department; and they knew I had enough time to retire,  
15 you know, 30 years. They called me up and they said, "We think that the  
16 company is near the end. Just for your safety sake we think it would be  
17 better for you to retire right now than to wait and see what happens  
18 afterwards." So, I took retirement and uh, and at the same time I took  
19 retirement I hired back as a temporary employee to work on up until they  
20 closed the doors. But anyway, we were given \$550 a month plus our  
21 benefits when we retired.  
22

23 And uh, it was within a year or so after that... Well when the company  
24 went through bankruptcy, we lost our benefits right there. But we drew  
25 the \$550 a month for maybe a year; and then it was reduced down...I  
26 think it was like \$270 a month. I collected for a few years after that,  
27 maybe three or four years. And then I had a letter one day from Pension  
28 Benefit Guarantee which was making the retirement payments telling me  
29 that my benefit was being reduced from \$270 or whatever it was down to  
30 \$62 a month. And that's what I get right now from...for 30 years of  
31 service.  
32

33Interviewer: For all that work and loyalty.  
34

35Mr. Cataline: But uh, but I went out to the general motors parts plant in 1976 when I left  
36 this liquidating company; and was able to work 15 years out at the GM  
37 parts plant.  
38

39Interviewer: Okay. I wondered... I figured you were too young to just really...  
40

41Mr. Cataline: Yes, I was only 48 when I had my 30 years in – I was 48 years old.  
42

43Interviewer: Oh. my goodness.  
44

45Mrs. Cataline: He didn't want to retire at that age.  
46

47Interviewer: Oh no.

1Mr. Cataline: So, uh, in the end if it hadn't been for General Motors we would have  
2 been in sad shape.  
3

4Mrs. Cataline: Yeah.  
5

6Mr. Cataline: I was luck too... Back at that time I was one of the younger people there;  
7 and these fellas that were older than I was, you know, they weren't able to  
8 find work.  
9

10Interviewer: Yeah, I've heard some stories about a couple suicides, I think...  
11

12Mr. Cataline: Yeah, oh yeah.  
13

14Interviewer: ...because it was so devastating.  
15

16Mr. Cataline: It was. It was. That was just taking away our whole life away from us.  
17

18Mrs. Cataline: [Inaudible 1:03:44]  
19

20Interviewer: And, you know, the people around – the shops, the restaurants – around  
21 the REO, they must have been affected too...  
22

23Mrs. Cataline: Oh yeah.  
24

25Mr. Cataline: Oh yeah.  
26

27Interviewer: Like you said, the Potter's lunchroom depended on you guys... Drug store  
28 and grocery stores...  
29

30Mr. Cataline: The business section in South Lansing. Yeah, that little bank on the  
31 corner there... What is that?  
32

33Interviewer: I remember that bank. Was it American State then?  
34

35Mr. Cataline: Yeah it was.  
36

37Interviewer: Right across from the depot.  
38

39Mr. Cataline: Yeah, we'd run up there every Friday and cash our checks. Yeah, it was a  
40 busy place. And uh, what was the old restaurant on the corner – right  
41 across the corner from it?  
42

43Interviewer: Oh, there was one, wasn't there?  
44

45Mr. Cataline: Yeah. We'd go up there quite often.  
46

1Interviewer: It's lost in here somewhere. Yeah, but I do remember that. And then  
2Donaway's was Larrabee Sports Shop and Lansing [inaudible 1:04:45]  
3with the bowling lanes.  
4  
5Mr. Cataline: Yeah, yep, the bowling alley.  
6  
7Interviewer: Whimpey's or something...hamburgers?  
8  
9Mr. Cataline: Yeah. And then down the other way was Maria's.  
10  
11Interviewer: Yes.  
12  
13Mr. Cataline: Do you remember Maria's restaurant?  
14  
15Interviewer: Yes.  
16  
17Mr. Cataline: That guy I worked for when I was a timekeeper – Jerry. His name was  
18Jerry Lutz.  
19  
20Interviewer: Jerry Louis?  
21  
22Mr. Cataline: Lutz – L-U-T-Z.  
23  
24Interviewer: L-U-T-Z,  
25  
26Mr. Cataline: Yeah, Jerry Lutz.  
27  
28Interviewer: I knew it would come back to you.  
29  
30Mr. Cataline: But uh, everybody that worked at REO, they had pride in what REO was  
31building too.  
32  
33Interviewer: That's an important thing.  
34  
35Mr. Cataline: I've never talked with a person that owned a REO car or REO truck; and  
36we talked with a lot of truckers, you know, in later years when we were  
37traveling the country...  
38  
39Interviewer: Oh, is that so?  
40  
41Mr. Cataline: I've never talked with any of'm that didn't say their car or their truck was  
42the best. You know, they... Some old REO car owner, "Well that was the  
43best car I ever owned."  
44  
45Interviewer: [1:05:58] Do you think looking back that there could have been a way to  
46go on – that it didn't have to close?  
47

1Mr. Cataline: Well there might have been but, uh, in fact, uh, within that, uh, last few  
2 years there was some talk of building a new REO plant.  
3  
4Interviewer: Hm.  
5  
6Mr. Cataline: I remember REO management people going out way out on North Woods  
7 Street looking at property out there.  
8  
9Interviewer: Oh really?  
10  
11Mr. Cataline: For REO to survive, they would have had to have had a new plant.  
12  
13Interviewer: [1:06:42] Because it was getting very old, wasn't it?  
14  
15Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was getting old and it was outdated, you know. Technology...  
16  
17Interviewer: Machinery too, maybe?  
18  
19Mr. Cataline: Yep. But as far as their product was concerned, they had a tremendous  
20 product line. And they had a real good dealer organization. Everything  
21 was there.  
22  
23Interviewer: Everything was in place.  
24  
25Mr. Cataline: Mm-hm. Yep.  
26  
27Interviewer: They just needed money to...  
28  
29Mr. Cataline: Just needed the facility to produce. You know, the individual that owned  
30 the company just wasn't, uh...  
31  
32Interviewer: He wasn't interested in...  
33  
34Mr. Cataline: He wasn't strong enough, you know. He didn't have the finances and...  
35  
36Interviewer: It sounds like he wasn't really interested in the company anyway; only as  
37 a financial...  
38  
39Mr. Cataline: Yeah, that's been kind of the question ever since, you know.  
40  
41Interviewer: Has it?  
42  
43Mr. Cataline: Was this done on purpose or not? No one knows.  
44  
45Interviewer: No one knows. [1:07:47] What did you think when they bulldozed the  
46 clubhouse down?  
47



1Mr. Cataline: Oh, I was sick. That was a nice building.  
2

3Interviewer: Yes, it was.  
4

5Mr. Cataline: That was a real nice building; and uh, I don't know why the city didn't do  
6 something to preserve that.  
7

8Interviewer: Well I understand that it was on a national historic register for a while; and  
9 there was a loophole found, temporarily; and then it was too late. I don't  
10 know if that's true or not. It's just a rumor, like everything.  
11

12Mr. Cataline: Yeah, well that was a nice building. We had so many activities in that  
13 building.  
14

15Interviewer: Yeah.  
16

17Mr. Cataline: We used to have... With the Steering Gear Club, we'd have speakers  
18 come in. We had a sports night every year. I remember one night, uh,  
19 they had, uh, [Bigemon 1:08:45] from Michigan State and Bump Elliott  
20 from Michigan. They were the two speakers.  
21

22Interviewer: Oh, that had to be fun. That had to be a great night.  
23

24Mr. Cataline: That was. They kind of went at each other a little bit, you know. But they  
25 were both good sports about it.  
26

27Interviewer: I'm sure.  
28

29Mr. Cataline: Those things were fun. You think of those things when you think of the  
30 clubhouse. One sports night they had Gordy Howe...  
31

32Interviewer: Oh, yes.  
33

34Mr. Cataline: ...from the Red Wings. He was the speaker.  
35

36Interviewer: That had to be interesting.  
37

38Mr. Cataline: It was.  
39

40Interviewer: So, it was a special place.  
41

42Mr. Cataline: Yeah, it was. That clubhouse was... That's where we had all the  
43 Christmas parties for the kids.  
44

45Interviewer: That's where all the social...  
46

47Mrs. Cataline: You guys had a movie star come to the clubhouse too. What's his name?

1Interviewer: Dale Robertson came...  
2  
3Mr. Cataline: Dale Robertson.  
4  
5Interviewer: He had some special trucks built.  
6  
7Mr. Cataline: Yes.  
8  
9Interviewer: Was that in the 60's?  
10  
11Mr. Cataline: I imagine it was. Your dad was still working. He met him, didn't he?  
12  
13Mrs. Cataline: My dad used to [inaudible 1:09:50] cabs.  
14  
15Mr. Cataline: Her dad was the one that used to put cabs down on the...  
16  
17Interviewer: Your dad worked at REO?  
18  
19Mrs. Cataline: Mm-hm.  
20  
21Interviewer: When did he work there?  
22  
23Mrs. Cataline: Well he worked there 45 years; and he retired in the 60's. [Inaudible  
24 1:10:06]  
25  
26Mr. Cataline: Oh, I don't know. He must have started there back around the end of  
27 WWI.  
28  
29Mrs. Cataline: Yeah, he didn't get in the war because he [inaudible 1:10:16] finger.  
30  
31Mr. Cataline: He lost a finger.  
32  
33Mrs. Cataline: That's the only thing that kept him out of the war.  
34  
35Interviewer: On the job?  
36  
37Mrs. Cataline: No.  
38  
39Interviewer: [1:10:23] Oh, he didn't get in the war because he had lost the end of his  
40 finger.  
41  
42Mrs. Cataline: His trigger finger.  
43  
44Interviewer: Oh, his trigger finger? He might need that.  
45  
46Mrs. Cataline: Yeah, then he died in 1983.  
47

1Interviewer: But he worked here for 40 years and he put the truck bodies on the  
2 chassis?  
3  
4Mr. Cataline: He put the cab on there.  
5  
6Interviewer: The cab.  
7  
8Mr. Cataline: Yeah, I remember one time... Oh, this was back before I went up into the  
9 office to work, so it would have been in the late 40's. I used to go out the  
10 door on the end of Platt Street, you know, up on Baker Street, right next to  
11 where the old timeclocks were...  
12  
13Interviewer: Okay.  
14  
15Mr. Cataline: And uh, I changed out driving with some other people. And I sat there  
16 waiting for my ride one night; and the pressroom was right over...just  
17 west of us there, toward...  
18  
19Interviewer: Washington?  
20  
21Mr. Cataline: ...Washington Avenue. A couple fellas come running up out of the  
22 pressroom; and one guy had the other guy's hand and they run out the  
23 door and, and was going down... Just west of us there was the little  
24 hospital and nurse's station. The guy had cut his finger off back in the  
25 pressroom. Talking about your dad's finger made me think of that. They  
26 come running by and... You mentioned safety at one time. So, apparently  
27 they didn't have all the safety devices on their...  
28  
29Interviewer: All the handguards or something...  
30  
31Mr. Cataline: ...machinery like they do today.  
32  
33Interviewer: Yeah, I was going to ask you if you'd seen any accidents or... And then I  
34 didn't. And I also quite often ask if you can remember humorous things  
35 that have happened. I think you've already shared some with me.  
36  
37Mrs. Cataline: Tell her about the guys playing Euchre at noon.  
38  
39Mr. Cataline: Well uh, it isn't really humorous, I guess, but this building that our parts  
40 stockroom was in was, uh, was opposite the depot. It was out next to the  
41 railroad tracks opposite the depot.  
42  
43Interviewer: Oh, sure. On the north side.  
44  
45Mr. Cataline: Yeah, on the north side. And uh, we were up on the second floor and we  
46 could go out of our windows onto the roof that was over the docks below,  
47 the rail docks.

1Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
2  
3Mr. Cataline: They'd bring railcars up to these docks. Well there was a metal roof over  
4 the rail dock; and in the summer we'd take our lunch and go out sit out on  
5 that roof, you know, and watch the people over at the depot. Now and  
6 then a train would come through. That was something that you remember  
7 that you...  
8  
9Interviewer: Sure. That was fun. Get out in the fresh air for a few minutes.  
10  
11Mr. Cataline: Yeah, sat out there and watched the people at the depot and the old steam  
12 engines come through.  
13  
14Interviewer: Oh, I love trains.  
15  
16Mr. Cataline: Yeah, I liked to hear the old train whistles.  
17  
18Interviewer: Oh, I do too. And there's talk about trying to revitalize that end of town.  
19 They all it REO town, as it should be. Have you seen the mural?  
20  
21Mr. Cataline: We were there, yep.  
22  
23Interviewer: We were too.  
24  
25Mr. Cataline: We were there for the dedication.  
26  
27Interviewer: Wasn't it cold?  
28  
29Mr. Cataline: Oh, yeah.  
30  
31Interviewer: I was so glad to get into the old bowling alley. Just to get in out of the  
32 wind. We've had a lot of wind this year. Well is there anything else you  
33 can think of that we haven't covered?  
34  
35Mr. Cataline: No, I can't think of anything that we haven't covered.  
36  
37Interviewer: Thank you so much for putting your memories down on this tape for  
38 people to listen to later on.  
39  
40Mr. Cataline: Yeah.  
41  
42/al