

Interview of Thomas Morefield

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4Interviewer:

...REO/Olds Museum; and we're going to be talking about REO memories for the Centennial in July. We're just going to start by chatting; and I'm going to ask Tom a little bit about his own background. Where he grew up and where he went to school and how he happened to go to REO.

8

9Mr. Morefield:

Uh, I was born in Lansing during the war years. My dad worked, uh... He worked in, uh, uh, [war planning 00:30]. But uh, [inaudible 00:34] he worked in the defense plant. Then he got drafted, but in the meantime, we lived in Nashville, Michigan.

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14Interviewer:

Mm-hm.

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16Mr. Morefield:

So, in my younger years, I lived in Nashville, but he commuted to Lansing. After even having four kids, he still got drafted in the Navy during the war.

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20Interviewer:

Oh, is that right?

21

22Mr. Morefield:

Yeah. But he worked in the... He was the manager of a lumber company, Young Brothers & Daley, here on Michigan Avenue. During the war, he had to go work in the defense plant; then he got drafted. Uh, when he got out the army, he was looking for a job in a lumber yard again. That was his field he wanted to be in. But like a lot of people, he had problems finding work. So, he got a job managing a lumber yard in Reed City, Michigan. So, for quite a few years we lived in Reed City, Michigan.

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37Interviewer:

[2:06] And after graduation, what did you do?

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39Mr. Morefield:

Uh, went to a technical school which is now a community college – the old Central High School was a technical school for the Lansing School District. I went to automotive/mechanics training there after high school. They didn't have a real expensive program in East Lansing, so I just wanted to continue into my training. From there, I got a job in a gas station and I had a large service department in East Lansing...

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46Interviewer:

Fullers?

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1Mr. Morefield: ...Fullers Standard Gas. And I had a large repair shop in the back.
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3 I worked there for several years, but the pay wasn't very good. So, I
4 found that they were hiring at REO, so I hired in on December 8, 1960 as
5 a mechanic. REO was, at that time...in fact all the time that I worked
6 there...really had its ups and downs as far as employment. There was a
7 lot of lean times and good times through the years. So, I moved around
8 into a lot of positions at REO. I started as a mechanic, but I was fortunate
9 enough after REO closed down, I called the personnel department to see if
10 I could get a record of my employment. They sent me a copy of it, so...
11
12Interviewer: Amazing they still had the paperwork in the office, isn't it?
13
14Mr. Morefield: Yeah, it shows every place I worked and every job I had. I counted them
15 up and I had about 20... In the 15 years I was there I had 21 different jobs.
16
17Interviewer: Oh, my goodness. Such as...?
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19Mr. Morefield: Well, I started out, uh, like I say, as a mechanic, but that only lasted a
20 couple of months; then they had layoffs and I was going to lose my job.
21 So, I went up to personnel to see if they had any other job openings that I
22 might be qualified for. And they thought, well yeah, they did have some
23 inspection jobs on the assembly line that I would probably qualify for. So,
24 I went from, you know, \$2.53 to...I got a cut in pay to \$2.34 an hour.
25
26Interviewer: You had to take a cut in pay to go up...
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28Mr. Morefield: A cut in pay, but I still had a job, so...
29
30Interviewer: That's the important thing. [4:41] Who did you work for there?
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32Mr. Morefield: I hired in... Uh, Floyd [Foltz 4:45] was my foreman when I hired in as a
33 mechanic. Then when I went on inspections, Bill Cummings was the
34 inspection foreman. I worked on inspecting the assembly line. My
35 records show that I got a merit raise in '61. I kept after trying to get, uh,
36 better paying jobs. So, I signed up for a job in '62 as an inspection – rolls.
37 I test drove trucks on the rollers...
38
39Interviewer: Oh, on the rollers?
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41Mr. Morefield: ...on dynamometers. I got a job on that. That paid better money. But that
42 didn't last long either, according to this thing -10 of '62 and 6 of '63. Oh,
43 I got a better job. I upgraded myself again to final check-out inspection
44 department.
45
46Interviewer: [5:40] What would you do in final check?
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1Mr. Morefield: We took the production orders and checked the production orders against
2 the truck to make sure it had all the correct components and everything
3 was installed correctly. We checked the serial numbers and, uh, recorded
4 all the pertinent data for the final check-out. Just made sure that
5 everything was complete and ready for shipping and final check-out.
6
7Interviewer: Mm.
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9Mr. Morefield: So, that's what I did for...
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11Interviewer: [6:17] Did you find sometimes that there were some that were lacking
12 something?
13
14Mr. Morefield: Yeah. They had... Through the years, they had a lot of, you know, parts
15 shortage problems and stuff. So, the repair floor was very busy because
16 they did a lot of – they had to add a lot of parts to the trucks that come off
17 the line with short parts. The repair floor was a large department as far as
18 having to repair the trucks and... They had to go through final paint and
19 inspection and testing. So, uh, most of the time while I worked at REO
20 was on the repair floor. I was either a rolls dynamometer operator or a
21 final inspection. I even road tested for a time. But most of my time I
22 spent was spent as an inspector on the repair floor.
23
24Interviewer: [7:15] If the parts... Uh, you said short parts, you mean the parts weren't
25 in the factory?
26
27Mr. Morefield: Yeah.
28
29Interviewer: [7:19] So, you'd have to create them – somebody would?
30
31Mr. Morefield: We had to make sure that... They were either...parts would come late, or
32 they had to order the parts or for some reason they didn't run out of parts;
33 and then they would come down the line without them. And then the parts
34 man would have to run down a part and find out whether it was ordered or
35 whether it was in route to the plant or...
36
37Interviewer: Where is this thing, huh?
38
39Mr. Morefield: ...or it was stored somewhere where somebody couldn't find it or
40 something. They'd get the parts down to the mechanics so he would have
41 to install them. I worked a long time on military inspection also.
42
43Interviewer: Did you?
44
45Mr. Morefield: I was in rolls and final inspection and road test. Sometimes we run them
46 on test rolls.
47

1Interviewer: Test roads?
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3Mr. Morefield: The rollers.
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5Interviewer: Oh, the rollers? I'm sorry.
6

7Mr. Morefield: The military didn't have a dynamometer. All they did was put some miles
8 on 'em, warm them up and make sure – checked for leaks. Just had to put
9 about 10 miles on every truck on the rolls...
10

11Interviewer: You did?
12

13Mr. Morefield: ...to check to make sure everything was operating properly. We would
14 run them over a pit to check for any kind of leaks or anything.
15

16Interviewer: [8:32] So, you would go underneath and...?
17

18Mr. Morefield: Yeah, we went under the pit. The pit [inaudible 8:34] was 3A. 3A
19 building was a long narrow building where they run all the militaries on
20 the repair; then they did the final paint.
21

22Interviewer: [8:44] Where was that building in the complex?
23

24Mr. Morefield: It was just behind the engineering building. There was a large parking lot
25 inside the complex there.
26

27Interviewer: Mm-hm.
28

29Mr. Morefield: Sometimes that parking lot would be just completely full with military
30 trucks waiting for repair and final inspection.
31

32Interviewer: [9:07] How many coats of paint...? You mentioned paint. How many
33 coats of paint say on a military truck?
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35Mr. Morefield: Well everything came to us with what's supposed to be a final finish, but
36 then they completely repainted them again after that.
37

38Interviewer: Oh, they did?
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40Mr. Morefield: Yeah. And the undercoat... They had a rack and drove 'em up over on a
41 ramp for undercoating. They had to undercoat everything. They had
42 military inspectors there all the time to inspect the trucks.
43

44Interviewer: Oh, they did?
45

46Mr. Morefield: Yeah. What a process to get 'em through military inspection and shipped.
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1Interviewer: [9:41] How long would you think it would take to make a truck for the
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4Mr. Morefield: Well probably... From start to finish, assembly line a couple of days but
5 then, you know, another day for it...when it finally went into the... They
6 ran maybe 20 or 30 trucks a day through the assembly.
7
8Interviewer: [10:13] How were they delivered – the military trucks in particular? Were
9 they driven?
10
11Mr. Morefield: Some of them were shipped. A lot of'm went by railcar. We had an
12 export department. They took'm over there and they would...
13
14Interviewer: Oh, okay.
15
16Mr. Morefield: If they went overseas or were going overseas or something, they would
17 take the cloth tops off, fold the windshields down and put preservative on
18 everything and prepare them for overseas shipment.
19
20Interviewer: I see.
21
22Mr. Morefield: And they would pack everything up in wood boxes. The tarps and all that
23 stuff would go. Tools that went with the truck would be all strapped into
24 the cargo body; and then they would be mounted on railroad cars and
25 shipped out that way. A lot of'm went by rail.
26
27Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting.
28
29Mr. Morefield: We had our own shipping department for export.
30
31Interviewer: Big packing boxes.
32
33Mr. Morefield: Yeah, right.
34
35Interviewer: [11:15] Did you ever hear back from any military unit anywhere in the
36 world about how the truck stood up or it was good, or it was bad?
37
38Mr. Morefield: Not personally, but I've heard some reports about people that had the
39 military trucks and, you know, they loved the truck. It was a really well-
40 built truck and it held up well for them. So...
41
42Interviewer: [11:44] What about the civilian trucks? Pretty much the same thing?
43
44Mr. Morefield: Yeah. We had a good quality product. It was too bad that they didn't last
45 any longer than they did. We were really proud of the quality truck that
46 had been built for years and had a good reputation. We sold a lot of
47 export trucks all over the country – all over the world. A lot of them, they

1 would disassemble the trucks and ship them; pack them in boxes and
2 disassemble; take the cabs off and pull everything... disassemble
3 everything and then pack them in boxes and ship them and have them
4 reassembled after their destination. A lot of that kind of thing.
5
6Interviewer: Oh, really? That's interesting. I haven't been able to talk to anybody
7 before about this particular aspect.
8
9Mr. Morefield: The military? Yeah.
10
11Interviewer: I find that interesting. Well, you know, they talked about the military
12 trucks, but the actual how they were delivered and all that kind of thing.
13
14Mr. Morefield: Yeah, it was quite a process.
15
16Interviewer: I think in 1992, I talked with, uh, he's from export. Not Art [inaudible
17 12:52].
18
19Mr. Morefield: I don't know who that was.
20
21Interviewer: I can't remember. Anyway, I knew a little bit about it then. So, this is
22 good. [13:01] So um, we already mentioned the training you got probably
23 came from you going to Lansing Tech; and then going on the job working
24 quite a while as a mechanic or a repairman.
25
26Mr. Morefield: Yeah. That's where I got background for mechanic and stuff. That kind
27 of lended itself to inspection because I knew the ins and outs of the vehicle
28 and what to look for. So, it helped to have a mechanic's background to be
29 a good inspector.
30
31Interviewer: [Laughter]
32
33Mr. Morefield: So, yeah. I always looked for jobs that were above my seniority level. So,
34 I'd [inaudible 13:44] and then I figured I'd qualify for it. But sometimes –
35 every time there was a little bit of a slow time, I would get laid off that job
36 from uh, from a uh, you know, final checkout inspector, which paid 10 or
37 15 cents more an hour, right down to a line inspector. But uh, so I
38 inspected probably every station on the main assembly line and cab room.
39 I even spent two years in the motor plant inspecting because that was
40 supposedly the worst place – the motor plant.
41
42Interviewer: [14:20] Oh yeah? Why is that?
43
44Mr. Morefield: Oh, it was an old plant and it was all machine parts, so it was dark and
45 dingy with machinery running all the time. They figured that was the
46 worst place to work, but... I always looked forward to going out of it over
47 there. That was pretty typical. Every job I went on, I didn't like the fact

1 that I had to learn a new job and I didn't like it when I first got there. But
2 after I learned the job, I enjoyed every one of them. I learned a lot over in
3 the motor plant because you work with machine parts and you have to use
4 gauges and all that sort of stuff. So, I learned a lot. I finally got to the
5 point after a few years they couldn't tell me I wouldn't qualify for a job
6 'cause I'd done most of'm already. [Laughter]
7
8Interviewer: Well that's a valuable employee to the company, I would think.
9
10Mr. Morefield: Yeah, because I did have a lot of experience. In fact, I was foreman for
11 probably three years on inspection department.
12
13Interviewer: Mm-hm.
14
15Mr. Morefield: I think before I went on as a foreman, I was – a salary job I was on –
16 engineering change coordinator...
17
18Interviewer: [15:33] Now, what is that?
19
20Mr. Morefield: Every time there was an engineering change to a vehicle, they had to have
21 somebody to coordinate it with production to make sure that everything
22 happened in sequence at the right time. There was a person involved with
23 the parts department; and they would make a determination as to how
24 many... If they would have to make this change, there may be a lot of
25 parts scrapped or something that were no longer usable if they made this
26 change.
27
28 So, parts department would inventory their parts involved with this thing
29 and see what might have to be scrapped or put in service parts or
30 whatever. Then they made a determination. Of course, it depended on
31 whether it was a safety, uh, change. If it was an important change, it
32 happened right away. It didn't matter how many parts they had to scrap; it
33 was done right away. But if it was just a minor production change, they
34 would inventory the parts and determine how many parts they had and
35 where was the best point to start this, this engineering change.
36
37Interviewer: Oh.
38
39Mr. Morefield: I would coordinate that. I'd take the prints out and explain to the
40 production foreman what the change was, what serial number or what
41 actual time this change was going to be made at that particular time. So, I
42 coordinated through engineering and parts department and production to
43 tell them when this change was going to be made.
44
45Interviewer: Well that's an interesting...
46
47Mr. Morefield: Still part of the inspection department.

1Interviewer: A lot of responsibility there.
2
3Mr. Morefield: That was a very interesting job.
4
5Interviewer: I'll bet it was.
6
7Mr. Morefield: You had to [travel 17:19] the whole plant. I learned a lot about the
8 engineering end of it and uh, of course, you got to know all of the
9 production people and the foreman and... You had to know how to read
10 the prints and understand what the change was going to be and how to best
11 implement. That was an interesting job. That only lasted a couple years.
12 They decided that – I guess they didn't need an engineering change
13 coordinator and they just let'm flounder on their own as far as how to get
14 the changes made.
15
16Interviewer: That must not have been as easy for the foreman then.
17
18Mr. Morefield: [Inaudible 17:59] coordinated the way of changing it after that. After that,
19 I went on as a... Well, three years I worked as an inspection foreman.
20 And most of the inspections I had were on the repair floor. At that time,
21 we were going pretty strong. We had a lot of employment at the time. We
22 had a lot of production. I had about 20 to 22 people under me –
23 inspectors.
24
25 I spent most of my time just coordinating overtime. They were working a
26 lot of overtime and I would, uh... Union required that you have to ask'm
27 before 2:00 in the afternoon or something – I can't remember the exact
28 time – but you'd have to ask the guys to work overtime. If you didn't ask
29 them, you couldn't – you had to keep each employee within a certain
30 number of hours – working the same number of hours until... If you didn't
31 ask'm before 2:00, you couldn't put'm on the chart as they refused those
32 hours. So, they had to keep the hours independent of each classification
33 within a certain [inaudible 19:09]. So, I spent most of my time in the
34 afternoon asking everybody to work overtime.
35
36Interviewer: "Can you work tonight? Can you work tonight?"
37
38Mr. Morefield: Yeah. I had that many employees and that many stations to cover.
39
40Interviewer: You were all over the place.
41
42Mr. Morefield: It was a very time-consuming job, just keeping'm, you know...
43
44Interviewer: I bet.
45
46Mr. Morefield: When they refused, then you had to go find somebody that would work the
47 job, you know.

1Interviewer: You probably didn't get too many refusals.
2

3Mr. Morefield: No, but there were some guys that would, you know, that would work,
4 would carpool or something like that. So, they didn't – a lot of guys
5 didn't want any overtime; and they would refuse it. You still had to
6 ask'm. If you didn't, you'd get caught. You had to ask'm whether they...
7 You know they were going to turn it down, but you still had to ask.
8

9Interviewer: [19:54] What years...? You had mentioned that they were going great
10 guns. Would that have been in the '60's? Do you think?
11

12Mr. Morefield: Uh, let me see if I can see...
13

14Interviewer: A lot of military contracts at that time?
15

16Mr. Morefield: Yeah, in the mid to late '60's.
17

18Interviewer: Mm.
19

20Mr. Morefield: Uh, '68. So, it would have been late '60's. It was '68 according to when I
21 was on salary at that time.
22

23Interviewer: [20:28] Oh, you were on salary? Before that you were just hourly?
24

25Mr. Morefield: Yeah, see when you go to foreman you left the union and then went into a
26 salary position.
27

28Interviewer: Oh.
29

30Mr. Morefield: You were not represented by the union, so the engineering coordinator job
31 and the foreman's job were salary positions. So, you had to leave the
32 union. You still maintained the seniority, but you didn't accumulate any
33 more seniority.
34

35Interviewer: Oh.
36

37Mr. Morefield: So, although I had 15 years there, I think I only had 10 years as far as the
38 union is concerned, as far as union seniority. So, when I got back off of
39 salary and back onto hourly, I lost the... A lot of guys that were in
40 seniority had passed me on the seniority list.
41

42Interviewer: Oh, sure.
43

44Mr. Morefield: I would be lower seniority. That's the reason I ended up in the... Like two
45 different times, I worked on the assembly line. I didn't even have enough
46 seniority... At eight or ten years, I didn't even have enough seniority to
47 stay on assembly – or on inspection. One time I worked to [inaudible]

1 21:45] in the cab department. Another time I worked, uh, I worked on the
2 frame assembly – engine assembly. I was helping with mounting all the
3 accessories and stuff on the engine. So, a couple of times I got laid off to
4 the point where I had to go to work on the assembly line.
5
6 Interviewer: [22:10] When you had to go off the union, did you then have any kind of
7 job protection?
8
9 Mr. Morefield: No.
10
11 Interviewer: [22:15] No. Nothing that would back...? Nobody to back you up if there
12 was a problem?
13
14 Mr. Morefield: No, no, no.
15
16 Interviewer: You were on your own?
17
18 Mr. Morefield: Yeah, you didn't have a union backing you. In fact, they were against
19 you.
20
21 Interviewer: [22:24] Because you were management? Oh, yeah. Same old story, isn't
22 it?
23
24 Mr. Morefield: Yeah, you were the enemy at that point. [Laughter]
25
26 Interviewer: [Laughter] [22:36] That kind of had to be strange for you and for the
27 people around you. Today you're the boss; next day you're on the line
28 next to them.
29
30 Mr. Morefield: There was a lot of that happening. A lot of guys... They did allow
31 promoting within. A lot of guys that would show potential on the repair
32 floor assembly line would get promoted to salary positions. That
33 happened a lot. Some of'm would last several years; and some of'm
34 lasted... A lot of the guys that were good and successful foreman were
35 hired in as workers, you know, working in the parts department or on the
36 assembly line or the repair floor. If they showed potential, they would get
37 promoted. There was a lot of that happening.
38
39 Interviewer: That's interesting, isn't it? I'm not sure that happens anymore now a days
40 where people can work by their merits and by their evaluations and work
41 their way up to better jobs.
42
43 Mr. Morefield: That's true. They are expecting everybody to have college degrees and all
44 kinds of certificates and [potential 23:34] stuff.
45
46 Interviewer: Well, not everybody is meant to go to college, you know?
47

1Mr. Morefield: That's not always a good indicator of a good supervisor.
2

3Interviewer: That's right. [23:45] What kind of working conditions do you remember?
4 I'm thinking of safety. I'm thinking of, uh, in terms of cleanliness, uh...
5 Of course, it's a shop so I don't expect it to be white-washed floors, but...
6

7Mr. Morefield: It was an old building.
8

9Interviewer: It was an old building.
10

11Mr. Morefield: There were a lot of different levels – ramps and tunnels.
12

13Interviewer: Tunnels?
14

15Mr. Morefield: Yeah, there were tunnels that went from one building to another.
16

17Interviewer: Really?
18

19Mr. Morefield: Yeah. You would go under a road and walkways to get out of the
20 building. Well, I'm talking about the 3A lot. There was a real narrow
21 tunnel you would drive. You had to be careful. There wasn't a lot of
22 room. It was kind of built for the early cars, but we built... You could
23 drive the big trucks through.
24

25Interviewer: You could? [24:41] It was big enough to drive a truck through?
26

27Mr. Morefield: Yeah.
28

29Interviewer: And it would go...?
30

31Mr. Morefield: From the main repair floor up to this 3A lot, which was surrounded by
32 buildings. The lot was inside the complex, you know.
33

34Interviewer: Like a courtyard kind of thing?
35

36Mr. Morefield: Yeah, right.
37

38Interviewer: Hm.
39

40Mr. Morefield: So, there was... Like I say, there was different levels in the building, so
41 you'd have to drive up ramps to get in and out of the place. It was, uh...
42 Some of the wood floors, you'd drive the truck over and want to know if
43 they would hold up.
44

45Interviewer: Oh.
46

1Mr. Morefield: They used a lot of wood blocks, especially in the stock rooms and stuff.
2 Heavy wood blocks for flooring. And the building leaked a lot. In heavy
3 rains, the water would run inside as well as outside.
4

5Interviewer: Oh, is that right?
6

7Mr. Morefield: We got a lot of flooding problems. With the heavy rains, the water would
8 go inside the buildings. These wood block floors would soak up water and
9 swell. You'd come in the next day after a heavy rain and there would be
10 humps in the floor where these, uh, wood blocks had swelled up and there
11 would be humps in the floor. The maintenance people would come out
12 and knock'm down and rebuild'm – put the blocks back in and...
13

14Interviewer: That's interesting.
15

16Mr. Morefield: The same way they would shrink up too, so you'd have a lot of loose
17 blocks.
18

19Interviewer: Go the other way.
20

21Mr. Morefield: Yeah, they would shrink up, so you'd have big gaps between the blocks.
22 They'd have to come in and add spacers to'm. Just trucks driving over'm,
23 they would come apart – blocks would come apart – and they'd start...
24 Anyhow, it was lot to just maintain those old wood floors.
25

26Interviewer: And, of course, no air conditioning? You couldn't open windows, I
27 imagine, in a lot of the areas?
28

29Mr. Morefield: A lot of'm had the old windows; and a lot of'm would not open. You
30 wouldn't dare open'm. You might not get'm closed, you know.
31 [Laughter]
32

33Interviewer: Oh, is that right? [Laughter]
34

35Mr. Morefield: Yeah, so it was an old plant...
36

37Interviewer: Yeah.
38

39Mr. Morefield: I think it was... I still talk and meet with a lot of the people. There were a
40 lot of great people that worked there.
41

42Interviewer: [26:59] Can you remember some of the people you worked with?
43

44Mr. Morefield: A lot of'm have worked at the museum. [inaudible 27:13] had
45 volunteered here and, uh, Don Ely, he worked in the...
46

47Interviewer: [27:23] Don Ely? E-L-Y, I would imagine.

1Mr. Morefield: Yeah, he worked mostly in the service, uh, they had their own service
2garage outside of the plant that they operated the maintenance and service
3facilities. He worked there most of the time with his father at the plant.
4[inaudible 27:51]. And then [Larry Otis 27:55].
5
6Interviewer: [27:59] During the years that you were there... Well let me see. You
7hired in what year; and you left in what year?
8
9Mr. Morefield: I hired in December, uh, December 8, 1960; and I worked there until they
10closed.
11
12Interviewer: You were there...
13
14Mr. Morefield: About the last six or eight months that I worked there, I worked in the
15service department. I worked, uh, with Dick [inaudible 28:28], as part of
16the service department. I knew most of the people in the service
17department through the inspection and other work and stuff that I had
18done.
19
20Interviewer: [28:36] Was there wasn't much work the last few months that you were
21there?
22
23Mr. Morefield: Yeah, we were... Well, we were struggling because a lot of creditors were
24really, uh, putting a squeeze on the company for money and stuff. A lot
25of'm weren't supplying materials 'cause we weren't paying for'm. A lot
26of'm put us on the "pay as you go". We had to pay for the parts that we...
27We had to pay for the parts they shipped to us because we weren't very
28good at paying our bills. So, things got really... We knew we were in
29trouble. We were just hoping that, uh, we would be able to, uh, find some
30way to pull us out of it. So uh, they would have trouble running the
31assembly lines at times, not having enough parts and components to build
32trucks, you know. The fact that we were struggling... And we built a lot
33of trucks that were just half-built. There were a lot of parts missing off of
34them. We had trucks stored all over town and lots all over town...
35
36Interviewer: Oh really?
37
38Mr. Morefield: ...that were missing a lot of parts; and they would determine if they had
39enough parts to complete the truck. They'd go out with a wrecker and
40pick'm up. We had our own wrecker there. Our wrecker operators would
41pick the truck up and bring it into the repair shop; put it in a stall; get the
42parts over there and put it together. There was a lot of that going on. We
43got through that and...
44
45Interviewer: People were getting worried?
46
47Mr. Morefield: Yeah, we knew we were in trouble.\

1Interviewer: [30:16] Were there still contracts for the product?
2
3Mr. Morefield: Yeah, I guess the order bank was still... We still had quite a few orders
4 out there for trucks.
5
6Interviewer: Mm-hm.
7
8Mr. Morefield: In fact, we were building a lot of military trucks at the time too. They
9 were able to complete the military orders. We had orders for military
10 trucks. At the time, we bid the contracts and uh, inflation hit and the cost
11 of building parts and all... Costs started skyrocketing and we were
12 supposedly building trucks at a loss because we couldn't... We'd bid the
13 contract and the military says you bid it at this cost and then it would
14 come out... We were paying a lot more for the parts that were having to
15 go on the trucks. We weren't making any profit from what they, you
16 know... Management tells me we're not making on the trucks...
17
18Interviewer: Oh, I see.
19
20Mr. Morefield: ...and so we went to the, you know, they went to the government and said,
21 you know, you subsidized aircraft and everybody else's industries to
22 keep'm afloat, you know, keep'm building stuff. But uh, we never were
23 able to get any additional relief from the government for military to help
24 us complete the military contracts.
25
26Interviewer: Oh.
27
28Mr. Morefield: I don't think they ever did finish the whole contract.
29
30Interviewer: [31:48] So, that was part of the problem too, wasn't it?
31
32Mr. Morefield: We had a lot of military that were incomplete too. I guess they brought in
33 guys to close down and finish what they could complete.
34
35Interviewer: [32:00] What happened to the things that couldn't be finished?
36
37Mr. Morefield: It all got sold at auction.
38
39Interviewer: [32:06] Oh, they had a big auction?
40
41Mr. Morefield: They had big auctions and sold off everything.
42
43Interviewer: I see. Individuals or companies would come in and...?
44
45Mr. Morefield: Yeah, a lot of companies came in and bought large blocks of different
46 materials. They figured they could, they could use...
47

1Interviewer: They could use...
2
3Mr. Morefield: And individuals bought... Dealers would come in and buy a chassis and,
4 you know, take it to their shop and try to complete it themselves.
5
6Interviewer: [32:36] I imagine over the years you probably were part of a lot of funny
7 things or bad things that happened. Anything in particular that sticks out
8 in your memory.
9
10Mr. Morefield: Oh, when I went into the militaries on the Rove...
11
12Interviewer: On the Rove, uh-huh.
13
14Mr. Morefield: I was testing military... I had a close friend that came to REO. He was a
15 mechanic also. He come into the inspection department. The two of us
16 were running the, testing militaries... Somehow, he was testing a truck
17 and uh, I don't know why he got out of the truck...what happened... He
18 heard something or... He got out of the truck and set the throttle on the
19 truck. The truck was running on the rolls; and somehow fell between the
20 wheels and was killed.
21
22Interviewer: Mm. That's terrible. Some of the other fellows that I've talked to have
23 alluded to that.
24
25Mr. Morefield: [Inaudible 33:40]
26
27Interviewer: Yeah, that's sad. Let me see here. [33:53] Looking back... I think I know
28 the answer because I think I heard it between the lines here. But looking
29 back on REO, what's your impression of the place? Good place to work?
30 Bad place to work?
31
32Mr. Morefield: Like I say, you started out at \$2.43 an hour.
33
34Interviewer: That's what you started at?
35
36Mr. Morefield: Yeah and then we were almost \$5.00 an hour.
37
38Interviewer: Wow.
39
40Mr. Morefield: The last job I had I went on salary. Uh, yeah it paid the bills.
41
42Interviewer: Raised your family. You did pretty well with'm?
43
44Mr. Morefield: Yeah, three kids and bought a house. Yeah, it was a union job. It was
45 UAW. We got comparable contracts that General Motors got.
46
47Interviewer: Oh.

1Mr. Morefield: It was a steady job. I moved around a lot, like I said, but uh...
2
3Interviewer: That was interesting, wasn't it?
4
5Mr. Morefield: But uh, I don't ever remember getting laid off out of the plant. I worked
6 the whole time. A couple times I was on minor sick leave problems. But
7 uh, the employment record here shows that I missed very little time. You
8 know, I could tell when my dad died, you know.
9
10Interviewer: Oh, sure.
11
12Mr. Morefield: [Inaudible 35:28]
13
14Interviewer: Wow. They really kept track of things, didn't they?
15
16Mr. Morefield: Yeah.
17
18Interviewer: I think it's amazing that there was any paperwork left that they could give
19 you that. You know, any records you could draw from.
20
21Mr. Morefield: They copied this and sent it to me.
22
23Interviewer: Oh, it's an interesting piece of paper the way it's shaped.
24
25Mr. Morefield: Here's the envelope it came in.
26
27Interviewer: There it is with the logo on it.
28
29Mr. Morefield: Apparently, I went and picked it up. They didn't mail it to me. I went and
30 picked it up.
31
32Interviewer: Yeah, apparently.
33
34Mr. Morefield: I have my name written on it.
35
36Interviewer: [35:54] So, you were... What was I going to say?
37
38Mr. Morefield: I was steadily employed. I can't ever remember getting laid off. We had
39 one, one, maybe a few days of work stoppage for strike. Most of the time,
40 we settled all of our contracts. This one time, we had a short period of
41 time, just a matter of a few days, we went out on strike.
42
43Interviewer: I was just going to ask you about strikes. I think that's where my thought
44 was going.
45
46Mr. Morefield: Most of times... There were threats of strikes, you know, when contracts
47 come up due and they'd extend the contract, you know. One time, we had

1 short period of time... That's the only time I can remember, we had... We
2 were calling out a strike and...
3
4Interviewer: [36:43] And the strike was for better wages or...?
5
6Mr. Morefield: Yeah, I don't really remember the details.
7
8Interviewer: Usually that's the bottom line.
9
10Mr. Morefield: It's wages or...
11
12Interviewer: Benefits.
13
14Mr. Morefield: ...benefits. It was probably wages. I don't know what the dispute was at
15 time, but uh...
16
17Interviewer: [37:02] What about the clubhouse? Did you and your family take part in
18 activities at the clubhouse?
19
20Mr. Morefield: Yeah, I remember Christmas parties – going to Christmas parties. It was
21 quite popular. We usually filled that place up at Christmas parties. I
22 remember meetings and, uh... It had a great reputation for years. I
23 remember my mother telling about, they lived over here by Potter Park
24 and my grandfather worked for REO.
25
26Interviewer: Oh, he did?
27
28Mr. Morefield: Yeah. They would walk to the clubhouse every Saturday. They would
29 see movies or music concerts. There was a movie building that my mother
30 talked about walking to...every Saturday walking to see movies or see
31 plays or music concerts.
32
33Interviewer: [38:06] And it was all free for the employees?
34
35Mr. Morefield: Right. Yeah.
36
37Interviewer: Isn't that wonderful?
38
39Mr. Morefield: Yeah.
40
41Interviewer: [38:11] So you had other relatives that worked at REO?
42
43Mr. Morefield: Yeah. My, uh, my dad... I wished I knew about when and what he did
44 and what years he worked here. You can talk to my sisters and see if
45 they've got any of my mother's and dad's artifacts.
46
47Interviewer: Mm-hm.

1Mr. Morefield: They maybe have a better memory of what I do as to when my grand-...
2 He died really young so I can't really remember him that well. They were
3 immigrants from England.
4

5Interviewer: Oh.
6

7Mr. Morefield: In fact, most of my aunts and uncles were... My mother was the first one
8 to be born here. They had seven or eight kids; most of'm were born in
9 England. They were immigrants. I asked my mother what my dad – or
10 my grandfather died from. She says, "Well, just hard work." [Laughter]
11

12Interviewer: [Laughter] That puts it neatly.
13

14Mr. Morefield: Factory work back then was hard work, you know. There was a lot of
15 manual labor involved. She said he just died from hard work, you know.
16 So, but uh, and my father-in-law worked here. We've got some
17 interesting history on him. He got a huge certificate for graduating from
18 Mancelona High School. The dates on it was 1923 when he graduated in
19 the spring. We've got some awesome paperwork from... Apparently, he
20 came to Lansing and went into the REO apprenticeship program in the fall
21 of 1923 and graduated from the apprenticeship program. We've got a
22 photograph of him at graduation; and a [inaudible 40:00] him a certificate
23 where he graduated from REO apprenticeship program – tool and die – in
24 1925.
25

26Interviewer: Tool and die.
27

28Mr. Morefield: Yep. And there was some...
29

30Interviewer: So, they had apprenticeship programs – ways of training people to come
31 and work.
32

33Mr. Morefield: They had a lot of great apprenticeship programs at REO and Oldsmobile.
34 He eventually worked for Oldsmobile and retired from Olds. There's a
35 time period in there that he must have worked for REO for... I found some
36 other documents where he's... A time... The years where he started work
37 at Oldsmobile – 30 years – but there's a time period in there before he
38 started working for REO that – or for Oldsmobile – that he must have
39 worked for REO for a period of time. But I don't have all that
40 documentation. There's no documentation where he worked between the
41 time when he finished his apprenticeship and went to work for... But he
42 was a – job title – his was a die sinker. He worked in the die, um, die
43 shops over on Saginaw Street, which is now the craft center...
44

45Interviewer: Oh really?
46

47Mr. Morefield: Yeah, they call it Craft Center now or...

1Interviewer: That was the REO tool and die.
2
3Mr. Morefield: It was actually a foundry – a lot of tool and die work there. That was
4 REO’s foundry at the time.
5
6Interviewer: It was?
7
8Mr. Morefield: He did a lot of work in the foundry part.
9
10Interviewer: In the ‘20’s?
11
12Mr. Morefield: Yep.
13
14Interviewer: That’s interesting. Well, any last thoughts? Anything that I haven’t even
15 thought about covering?
16
17Mr. Morefield: No.
18
19Interviewer: Anything you’d like to share?
20
21Mr. Morefield: I can’t think of anything else.
22
23Interviewer: Okay. Oh, I know. [41:48] When you retired, you probably were still too
24 young to be retired, did you go somewhere from there?
25
26Mr. Morefield: Ah, yeah. Jobs were really scarce, so...
27
28Interviewer: Were they?
29
30Mr. Morefield: ...I worked a lot of part-time jobs just trying to make money. My wife
31 went back to work. She was a registered nurse; and she went back to work
32 just to, you know, put bread on the table. She worked nights and
33 weekends and we had three kids. But uh, I ended up... A friend of mine
34 was working as a foreman on a construction job for, uh, Brown Brothers
35 Construction in Lansing...
36
37Interviewer: Brown Brothers.
38
39Mr. Morefield: They owned a lot of Diamond REO equipment too.
40
41Interviewer: [42:29] They owned a lot of Diamond REO...
42
43Mr. Morefield: ...trucks, yeah.
44
45Interviewer: Oh, they did?
46

1Mr. Morefield: Yeah. And so, they had a job project repairing bridges down in the
2 Jackson area on 27. I worked two summers. In fact, I worked in the
3 repair shop – Brown Brothers repair shop one winter. Two summers I
4 worked as a laborer...
5
6Interviewer: You were really over-qualified but...
7
8Mr. Morefield: Yeah, but it was tough work. Forty years old running the jack hammer
9 was, uh, was tough work.
10
11Interviewer: Oh boy.
12
13Mr. Morefield: It was tough work, but it paid well. We got a lot of overtime. They took
14 good care of me. Then I had an opportunity to, uh... Charlie Green and,
15 uh, worked in the service department and Tom Shumway was in the sales
16 department... Both got a job for a company called Crane Carrier Company
17 that built trucks in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
18
19Interviewer: [43:34] Crane?
20
21Mr. Morefield: Crane Carrier Company.
22
23Interviewer: [43:36] And Tom...?
24
25Mr. Morefield: Tom Shumway was the sales representative.
26
27Interviewer: Shumway, okay.
28
29Mr. Morefield: He got a job right after REO closed. He got a job right away with Crane
30 Carrier as a sales rep covering all the Midwest territory. A short while
31 later, Charlie Green got a job in the service department. Charlie Green,
32 after a couple years, got a promotion. He moved to Tulsa to work in the
33 office as a manager in the service department. So, he called me up and uh,
34 asked me if I would be interested in the field service job because I had
35 been in the field service for a short period of time at REO. And I said,
36 “Yeah, I’d be interested.” So, I ended up going to Cincinnati – no
37 Columbus, Ohio – to interview for the job because the manager of the
38 service department was a graduate of Ohio State University and he was
39 going to the Oklahoma/Ohio State football game. [Laughter]
40
41Interviewer: [Laughter]
42
43Mr. Morefield: So, I drove to Columbus, Ohio and met him in a hotel near the airport in
44 Columbus, Ohio. And then we went to the job and I worked for them for
45 22 years as a field service rep. I traveled all over the United States and
46 Canada for’m.
47

1Interviewer: That was good.
2
3Mr. Morefield: Yeah, a lot of traveling, but it, uh...
4
5Interviewer: Think of all the people you met and all the people you worked with over
6 the years.
7
8Mr. Morefield: It was a great experience. I met a lot of people.
9
10Interviewer: Sounds like you've had two really good careers.
11
12Mr. Morefield: Yeah, yeah.
13
14Interviewer: Plus, father and husband and... [Laughter]
15
16Mr. Morefield: [Laughter]
17
18Interviewer: That's a career, isn't it?
19
20Mr. Morefield: Yeah, it was a small company. The benefits weren't all that great, so there
21 was no benefits of retirement after I left there.
22
23Interviewer: Oh, yeah.
24
25Mr. Morefield: But they had a, you know, 401K program, so I was able to invest some
26 money in that so that I was...
27
28Interviewer: That helps.
29
30Mr. Morefield: ...able to survive my retirement. [Laughter]
31
32Interviewer: Good. [45:45] So, did you have sons? Do you have sons?
33
34Mr. Morefield: Yeah, two sons and a daughter.
35
36Interviewer: [45:48] Did they ever think of going into Oldsmobile or...?
37
38Mr. Morefield: My youngest son has worked for Olds for about 14 years. He works at the
39 [inaudible 46:04] plant now. He's been up and down. Ten or fifteen years
40 ago there were a lot of layoffs. He had a chance to work in another plant,
41 but he stayed [inaudible 46:21]. But he, uh, he didn't take... They offered
42 buyouts, you know. He never took his buyout. After several years, he was
43 laid off for several years. In fact, the was laid off longer than he worked,
44 but they still called him back.
45
46Interviewer: Wow.
47

1Mr. Morefield: He's had a steady job for probably 20 years. He'll be laid off probably
2when all this changeover when the new plant gets built. They'll have a
3shutdown of the Oldsmobile and the Pontiac.
4

5Interviewer: Well, we're really in the time of change, aren't we?
6

7Mr. Morefield: He'll be laid off for a while, but GM takes pretty good care of their
8employees with their union contracts and stuff like that. So, he'll be
9alright. My other son, he's got great mechanical ability. He works at a
10company in Colon, Michigan now. They build automobile trim parts, now
11part of Johnson Controls. But uh, he's worked there for 15 years. They
12were moving a lot of jobs to Mexico too, but... [Tape cut off]
13

14Interviewer: We've had an interesting talk and you've brought out some facts that I
15haven't had before. So, hopefully anybody down through the years that's
16listening to these tapes to find out what was it really like at REO, this will
17give them a bird's-eye view. Thank you very much.
18

19Mr. Morefield: Thank you.
20
21/al