

**Doug Sleep discusses his career at
REO Motor Car Company and Diamond REO Trucks, Inc. 6/22/2004**

1
2
3
4
5 Shirley Bradley: Here we go again.
6
7 Douglas Sleep: Okay.
8
9 Shirley Bradley: I hope we haven't lost anything. We were just saying that Mr. Sleep
10 worked in the export department, just in case that thing screwed up and,
11 uh, he helped block the military trucks onto the flatbed railroad cars for
12 export. Okay, let's see, so...
13
14 Douglas Sleep: There were, there were, I didn't do this but there were other people in the
15 export department that would take a regular commercial truck and tear it
16 completely apart, put them in huge boxes like an 8 x 8 box. You know, 1
17 would have to be big enough at least for the cab because they'd take the
18 cab off.
19
20 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
21
22 Douglas Sleep: They'd take it all apart as much as they could take apart. Take the rails
23 and wheels off and they'd box them all up and ship them to foreign
24 countries.
25
26 Shirley Bradley: [0:45] Everything went in 1 box but it was...?
27
28 Douglas Sleep: Well, several boxes.
29
30 Shirley Bradley: Oh, several boxes for a truck.
31
32 Douglas Sleep: Several boxes. They'd tear'm down and get'm in small boxes or as big a
33 box as they could...
34
35 Shirley Bradley: Uh-huh.
36
37 Douglas Sleep: ...that they could still ship and they might be 10 x 10 and the rails had to
38 be shipped separate because they had to leave the frame together.
39
40 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
41
42 Douglas Sleep: Other than that, they'd tear everything off from it they could, the wheels,
43 the brakes, everything that they could get off there, then it would be
44 shipped. And they were all right-hand drive trucks that, that were going to
45 foreign countries.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: Oh, foreign countries.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
4

5 Shirley Bradley: Gee, you know, I'm thinking of people receiving them over there, I hope
6 they knew how to put 'em together.
7

8 Douglas Sleep: Well...
9

10 Shirley Bradley: [Inaudible 1:19].
11

12 Douglas Sleep: They would get quite a few, so they must have had...
13

14 Shirley Bradley: They must have known.
15

16 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
17

18 Shirley Bradley: [1:23] And I imagine were there any representatives from REO Truck
19 Division that were over there?
20

21 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, they must have had some people in that part of the countries or
22 other countries that were selling them, yeah.
23

24 Shirley Bradley: Kind of could be the go-to person.
25

26 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. They were custom-made trucks for particular jobs.
27

28 Shirley Bradley: Oh, I see.
29

30 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And we had pretty good business in there. They'd probably tear
31 down a truck, this is just off the top of my head...
32

33 Shirley Bradley: Mm-hm.
34

35 Douglas Sleep: ...but I would say every week they'd probably tear a truck down and ship
36 it out.
37

38 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
39

40 Douglas Sleep: Box it up and ship it out.
41

42 Shirley Bradley: It's interesting. Build it up and tear it down.
43

44 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. They had to put it together, test it and drive it, and then they'd tear
45 it apart and box it up and send it overseas.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: I wonder how many of those arrived, they probably all arrived in great
2 condition.
3

4 Douglas Sleep: I would assume so.
5

6 Shirley Bradley: Boxed...
7

8 Douglas Sleep: But I would have no way of knowing that.
9

10 Shirley Bradley: Yeah. Boxed up that well, I would think so. [2:09] Um, so from the
11 export department you went to...?
12

13 Douglas Sleep: Service Department 88.
14

15 Shirley Bradley: [2:16] In Building 88?
16

17 Douglas Sleep: No. Department 88.
18

19 Shirley Bradley: Department 88.
20

21 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
22

23 Shirley Bradley: [2:21] And what did you do there?
24

25 Douglas Sleep: Well, the service department was a department where they, if somebody
26 needed parts for their trucks, they'd order the parts and we would procure
27 them and, and box them up, whatever, however they needed to be boxed
28 or packaged or whatever. We'd package'm and ship'm to the dealer who
29 would then sell. And my job for the most part, I worked with an old,
30 Charlie [Gillespie 2:46] was his name. He was an older fellow and, uh, he
31 just did his own thing and nobody bothered him. Einar Johnson was the
32 supervisor.
33

34 Shirley Bradley: [2:56] Mynard?
35

36 Douglas Sleep: Einar.
37

38 Shirley Bradley: Oh. I'm sorry. Ein maybe.
39

40 Douglas Sleep: A-r, I believe.
41

42 Shirley Bradley: A-r, Einar, oh, Einar, oh, sounds like a nice German name. And his last
43 name was...
44

45 Douglas Sleep: Johnson.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: Johnson. Oh. [chuckle] So it may be Swedish.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: I'm not sure.
4

5 Shirley Bradley: I'm not sure either, but.
6

7 Douglas Sleep: But Charlie I worked with him for a month or 2 and, and he took care of
8 boxing up all the engines and transmissions and he'd custom make the
9 boxes for each individual part that was going out or transmission or motor.
10 But the majority of the time I spent I was sent out in the shop to locate the
11 parts and I would bring them back. They'd give us tickets indicating how
12 many parts you needed and you had to go out and find'm and some of
13 them were pretty difficult to find.
14

15 Shirley Bradley: [3:41] Oh, they were? Why was that?
16

17 Douglas Sleep: Well, they weren't parts that were used an awful lot because they were
18 older vehicles in some cases, so...
19

20 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
21

22 Douglas Sleep: You had to spend some time. You had to get, it took a knack to get the
23 handle on how to do it. You had to go back to inventories and find out
24 maybe where the part was inventoried and see if it was still laying in that
25 particular spot. 90% of it was pretty easy to find but there were problems
26 finding some of them.
27

28 Shirley Bradley: Now these were people that had trucks and needed a new part for it or a
29 dealer that needed...
30

31 Douglas Sleep: Right. Just like you to a Chevy dealer and say you need a new antenna for
32 your car or something.
33

34 Shirley Bradley: Oh, okay.
35

36 Douglas Sleep: So we'd find the parts for them and send them, send them to the dealer and
37 then the dealer would sell them. That was...
38

39 Shirley Bradley: That was the way it went.
40

41 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
42

43 Shirley Bradley: Yeah. Um, let's see. [4:27] From service department you went to...?
44

45 Douglas Sleep: I went to maintenance department.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: Maintenance.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Gosh, I can't remember the number of the maintenance department now
4 that I spent 3, 4 years there.
5

6 Shirley Bradley: Oh, that's okay. [4:39] Um, who did you work for there?
7

8 Douglas Sleep: Uh, let's see. Who was it? Oh gosh. I can see his, oh, he was an old
9 timer. I can see his face and see that hat he wore but I...
10

11 Shirley Bradley: [4:56] He wore a special hat maybe?
12

13 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, well, he had the old felt hat type thing.
14

15 Shirley Bradley: Oh, like something out of the 30s.
16

17 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
18

19 Shirley Bradley: And he wore it every day.
20

21 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. He, majority of the maintenance department was skilled trades and
22 we were just a small part of it. There was only like 4 of us that were
23 laborers and all the rest of them were skilled trades...
24

25 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
26

27 Douglas Sleep: ...electricians, plumbers, and stuff. And we would assist the carpenters,
28 maybe we'd help them pour cement, or maybe the painters help them
29 clean a surface, or the millwrights we might help them by handling some
30 of the steel or helping them. Well, we dug a lot of holes let's put it that
31 way for the, for the concrete and for repair work for the plumbers and
32 stuff, so.
33

34 Shirley Bradley: In the building, in the complex.
35

36 Douglas Sleep: In the building and on the, on the property outside. If a main was broken,
37 a water main was broken, we'd fix that. We'd do the digging anyway and
38 the plumbers would do the fixing, but. And we repaired a lot of floors.
39 There were a lot of wood floors. Every time it rained, the floors would
40 bubble up, they'd swell up and bubble up and we'd have to tear them apart
41 and take a hatchet and chip the parts down and re-fix the floors.
42

43 Shirley Bradley: Oh my gosh. [chuckle]
44

45 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Did a lot of air hammer work.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: [6:10] Did you?
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
4

5 Shirley Bradley: That would be on the floors or on the...?
6

7 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, on the floors, yeah. If you had something that had to be replaced or
8 going to do some more cement work maybe in the pressroom or whatever
9 or if they were going to put a post in someplace, we'd [inaudible 6:22] the
10 post ourselves but skilled tradesmen have to do that. But if they ran short
11 on millwrights or something, they'd assign us to work with the millwright
12 or a plumber, so.
13

14 Shirley Bradley: [6:30] Now what does a millwright do? I'm a little puzzled. I know what
15 a plumber does.
16

17 Douglas Sleep: That's what my son is at GM.
18

19 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
20

21 Douglas Sleep: A millwright is like a carpenter only he uses steel. They would build any,
22 any assembly lines, any lines that carried parts. They would design
23 them...
24

25 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
26

27 Douglas Sleep: ...and put them together. If they had rollers on them, they'd attach the
28 rollers. But they, they designed the steel and put the steel up and have it
29 welded together, so they're kind of the construction people inside the
30 plant.
31

32 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
33

34 Douglas Sleep: Anything, if they had to have a big piece of machinery [inaudible 7:05] a
35 millwright would build the machinery, so they were the heavy
36 construction guys inside the plant. On the outside you'd see them walking
37 on the, on the building just you could see the steelworkers that's basically
38 what a millwright is.
39

40 Shirley Bradley: Oh, okay.
41

42 Douglas Sleep: But...
43

44 Shirley Bradley: Oh, well, that clears it up for me.
45

1Douglas Sleep: But they do a lot of different things inside the plant besides just doing the
2 construction because there's not a lot of construction in most plants. But
3 if they changed the line, they'd redesign the line and then they'd put it up,
4 so we would help them with that from time to time.
5

6Shirley Bradley: It sounds like, and as I recall, the plant, of course, was very old.
7

8Douglas Sleep: Right.
9

10Shirley Bradley: The building itself was very old.
11

12Douglas Sleep: Right.
13

14Shirley Bradley: And I, I've heard stories about the wooden floors that were soaked with oil
15 and...
16

17Douglas Sleep: Right. And that's where we would repair them if it rained, if, you know,
18 the gutters ran over and the rain came in on the plant floors, they'd swell
19 up. They might, they might get 4, 5 feet high.
20

21Shirley Bradley: [7:54] Is that right?
22

23Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
24

25Shirley Bradley: Oh my goodness.
26

27Douglas Sleep: I mean it might only be one spot about 15 feet...
28

29Shirley Bradley: Mm-hm. Where the rain was coming in.
30

31Douglas Sleep: ...yeah, 15 feet long and, and 10 feet wide.
32

33Shirley Bradley: I'm picturing people trying to work at their production line or their
34 machine or whatever...
35

36Douglas Sleep: Well, yeah.
37

38Shirley Bradley: ...and the rain is coming in on them.
39

40Douglas Sleep: Yeah. It didn't rain a lot in the places where there was machinery and
41 stuff, let's put it that way.
42

43Shirley Bradley: Oh.
44

45Douglas Sleep: I mean they took care of that stuff right away.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: The roof was different there.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, but there was a lot of, there was a lot of area in the plant so any area
4 that was open where they got rain, we'd take care of that.
5

6 Shirley Bradley: It was a very...
7

8 Douglas Sleep: A lot of times if it got too bad with the floors, they'd just tear them out and
9 throw cement on the floors.
10

11 Shirley Bradley: [8:30] Oh really?
12

13 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
14

15 Shirley Bradley: [8:31] They could do that?
16

17 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. They'd just tear a big chunk of the area out. If they were having
18 problems with rain in an area, they'd just pull it out.
19

20 Shirley Bradley: [8:38] The factory was all on 1 level all the whole entire complex do you
21 think, Washington, Baker, Cedar?
22

23 Douglas Sleep: Hm.
24

25 Shirley Bradley: [8:45] I mean it wasn't 2-story was it, or was it?
26

27 Douglas Sleep: There were, there were different building where they had stories, yes.
28

29 Shirley Bradley: Oh, there were?
30

31 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. The majority, all of production basically was on 1 story for the
32 most part. There would be some welding like up in 43A which was the
33 second floor. And then there were several places for storage, all the
34 storage areas were, let's see, 3 floors I think is as high as it went...
35

36 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
37

38 Douglas Sleep: ...1303, 1302, 1301.
39

40 Shirley Bradley: Okay.
41

42 Douglas Sleep: But all the storage areas were up on the second or third floors. Not a lot of
43 production except on the cab line was up on the second floor as I recall.
44

45 Shirley Bradley: It's interesting. I never thought about that before.
46

1Douglas Sleep: And the cabs would float down, not float down but they'd be on an
2 assembly line.
3

4Shirley Bradley: [9:25] There was a ramp or something?
5

6Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Assembly line like I described where they would build a line
7 overhead and they'd be on a rail and come right down into the...
8

9Shirley Bradley: Oh.
10

11Douglas Sleep: ...main production line.
12

13Shirley Bradley: Oh.
14

15Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
16

17Shirley Bradley: Interesting. My mother worked there too and my dad at one time and I'm
18 wishing now I could have had a chance to go inside and see it, you know,
19 so.
20

21Douglas Sleep: When did she work there?
22

23Shirley Bradley: Uh, she worked there during the war.
24

25Douglas Sleep: Okay.
26

27Shirley Bradley: Um, she had a tough time getting in because as soon as war was declared,
28 she needed a better job and she went over and sat in the personnel office
29 for a long time and they wouldn't call her in to be interviewed so she kept
30 going back, going back, and going back. Finally, whoever the personnel
31 manager was at that time or an assistant was a man...
32

33Douglas Sleep: Uh-huh.
34

35Shirley Bradley: ...he finally said, oh, all right. He got tired of seeing her sitting out there I
36 guess in the other room with all the dusty, old magazines and cigarette
37 ashtrays overflowing. And he, so he, she said to him I know you're going
38 to have to hire women 'cause the men are going to be going, you know.
39

40Douglas Sleep: Right.
41

42Shirley Bradley: He finally gave in. His first idea was, lady, you belong, you know, at
43 home.
44

45Douglas Sleep: Right.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: [throat clearing] And, of course, after that...
2
3 Douglas Sleep: The war changed that.
4
5 Shirley Bradley: History changed, yeah, changed everything. But she worked on the
6 receiving dock during the war. And then after the war, after the strikes
7 and all that was settled and coal, steel, and railroad and whatever else, then
8 she was called back 'cause I guess they got a new military contract or
9 commercial contract, I'm not sure what, and then she was there again for a
10 while and then she ended up in the lawnmower division.
11
12 Douglas Sleep: Okay. The lawnmower division was gone when I got there.
13
14 Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
15
16 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
17
18 Shirley Bradley: Oh yeah. This was in the...
19
20 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
21
22 Shirley Bradley: Well, it would have been early 50s.
23
24 Douglas Sleep: I used to see lawnmower parts once in a while in all my...
25
26 Shirley Bradley: [11:01] Did you?
27
28 Douglas Sleep: ...poking around looking for things. They would still get inventoried and
29 be on the inventory list, but.
30
31 Shirley Bradley: It never occurred to me as a kid, lawnmowers in a truck plant, you know,
32 kids don't think about that sort of thing...
33
34 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, right.
35
36 Shirley Bradley: ...but yeah. Um, let's see. Okay. In the maintenance department, so you
37 pretty well described what you did there. [11:25] And let's see, any kind
38 of training that you had before you went to REO that fit you for working
39 or they...?
40
41 Douglas Sleep: No. Basically...
42
43 Shirley Bradley: ... just on the job?
44
45 Douglas Sleep: Basically, I went right out of high school right to REO for the most part,
46 yeah. I had a little short-term job in between but it was a short one.

1
2 Shirley Bradley: [11:38] Do you have any idea, can you remember any kind of what you
3 made per hour? You weren't on salary were you or were you?
4
5 Douglas Sleep: It seems to me I hired in at \$2.38 an hour in 1961.
6
7 Shirley Bradley: [11:50] And that was pretty good then, wasn't it?
8
9 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Yup, that was basically the same amount of money that GM was
10 paying.
11
12 Shirley Bradley: Oh. Oh, that's interesting. Thank you.
13
14 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. We were pretty close. We were on par with everything there as
15 GM was.
16
17 Shirley Bradley: [12:04] And benefits, hospitalization?
18
19 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Yeah. I had benefits, vacation time, yup, everything, was probably
20 better benefits than we have now. [chuckle]
21
22 Shirley Bradley: Could be, could be. [12:15] Um, did you ever have the occasion to go
23 down to the first aid department?
24
25 Douglas Sleep: Oh yeah. Yeah, I went there several times.
26
27 Shirley Bradley: [12:21] Did you?
28
29 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. I mean nothing serious.
30
31 Shirley Bradley: Just...
32
33 Douglas Sleep: I head a nick here, there, you know, but I was...
34
35 Shirley Bradley: Steel slivers or whatever.
36
37 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. I'd get banged up one way or another, scratch here or there,
38 but.
39
40 Shirley Bradley: [12:32] It was nice to have that right there on site, wasn't it?
41
42 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, it was, yeah.
43
44 Shirley Bradley: Um...
45
46 Douglas Sleep: I can't remember her name right now.

1
2 Shirley Bradley: [Ardith Pappen 12:38].
3
4 Douglas Sleep: [Ardith Pappen 12:38], yeah, right.
5
6 Shirley Bradley: Everybody speaks so highly of her.
7
8 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
9
10 Shirley Bradley: I met her and we wanted to interview her in '92, um, and she was perfectly
11 willing but we didn't know it at the time, she was very ill.
12
13 Douglas Sleep: Oh.
14
15 Shirley Bradley: And she had to keep going – whenever we'd get ready to interview her,
16 she couldn't do it and now as I look back on it discovering that she was
17 quite ill, she had to go in for treatments and whatever so that...
18
19 Douglas Sleep: Oh. She was, she was really nice.
20
21 Shirley Bradley: Oh, bless her heart. And, uh, all the taped interviews that I did in '92 with
22 Lisa Fine were here and then they got moved around a lot and ended up
23 [Doris Doll 13:10] had, I took them to her finally so they wouldn't get
24 lost, then Doris passed away and her husband Mack had them but he
25 couldn't remember where he had them and I didn't want to bother him
26 right away after she passed away so I let it go a couple months then he
27 couldn't find them and [Ardith 13:23] found them for us and brought them
28 back down here and then she passed away just a week or 2 after.
29
30 Douglas Sleep: Wow.
31
32 Shirley Bradley: God bless her.
33
34 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. She was, everybody liked [Ardith 13:30].
35
36 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
37
38 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
39
40 Shirley Bradley: I've heard such – and I met her a couple of times at the REO girls'
41 luncheons and really a lovely woman. Um, okay, let's see.
42
43 Douglas Sleep: I think it was about that time I got started in union activities when I was in
44 – so I was union steward there for 2 or 3 years and then when I transferred
45 to the, uh, what do they call it, stock department, I was a stock chaser.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: Hm. [14:02] What does a stock chaser do?
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Well, similar to what I was doing in service, you provided all the parts for
4 all the assembly lines.
5

6 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
7

8 Douglas Sleep: You had to go out and procure all the parts, find all the parts. The only
9 thing different when you're a stock chaser, you for the most part you were
10 just dealing with one specific area. Like I was, at one point in time I was,
11 well, the first part, the first job I got I think it was in the press division. I
12 worked in the press division. All I did was drive trucks, uh.
13

14 Shirley Bradley: [14:30] A stock truck?
15

16 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. A stock truck, fork trucks basically.
17

18 Shirley Bradley: Forklift, yeah.
19

20 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And then you would just move parts from, from one press to
21 another and then you take them to a storage area when they were
22 completed pressed out. And after that, I think I spent 6 months there and
23 then I went to the axle department and I provided a portion of the axle
24 department with, with stock, U-bolts, whatever it might be, you know, to
25 keep the semi lines running.
26

27 Shirley Bradley: So they could keep running.
28

29 Douglas Sleep: Right.
30

31 Shirley Bradley: You put them in big bins or something...
32

33 Douglas Sleep: Put them in bins.
34

35 Shirley Bradley: ...and they could just reach their parts.
36

37 Douglas Sleep: Right, so you put them in a place where, well, they were all designed to
38 have a specific area. And then a lot of times there were specialty trucks
39 coming down the line so sometimes you had to get specialty parts, you
40 know. Each truck was different per se.
41

42 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
43

44 Douglas Sleep: I mean there were a lot of standard parts that went into each truck but each
45 truck had different U-bolts, different drag links.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: According to their purpose.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: Right, yeah. What...
4

5 Shirley Bradley: Who was going to buy them.
6

7 Douglas Sleep: What they were buying, who was buying it and what they were buying
8 them for so there were a lot of different trucks. Everything was custom
9 made basically.
10

11 Shirley Bradley: [15:29] Did you ever see any of the owners who had ordered those trucks?
12

13 Douglas Sleep: No, I can't say that I ever seen any of them, no, no.
14

15 Shirley Bradley: Sometimes I guess there had been some that have come to the, come to the
16 factory...
17

18 Douglas Sleep: Oh, I'm sure there were. Yeah.
19

20 Shirley Bradley: ...to see what was being built.
21

22 Douglas Sleep: And probably at that point in time I got elected to the bargaining
23 committee, so I...
24

25 Shirley Bradley: [15:45] And did you like that?
26

27 Douglas Sleep: Oh yeah, yeah.
28

29 Shirley Bradley: [15:47] Did you?
30

31 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, I liked it. It was, it was a little stressful for me 'cause I was kind of
32 young and I took a lot of things too close to, I carried it on my heart I
33 guess some of them too, too close. I never had a guy released. The
34 biggest part is not having anybody fired that you were representing. I
35 probably represented 500 people and for me it was a full-time job. It was
36 negotiating. It was – that's all I did was do union activities, try to settle
37 complaints.
38

39 Shirley Bradley: Oh, somebody would come to you, a worker with a complaint.
40

41 Douglas Sleep: Right.
42

43 Shirley Bradley: And then you were to...
44

45 Douglas Sleep: I, I would either write a grievance if we couldn't settle it with the
46 supervisor or the superintendent and we'd write a grievance and try to

1 settle it out later. But 90% of the time – the superintendent of the stock
2 department was Lowell Leverett. That was the biggest area I represented.
3 I represented Maintenance and Export and Service. I had a pretty, pretty
4 big area but the majority of the time I was able to work things out with
5 Lowell Leverett, saved a lot of grievances for him and a lot of problems
6 for me.
7
8 Shirley Bradley: [16:43] What was his name again?
9
10 Douglas Sleep: Lowell Leverett.
11
12 Shirley Bradley: Lowell.
13
14 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. He would be a good person to contact too.
15
16 Shirley Bradley: Leverett.
17
18 Douglas Sleep: L-e-v-e-r-e-t-t.
19
20 Shirley Bradley: Oh, 2 T's. Okay.
21
22 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
23
24 Shirley Bradley: Um, so a person, a worker comes to you and they got a problem they
25 couldn't handle.
26
27 Douglas Sleep: Right.
28
29 Shirley Bradley: They couldn't get any satisfaction from their department.
30
31 Douglas Sleep: If they didn't feel the foreman was treating them fairly or somebody did
32 some work that should have been done by us, a supervisor or another
33 employee. Or a lot of it was discipline, if they get disciplined for
34 something, I would try to intercede and, and have the discipline removed
35 or reduced or negotiate.
36
37 Shirley Bradley: Find out...
38
39 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
40
41 Shirley Bradley: Find out what maybe.
42
43 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. Try to settle the problem if I could keep it from getting into
44 writing. As I say, Lowell and I worked pretty well together and he, he
45 made arrangements in several cases to reduce the, the suspensions or
46 whatever.

1
2 Shirley Bradley: Mm-hm.
3
4 Douglas Sleep: Everybody for the most part was pretty happy.
5
6 Shirley Bradley: Good.
7
8 Douglas Sleep: It worked out pretty good, yeah.
9
10 Shirley Bradley: Great. Well, that's a, that should have been satisfying in a way for you.
11
12 Douglas Sleep: It was. It just...
13
14 Shirley Bradley: Except for...
15
16 Douglas Sleep: Well, the problem was the ones that were – I spent 90% of my time with
17 10% of the people and 10% of my time with 90% of the people. And the
18 10%, the 10% of the people, the ones who were in trouble all the time,
19 were never satisfied with the work you were doing. I mean you might,
20 they might want to give'm 2 weeks off and you get it reduced to 2 days
21 and they didn't feel it was, the 2 days was even proper, you know. You
22 just couldn't make those 10% happy no matter what you did. The other
23 90% were always happy and they always did their job but most of the time
24 I spent my time with people who didn't want to work or had drinking
25 problems or absentee problems.
26
27 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
28
29 Douglas Sleep: You know, it would have been an awful easy job if it wasn't for those 10%
30 of the people there. [chuckle] They wouldn't really have needed me, you
31 know. 'Cause most people especially at REO were awful good people but
32 in a plant that big you had some that had some alcoholic problems and I
33 sat on the alcoholic committee for a while and that was...
34
35 Shirley Bradley: [18:43] Oh there was a committee for that?
36
37 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And I was only 23 years old at the time so it was a...
38
39 Shirley Bradley: Oh, just a young fellow.
40
41 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. I was probably the youngest one that was ever elected to the
42 job, so. It was, it had it's – I developed high blood pressure at that time. I
43 don't know if that was...
44
45 Shirley Bradley: [18:59] At that age?
46

1Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yup. I don't know if that was the result of it or not, but.
2

3Shirley Bradley: Oh.
4

5Douglas Sleep: It was rewarding at times sitting on negotiations and getting somebody out
6 of trouble and solve problems ahead of time. I mean several times Lowell
7 would call me and say you got somebody who has been drinking too much
8 down in Export. You better get him home before somebody gets in
9 trouble. It would be easier for me to just go over there and get that guy
10 and say let's get out of here.
11

12Shirley Bradley: Oh.
13

14Douglas Sleep: Somebody knows what the problem is. You better get out of here now
15 before you get suspended.
16

17Shirley Bradley: [19:26] So you would take him home perhaps or?
18

19Douglas Sleep: Right, right.
20

21Shirley Bradley: Make sure he got there.
22

23Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. So a lot, I could say a lot of our problems were settled in
24 between him and I as opposed to some supervisors or superintendents that
25 just wanted to you might say nail somebody but I had a pretty easy job in
26 that respect. And negotiations, I really enjoyed negotiations, negotiating
27 for contracts. That was, that was fun.
28

29Shirley Bradley: [19:51] Uh, what goes into negotiating contracts? You have to work
30 between the workers and the management or?
31

32Douglas Sleep: Just the bargaining committee sat down with International and we'd, we
33 would negotiate with the, either the lawyers if they hired lawyers or the
34 personnel department or sometimes the president would come in or the
35 plant manager which was [Clair Laudenslager 20:11]. I negotiated with
36 him a couple different times and Everhardus, Herm Everhardus was the
37 personnel director.
38

39Shirley Bradley: Everhardus.
40

41Douglas Sleep: Herm Everhardus, yeah. He was an All American out of University of
42 Michigan.
43

44Shirley Bradley: Herm I suppose is Herman.
45

1Douglas Sleep: Herman, yeah. Herman Everhardus. He was an All American Football
2player.
3

4Shirley Bradley: He was?
5

6Douglas Sleep: Yeah. He is married to I believe a Kellogg girl.
7

8Shirley Bradley: From the Kellogg?
9

10Douglas Sleep: Family.
11

12Shirley Bradley: In Battle Creek.
13

14Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
15

16Shirley Bradley: Oh, interesting.
17

18Douglas Sleep: He probably really didn't need the job, it just was something for him to do.
19

20Shirley Bradley: Everybody needs to be useful.
21

22Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
23

24Shirley Bradley: [20:52] Um, can you recall any of the big, would this be during a strike
25period you'd be negotiating or?
26

27Douglas Sleep: Well, the strike was always an option but we never, we never did go on
28strike with any of the negotiating contracts we had.
29

30Shirley Bradley: Hm.
31

32Douglas Sleep: We were able to settle them ahead of time.
33

34Shirley Bradley: That's good, isn't it?
35

36Douglas Sleep: Yeah. We came close just before I got on the bargaining committee.
37White Motors had acquired REO and White Motors wanted us to go out
38on strike, the union from White Motors, but we ended up not going on
39strike. That was something Roger Foster – the employees wanted to go on
40strike, Roger Foster got in front of a meeting of 2000 people and I never
41seen a guy talk so long in my life. He convinced them. The International
42reps couldn't convince the people not to go out on strike but Roger spent
4315 minutes up on the stage I think it was over at Sexton High School. He
44had them eating out of his hand before he left there. We ended up not
45going on strike.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
2
3 Douglas Sleep: I never – I always said the guy could be governor of Michigan if he ever
4 set his mind to it but he was happy enough just to be the president of
5 REO...
6
7 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
8
9 Douglas Sleep: ...of the union anyway.
10
11 Shirley Bradley: Of the union.
12
13 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
14
15 Shirley Bradley: He sounds like a very nice...
16
17 Douglas Sleep: Oh, he's a...
18
19 Shirley Bradley: ...very valuable person for the company...
20
21 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
22
23 Shirley Bradley: ...if he could do that, uh.
24
25 Douglas Sleep: So I spent, oh gosh, I think it was 8 years on the bargaining committee, 6
26 to 8 years.
27
28 Shirley Bradley: Oh, you were there a long time on...
29
30 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
31
32 Shirley Bradley: ...on bargaining.
33
34 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And then I ran for the chairman of the bargaining committee and
35 lost the election. At that point in time, I had to go back to work.
36
37 Shirley Bradley: You didn't kiss enough babies. [chuckle]
38
39 Douglas Sleep: I guess not.
40
41 Shirley Bradley: Shake enough hands.
42
43 Douglas Sleep: I guess not. I guess not. It was a close election but I ended up losing,
44 which is one of those things that happens, I guess. If you're going to try
45 and move up, you got to take the chance.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: That's, yeah, true.
2

3 Douglas Sleep: And I always wanted to go in the International Union, that's what I was
4 hoping to do because I got started so young [inaudible 22:44].
5

6 Shirley Bradley: 'Cause you had a long time, a future.
7

8 Douglas Sleep: Right, right.
9

10 Shirley Bradley: Sure.
11

12 Douglas Sleep: But it didn't work out and I went back to, at that point, I went to back to
13 working on the, back to the stock department or the stock division. I had
14 to go to, let's see, I think I went to back to chasing stock and, and that's
15 when they were going through some hard times.
16

17 Shirley Bradley: [23:05] Because of?
18

19 Douglas Sleep: That was – Cappaert owned it at that point in time and the guy selling
20 parts to him, the vendors wouldn't sell him any parts. They had to store
21 all the parts over at John Bean, all the big parts. The engines, the
22 transmissions, the axles, they all had to be stored in a separate building in
23 case the company went under 'cause he wasn't paying any of the vendors.
24

25 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
26

27 Douglas Sleep: And they couldn't get a transmission or an engine ahead of time unless
28 they paid for it or they put it over in that other building.
29

30 Shirley Bradley: So that was...
31

32 Douglas Sleep: That was separate from REO.
33

34 Shirley Bradley: Separate from REO.
35

36 Douglas Sleep: They, they were renting the building and they were storing the bigger...
37

38 Shirley Bradley: [23:48] Whose decision was that, was that Cappaert's to put those over
39 there?
40

41 Douglas Sleep: Well, just he, he...
42

43 Shirley Bradley: [23:51] Or he didn't know about it or?
44

45 Douglas Sleep: No, he didn't have any choice I don't think. He couldn't get the parts
46 unless they stored them in a separate building.

1
2 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
3
4 Douglas Sleep: 'Cause the vendors wouldn't sell them.
5
6 Shirley Bradley: Oh, oh, I see. If it said John Bean on it...
7
8 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
9
10 Shirley Bradley: ...they wouldn't...
11
12 Douglas Sleep: It wasn't on Cappaert, it wasn't on...
13
14 Shirley Bradley: It wasn't...
15
16 Douglas Sleep: ...Diamond REO's property so if, if they went under...
17
18 Shirley Bradley: So they felt...
19
20 Douglas Sleep: ...they could still go back and get those parts because they were on
21 separate property.
22
23 Shirley Bradley: I see, so they could finish up some trucks.
24
25 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Some they were building and I was, I had to go out, me and 1 other
26 guy they assigned us to go out and find each individual parts to see if they
27 had the transmission, the axle, the engine, all the major parts, the drag
28 links, even some of the drag links and some of the specific parts that they
29 need for each individual truck a couple days ahead of time.
30
31 Shirley Bradley: [24:32] Drag what?
32
33 Douglas Sleep: Drag links, they go on the...
34
35 Shirley Bradley: [24:34] Links?
36
37 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
38
39 Shirley Bradley: Okay.
40
41 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. It's like a tie rod basically on a car but only about 6 times bigger.
42
43 Shirley Bradley: Oh. [chuckle]
44
45 Douglas Sleep: But we had to go out and find all the major parts to make sure they could
46 build a truck because there were, you know...

1
2Shirley Bradley: Oh.
3
4Douglas Sleep: ...like 3 or 4 days ahead of time to see what trucks they could build and so
5 me and another guy were doing that for about 6 months. And then the
6 cutbacks came even further and then I got transferred to the, uh, the rail
7 dock which is right alongside Export.
8
9Shirley Bradley: Mm-hm.
10
11Douglas Sleep: And they laid off so many people, I had to run a mobile crane which was a
12 4-wheel, 4-wheel drive crane that steered both wheels, front and back
13 steered, and you had to lift up the frame rails from down below the dock
14 and lift them up with a crane and drive them down to the other end of the
15 dock and get them on a rail. And that's where the trucks really got started
16 from that frame rail, you know.
17
18Shirley Bradley: Oh, that was from the bottom up then.
19
20Douglas Sleep: Right. And that was...
21
22Shirley Bradley: [25:40] Did you like doing that?
23
24Douglas Sleep: Well, I didn't mind it 'cause you weren't under any major pressure. You
25 could keep ahead without any problem but it was a little bit dangerous
26 because there was...
27
28Shirley Bradley: I was wondering about that.
29
30Douglas Sleep: You could drive right off the dock. There was no way to stop you from
31 going off the dock or if you got...
32
33Shirley Bradley: Really?
34
35Douglas Sleep: Yeah. There was no – there was a cement dock and there were no side
36 supports. You were just...
37
38Shirley Bradley: Hung out there.
39
40Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. You may...
41
42Shirley Bradley: [26:03] What kind of a drop was that?
43
44Douglas Sleep: Oh, about a 7, 8-foot drop.
45
46Shirley Bradley: Enough to have that thing...

1
2Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
3
4Shirley Bradley: ...fall down on top of you.
5
6Douglas Sleep: Oh yeah. If the, if the, if the crane was to fall on you or you fall on those
7 rails, it would definitely would kill you.
8
9Shirley Bradley: Oh heavens.
10
11Douglas Sleep: And if you picked up too heavy a package of rails, you know, the rails
12 came in, they were all bound together probably I'd say about 16 at a time.
13 You had to, you had to move them out there without tipping over the, the
14 [chuckle] crane as well so it was a little bit dangerous but...
15
16Shirley Bradley: It sounds like that.
17
18Douglas Sleep: ...I worked with a guy that was pretty well at it and when he was off I had
19 to, I had to drive it myself. I had to stand up and drive it.
20
21Shirley Bradley: Oh, you stood up to do this thing.
22
23Douglas Sleep: Yeah. You stood up on it and drove it with, your hand controlled the
24 speed and your foot controlled the brake. It was a unique piece of
25 machinery.
26
27Shirley Bradley: That sounds like a job just learning to coordinate.
28
29Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
30
31Shirley Bradley: Being me, I would forget which one to push and I'd be in trouble.
32
33Douglas Sleep: Well, it took some getting used to. I drove a bullnose before, which is a
34 similar type of operation with your feet and with your hands.
35
36Shirley Bradley: Oh.
37
38Douglas Sleep: So I had done that type of thing before but carrying frame rails, lifting
39 them up 15 feet off the ground and having it swing up there, you know,
40 it's a little bit different.
41
42Shirley Bradley: I'm not, for anybody listening to this, you're talking frame rails. [27:25]
43 Frame rails are what?
44

1 Douglas Sleep: Are the sides, are, well, they'd be steel, they might run anywhere from 20
2 to 30 feet long and they would be about 8 inches, 10 inches wide and I'd
3 say 3/8 or more thick, maybe 1/4 inch or more thick.
4

5 Shirley Bradley: Hm.
6

7 Douglas Sleep: It's basically the sides of the truck, everything goes to the frame rails.
8

9 Shirley Bradley: This is the sides of the frame.
10

11 Douglas Sleep: Sides, yeah, this is the frame.
12

13 Shirley Bradley: And everything hooks to that.
14

15 Douglas Sleep: Every, this is basically the frame.
16

17 Shirley Bradley: Okay.
18

19 Douglas Sleep: It's a frame and then they just, they take it inside and then they, they have
20 patterns laid out, each individual one where the frame layout man would
21 mark it out and then it would go from the frame layout area to the drills
22 and it would have holes drilled in it so there was a way to attach
23 everything to the frame.
24

25 Shirley Bradley: [Inaudible 28:13] together.
26

27 Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
28

29 Shirley Bradley: So you brought them in and then just put them down.
30

31 Douglas Sleep: Put them on rollers.
32

33 Shirley Bradley: Oh, on rollers, okay.
34

35 Douglas Sleep: And then they would roll them into the frame layout area and then a guy
36 would lay them out. The guy, he had to be pretty good with blueprints.
37

38 Shirley Bradley: [28:28] Did he?
39

40 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And they would stamp them. They'd, they'd pinprick them so they
41 knew where the drill bits were supposed to fit.
42

43 Shirley Bradley: Where to put the holes. [chuckle]
44

1Douglas Sleep: Right, right. And then they'd mark, take chalk and mark around them so
2 they knew which size hole to put in each one, so it was quite a process
3 there.
4

5Shirley Bradley: Huh. And that was the beginning of the truck.
6

7Douglas Sleep: That was the start of it, right.
8

9Shirley Bradley: Oh, that's interesting. That's interesting. It would be such, I don't know
10 if fun is the word I want here but it would be so interesting to go in and
11 see that happening.
12

13Douglas Sleep: It was a, it was a spectacular place to work.
14

15Shirley Bradley: [28:59] Was it really?
16

17Douglas Sleep: Yes, it was.
18

19Shirley Bradley: That's what I wanted to ask you next. [29:01] Looking back, what are
20 your thoughts?
21

22Douglas Sleep: Well, it was almost like a family. Everybody liked each other. Everybody
23 worked together and most of the people didn't have to kill themselves but
24 everybody gave a pretty fair day's piece of work for, for their wages.
25 There were some that would goof off without any question.
26

27Shirley Bradley: You can find that anywhere.
28

29Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
30

31Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
32

33Douglas Sleep: But everybody for the most part worked pretty well together. There are
34 some that had to work a whole lot harder than others, those guys on the
35 main line but after they got a little bit of time then they could get off the
36 main line.
37

38Shirley Bradley: That's production line?
39

40Douglas Sleep: Right. Production line. But, as today's standards and what I hear from
41 other places and GM and stuff, I think for the most part, people worked,
42 gave a pretty good day's piece of work for their wages.
43

44Shirley Bradley: [29:45] And you were there then when the doors closed?
45

1Douglas Sleep: Yup, I was there when, well, I wasn't there the last few days when it was
2 closed but I was one of...
3

4Shirley Bradley: Toward the end.
5

6Douglas Sleep: Yeah. I was there on the last major layoff. Everything that was done after
7 I was there was just shipping parts out and stuff and tearing the place
8 down basically.
9

10Shirley Bradley: [30:01] So you knew it was coming, did you [inaudible 30:03]?
11

12Douglas Sleep: Well, I didn't, I didn't really believe it when it happened.
13

14Shirley Bradley: Is that right?
15

16Douglas Sleep: Yeah. 'Cause I think it was, oh, what was it, it was like April 4th I'm
17 going to guess...
18

19Shirley Bradley: Mm-hm.
20

21Douglas Sleep: ...was the big layoff.
22

23Shirley Bradley: Oh.
24

25Douglas Sleep: As I, as I recall, and I thought, well, I've never been off work here in my
26 life. I packed up the kids and we went to Disneyland. I thought I'm going
27 to have a paid vacation. I'm going to get unemployment and I'll come
28 back in a couple months and probably be back to work.
29

30Shirley Bradley: You think another contract maybe.
31

32Douglas Sleep: Well, they had put a lot of money into the place in different parts.
33

34Shirley Bradley: Oh they had?
35

36Douglas Sleep: Yeah. They...
37

38Shirley Bradley: [30:43] Into what? Repairs for the building or?
39

40Douglas Sleep: They bought some new equipment and some repairs in the building and...
41

42Shirley Bradley: Hm.
43

44Douglas Sleep: ...did a lot of cleanup and paint work and they bought a lot of equipment.
45 I thought maybe this place is going to make it but I didn't realize how he
46 had leveraged the place, you know. Even though I worked in stock there

1 for a while, seeing how they had to order the parts, I still thought
2 something was going to happen. I just thought it was – they were making
3 money every year. I thought they were doing a good job.
4

5Shirley Bradley: And you were pretty sure you would have a job to come back to.
6

7Douglas Sleep: I thought I was going back. It took me 6 months to realize I wasn't going
8 back to work.
9

10Shirley Bradley: Oh. [31:15] So when you came back to Lansing to go back to work, what
11 kind of conditions did you find? People were emptying out their drawers
12 or?
13

14Douglas Sleep: Well, I never, I don't think I ever went back into the plant after I got laid
15 off.
16

17Shirley Bradley: Okay.
18

19Douglas Sleep: I don't believe I ever did.
20

21Shirley Bradley: Okay. You knew. You had gotten word or something...
22

23Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Yeah.
24

25Shirley Bradley: ...by then.
26

27Douglas Sleep: Well, by then, when some of the people I knew that were telling me what
28 they were shipping out while I was gone, I finally realized after about 6
29 months that I wasn't going back to work so I better start looking for...
30

31Shirley Bradley: Nobody ever called back.
32

33Douglas Sleep: No. I never was called back. No.
34

35Shirley Bradley: That was a sad day.
36

37Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
38

39Shirley Bradley: I think one of the saddest was when they tore the clubhouse down.
40

41Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
42

43Shirley Bradley: I know people several years ago when we did a, well, '91 and '92, we had
44 a REO reunion down here and we put out a big blanket ad and called
45 people, anybody that worked for REO come on down, we want to have a
46 REO day and get to know you and if you'd like to be, if you'd like to talk

1 about your experience, we'll take your name and address and phone
2 number and follow up and we did. I think almost to a person they all said
3 they tore the clubhouse down. It was like your, your childhood home...
4

5Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
6

7Shirley Bradley: ...was suddenly gone from the face of the earth.
8

9Douglas Sleep: Yeah. That was a big thing. That was, I mean, I enjoyed the clubhouse
10 but the generation before me that worked there that were 20 years older
11 than me, that was a big part of Lansing.
12

13Shirley Bradley: Oh yeah.
14

15Douglas Sleep: I heard a lot of stories about it and stuff. We used to negotiate our
16 contracts upstairs in the clubhouse.
17

18Shirley Bradley: [32:37] Oh, you did?
19

20Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
21

22Shirley Bradley: That was where that was done.
23

24Douglas Sleep: Yeah. When we got down to the final part or if we had arbitration
25 hearings, we would do that up there.
26

27Shirley Bradley: [32:44] Was the union...?
28

29Douglas Sleep: In the wheel, I think they called it the wheel room or whatever.
30

31Shirley Bradley: The, yeah, oh yeah.
32

33Douglas Sleep: Is that what they called it?
34

35Shirley Bradley: Something like that. I should know.
36

37Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
38

39Shirley Bradley: Yeah, but anyway, I know where you mean.
40

41Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
42

43Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
44

45Douglas Sleep: Oh.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: [32:59] Are there any last thoughts here, something I didn't cover that
2 you'd like to talk about?
3

4 Douglas Sleep: Well, one of the, one of the, one of the experiences I had, I was on the
5 bargaining committee, me and the president and 1 other guy got fired.
6

7 Shirley Bradley: [33:14] Really? For what?
8

9 Douglas Sleep: Well, they never, they never, uh, it was Cappaert that was trying to break
10 the union.
11

12 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
13

14 Douglas Sleep: And he figured if he got rid of Roger Foster, me, and, oh, a guy in the
15 office, I can't think of his name right now, he was chairman of the office.
16 He figured if they got rid of us 3, maybe they could break the union and
17 have things their way a little bit more. But we spent a week out, our
18 names hit the newspaper and stuff but I guess they finally decided that
19 they didn't really have any grounds so they brought us all back to work
20 after a week.
21

22 Shirley Bradley: Not I'm sorry, we misunderstood or anything.
23

24 Douglas Sleep: No.
25

26 Shirley Bradley: Just get back in here, huh?
27

28 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah. I guess that was probably one of the more unique
29 experiences. But I have a lot, a lot of good experiences there.
30

31 Shirley Bradley: With a lot of good folks.
32

33 Douglas Sleep: A lot of good people.
34

35 Shirley Bradley: And you probably still see...
36

37 Douglas Sleep: I see some of them from time to time. I golf with one of them once in a
38 while, Tom [Barkley 34:09] and I see him mostly probably 2 or 3 times a
39 week out on the golf course. I don't golf with him but I see him out there.
40

41 Shirley Bradley: You see him out there.
42

43 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And I, I can't go anyplace, I go to hockey games at Michigan State
44 every year and I always see half a dozen people there so you just really
45 can't go anyplace without running into somebody.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: It's like family again.
2
3 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
4
5 Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
6
7 Douglas Sleep: It was a close, close-knit group really. Everybody was, I just I wish I
8 could have retired from there. I really do. It's just...
9
10 Shirley Bradley: [34:37] Where did you go from there after...?
11
12 Douglas Sleep: I went to CATA. That's how Sandy Draggoo...
13
14 Shirley Bradley: Oh, that's how Sandy knows you.
15
16 Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
17
18 Shirley Bradley: Sandy Draggoo.
19
20 Douglas Sleep: I worked there for about 24 years. I retired 4 years ago.
21
22 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
23
24 Douglas Sleep: I retired at 58, so.
25
26 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
27
28 Douglas Sleep: So I've been pretty lucky I guess. And [Clair Laudenslager 34:54] who
29 had run the company at the end, he hired quite a few people from, from
30 the REO that he knew that he figured were good employees.
31
32 Shirley Bradley: [35:01] And did he hire you or?
33
34 Douglas Sleep: Uh, actually through his daughter. She helped me get in there.
35
36 Shirley Bradley: [35:07] Is that Charmin, Charmaine?
37
38 Douglas Sleep: No, it was Dawn.
39
40 Shirley Bradley: Dawn.
41
42 Douglas Sleep: And then Sandy Draggoo actually hired me.
43
44 Shirley Bradley: Oh.
45

1Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And another fellow, a president of the union turned my name in
2 down there but between Sandy and Dawn and Jim Kramer I was able to
3 get in there and it worked out pretty good for me.
4

5Shirley Bradley: Good.
6

7Douglas Sleep: I didn't like driving but it still worked out pretty good. I liked to eat, you
8 know, and stuff like that.
9

10Shirley Bradley: You got a family to support.
11

12Douglas Sleep: Yeah. I got kids in school and stuff, so.
13

14Shirley Bradley: You bet.
15

16Douglas Sleep: It worked out well for me, really.
17

18Shirley Bradley: Good, glad to hear it. Um, Sandy spoke a lot of [Clair Laudenslager
19 35:41] and his name has come up through the years with interviews I've
20 done and I almost always...
21

22Douglas Sleep: He treated the employees really well, really well.
23

24Shirley Bradley: That's the picture I got from her...
25

26Douglas Sleep: He treated, he treated...
27

28Shirley Bradley: ...that he was tough but he was fair.
29

30Douglas Sleep: Yeah, he was tough. He was extremely tough. He went a bit tougher on
31 the supervisors and stuff. He, he ruled kind of with an iron fist in that
32 respect with the supervisors. But for the employees, if somebody walked
33 through if they wanted to talk to him, he, he would talk to them. If they
34 had a complaint, he'd listen to it. But he really treated the employees, he
35 figured the employees were the backbone of the place and he did the same
36 thing with CATA when he got over there. He took over CATA, he treated
37 the employees, he had all the employees in his back pocket, so he knew
38 how to start from the ground floor.
39

40Shirley Bradley: Hm.
41

42Douglas Sleep: Yeah. He, he was well loved down at the REO and CATA both.
43

44Shirley Bradley: That's good to know.
45

46Douglas Sleep: Yeah. It's hard to find a guy in that capacity that was that well liked but...

1
2 Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
3
4 Douglas Sleep: ...he did it from the old school standpoint not the new school standpoint
5 but he was well liked.
6
7 Shirley Bradley: Yeah. I think she mentioned that he got fired several times and hired
8 back.
9
10 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. And they'd always hire him back 'cause if they got problems,
11 they'd hire him back 'cause he could get things squared away and get the
12 people...
13
14 Shirley Bradley: Nobody else could do it.
15
16 Douglas Sleep: Right. Yeah.
17
18 Shirley Bradley: Well...
19
20 Douglas Sleep: As a matter of fact, one other story.
21
22 Shirley Bradley: Oh good, good.
23
24 Douglas Sleep: Uh, in regard to him, Cappaert wanted to fire him, he locked, he locked all
25 the gates, put chains around all the gates and for some reason he was after
26 [Clair 37:11]. I don't know the particulars of that but I was serving as
27 chairman of the bargaining committee at that time on a temporary basis
28 and I contacted Roger Foster the president and we went over to [Clair's
29 37:24] office and told him we were concerned about the employees being
30 locked in.
31
32 Shirley Bradley: Oh, they were locked in.
33
34 Douglas Sleep: Inside, yeah. They wanted to do special inventory or something and I
35 don't know exactly what Mr. Cappaert's plans were but we didn't see any
36 reason for our employees to be locked in, in case something went wrong.
37 So he told us to, you open them gates any way you can. He says that's
38 your responsibility and, and I'll stand behind you on that. So Roger Foster
39 was able to make some pretty good political points in that respect 'cause
40 we went from one place to another and telling all the employees to cut
41 them chains off or take some bolt cutters. He says we're giving you
42 authority to do it, so [chuckle] we went around and cut all the chains off
43 all the doors. We never heard anything from Cappaert or anybody else but
44 we had...
45
46 Shirley Bradley: Probably he was afraid to say anything.

1
2Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
3
4Shirley Bradley: He probably didn't think anybody would do that.
5
6Douglas Sleep: Yeah, yeah.
7
8Shirley Bradley: It probably never occurred to him.
9
10Douglas Sleep: We took on the challenge. I guess maybe that's why he tried to fire us
11 later, I don't know.
12
13Shirley Bradley: It could have been.
14
15Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
16
17Shirley Bradley: It could have been.
18
19Douglas Sleep: But that was an interesting story. That was fun. [chuckle] Yeah. And I
20 was just a kid. It was a little spooky for me. I was probably only about 25
21 at the time when it happened, 27 I guess.
22
23Shirley Bradley: Yeah. [chuckle] Yeah. I've heard from some of the gals that worked in
24 the offices said, one in particular said she, like you, had thought things
25 were going to get better and when she went to work that day there was a
26 chain on the door, a padlock on the door.
27
28Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
29
30Shirley Bradley: She said I just sat down and cried. And I've heard of other people who
31 were too old to get a job somewhere else and they had their money in their
32 pension fund thinking they could retire and they'd have that pension and
33 didn't, it was gone.
34
35Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
36
37Shirley Bradley: And I've heard of suicides.
38
39Douglas Sleep: The pension, yeah, there were some suicides. There was some – the
40 pensions were guaranteed but everybody lost a considerable amount. We
41 were the first company under the Act of Congress to have our pensions
42 guaranteed.
43
44Shirley Bradley: Oh really?
45

1Douglas Sleep: Yeah. But, uh, in my case it was supposed to be like \$62 a month when I
2 turned 65.
3

4Shirley Bradley: [39:24] \$62 a month?
5

6Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Which I was lucky I was able to get mine out and put in a, in an
7 IRA and I've made considerably more money than that already.
8

9Shirley Bradley: But you were able to get yours out before...
10

11Douglas Sleep: Some were, yeah. It took me a long time. I had to call Washington
12 several times. I, I bugged them for 9 months. I got to know everybody
13 down there. Finally, I just got a hold of the right gal and she took care of
14 it for me.
15

16Shirley Bradley: Really?
17

18Douglas Sleep: Yeah. I don't know how it worked. I don't know why but, but those that
19 couldn't get theirs out, they, like my father-in-law I think his, he had 33
20 years in there. I think he was living on \$300 a month. It just was
21 devastating for them.
22

23Shirley Bradley: Oh, absolutely. And you don't get another job at that age.
24

25Douglas Sleep: Right, right. He had to, he went to take on a janitor job for 3 or 4 years at
26 Waverly Schools and...
27

28Shirley Bradley: Oh. Oh, Waverly.
29

30Douglas Sleep: Yeah. That got him by for a while but it was, it was pretty tough. I, I've
31 seen some guys that never recovered from it. I've seen others that made a
32 fortune, so it worked both ways.
33

34Shirley Bradley: Yeah.
35

36Douglas Sleep: More got hurt than got helped, let's put it that way.
37

38Shirley Bradley: That's, yeah, that was really tragic as I look back on it.
39

40Douglas Sleep: Yeah.
41

42Shirley Bradley: Well, Lisa Fine has written a book and it just came off the press and it's
43 about REO.
44

45Douglas Sleep: Uh-huh.
46

1 Shirley Bradley: And thank you very much.
2
3 Douglas Sleep: Yeah. Okay.
4
5 Shirley Bradley: Thank you very much for the interview. And here it is, June 22, 2004, and
6 I've been talking to Doug Sleep.
7
8
9/mlc