



Transcript for

**AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW WITH HOLDEN N. "BOB" KOTO, 17 JUNE 1985**

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## **NOTE TO READERS**

This PDF-format version of the Holden N. “Bob” Koto interview transcript was created from digital images taken of the original bound hardcopy transcript held in collections at The Henry Ford.

The page images were cropped and resized to fit standard letter-size paper, and were converted to grayscale to improve readability and optical character recognition performance.

The Automotive Design Oral History Project, Accession 91.1.1673, consists of over 120 interviews with designers and engineers conducted by David Crippen of The Henry Ford during the 1980s. For more information, please contact staff at the Benson Ford Research Center ([research.center@thehenryford.org](mailto:research.center@thehenryford.org)).

Staff of the Benson Ford Research Center  
November 2020

AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

KOTO, HOLDEN N. "Bob"

1985

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum &  
Greenfield Village

The Reminiscences of

HOLDEN ("Bob") N. KOTO

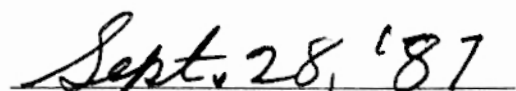
This oral reminiscence is the result of a series of interviews with Holden ("Bob") N. Koto by David R. Crippen during June, 1985, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. These interviews were held under the auspices of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, Archives & Library Collection, The Edison Institute.

The questioning was primarily in the form of topics suggested to Mr. Koto concerning his career. No editorial insertions have been made, except those made by Mr. Koto himself.

The language of the narrative is entirely that of the interviewee. He has reviewed and corrected the manuscript and by his signature below indicated that it is a correct copy of his reminiscences.

This transcript and the recorded tape are deposited in the Archives at The Edison Institute with the understanding that they may be used by qualified researchers for scholarly purposes. The undersigned does hereby release to The Edison Intitute all literary rights to this interview.

  
Holden N. Koto

  
Date

This is Dave Crippen, and this is June 17 [1985]. We are conducting one of our design history interviews for the Design History Center of The Edison Institute in Ann Arbor [Michigan], and today we are talking with Holden N. ("Bob") Koto who is a well-known automotive designer who is in Ann Arbor to visit his son and daughter-in-law. We will ask Mr. Koto to give us his career narrative at his own pace, in his own way.

A I was born in Beloit, Wisconsin, in 1910--February 27th. I came from a fairly well-to-do family. My dad was always interested in cars, and he had always had a big car and one business car, and, I suppose, that got me interested in cars.

Q What kind of cars did he like?

A He had big sedans for the family sedan and then the coupe for himself. We had a Cole Aero 8 [which] was one of his favorites. He had one of those and two Peerless' and a Pierce-Arrow, and so I was always interested in automobiles. My school books had little sketches of cars in them, and [during my] last days of high school, I had made sketches and a model. I had a little model made out of tin and plaster and different things, and it wasn't to scale, and my drawings weren't to scale either. I thought that was up to the engineers or something--somebody else. I was just interested in the ideas, and I took my samples--drawings and the model, which were very crude--to Detroit. We had a friend who I stayed with who knew somebody at Briggs Manufacturing Company, and he called this person up. I forget his name now, but it was through him I met Ralph Roberts, and Roberts saw my sketches and the model. He was rather impressed with the model, with one of the ideas--

especially in the back end, and he wanted to try this out on a quarter-size model, but he said he couldn't hire me then. He said, "Our staff is too big" as it was, but he'd give me a chance for a month. I was going to work out this idea in a scale [model], and I'd get some experience. I had a desk, and I did a little sketching which was very poor compared with the rest of them. Phil Wright, who was a well-known designer, sat right behind me, and he helped me out a lot. And then there was a man in the modeling department, Joe Thompson, who took an interest in me, and he helped [me] out in the modeling end of it.

Q I hate to interrupt you, but before you got your tenure there, what was Briggs at this time? How come they had designers?

A Well, you see, Briggs built bodies for Chrysler and Ford, and they also made stampings for many other cars, so they had sort of a goodwill department, I guess you might call it, where they had a chief designer, Ralph Roberts, and another chief designer sharing the same office. The studios were opposite each other.

Q Do you remember his name?

A John Tjaarda.

Q Tell us about him.

A But, I worked for Ralph Roberts, and Tjaarda's was [the] more experimental work. He did rear engine jobs, and he had the Briggs Beauty Ware. See, they did some plumbing work too.

Q He designed that as well?

A He designed that, and they had quite an elaborate setup where they made samples of bathrooms and stuff like that. I wasn't in on any of that. I just worked for Roberts.

Q That had really been one of their main lines, had it not?

A Yes, it was one of their main lines. Well, I don't know if it was more important than the bodies. I don't think it was.

Q But, apparently, someone developed that along with the body building.

A Yes, I also designed travel trailers which were similar to the Airstream. I still have the blueprints. So, the work was very diversified. We had many different companies to work for, not only the Ford and Chrysler. See, Ford and Chrysler didn't have much of a design department. They may have had just a few people, but they relied more upon Briggs and also Murray body. That's another company that did bodies for [Detroit automobile companies]

Q What year was this?

A This was in 1933. I started in Briggs in August, 1933, and then I left in October, 1938.

Q So, you had five good years?

A Yeah. Oh, but they were fun years.

Q So, you're coming along, and you're a fledgling designer, and working for Briggs. What happened then?

A Well, I had sort of a free hand. I worked out my programs. I thought that the cars should have more interchangeability between the car lines. I worked on interchangeability between the different models, but a different way than they did in those days. They usually had a longer hood for the bigger car, and I thought they should move the rear wheel back, and make more room and more trunk room or whatever, and do it that way which was a lot more sensible, I thought, and more aerodynamic.

I still think so. So, I made out my own programs, and they were sent over--quarter-size models--over to Ford, but they didn't get very far.

Q Forgive me, could you tell us, in some detail, what companies were using the Briggs' design?

A Well, yes. They had Briggs Body--in England, and so we did design [work] for them, and I did a lot of work for English cars. Mostly in models that were sent over there--Austin and Daimler.

Q Dagenham is where Ford of England was. Did you work on the so-called Y-Job? Was that one of yours?

A No, I don't think so.

Q What other companies?

A My boss, Ralph Roberts, went over there, and he worked over there for awhile. I wanted to go, but he had other men over there. While he was over there, I fell under John Tjaarda. That wasn't quite as nice. Although he was all right, too. Oh, the other cars--one of them I worked on but not a model. I made a line drawing for, I think, it was 12th scale. We usually did 12th scale in the line drawings, and that was sent over to Standard, and they came out with that car.

Q Standard?

A The Standard. Briggs built bodies for this--it was called the Standard.

Q An English car? [1903-1963]

A English car, and there are pictures of it. I have it in one of my magazines. I can recall Roberts came back to visit. He'd been in England working on the Standard, and he brought some of the executives back and introduced me to the executives. I was real proud when he said,



"This young chap did your line drawings that started this design." It was kind of a tricky belt-moulding design. The front fenders ran into the door. They didn't do that. That was a nice feature. This was in 1935. And, some of the other things at Briggs--of course, were mainly for Ford and Chrysler, but there was a job for Studebaker. I didn't know it at the time, but the program had been practically cancelled, but I was working on it anyway, and it was a Rockne, and I did my first quarter-scale model in clay.

Q Named after, of course, for the famous Notre Dame football coach, Knute Rockne.

A Yes. And, Studebaker had been building a Rockne for some time, but, I guess, it wasn't a great success, so production was discontinued. But, I was to make this model in case they changed their mind. Sometimes, you know, they've thought they were going to discontinue, and then they started up something else, and that's what they were hoping for.

Q Rockne--he had been killed about this time, hadn't he?

A Yes. I don't know just when that was. Yes, he was killed.

Q So, that [eventually] killed the car?\*

A That might have had something to do it, but, anyway, I made my first little model. It was a quarter-size model that had the headlights built into the side of the hood which was a continuation of the belt moulding. Later, Hupmobile did a similar thing. But this is quite unique, and it wasn't like my sample model. It was something entirely different. Phil Wright, who was a great designer and illustrator, did most of the illustrating for Briggs, and he made the rendering of the coupe

\*Editor's Note: Rockne died in an airplane crash early in 1931. The Rockne Six was announced in February, 1932. Due to poor sales, it was phased out in 1933.

model--how the coupe would look, and that was [shown] at the Detroit Institute [of Arts] at the exhibit in 1985. Then, of course, we did--I think what I was probably most proud of was a Zephyr front end. I know I don't get credit for it, but I know that I made a quarter model of just the front end for the Zephyr in competition with [other] sketch ideas. My model was picked. The Zephyr was started from John Tjaarda's Dream Car that he made at Briggs. It was a full-size, wooden model. They didn't do full-size clays then. They did small, clay models, but this was a full-size, wood model with the doors opening--seats and everything.

Q That was exhibited in the [Ford exhibit at the] 1934 Chicago World's Fair?

A Yes. That was one of the important things. Then a steel model was made of that. It had the engine in the rear, a Ford engine. I think it was about a 112-inch wheelbase. It wasn't a long car, but Ford management liked the design--liked the idea--but they didn't want the rear engine, so the front was moved ahead 10 inches, and then it was up to the design department to make a new front end for it, and that's where I came in.

Q Now, how did this come about? Do you remember talking with anyone about the assignment?

A Well, the assignment was through [Ralph] Roberts.

Q He was chief designer?

A He was the chief designer, but later when he went to England, [and] then it fell under John Tjaarda, and John and Ralph were not the greatest of pals. Nothing against either one of them, but it's just one of those

things. So when Roberts went away, Tjaarda had a chance to redesign this front end that I did, that was already approved. The fenders ran into the door, and it had this prominent nose and had the lights into the fender and all this, and it was a beautiful job, I thought, and it was well liked. But, Tjaarda--well, when the engineers--Briggs engineers--couldn't hinge the door because, I guess, they didn't want to spend the money for the goose neck hinges and things like that. It should have been done, but it wasn't, and they couldn't make the grille the way I had it. I think I had louvers around. So, Tjaarda started all over. They had different designs, and it was a year's delay--a year's delay. That thing should have come out in '35 or '36--'36 I guess it was. But then it went over to Ford--then later--I don't know just how the development came about, but [Bob] Gregorie, [who] was the chief designer at Ford, redesigned it, but he used some of the same original ideas, except the fender didn't go through the door, and he had a catwalk that was quite contrived. But it was somewhat the same as the original with the lights and prominent nose which came from me.

Q In effect, he'd salvaged part of your design?

A Yeah. That's the way I look at it.

Q But, you didn't have a catwalk. You had it integrated into the fenders.

A I had the catwalk proportioned to the belt line.

Q Well, before you leave that. This is interesting. Mr. Roberts had left for England, and that left Tjaarda in charge at Briggs--at Briggs design--so he--did he ever say to you why he didn't want your design? Have you had any conversations with him about it?

A No, no, no.

Q He just went and did it arbitrarily?

A Yes. Yeah, mostly in his own department. He had Morgan Karstead, and Jack Aldrich and others who came from G.M. Roberts had his own designers. He had Phil Wright, who was the greatest, and Walt Wengren, Clarence Wexelberg, Jack Wilson and myself, and later Alex Tremulis.

Q Tjaarda had his own people?

A Yes. Used his own designers.

Q Working on his own accounts. Presumably, that was the Lincoln account?

A No. You mean the [1934] Dream Car?

Q Right.

A Experimental ones. He also did--he did a lot of work there. Later the "Dream Car" became the 1937 Lincoln-Zephyr. He did other rear-engine cars, too--smaller ones.

Q He had the so-called Sterkenburg that he had done?\*

A That came from him.

Q Now, Mr. Gregorie was at Ford at this point. He did not have--too much input into this car until later.

A No. Until later. Until after--you see, it started from Tjaarda, and then--and....

Q Forgive me. I interrupted [you] there. So, continue your narrative, if you will, to the point where you had come up with the design, and Mr. Tjaarda had modified it, and then what happened? Then it went to Ford?

\*Editor's Note: Tjaarda, of Dutch origin, had designed several rear-engined, aerodynamic vehicles which he named after his family estate in Friesland.

A Then it went to Ford, and Gregorie redid it. In fact, in the catalog from the Detroit Art Institute [auto exhibit], it tells about Gregorie doing the car. It doesn't mention me. I started it--started that front end. I think, that's my [firm] recollection.

Q So, let's establish for all time that Bob Koto--Bob Koto's design of the first Lincoln-Zephyr front end, which had been largely set aside by John Tjaarda, was partially reinstated in Gregorie's [Ford] redo of the new design.

A That's right. I'd say that's about what [happened]--yes, that's fine. But, probably the thing that I was most proud of, [at Briggs] was two full-size wooden models made from my quarter-size models. One was for an all-new Airflow. The other was for a Plymouth.

Q Can you tell us about that.

A Yeah, I will. That was a Briggs design.

Q How did that start? Why did they redesign it? What had happened to the old one?

A Well, the old one--most stylists didn't really care [about]. They liked the idea. I loved the idea of moving the seats ahead, and the proportions were great, but the fenders and front end left a lot to be desired from a styling standpoint. From an engineering standpoint, I thought it was great.

Q This is the Airflow?

A The Airflow. The original Airflow--DeSoto and Chrysler.

Q Which was brought out, I think, in '33?\*

A Yeah. When I came there in '33, they were building in the back shop, metal prototypes. I think it was about 50 of them that they were

\*Editor's Note: The Airflow as introduced as a 1934 model. Due to customer apathy, it was phased out in 1937.

going to send around to the dealers and the auto shows and things like that.

Q Who would get primary credit for that design?

A That came from Chrysler. That wasn't a Briggs design in any way, shape or form. It was done mostly [by] engineers, I think.

Q At Chrysler, right?

A At Chrysler. So, at Briggs we did a new Airflow that I just talked about.

Q Because the original had failed.

A Well, it hadn't really failed, I would say. It failed from a design standpoint--a styling standpoint, I think.

Q And from a sales standpoint?

A Yeah, I guess, it wasn't too successful. So, I made a quarter-size model for that and also for the Plymouth of the same year for 1936 or 1937. And, Briggs made a full-size, wooden model with the doors open, seating in it, everything, and it was a beautiful thing. I remember, I never saw photographs of it. I don't know anything about the car. I certainly wish I could see one because, maybe, I wouldn't think it was so great, but at the time I did. I do remember it had front fenders running into the doors. All my designs did.

Q That was one of your trademarks at this point.

A Well, yeah. I'm not sure that I started it, but I certainly used it in various forms. At about this time Chrysler started their own styling department with Ray Dietrich as the Head.

Briggs was affiliated with LeBaron.\* As I understand it, LeBaron

\*Editor's Note: Roberts essentially brought LeBaron to Briggs in 1928. Dietrich, an original LeBaron partner, was hired by Chrysler in 1936. Roberts hired Tjaarda at Briggs in 1932 from Locke.

was started in the mid-'Twenties and composed of Ralph Roberts, Ray Dietrich, Tom Hibbard and Darrin. They didn't build bodies, but were design consultants for the very wealthy, and then their designs were submitted to a body company such as Brunn, Locke, Willoughby and others. Later Roberts went to Briggs, and by that time LeBaron became affiliated with Briggs and also built the bodies. Dietrich later went with Chrysler. Hibbard and Darrin did custom bodies for European luxury cars. I did one front end for LeBaron--this is under Tjaarda when Roberts was in England. It was a big convertible--Model K, I guess, it was called. It was a big convertible, and it had a new front end. Of course, it couldn't have the fenders running into the door. [This car was featured in one of the early SIA issues.].

Q Which line was it?

A It was the big K job, I think, they call it. The big Lincoln--not the Zephyr. It was the old big Lincoln.

Q So, Briggs had the regular Lincoln contract too for Ford?

A Yeah.

Q Apparently, Mr. Edsel Ford liked Tjaarda and some of his designs.

A Yeah, I think so. Especially that original Zephyr.

Q There's some thought, over the years that the original design that Tjaarda [did] of that 1934 Dream Car for Lincoln and Ford is that its shape influenced Dr. Ferdinand Porsche when he came to see it at Briggs and that he went to Germany and designed the Volkswagen?\*

A That may have been.

Q There is a definite similarity.

\*Editor's Note: Though denied by Porsche/Volkswagen historians, this premise persists. Tjaarda has maintained that he showed Porsche and Rasmussen of Auto Union the complete plans in 1934 while at Briggs.

A Yeah. It could easily be. It was a very interesting car, except that I didn't like the short front fenders and stuff. I like to see it run into the door and stuff like that, but it was a dream car.

[Tjaarda's 1932-34 prototype]

Q So, you're established at Briggs, and you're doing well in spite of the fact that you have to work for Mr. Tjaarda.

A Yes, I would say so. Roberts was only to keep me a month just to give me a start--experience--to know how it was done and then later I could, maybe, go someplace else. But, I stayed there about five years.

Q Did you enjoy it?

A Oh, it was great. Lots of times I was so interested in my work. I'd go back. I don't how it was done, but it was on the fourth floor, and I'd come back at night, and I'd be the only one there. I'd work at night. Security must have just let me in, but I remember we lived just a short distance from work, and I'd walk across the field, and I'd get upstairs at night and flash the light. My wife would be watching to see. We were newlyweds. I got married just after I got double my salary.

Q Where was Briggs located at that time?

A That was on Mack Avenue near Connors.

Q And you lived close by?

A Yeah, on Springle.

Q You enjoyed your work, obviously.

A Oh, that was a lot of fun. And then--but Tjaarda actually let me go. Yes, I do mean Tjaarda, not Roberts. Because Roberts was in England at the time, and it was sort of a depression. They had to cut down.



This was in October, '38.

Q There there was a recession in '38.

A So, but then Tjaarda called me back about a month or a couple weeks later. He wanted me back again.

Q Did you go?

A No. I wouldn't go back after he laid me off.

Q Mr. Tjaarda was something of a--several people have mentioned that he was a hard person to work for.

A Yeah. He wasn't always fair, I think. He let another person go one time. He let one fellow go, I knew well--Howard Olilla, who was a modeler, and then later tried to get him back, and he did come back, but they disagreed on salary. He said he'd hire him back again for so much, and he wouldn't honor it. Well, that may be true, and it may not. I don't know for sure, but that's the story I get from Olilla.

Q I think it points up the fact that Mr. Tjaarda was a difficult person.

A In that respect, Dave, I think [he was].

Q What did you think of him as a designer?

A Well, from that [1934] Dream Car, yes, and from some things, no.

Q Well, in that regard, the genesis of the Zephyr was...?

A Yeah, the body was great. I liked that body.

Q That front end was quite distinctive, wasn't it?

A Yeah. It was rounded. It was better than the Airflow.

Q Speaking of the Airflow, in spite of its aerodynamic characteristics they sort of flubbed that front end?

A Yeah. It wasn't....

Q And, [the body] was awfully heavy, too.

A Yeah, it wasn't graceful at all.

Q Where did you go after that?

A Well, then I went to Hudson [Motor Car Company]. Started there the first of the year in 1939.

Q Where were they located?

A That was on Connors too. It was near Jefferson--Jefferson and Connors. And, they had an office--a design department on the second floor--the studio, and then Frank Spring had his office.... He was the chief designer. He came from California.

I started in 1939. There it wasn't quite so interesting because they didn't have [enough] money to come out with a new car. It was mostly facelifts, and they used those same doors all the time I was there, and they'd been used several years before that. I think it was about eleven years they kept the same basic doors.

Q What were the lines in Hudson in those years? What were some of the name of the cars?

A As far as I know, there was just the Hudson. There used to be Essex, the Terraplane, etc. Well, as I say, they didn't change much. It was that one--the doors are continued on through eleven years, and you'd put a new front end and a new back end, and then when the running boards were concealed, all they did, because it was an economical way to do it, was put an extension on the bottom of the door and cover up the running board with a moulding at the top of it to cover up the joint line. So, they rehashed the jobs that way. But, I did the front end. They called them the banana skins. That was my design with the hood coming down

through, and then these banana skins appeared to be protruding through. And, later on made variations of them--those variations, later on, were pretty good. The front end wasn't so bad.

Q That design stuck?

A Yeah. It stayed on for quite awhile, but then we did do some experimental work. I made a model of a car that eventually became a metal prototype. Nothing like Hudson at all. Many manufacturers make experimental cars even though they can't afford to come out with a new car right then, but they might later--so this was just from my eighth scale model. Complete running car. Well, it was a fastback. It was quite streamlined. It had front fenders running through the door as I always did, and it was very modern, advanced looking for that time. It was really a nice looking car, I thought. [This prototype was only driven at night for secrecy. One night they brought it to my house and took me for a ride in it. It was quite a thrill.]

Q What sort of comment did you get from the design...?

A Well, it was well liked, I think, but they couldn't afford to come out with it.

Q Do you have any pictures of that? Did you save any pictures of that?

A No. I have one picture of the eighth scale model that I was working at. One of the executives took a picture of me modeling this car, but I've not seen any picture of the prototype.

Q You still have that?

A Yes.

Q Can you describe them?

A Yes. I worked sometimes on my own at home, and I worked with a fellow by the name of Mac Tornquist who was a very good artist, and we were going to make a program for Hudson and show it to the top management, which we did. We made this model, and I have a lot of photographs of that which is quite nice. It wasn't a fastback. It had a slightly broken back, and, of course, it had the fenders running through the door. It had quite a sloping windshield, and, of course, wrap around, and it was all new, nice looking car, and we thought it would be something that they'd [like]--but, of course, they couldn't come out with a new car anyway, and the war came along.

Q Excuse me, Mr. Koto, can I ask you a question at this point? Do you remember a fellow employee at Hudson in '39 and '40 named Betty Thatcher?

A Yeah.

Q Tell us a bit about Betty Thatcher. Do you remember her? She must have been one of the earliest female designers, don't you think?

A Yeah.

Q She apparently came out of the Cleveland Institute of Design, and was hired by [Frank Spring].

A Yeah, I think, she probably worked on interiors and stuff like that. I don't think she--didn't she marry Joe Oros?

Q She married Joe Oros, right. She must have been one of earliest full-time, female employees in the design department.

A Yeah. [Raymond] Loewy had one or two.

Q Yeah, that's right. We'll talk about them later. But, do you think she largely worked on interiors?

A Yeah.

Q Fabrics and colors and so forth?

A Yeah, I think so.

Q So, there you are at Hudson. There's not much money even though you're doing some trim and a little material....

A And, during the [World] War [II] all the styling department disappeared, of course, except for one hour a day for me. I worked on the B-26 Bomber. The layout men, more or less, only had to redraw the plans furnished them, and so I could fill in just as well as they could.

Q That was one of the wartime efforts?

A Yes. So, I was a layout man--wasn't a detailer--job as a layout man doing war word, but one hour from four until five [o'clock] I would work on styling, and there I would work on scale models, and it started it out--we called it number A, and then it was shown to Spring and some of the executives. They'd make suggestions, and then so I was to use those suggestions, and that number B, and that was shown. Then, they'd make further suggestions, and I was more or less just a modeler doing what they told me to do. And, finally, we came to about--I don't know--S, T, W, whatever--many after the first one, but they kept the first one, and Frank Spring says, "I don't think this W," or whatever it was, "is as good as A."

Q So you could go back to that?

A But, then I got my job at Loewy's.

Q Well, now, did you work at Hudson all during the War?

A Not all during the War, because the War was still on when I went with Loewy.

Q How did that come about? Presumably Studebaker was thinking of the post-war years, and they were starting to set up a design department. How did your contact come about?

A Well, I also--getting back to Hudson, again, I also worked with a fellow by the name of Ted Pietsch. But, anyway, he made some beautiful renderings of a model--variations of a model. In fact, we had two models. They were small ones. They were eighth scale, and they were our samples. See, this is during the war, and we wanted to get a job as a consultant for Nash or somebody. We took these samples to Nash.

Q Is this during the War?

A This is during the War, so we were hoping to get the job as consultants along with our War work. We had to do our War work, but we did samples at night. We'd do whatever we could, so we almost got a job with Nash. Wahlberg is the name I was [thinking of]--he was the vice president of engineering at the time at Nash. In fact, he was the one that recommended that I go to Cornell many years ago, which I did. I went to Cornell University for 3½ years and took engineering and architecture, and neither one of them was the right thing for me. In the 'Twenties, there were no industrial design schools. See, I had talked to Eric Wahlberg a long time ago, but this was ten years later, whatever, [when] I went back to him with these samples, and later he told me that he almost hired Koto and Pietsch, but instead he hired George Walker.

Q For Nash?

A Walker worked for Nash for awhile. That's where Joe Oros and Elwood Engel worked, I think. They worked there. They started there. Maybe they didn't work in Kenosha [Wisconsin], but they had the

contract.

Q That was a near miss?

A Yeah, it was a near miss.

Q Did Koto and Pietsch stay together?

A Yes, we had our own stationery. Ted did make a few contacts, but it was his own--I don't know just what it was.

Q Automotive design team?

A Yeah, but as far as the automobile part, we didn't get any place with it. Except that it helped us in a way. It helped me get my job with Loewy because I was on a vacation or something, but Ted was interviewed by Loewy's spokesman, Barnhardt, and he had the photographs, I think. I don't think he had the actual models, but photographs, of the models and his own illustrations, and so that was the start of my going to Loewy. Because of Pietsch's interview, I was to call Loewy's office.

Q In New York?

A In New York, which I did on a pay phone in Detroit, and I was hired over the phone.

Q By whom? By Mr. Barnhardt?

A By Barnhardt.

Q On the basis of the sketches and the photographs?

A On the basis of the sketches and the photographs of the model.

Q And, I take it that Koto and Pietsch had drawn--gotten together a series of models and photographs of them. Sort of a portfolio.

A Yeah, a portfolio.

Q Was Pietsch the modeler in your firm?

A No, no. I did the models.

Q You were the modeler?

A Did the models and the design. Ted Pietsch was an artist and did the illustrations.

Q And Pietsch was--what was his discipline?

A He worked for Hudson, and then later he worked for Loewy's unit for awhile and then American Motors.

Q Now, you'd picked up the modeling expertise along the way, had you not?

A Yeah. Oh, incidentally, there was one thing about the modeling that I might mention about. I wasn't a modeler in the sense that most modelers are. I was just interested in my own designing and getting it out as quickly as I could, usually. Sometimes I took short cuts. I might have used a bigger tool or a bigger scraper or something than the regular modelers used, and my boss, Ralph Roberts, one time said that, "I took the mystery out of modeling." He meant those design models. Although, not to belittle any modelers, they were great, I'm sure.

Q But, you have picked this up on your own?

A Yeah. I picked up a lot of ideas, and I learned a lot, too. At the time at Briggs, they never made full-size clay models, but we made a lot of quarter size and eighth scale and even smaller scale, but we didn't have ovens to heat the clay. In the wintertime, we'd heat them over the radiators, and in the summertime we'd have warm water, and we'd put the clay in warm water and wring it out. Anyway, getting back to Loewy. We're starting with [my] Loewy [phase] now.

Q Yes. So, Mr. Barnhardt hired you over the phone. Did he say what you were going to do?



A Well, yeah. That was one of the--see, Studebaker had just started their big department at that time. Loewy had a contract to design--to hire--oh, it must have about five or six of them. John Reinhart was one--Jack Aldrich another.

Q Can you name some of the others?

A Well, of course, [Virgil] Exner had been there. Exner and [Bob] Bourke had been there for some time.

Q They had a design department at Studebaker?

A Yeah. But, then Loewy--well, actually Loewy had the contract. They were working for Loewy, too, at that time, but not in a big capacity. It was just the two--there was one other fellow--Dick Calleal was with them too. Anyway....

Q The contract.

A Oh, yeah. Loewy was able to get a big [design] contract and hire quite a few men and have a big studio and all that.

Q This was anticipating the post-war need for an all-new car?

A Yeah.

Q About 1944?

A No. Started in--it was in August, '43.

Q Oh, that early?

A And I stayed until August, '55. Anyway, Loewy had this big contract, and Gordon Buehrig was hired as the boss. We didn't know that at the time because Exner was there, and we sort of thought he was the boss, but later a memo came around that Gordon was the boss, and Exner his assistant. Anyway, we were all to make models. Again, that was my long suit. I liked that part of it, and we made models, but no full-size

ones. Although before we started, Loewy and Exner [and Bourke] had a full-size clay model. It was the green clay--soft clay, [which] didn't require ovens.

Q But, in these years you had traveled--you had no way to soften clay.

A We did at Loewy's. Later on they got an oven.

Q Did they? The green clay was softer?

A Yeah, that was easier to model. And, anyway, we made quarter-size models, and they were cast, but we didn't have our own shop. They hired people from Chicago to come in on the train. In every day, and out every day.

Q In South Bend?

A In South Bend. See, it was the commuting train.

Q Were they fabricators, or...?

A Yes, they were--they'd make plaster casts of our quarter-size models. Although, that isn't so difficult. Actually, later on we did it ourselves. John Bird was one of the modelers. Later he became executive at General Motors in charge of all modeling.

Q That's interesting. He was one of your modelers?

A Yeah. Modeler and fabrication. Casting moulds.

Q So, what are you doing at this point?

A Well, I'm making models. The fabrication of the models, especially the full-size, is quite interesting and done different at different companies, at least, during my career. At Briggs, no full-size clay models were made--only wood ones, and very elaborate with doors to open, seats, instrument panel, etc. They were beautifully done. They had a very

talented layout man with a good eye for design. He would usually make his layout from a quarter-size clay model. But in some cases, his layout was made directly from a rendering as was the case with the '35 Ford. This was Phil Wright's design. This layout man was Fred Walther. He helped me a lot in body layout work. Sometimes our quarter-size clay models were quite elaborate also. The model program I did for Ford--the Ford-Zephyr--was two painted clay models with all the bright work fabricated in brass and chrome plated.

At Loewy's we did mostly quarter-size clay models and then cast them in plaster. We also did many full-size clay models, usually not painted (because we kept changing them so much). In a few cases we cast them in plaster. The <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> right work (ornaments, bumpers, etc.) were sometimes made in wood and then metal sprayed. This required a lot of filing and sanding to get a bright finish. Later, metal foil was used.

At Hudson, plaster models were made almost exclusively for showing.

At Ford, all models shown were full size. The first showing would usually be clay, but with a dinoc finish. This was a thin, pliable, painted skin that was applied with water and a sponge. Models that were shown for final approval were see-through, fiberglass.

You've probably heard this story about Loewy firing Exner.

Q Tell us about that. It's kind of a shadowy episode.

A Yeah. Well, we were all working on this--for this '47, all-new Studebaker.

Q Which is about 1945 or '46?

A Yeah. Oh, it was before that. It would be '43/'44. See, before a

car comes out, there is usually three years work. And, so, we were all making these models, and here, in the meantime, Exner and Roy Cole, who was the vice president in charge of engineering, decided to make their own model. He [Cole] never quite approved of all of this Loewy bit, and he thought he and Exner and a few modelers could do a job, which they probably could. Well, anyway, he and Exner did a model--quarter-size model in Exner's basement unbeknownst to Loewy or anybody. They had one modeler. He was also with Exner before Loewy got his big contract, and he did the modeling for Exner for this car which was later a full-size, wooden model. It was made in Philadelphia at the Budd plant. It was then brought to the showroom at Studebaker and shown to the top executives, and, of course, they went for a full-size model--it's all there and all ready to go, Loewy just had the quarter-size models.

Just prior to Virgil Exner's and Roy Cole's showing of their full-size, wood model to management, our quarter-size models (about six of them) were shown to Studebaker management. Gordon Buehrig was in charge then. He told me afterwards that my model was preferred along with his sports car model. He thought (and I agree) that a little sports car, along with the "bread and butter" car, would be a good program. But, of course, after Cole's and Exner's model was shown, all this was dropped. Another near miss for me. Also our models were on a different package, there were a little larger.

Q Were the people at Studebaker changing their mind about the Loewy contract?

A Well, not necessarily, but, see, Roy Cole did this on his own unbeknownst to Loewy. He didn't go through Loewy at all. He just went

to Exner, and Exner was sort of on the spot. He--I suppose, if he felt real loyal to Loewy, he would have said, "Well, no, I can't do this. I'm working for Loewy," but I can understand his point too. So, he worked for Cole on this car that became the '47 Studebaker.

Q So, it's your feeling that Exner had to go along with this. That he really wasn't keen...?

A I don't say he had to, but he did, anyway, and, of course, Loewy was very disturbed about that.

Q Had he found out about it before it came?

A No, not before it came from Philadelphia to the showroom, no. And, so he fired Exner right there. But later, Exner told me that Loewy wanted him back. He felt that he probably [had] stepped out of bounds a little too much.

Q Exner never went back, did he?

A No, no. Cole hired him then. He was on the Studebaker payroll from then on--not on the Loewy payroll. See, we were all--all of us were on the Loewy payroll.

Q Separate contract.

A Yeah. In fact, Loewy wanted to make it very clear that we worked for Loewy--not for Studebaker. And, in fact, when we were hired, he took us to New York to show us around, and we had a grand time just--making an impression that we were working for Loewy--not Studebaker.

Q Obviously, you moved your family to....

A South Bend, yes.

Q Stayed there for a number of years?

A Yeah, for twelve years.

Q Well, so the design that Exner did, did become the '47...?

A Yes, the The '47 Studebaker.

Q How did that come about? Did Mr. Loewy realize that he had the good model here? I mean, Exner's?

A You see, this car that Exner did was shown to the top executives [of Studebaker], and they bought it right there and then.

Q They bought it?

A Yes, but not in its entirety. Loewy's group and Exner were now in competition with one another to make improvements on the front end and also to make the front end designs for the Commander. Loewy's group won out in both events. Also, about this time, I made a quarter-size clay model of the "Starlight Coupe," which was primarily a modeling job taken from an Exner rendering.

Q Was Bob Bourke involved in it too?

A Yeah, Bob Bourke was in good graces with Loewy, and Gordon Buehrig wasn't. See, that's how Bob Bourke became the manager and chief designer.

Q What had happened to Gordon and Loewy?

A Well, they had a--I don't--let's see if I can say this.

Q They had a difference of opinion on several matters?

A Yes, yes, and Buehrig....

Q Mr. Buehrig was very strong minded?

A Yes, quite so. Gordon's done some great things as you know--the Cord and some of his Duesenbergs.

Q But, those are behind him at this point.

A Yes.

Q They always seemed to echo those years with Duesenberg and Cord, didn't they?

A Somehow--so he got some wealthy men interested in a special custom car that he did. It was a beautiful model. It wasn't beautiful as far as styling is concerned, but the workmanship and all, and they built a complete running car.

Q What was it called?

A I forget the name. It was photographed a lot. It had cycle fenders. His fenders turned with the wheel. It was sort an airplane-type fuselage, and so it wasn't--it wasn't anything Loewy would be interested in, but these wealthy men did invest a lot of money, and they built this car.\* But, anyway, he was busy doing that, and he was on his way out. So, Bourke became the manager of the Loewy unit.

Q And you were the chief designer?

A Not at that time, no. It was quite awhile afterwards. We were in a new location. The first location was at one of the Studebaker buildings that was [built] for a gymnasium--an athletic place, and we were there for awhile, and then over in Sherman Schaus-Freeman Building on the second floor. We had that building--or that floor. Then--during that time--there was an interesting development that took place. The Studebaker management thought that the Studebaker they came out with in '47 was too expensive. I think it was around \$1200/\$1300. They [felt they] should get into a small car, and, so, it was decided they were going to build a small car, and so it was our job to build a small car. It wasn't a lot smaller, and it was narrower, and so, as a result, it

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\*Editors Note: Koto was probably referring to the Tasco (ca. 1948).

didn't save them a lot of money, but we went through this whole development of full-size, plaster models. Bourke worked up two of them from full-size clay models, he made. I had a quarter-size model that Loewy liked, and we were going to have that as a third one if we could get somebody to do it. It took almost all the men to work on those two models, but he gave me a couple men to do this car. if I could do it. I had a layout man from Studebaker engineering department to make a complete layout--the sections and all--all the development--body development in quarter scale and then enlarged to full scale from my model. And--but we didn't have facilities to make the full scale model out of it, so what we did, it's--I don't think it's ever been done before. At least, I've never heard of it or seen it, but we made these sections--all the sections--every ten inches--a section--made it on plaster--reinforced plaster, and they were set up on the frame just like ribs all the way through it, and then chicken wire put in between these ribs, and we made a full-scale model, and it was a see-through model. You cut the windows out, and the chicken wire didn't go where the windows were, but it was all chicken wire and then plaster in between, and it was--I got some little photographs of that on showing how that was done. But, that was an unusual way of building a car, but it came out all right. But then the sad thing, Cole saw it, and he liked it, and it was well liked, but the whole thing was too wide. He said, "If you want to show it, you've got to have it two inches narrower," so we cut two inches out of the middle--sawed right down through the whole thing--all these ribs and everything, and pulled it together and made it two inches narrower, and then it was shown to top management, and they liked that



model the best, and that was to be IT if they decided to build it, but they didn't decide to build it. So, that was a near miss for me.

Q You would have had the first post-war, small car?

A Yup.

Q What decided them not to do it?

A They didn't save enough money. I did have some things I thought would be an asset like the interchangeability between the coupe and the sedan. They had the same roof, but, still, it wasn't enough. Maybe it wasn't understood. I don't know. On one side of the model was a coupe, and the other side of the model was a sedan.

Q Who was running Studebaker in these days? Can you remember the top management?

A I should know [Paul G. Hoffman and Harold S. Vance].

Q Mr. Koto, could we at this point interrupt your narrative to ask you to give us a fairly detailed sketch of Raymond Loewy who in mid-career had gotten into automobile design--just made it before the war--and had quite a tenure at Studebaker. Could you tell us about him? What kind of personality he had, what his working techniques were--his supervisory techniques--anything that you remember about him that sticks in your mind?

A Yeah, I loved working for Loewy. Contrary to Exner and Gordon Buehrig--they felt he was too much of a showman, but I thought he was great. He was so kind and so appreciative, and I thought he had good taste, and he certainly was an asset. Although, he didn't dominate in his own design--he made his own personal cars and things like that, but he didn't insist that we do this and that, although he did insist that we

make a lean, fast-looking automobile. He disliked bathtubs as far as cars are concerned.

Q Low-slung and racy?

A Yeah. He didn't want heavy front ends and things like that.

Q He preferred the aerodynamic look?

A Yeah, which most of us liked, too.

Q Would he come out to Studebaker? Did he come out to South Bend periodically?

A Yes. He'd come out there quite often, and he was very interested in what we were doing. It wasn't that it was just a money-making thing for him. He seemed to be very genuinely interested in it. He would want everybody to be happy. It was sort of like a--almost like country club atmosphere. He used to say, "Think about cars all the time. Think about them on the way to work." He said, "You don't have to be here all the time," although it didn't work out that way. We had our regular times to work and so on. We had our overtime which was kept track of, and some of them got overtime pay and stuff like that. Most of us just enjoyed working, and it was kind of free, and he had parties, and we'd entertain. I belonged to the country club, and Loewy's group entertained at the country club at his expense.

Q Did he encourage a family atmosphere?

A Yes, all the women liked him very much.

Q Very charming.

A Very charming. He was elegant. He was charmer, all right.

Q At this point, do you remember a female--the designer at Studebaker named Audrey [Moore]?

A Yes, yes. She was a designer there, and I can't remember just what she did.

Q She worked largely with fabrics and colors.

A I think so. I think it was pretty much that way.

Q That was a traditional role for female designers then?

A Yeah, it was, yeah. Although they had one designer. Exner hired her--Virginia Spence. Came from a wealthy family there in South Bend, and her assignment was to work with me. It was the first model that we worked on, and she was a very charming woman.

Q How long was she there?

A Oh, probably--oh, not many years--maybe, one or two years.

Q Did she contribute anything?

A Well, as much as possible, I guess.

Q Have you kept contact with her over the years?

A She moved to Colorado, I know, but I've never heard much about her.

Q So, this is pretty close to the introduction of the '47 Studebaker at this point, and you're working on--a couple years behind.

A Yeah, then the '47 Studebaker--then, later, we worked on facelifts of the '47, and the probably the most interesting and most talked about--controversial one was the '50--the spinner front end.

Q Oh, yes. Tell us about that.

A Well, that was started from a '47 Studebaker. We chopped the front end out and made a new front end, and it was big spinner. I didn't have anything to do with that first one. I think Vince Gardner and Loewy--and Bourke worked it up, and Loewy was interested because he always liked spinners and stuff like that. He liked it. Roy Cole saw it, and he

said, "If Studebaker ever does a thing like that, they would go broke." It was a controversial thing, but it was a big seller. They sold an awful lot of '50 Studebakers. In '51, I was [put] on redesigning the grille, but it still had the spinner type, but then in '52, we went back to more of a conventional type.

Q At this point, it may be instructive to draw on a situation that you got involved in. At this point, Dick Calleal, apparently, had left Studebaker and had gone to work for George Walker, had he not?

A Well, no, not quite that way. He was laid off--Bourke was in charge, and Bourke, although he liked Calleal and all that, he was told to cut down on the personnel. He had to make a budget cut.

Q Calleal had been in design?

A And he had been a designer there before Loewy's big department, so he'd been there a long time, but he had to go. I was asked if I would make a model for him.

Q By this time, he'd gone to Walker's?

A No, he hadn't. Well, he tried to get a job with Walker, but Walker told him, "Well, if you will make a model and show it, and we like it, well, we'll hire you." It was that way.

Q So, at this point, he came back to South Bend?

A He came to me, or he came to Bourke. I'm not sure which. But, anyway, I....

Q Did he have a sketch with him?

A No, no sketch. He had the package [dimensions], you know, the head room, seating, etc. We had to work to an exact package. In fact, I wanted to change them, I remember, and he said, "No, no--can't change

it."

Q Well, let's talk about that in a minute. So, then what happened? He brought the package [information] to South Bend.

A Yeah, and so Dick had an armature made for it....

Q One quarter?

A One-quarter size, and on his kitchen table we made this quarter-size model.

Q Now, where was his kitchen table? Where did he live?

A He lived in Mishawaka. I don't remember the street number.

Q Not too far from South Bend?

A Yes, adjacent. [Really twin cities.]

Q So, he was still there at Mishawaka, and he brought this package....

A Yeah, and in a short time--I just worked at nights and the weekends....

Q What did he ask you to do?

A Design it with him. I'd just start making a model. That's the way I often worked, anyway. I very seldom worked from a sketch.

Q Now, would you make a mould first?

A No.

Q Or would you build a frame?

A No, it was clay. We made the clay model, and then later a plaster model was made from this clay model.

Q But, here you are in South Bend working for Loewy and Studebaker. Dick had just left, and he's trying to get a job with Walker, and Walker says, "Okay, take this package and see if you come up with a model," but Calleal had no modeling experience at this point.

A Oh, no. No, he didn't do any modeling. I did the whole thing.

Q So, you were friends at Studebaker.

A Yeah, I just did it to help him out, and I always felt like, maybe, I wasn't being loyal, because here I was working for Loewy, and nights and weekends working for Ford--working on a Ford, but Bourke assured me it was all right.

Q So, his okay cost you your friendship...?

A No, but I remember I didn't want to mention it to anybody, and that was a secret as far as I was concerned. In doing this work, Dick Calleal did have a little, thumbnail sketch that Bourke did of a front end, and he said, "Shall we try this?" And, I said, "Yeah," so we tried that sketch, and that was a little spinner. It was the front end--the grille. But, as far as I knew, that was done by Bourke.

Q So, actually the spinner that Bourke designed for Calleal later became the front end of the '49 Ford.

A Yeah, pretty much so.

Q So, there you are in your kitchen--or you're in Calleal's kitchen in Mishawaka, and what happens? Tell us about that.

A He had this model cast, in plaster, by some of Loewy's men and painted. And, it was painted a nice blue. A professional automobile painter painted it for Dick. So, Calleal took it to Walker, in Detroit, and, see, Walker wasn't vice president at this time. He still had his consultant studio [in Detroit]. He was the consultant to Ford.

Q They were working on the first, post-war Ford.

A So, Walker showed this to the Ford management along with some other models from Ford studios, and they picked the Calleal model, and the pro-

duction car came out very much the same except for the taillights. They had horizontal taillights which, I thought, were very good. In fact, I think I liked them better. We had vertical ones. It didn't hurt the model at all.

Q So, from your standpoint, once you had done--doing the model for Calleal--he left--thanked you and left, and apparently he never mentioned it to anyone. You thought it was...?

A No, no. In fact, I'm sure I had done so many other cars that I liked better. It was straightforward. It was a nice car, but, to me, I was surprised it was accepted as well as it was. The coupe looked--well, it was a nice car, but it was a little bit on the bulky side.

Q Can you tell us, in your opinion, how much of what became the '49 Ford resembled your original clay model?

A Oh, exactly, except, as I said, the taillights, and other than that I couldn't--I wouldn't know any difference. I'm not sure that we had a moulding on the side, but it probably did. But, I don't recall any differences.

Q The Ford taillights were....

A Their taillights were horizontal.

Q And, yours were vertical?

A Ours were vertical. Either one was good.

Q How did the spinner device become part of that. Had Calleal taken the sketch that Bourke had made and showed to Walker as well?

A No, no, no. I think--see, I didn't know this at the time, but, apparently, Bourke--maybe I did know it, but I don't remember it. Bourke said he asked me to do this model, but Bourke knew Calleal was doing this

model, and they--or maybe Calleal went over to the office and talked with Bourke, and Bourke gave him a little sketch.

Q Of a front-end device?

A Yeah, and which we tried out. But, as far as--other than that, I didn't know Bourke had anything to do with it.

Q Did you put that front end on that--spinner front end on your model?

A Yeah, oh yeah.

Q And Calleal showed you the sketch?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q And, later on you found out that Bourke had done it?

A Well, I think I knew it at the time when I was doing it, but I didn't remember that Bourke had told me [when he] asked me to work on it for Calleal.

Q Well, when it finally came out, did you--when you saw it, what did you think?

A Well, Calleal told me all along. He kept me in touch with this.

Q Oh, he did?

A Yeah, and he said, "Oh, hey...." Do you know him at all?

Q No.

A He's a Syrian--a big fellow and very aggressive. Makes a nice appearance, and he thought he was going to be in charge of all Ford styling, and he says, "I want you to be my chief designer of one of the studios," and he said the same to Bourke. But, all he did get was a job.

Q With the Walker unit?



A Yeah. But, then later Walker got him a job at Chrysler.

Q Oh, really. Because he stayed with the Walker Group?

A And, this is just when Exner was coming in--before Exner became vice president, and Calleal had about the same chance, as I understand. Now, this is just heresay, but Dick had a chance almost like Exner did of doing show models and doing stuff, but, apparently, his stuff got lost, and he stayed with Chrysler, but not as a top executive or anything like that. He was in trucks for a long while and a liaison man for awhile, and....

Q Was Calleal ever at Ford as far as you knew?

A Yeah, he got his job at Ford through this model, so I don't know just how long he stayed at Ford. Not very long because Walker got him this job at Chrysler.

Q Well, that's interesting, but, as you say, it was just another in a long series of things you had in your career of that sort. You don't remember it except when the '49 Ford came out. It was just another incident to you.

A Yeah. There was another time that I did some work, and that was, again--I probably shouldn't have done it. In my garage--a quarter-size, Lincoln Continental. This is the first Continental--or, not the first Continental--Mark III.

Q Mark II.

A Mark II, yeah, right, Mark II. And, there were quite a few people that made models for that.

Q Oh, did they? Did any...?

A Mine didn't get to first base. I haven't got any pictures of it or

anything, but I did get paid for that, but I didn't get paid for anything on the Ford.

Q Who hired you for that, do you remember?

A I think Calleal--or was it Walker?

Q Was it Reinhart?

A No, not Reinhart.

Q Was it Walker?

A Reinhart was laid off the same time Calleal was. They had to cut, and Reinhart--of course, he was making a lot of money. He was much higher paid than the rest of us--at Loewy's--and so that, I guess, when he left the budget was closer to being met. Anyway, he went to Packard shortly after.

Q So, there you are at--you're watching the--in '49 Ford you see something come out that looks very much like the design you've done a couple years before--the scale model. What did you think about that?

A Oh, I was pleased, of course. But, I never thought it would bring this publicity. In fact, the first time I had heard about it, I got a call from Mike Lamm [Editor, Special Interest Autos], and he said Gordon Buehrig had contacted him about the '49 Ford. He said they had an article about the '49 Ford. I guess it was a convertible test--road test or something--I don't know. And, anyway, Gordon [had] said, "If you want to know anything further about the '49 [Ford] call Koto."

Q He knew about that too, huh?

A Yes. Then Mike asked me to write an explanation about my part in the design of the '49 Ford for SIA. And, so then--from then on I had a lot of correspondence, and there were articles about a lot of things that

I did--Hudson, Briggs--mostly Briggs stuff in some of the early [issues] of SIA, and they did my autobiography in two issues.

Q Well, so--so you're working now on the--you're doing facelifts for the '51 and the '52 Studebakers?

A Yeah, and then came the all-new programs.

Q Now, how did you fit into that?

A Well, I had my share. I had a full-size, all-new car called the N Car. It had a spinner front, too.

Q It did. They liked that?

A I had mixed emotions about it. I kind of liked it, but I can see why--oh, some designers do not--I talked to one designer from General Motors one time, and he thought it was terrible. I thought it was so much better than the General Motors flat, uninteresting front ends at that time.

Q What did Bourke say to this? Was Bourke still at Studebaker?

A Oh, yeah, sure. Bourke was manager at that time.

Q So, he approved that type of front end?

A Oh, yeah. But, this N Car that I did, it was full-size model, and the coupe was very interesting. The sedan was a little bit awkward. The front fender came through into the door, but instead of dying off--it came down and made a Z turn and then went back into the rear bumper. But, other than that--well, I kind of liked it, but it was a controversial thing, but the interesting thing about it was that the front door--it was very nice on the coupe. It was a long door, but the front door on the sedan didn't line up with the rear door. The front door had a drop, so your elbows would be out over the door easy, and that was quite an

unusual thing, and they made a steel model of it--a full-size running model of it. But, I never rode in it. I've seen it, and then later it was scrapped. In fact, it was in one of the auto graveyards, and that's where one of the early SIA magazines had a picture of this. There was a feature of it, and then I had other photographs of it

A Then later was the full-size model--before it got to the graveyard. I mean, it was an interesting car. I don't know how it would have gone over. It was fairly radical.

Q Was this to be part of the '53 line?

A No. This is to be the '52. But, then it was scrapped, and we started working on the '53.

Q Tell us about the '53 Studebaker. What was it like?

A Well, all the designers worked on quarter-size models, and finally two of them were picked--one Bourke's and one mine. That's the way it usually works.

Q Inter-office competition.

A Yeah. We had an inter-office competition heating up at the very end. And, so we had a full-size model--the quarter-size were picked, and Bourke had one side of the coupe to do, and I had the other side of the coupe to do, and then there was a full-size sedan. He had one side, and I had the other side. And, we worked on that quite awhile. I've got a lot of photographs of that--both sides. And, then came judgment day, Loewy came and looked at them, and he liked both sides, but he didn't know what to do, and, so, he suggested we have a vote. There were quite a few people around in the range--and there were from Studebaker, not product planners, but something like product planners.

Q Executives?

A Well, there weren't any top executives, no, but just draftsmen and things like that: you know, all the modelers, and Loewy had quite a crew at that time--about 35 people, I guess, worked for him at that time. And, so, there was a vote, and 60% (plus)--I forget exactly, but it was 60% (plus) in each case--sedan and coupe--that liked my side better, but I remember seeing Loewy and Bourke talking about it, and, apparently, Bourke and Loewy agreed that he do his side, which is very nice, of course. But, mine was much wider at the C pillar. It had the C pillar flush with the rear quarter panel, just like cars are today. So, that was the basic difference. The front ends were quite similar except different variations of the grille.

Q So, Bourke talked Loewy into accepting his design? How did you feel about that?

A Well, I was disappointed, naturally, but, oh, then another interesting thing, I was always interested in interchangeability. I couldn't ever see why some cars are so close together and no interchangeability between them, and that's the way our sedan was and the coupe. Although, the sedan wasn't nearly as nice as the coupe, but they were similar designs. And, one time I was over at engineering looking at the two, and the front bumpers could just as well been the same, but they were different in length, but the same design. And, just by doing a little widening, one out a little bit and narrowing the other, you could use the same bumper. This was finally done. Bourke never liked the idea of trying to get any interchangeability between them at all. He wanted the coupe to be the sporty car. I wouldn't say he didn't care much about

the sedan, but words to that effect.

Q You could have saved them a lot of money.

A Oh, yeah. And, later, again, I tried to make my point about interchangeability. I made line drawing of the coupe that was already approved, and a line drawing of a proposed sedan that would have the maximum amount of interchangeability with the coupe. This would mean that everything forward, including the windshield, would be the same as the coupe and also the back end, including the deck, would be the same as the coupe. This meant increasing the wheelbase on the sedan--made them the same wheelbase and made a nice-looking sedan from the line drawings, and I took it over too--with Bourke's permission--over to Hoffman.

Q Paul Hoffman was the chairman?

A The chairman, and he liked the idea, but it was too late. But, that's what they should have done in the first place. The sedan, as approved, wasn't--a nearly as good as the coupe, but it could have been if the suggested interchangeability had taken place. Of course, it would have cost more, maybe. Maybe not, either. It probably wouldn't cost more because of the interchangeability, but it was the bigger car. See, the sedan would have been 123 inch wheelbase instead of what it was.

Q Well, you were a prophet without honor there because ten years later that became....

A That was the thing to do. It was the thing to do a long time ago. Now, where are we?

Q Well, you're in the early 'Fifties. You've been working on the....

A Well, from then on it was facelifts, and Bourke did all the--pretty

much all of the facelifts--the '55 was--although he didn't approve either, but he got from management: "Lots of chrome. Get bright stuff out there." And, so he went overboard for the '55 and made a great, big, chrome thing on the front which, you know, he didn't like it either. But, I never mentioned about the trucks. That goes back to the early days that I was with Loewy.

Q Studebaker trucks?

A Yeah. And, I should say here--I have a great deal of respect for Bourke, and I don't want to give the impression that he wasn't right or he didn't say the right things or whatever, but his version of the truck is different than mine, but I'll tell you my story. Now, one of our first projects was for an all-new truck, and it was different than other trucks, a better layout. It had a drop frame, and it was lower than Ford trucks and Chevrolet trucks, and so we both made them. Each had a model, and each the truck part, you know, the back part flush with the cab right through like all trucks are today.

Q Quite an innovation in those days.

A And, it was a real nice--both of them were nice, but they picked my cab--my design. It was a little fuller. I think his is a little squarer--mine was a little rounder, and they picked my cab, but they picked Bourke's front end which was very nice, but then the man who was in charge of the trucks said, "Well, that's a good design, but I think we should save that for some other time."

Q So, they had taken your design for the cab--for the rear end. Say that again.

A Only the cab, with Bourke's front end, the flush side idea was out.

Q The bed?

A The bed flush with the cab, just like all trucks are now, would have been a great idea then. It would have been a first. But, they wanted to save that for some other time, I don't know why, so they had to have a fender, you know, so I modeled the fender.

Q Well, did you say that even though your rear-end design had been picked, they saved it?

A It wasn't a rear-end design, only the rear fender.

Q Now, Mr. Bourke seems to think that it happened slightly different. What is his side?

A Well, he just said that, in his book, that he takes all credit for the truck except for the rear fender.

Q Well, that was--he considers that was yours?

A Yeah, just the rear fender, but it was little more than that.

Q So, did you have any further truck design at that time?

A We did facelift front ends for future years. Well, when we first came there, we were working on some war work or, at least, should be in order to get deferred, and we did make some sketches on an Army truck in the early '40's.

Q Was it accepted?

A Yeah, I think, the one I did was accepted. However, it wasn't a styled car, you know. It was a pretty boxy, Army truck-like thing.

Q Studebaker did some trucks for the Army.

A Oh, yeah. They built a lot of trucks for the Army.

Q So, there you are in the early 'Fifties. You've worked on the early 'Fifties Studebaker and the '53 Studebaker. What's next on your



docket? What comes up next? You did some facelifts, you said, for the '55 and '56.

A Well, I didn't have much to do with any of them that I can recall. Then, Packard merged with Studebaker. Loewy lost his contract, you know, and Bill Schmidt came over then, and he was the one in charge of the styling--not Loewy.

Q Vice president in charge of styling?

A I think he was to be vice president.

Q Did he come from Ford--Bill Schmidt?

A Well, originally, yes, but he was at Packard. He came from Packard. Packard hired him. But, Loewy, even though he lost his contract with Studebaker, wanted Bourke and myself and about three others to stay with him which we did, and we worked in South Bend, in Bourke's basement. We met there every day, and we worked pretty much a full day on industrial things. Bourke would go around and, maybe, get some manufacturer interested in designing their product.

Q Do you remember any particular products that you worked on?

A Well, some on trailers--on travel trailers. Well, house trailers.

Q Okay. They were just becoming popular in those days.

A Yeah. And, not much of any--I think [Bourke] probably had some that he worked up. I'm not sure, but nothing that I did. And, that didn't last long. I still had a contract with Loewy, and it was about half over, and so I wrote to Loewy. Well, in the meantime, I went to Ford and different places and tried to get a job and couldn't get anything that was [comparable to] what I had. Although, Ford said

they would hire me, and I was to be a supervisor in the Edsel department.

Q Who did you talk to about that?

A Walker.

Q George Walker?

A I think so. No, I think first I talked to somebody else. I think I first talked to...Bob Wieland. Later, he became a very good friend of ours, but I think at the very beginning, he interviewed me.

Q What was his job there?

A I think he had some manager's job. He wasn't at the top....

Q But, they didn't offer you anything like you [already] had?

A Nothing, nothing, really at all. And, so, I did decide to go there and get started anyway, and I wrote to Loewy and told him. My contract said I was the chief designer and assistant manager, but I wasn't that any more, so I thought, well, they'll just say, "Forget it, you're contract is void now." But, he didn't say that at all. He said--I don't remember just what he said. In fact, it was in a letter. He said, "We'll continue your contract." So, I still got money for the rest of the year which I really didn't expect. It was very nice of him. That's the kind of a guy he is. Even though it was out of his budget, I suppose, because it didn't come from Studebaker any more, I'm sure.

Q Did you have any chance to catch on at the new design department at Studebaker-Packard after all these years?

A No, I didn't stay there at all.

Q Did you talk to Schmidt at all?

A Yes. He wanted me to stay, but Bourke didn't stay either. But, I

think, somebody else who came from Packard was to have the manager's job or the chief designer or something, so, there was no real place for me.

Q It wasn't Dick Teague, was it?

A I think it was.

Q Duncan McCrea?

A Duncan McCrea. He came over.

Q I see. Along with Schmidt?

A Yeah. So, there was really no place for either Bourke or myself in a management position. Well, maybe Bourke could have if he tried, but he decided not to stay. So, anyway, I went with Ford, and Bourke and Hodgeman got together and had their own design department in New York.

Q Who is Hodgeman?

A Clare Hodgeman? Oh, say, I didn't get to this--one of the most interesting parts with Loewy. That's going back to Loewy again. I'm sorry I'm jumping around so much. It's hard to remember these things. Loewy had contracts in England--one with Austin Motor and one with Rootes [Group] at different times. Loewy had a contract with Rootes long before--in the early 'Thirties with Sir William Rootes and Sir Reginald Rootes, and Clare Hodgeman went over there at that time and did the Sunbeam Talbot--a real nice car, and I'll get to that later. I went to Rootes later on, but before that I went to Austin, and I was to design a small Austin. I had a couple of men from the London office who would help me out in making a full-size, scale model, and I first made a quarter-size, clay model. And, all the time I would correspond with Loewy--send him photographs and tell him whatever I was doing so he was well informed as just what was going on. He was in Paris.

Q What year was this?

A It was in '50. In the Summer of '50, I did this full-size model--clay model. It wasn't cast in plaster but just clay, and it was painted. I had a certain paint that would stay on clay, and it was a nice-looking model. At least, I thought it was, and it was very well liked.

My assignment to England, in the Summer of 1950, to design a small Austin would probably take a long time, so I had permission to take my wife and my two children. We were to stay at a luxury hotel in Dordwich which was about twenty miles from Longbridge where I was to work. Every morning and evening I had an Austin chauffeur drive me there and back. I had purchased a car from the Austin Co.--a one-of-a-kind Alfa Romeo that was designed by Pinin Farina and used as his personal car. But I couldn't use it because of license and tax required by the English government which was more than double the price paid for the car.

While we were there, I got a call from Loewy that he wanted me to come to St. Tropez (on the Mediterranean where he staying). It seemed Studebaker executives had a change of heart about the front end design. We made new front end designs, but, fortunately, nothing came of it because it wasn't as good as what we had.

Q Why did Austin buy the Alfa?

A I was told it was shown at the Geneva Auto Show in '48 and, apparently, was liked by Austin and purchased to help develop the Austin Atlantic (a sports car). But there was no resemblance that I could see when it came out.

Q You worked with them back in the 'Thirties.

A Yes, in about '34 or '35. While at Briggs, I made a quarter-scale

model for Austin. I did not go to England, but the model was sent there. I don't know what happened to it. They never came out with anything that looked like it. Now, getting back to 1950: The full-size, painted, clay model was finished, and I had a private showing for Lord Lord (the top man at Austin, like the chairman of the board here). I was never so happy in my life. He was very informal, and he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You know, I can't get over [it]," he says, "This is so much nicer than what we've been working on for so long." He said, "Look at what we've got over here. Look at that." And, can you believe the next thing I heard? That Austin didn't use one bit of my model! They went to--their model--I don't know who changed his mind or what, but, we heard that it didn't have enough of the Austin image. It wasn't an Austin.

Q That would be the early '50 Austin?

A Yeah. I think it came out in '53. And, incidentally, that was a very successful car. It was a very interesting way out from an engineering standpoint--the construction of it, the unit body type of a thing. It was a very well-done car. But, it wasn't our design. It wasn't a Loewy design. And, of course, I think, that irked Loewy a bit too. It sure was a disappointment to me. But, anyway, there's a magazine--Austin Spotlight they call it, and it features--most of it is about this car--Austin 35.

Q Did it have your story?

A Oh, yeah. And, then later one of the magazines--the editor of this magazine had heard that I did a car there, and he got in touch with me and wanted photographs, and I sent colored photographs--colored slides

they were and a lot of this stuff that I did for them that they didn't use at all.

Q Are these in the Austin archives?

A Well, yeah, I guess so. And, so he wrote in one of the magazines he explained the whole thing, and since then we have been corresponding, and now he wants us to get together. I'm coming to England next month--or, not next month--in August--and, he's coming here the following year. We're going to have a reciprocal thing. And, so then that's about the end of the Austin. Oh, oh, one other kind of interesting thing, while I was celebrating what I thought was my success, my wife and I were in a place in Paris at a restaurant--a fine restaurant there, and having our dinner, and somebody came up to me and said, "Bob Koto," and it was Al Prance from Briggs. I hadn't seen him since I left Briggs, and he said he was in England at that time to break in a fellow that he had hired to be in charge of the Ford--English Fords but working for Briggs, as I understand it.

Q Do you remember who that was?

A I should know, but I can't think of his name. Anyway, Al said at that time, "This is such a coincidence," he said, "because I almost asked you to come with me." He said, "I almost hired you, that is, if you would [have] come."

Q You were about to talk about the gentleman who did the Sunbeam Talbot.

A Yeah, but that's Clare Hodgeman, and, so, later on--this after my experience with Austin, Loewy had a contract with Rootes Group--another contract. He had had an earlier one, and this was to do an all-new Hillman Minx and also a sports car, and, so, that was very exciting, and

Clare Hodgeman and myself were to go over there and do this program.

Q Go over to England.

A To go over to England, and right away we were met by a Sir William Rootes, and he asked us where we were staying and all, and we were staying at the Cumberland. He said, "Aw, you don't want to stay at that place. That's not nice enough." So, he said, "You can have our nice suite at the Berkley--or some really expensive place, so we did, and he took us out to dinner, and steaks were very uncommon because of the war restrictions, but he was able to get us a big steak dinner and all that. And, so, the next day we were to be shown, at that showroom in London, the different projects--models of the Rootes group. See, they made the Hillman Minx, Sunbeam Talbot, trucks, and different things, and they were going to just show us in there. Of course, Hodgeman has been there before, so he was acquainted with Sir William Rootes. But, I wasn't, but I'd met him, and I thought he was a great guy. I liked him. Especially when we were all at a big table, and they were all [sitting] around trying to decide what to do, and Sir William said to me, or said to them, "Koto and I are going to go over and sit in this Sunbeam Talbot and see if--what he thinks about your suggestions." So, we sat in the back seat of this car, and he said, "This is what they want to do." He said, "They want to leave the floor plan, but they want to widen the top. They think there isn't enough room in the back here," and he said, "What do you think?" I said, "Gee, it doesn't sound good to me at all," and I said, "It means you would save the doors, but you make a new roof, new hood, and deck, and, to me, it isn't going to be any better. It's going to be worse, because you're straightening the thing out. Now it's got a little

tumblehome. We try to make more tumblehome instead of less," and I said, "I think it would be the wrong way to go entirely." And, he says, "I agree," and he told the people at the table, "Koto and I have decided we're not going to do this." I got a big kick out of that. This was on the Sunbeam Talbot, so they didn't make that change on the Talbot, so I still had the work to do on the Hillman Minx, and that car came out just the way my model was--just about the same--no difference that I could see. That was one time they did do just the way my car was supposed to be.

Q That year Hillman Minx, has that become a collectible car?

A Well, probably not that, but it was a success. They later came out with the Sunbeam, which was made from the original Minx we did. It was a hardtop with a new lower roof that made it look better.

Q That was a fascinating episode for you.

A Yeah, that was one thing that I was pleased about. Usually your work is, oh, about 99 times out of 100, it doesn't reach production.

Q It had happened to you with frustrating regularity.

A Oh, yes. I don't suppose any more so than the average designer.

Q But a couple of those interesting episodes had not really come out as you hoped they would.

A That's right.

Q So, did you stay with the Rootes group for awhile?

A Well, Clare and I were over there for just a short time. We did the model--the quarter-size model. I did it. He had suggestions here and there. We worked together, and then we went back. He went to New York, and I went to South Bend, and, in the meantime, their modelers



built the full-size, clay model, and then we both went back, and so it was the second time we were over there on this Hillman.

Q Did you get final approval for the model?

A Yeah, they finally approved it. Well, they approved of the quarter size, and then they approved the full size, and then it came out just about the way--except I remember they put more headroom in the rear seat than it needed, and we were able to get that down again, but other than that, it was the same. And, I think, it was quite a successful car.

Q So, that was your last freelance job you had with the Loewy unit.

A Yeah, yeah, that was--wait, that was way back in '53, so it wasn't the last freelance. There was one time we went to New York to do a sports car. This was for Loewy, too, and I did some--just renderings--just line drawings, but they were big ones, and I have those at home. One of them is in this magazine from Austin.

Q The Austin Spotlight.

A Yes, it was supposed to be a sports car that Loewy did, and he showed me the photograph of a quarter-size clay model that was done. I didn't do this model. It was done in England, I guess, but it was exactly the same as one of those line drawings that I'd made.

Q So, he apparently sent them over to England, and said, "Make a model of this."

A Yeah, and it was made, and this was the first I knew about it.

Q Did it ever come out?

A No. I don't know the story about it.

Q So, the Studebaker-Loewy contract has ended. They're paying you until the end of the year. What did you do then?

A Well, you see, I went to Ford right away.

Q How did that come about?

A Well, I went to Ford styling, and I didn't have any samples, or did I? I don't know. I wasn't very well prepared.

Q Did you have some contact over there? People you knew at Ford.

A Yes, I knew Alex Tremulis. In fact, I had lunch with him. He took me out to lunch. At that time he had a good job with Ford. He was one of the top men, but somehow I didn't get a very good job. But, I did take the job in the hopes of improving [my position].

Q What was the job they gave you?

A It was supervisory of the Edsel. There were two Edsels--the Edsel that was made out of the Mercury, and the Edsel that was made out of the Ford body. One was EM and one was EF--EF for Ford, and I was the supervisor at EM, and the car was pretty much designed by that time.

Q Who was there in the Edsel studio?

A The Edsel chief designer was Roy Brown, and, you know, he took an awful beating after the Edsel failed, and I was sorry for him. I don't think he deserved it. He was chief designer and went down to the job of manager. There was an executive, Jim Sipple, and then there was a manager, Ken Spencer, and then the two supervisors, one for Edsel/Ford (Bob Jones) and one for Edsel/Mercury (Bob Koto). Roy Brown went down two notches.

Q Well, was there any input that you had into the final Edsel design?

A Ah, very minor. You see, it was pretty much designed. So hard to remember names way back when you haven't heard of them for all these years. The basic theme had already been designed and the "horse collar"

they called it, and the Mercury character lines--the two lines that went through the body--and, they didn't know how to end that up in the front fender, and I did that, and that's about the only thing, so it was very minor what I did.

Q But, you can see it in the finished product?

A Yeah, yeah, I can see that.

Q The large Edsel?

A Yeah. It was made from the Mercury. I was getting impatient because I was back on the board. I hadn't been on the board for a long time, although. I had always made models. I was always in the modeling room, but I hadn't been on the board for some time, and here I had a desk and doing little detail parts and meetings and stuff, and it was very uninteresting from my standpoint. No complete cars to do or anything like that. So, I went to Exner. I'd known him for quite awhile. He was vice president, at that time, of Chrysler.

Q Is this the late 'Fifties or middle to late 'Fifties?

A This is when I went to Ford--August, '55, to April, '68, so this must have been in '56--about '56. I had an appointment with Exner and tried to get a job there at Chrysler.

Q Because he remembered you from Studebaker?

A Yeah, yeah. He remembered me, sure. And, he said sure he could fit me in but not in a job like I used to have--not any chief or assistant chief or anything like that, but it was a lot better job than I had at Ford. I made a little resume of the work I did, and I didn't go to Walker, but I went to the general manager--[V.Z.] Brink, I think his name was, and he was in charge of all of--everybody--administration, and

Walker, at that time, was the vice president in charge of styling, of course. And, so, I talked with him for quite awhile and told him all the things I did and so on and including the Ford--including the '49 Ford, and I....

Q This is the first time you mentioned it?

A Yeah, and so he was surprised, and he went into Walker, and Walker called me in. I got the sense that he didn't want me to take credit for the '49 Ford. He said, "I'll tell you how this happened...."

Q What did he say?

A It was done by--it was a combination of a couple other models--couple models or something like that.

Q He didn't want to give you credit for doing the work?

A That's right. He wanted to give the real credit to Joe Oros and Elwood Engel. But, anyway, he did come through with a decent job, but it wasn't quite what I wanted.

Q Tell us about the job George Walker got you.

A It was an assistant head designer for Mercury preproduction. Ford and Lincoln-Mercury studios each had their own preproduction studios. They did advanced models. Not real way-out models but models that the studios thought they should have for the next round. Anyway, I stayed. My boss was Bob Wieland, but it was just a short time, and Wieland went to Germany, and we went over to see him near Cologne. But then later, Walker retired [1960], and Bordinat became the vice president in charge of styling, and he called me in his office one time and told me that I was going to be the head designer for Mercury preproduction. Before that, Buzz Grissinger had it. He had that studio for awhile, and Cuccio

was his assistant. He's an industrial designer in New York now. He was a Loewy man.

Q What was his first name? Do you remember?

A John, John Cuccio, and he and Buzz did a model. It was a full-size, plaster model, and they had all the drawings and everything the company [wanted]--it was kind of squarish looking. Well, anyway, they worked on it a year or more, and it was the only one they did, and Gene Bordinat said to me, "I know your predecessor only did one model, but I expect you to do six," and later he said, "I didn't expect you to really do them, but that's what I told you." And, instead, I did 22--22 full size--but they weren't all started from scratch. A lot of them started--we did a lower part with the roof of something else, but it was--we counted them [22]--some of them were complete cars, and we had a lot of success there. A lot of things that came out of my studio.

Q Do you remember any?

A Yeah, nothing complete, just parts of them here and there got into production, except a Falcon. The Falcon. We did a model for Comet. See, I was in Mercury in preproduction, and the Comet was the Mercury, and, so, this was done for a Comet, but the Ford people saw it and liked it, and it became the Falcon. That was the one with a spear--spear running through it and running into the taillights. It was kind of an interesting one, but....

Q They snitched that off your Comet design and used it for the Falcon?

A Yeah, that's right.

Q Was it ever used on the Comet?

A No, it wasn't used in its entirety on the Comet. The front fender was modified to make it look a little different. In fact, it was worse, but--so, the Comet sort of suffered from it, although it came from the Mercury preproduction studio. And, of course, we did Lincolns, and the Lincoln preproduction in '65--it came out in '68, I think. I forget the exact date, but [it was] one of the first Lincolns with the all-new body. That came from our studio. I didn't do it all, but it was from my studio. Later on, I did one that I thought was better, and it was a plaster model, but Henry Ford had already seen this other one and liked that, so this one that I thought was better wasn't even shown. I've got pictures of both of them. But, things like that [happened].

Q These are mid-'Sixties Lincolns?

A Yes, the '65.

Q Gene Bordinat liked your work and encouraged you to go ahead?

A Yeah, and then I stayed in preproduction for quite while, and I had five or six good men, too.

Q Can you remember some of them?

A Yeah. I should remember every one of them. They were so loyal and so good.

Q In this job you were back--you're off the board and back really in modeling then?

A Yeah, I was in charge of it.

Q And, you enjoyed that?

A Yes, very much. My first assignment was an all-new Mercury to follow the '57-'58. The '57 had an interesting theme, I thought. This was a concave section in the quarter panel that worked into the

taillights. So, I thought it was a good idea to pursue this theme which could lead to many variations. This we did. The first one was a full-size, fiberglass, see-through model. I thought it was great. But, in the meantime, after the '57 had been out for some time, the sales were disappointing, so I had to get off this theme.

Q And the Turnpike Cruiser?

A Yeah, as I remember, this was the top of the line.

Q With the slanted backlight?

A Slanted back window, and it wasn't successful, I guess, but from some standpoints it was, I thought. We made many variations of it in the full size. But, then I stayed there for quite a few years, and then Cliff Voss, who came from Chrysler--went back to Chrysler, I think, or, at least, he quit Ford. He was an executive stylist, and that left an opening, and I got his job as executive stylist.

Q In what studio was that?

A That was in Lincoln-Mercury studio. There were two sections; the big cars and the small cars. I started out with the smaller cars--the Comet, the Monterey, and the Cougar, and later I was in charge of the big Lincoln and the big Mercury. But, all the time I worked in the Lincoln-Mercury Division.

Q Who was heading that up at that time?

A That was Buzz Grisinger. He was the director. I'd worked with him before. Under him were Al Mueller for big cars and me for small cars.

Q And, how did that go? Do any particular models stand out in your mind?

A Well, Lincolns, which I was in charge of later.

Q This would have been for the late 'Sixties or early 'Seventies? Do you remember any details that you...?

A The front end [had my] details pretty much.

Q And, so you and Buzz would be working on details from several models in the works?

A Yeah, and it got so that wasn't so much fun anymore. I would have to meet certain deadlines, and if my crew didn't come out with it, of course, it was my fault. And, it just--I was glad to retire frankly, but I was always sorry in a way that I did because I certainly liked cars. I still dream about them, and I can't get them off my mind, but I see so many things I would have liked to change.

Q When did you retire?

A In '68--April '68.

Q Oh, that early. You retired before Bunkie Knudsen got there.

A Yeah. Well, Iacocca was there, although I didn't know him, but he worked--he was responsible for the Mustang, and my studio did do one job for the Mustang, but all they took was the taillights and the back end of the car.

Q And, that's yours?

A Well, it wasn't really mine. It was from our job--from the one that we presented.

Q This is in your preproduction area?

A That was in our preproduction area.

Q Do you remember--can you tell us about the Turnpike Cruiser? That was to be a....

A That was done before I got there, I guess--just before. I think,



Ken Spencer worked on that.

Q Can you tell us a little about the Mustang period? You were in the midst of that. How did that come about?

A Lee Iacocca gets all the credit for that, and, I guess, he deserves it. Most of the actual styling of it came from the Ford studio, except for a minor part in the rear end that was taken from our preproduction model.

Q Bob MacGuire and...?

A Yeah, maybe he had something to do with it.

Q The people you worked for and with, do any of them stand out in the late 'Fifties and early 'Sixties at Ford? Do you remember any ones that still stick in your memory as really good stylists?

A Well, there were probably a lot of them.

Q Those who worked with you that you admired, perhaps? Do you remember John Najjar? Did you work with him?

A No, I didn't work with him. I know him.

Q He was in Mercury.

A If he was, it was before I came to Ford. He's an old timer. I think he was with Ford for many, many years.

Q Gene Bordinat--did you--you had some contact with him, of course.

A Well, of course, he was my boss. He was the vice president. And, he was the chief stylist for Lincoln-Mercury before he got his job as Vice President for Design, so I worked with him a lot. He knew my work pretty much. Just before I became an executive I worked for special projects studio which was headed by Bob MacGuire. There I had even a greater variety of work. That was very interesting. I liked that work

very much, because we worked on the whole Ford line of cars, not just Lincoln-Mercury.

Q Concept--advanced concept?

A Something like that. They're working on a lot of cars, and sometimes I had about five different things going at one time, and I enjoyed that so much, and I think it was through MacGuire that I got to be an executive. I think he pushed--of course, Buzz did, too. Because there were a lot of people who had been there a lot longer and probably deserved it a lot sooner. I remember one time long before that I asked--I was always probably too ambitious, and I asked Bordinat one time, "What chance have I got to be an executive?" He says, "None whatsoever." He said, "There's too many people ahead of you." But, not long after that he made me an executive designer.

Q At probably Bob MacGuire's recommendation?

A I think so. Bob and Buzz.

Q MacGuire was pretty well universally liked by everyone, wasn't he? And respected.

A I think so, yeah. He let people sort of do their own stuff, and that's what I liked. I worked on a Ford GT-40--that special race car.

Q Did you? Tell us about that.

A I did one of the first ones, a full-size, clay model, and it went to England, and for awhile we heard that it was coming out in production--that they were going to do that car, but then later it got changed. That was another near miss.

Q Something didn't....

A Yeah, it lost a lot I thought. But, I did see a picture of it one

time--the one that I did, but other than that--well, the German Ford. I did a German Ford--the Taunus, which came out the way I did it. The doors were carry-overs, but, other than that, it was all new. I think it was straight glass at that time, and I was all for curved glass because the contour of the whole door was so much better. You didn't have to have a real thick door section to let the glass down and still could have a good tumblehome and a good turnunder which we were always after. And, that was what one of the first Lincolns had, curved door glass, and then the next time they came out with a new body, they had straight glass, and that always seemed so ridiculous to me. But, finally they went back to curved glass, and they've had that ever since, as all cars do now.

Q Had the Taunus come out pretty much as you had designed it?

A . Yeah. It was more or less a facelift, but it was a new back end, new front, everything--but they still kept the same doors. But, if they did change them, they didn't change them much because at the time we were working on it, we didn't change the doors. Well, as it turned out, we might just as well have changed the doors, as I remember it now. I worked on Cougars a lot.

Q Did you? That was quite an innovative car, wasn't it? The '68.

A And, it still is. Yeah, I did a lot of work on Cougars. That came from our studio. That came right from our studio.

Q From your preproduction Mercury studio. Do you remember any...?

A You know, I remember more about the real old cars--Briggs--than I do later ones--isn't that funny? I guess I'm getting old.

Q The Cougar was quite a success. Quite innovative in design.

A Yeah. John Aiken had a lot to do with Cougars and Lincolns. He

worked for me.

Q Do you remember any devices that still...?

A Yeah. The '69 Cougar had that line like the Buick. The character line dropped down and then straightened out similar to a Buick, and we thought at that time that management wouldn't buy it because it was too much like a Buick, but they bought it, and it was quite successful, and the one before that was successful too.

Q '68? That was a good car.

A It was a nice car.

Q Was that pretty much the last one you worked on in '68/'69--Cougar?

A Yes. I retired in '68, so I worked on the '69.

Q And what else just before you left? Any '70's?

A No. The '70 was done before--I didn't have anything to do with the '70's.

Q You retired for what reason?

A Well, I used to go down to Florida every year--sometimes twice a year--and I always liked it so much, and I hated to come back, and I thought, well, shucks, if I can get a decent retirement, I think I will. So, I wrote to Bordinat, and he said, "Okay," and he gave me a pretty good--well, it isn't very good, but enough so that with my other investments I could get along fine, and so we just moved to Florida and have been happy ever since.

Q But, you did say a moment ago that you had some regrets since you've retired.

A Well, yes, because I'm still interested in automobiles, and I would

still like to have a consultant job. In fact, I talked to Bordinat about that right after I retired, and I suggested such a thing. They have a survey, you know, from people on the street--different--well, well-known people, perhaps, but not connected with automobiles particularly, and they take their word for a lot of it, and I suggested why not have a--some old pros that are retired to come in and give your suggestions and see it with a fresh eye. And, he thought it was an idea but not a good idea--not for Ford. The management wouldn't go for it, you see. But, at that time I talked to Don Kopka and mentioned it to him, and he said he thought that'd be a good idea, so when Don Kopka became vice president, I suggested the same thing to him, and he felt the same as Bordinat. I guess it's management's policy not to do anything like that.

Q Well, since then, though, they rely more and more, I think, on market research.

A Yeah, but not somebody from the Company.

Q It's too bad that they don't really exercise the option of getting informed opinions for car design.

A Yeah, I think that would be a good idea, and I mentioned the other day to Chuck Jordan while at the Detroit Art Institute car show. I talked to Chuck Jordan for quite awhile. I've known him for quite a time, and he seemed to think it was all right. Because I can see so many things on the cars that they come out with, that with a change here and there, could have been better. When they came out with the '79 all new Ford, it seemed as if they tried to make it look high. It looked kind of boxy. It was a good design, though, otherwise, it was a nice car, but

could have been better. However, I shouldn't criticize them because they have been so successful.

Q Of course, starting with the Escort and later the Tempo/Topaz and the Lincoln and the Thunderbird Ford, they decided to go more aerodynamic.

A Yeah, and they're better. I hope so. I hope they continue. Yeah, that's an improvement.

Q Well, looking back on your career as a designer, maybe you could sit back and sort of review it as a whole for future generations of students of design. You mentioned a couple of people that have worked for you that have come to mind.

A Well, one of them was Wescott. He was colorblind, but he could do the best renderings I ever saw.

Q Where was that?

A That was when I was in Mercury preproduction. Later he went with Cuccio in New York. They have a studio there, and, I guess, he's still doing fine. But, he was doing mostly pastel drawings, and he'd have to ask somebody, "What color is this?" But, he'd get such values--such great values and still was colorblind.

Q Well, looking back on your career, what do you think? What would you say the highlights were in reviewing your design career?

A Reviewing my design [career], I don't think it's typical of the average designer, but my long suit was models--three dimension. I wanted to work in three dimensions.

Q Clay models?

A Yeah, I always had a drawing board, and I did some renderings. One

of them is at the Detroit Art Institute. It is for the exhibit on cars, but usually it was in the model form, and any size. Of course, when it's a full size, I didn't do the heavy work, but lots of times I'd get in there and pitch in on the detail work--even on the full size. So, that was--and I didn't mention it before, but in preproduction I did an awful lot of 10th scale models. 10th scale, and they had a mirror, so I only did a half a model, so I didn't have to match up sides or anything, so when pictures were taken of it, it looked like a complete car. And, I'd have them photograph. I got hundreds of them, I think. Well, maybe not hundreds, but I bet it wouldn't [be] far from it, and some of them I'd have retouched. SIA magazine featured some of them. It was just taken for a 10th scale model. And, I'd get my ideas that way, and then sometimes we'd work them into full size.

Q And, when you were at Ford, in the latter part of your career, you were still modeling?

A No, no. Oh, yeah, in preproduction but not as an executive. I had an office, but I don't think I did any modeling whatsoever.

Q You had clay models?

A But, we had modelers all the time. I think, the modelers as a whole respected me and liked to work for me. I value that.

Q Do you still keep up the--keep contact with some of them?

A Yeah. Whenever they have an open house at Ford, I go. I usually visit the studio once a year.

Q Don Kopka--you had a good experience with him at Ford?

A Yeah, yeah. When I retired, we were on the same level, and he's really got a....

Q Which level was he at?

A He was an exec in interior, I think, at that time.

Q Good man.

A Yeah, yeah. He's very nice. I like him a lot, and he's well liked.\*

Q Have you any thoughts about design today? In terms of your overall career, do you have observations about yesterday's designs versus today's designs and what your thoughts are on the direction they've taken in recent years?

A Well, in some respects, I like today's cars better, but, as a whole, I don't think I do. I think I like cars--not way back, but some--of course, they were very interesting too, but I didn't like the trend that was boxy like the recent [Chrysler] K Car. I didn't like that at all. The lower part was all right, but it looked so often as if they tried to make it look high and boxy, which I don't like.

But, some of them are nice. I like the Lancer. I think that's very elegant, but--and I like the front ends--the basic theme of the front ends although they look a little too narrow, but I like the aerodynamic feeling that they have. But I don't like them riding up high in the rear end. I've seen pictures of the new Ford products called the Taurus and the Sable, and they look very high in the rear end to me. I would just like to see them not quite so much of a wedge shape, and although some of them are all right, I'm not fond of that.

Q The wedge seems to be coming into vogue.

A Yeah, it does. Sometimes it's a little exaggerated. I like to see

\*Editor's Note: Don Kopka retired in 1987 as Vice-President for Design at Ford Motor Company.



the car ride on the level, not high in the back and not low in the back. So, if it's a wedge shape that looks like its going level, it's all right.

Q But, in general, you approve of, what you had tried a few times in your career, that rounded, aerodynamic shape?

A I still think the rounded theme is better. I liked the old Camaro although, the new one's nice too. I can see why they did what they did, but I admire some of the old ones better than most of the new ones.

Q In general, you approve of the flush look that is coming out?

A Oh yeah. Oh, the flush glass, I think, is great. I wish we could have done things like that years ago. And, the headlights--you always had to have big, round headlights--not always big, but--so they have their plus and minuses. I think, I'd rather be designing back in olden days than now.

Q What year is this?

A Well, I enjoyed so much at Briggs--so much. There's so much--such a far way to go. I mean, you could visualize ahead then that some great things, but what do you visualize now? I don't know what to visualize in a car of the future. I would probably be a flop.

Q They've come a long way, haven't they?

A Yeah, they've come a long way.

Q But, you had tried to experiment with curved glass at....

A Yeah. I made one little model at Briggs that was just a two door and no side glass behind the doors. It was just wrapped around, similar to Exner's '47 Starlight Coupe. Exner gets a lot of credit, and he deserves a lot of credit for that.

Q Well, in many respects your experiments with rounded backlights and curved windshields and a pair of side glasses, and your overall emphasis on the soft, rounded look, you were pretty much in the vanguard.

A Yeah. Usually that. Sometimes I went overboard. The ones that I did for--my samples for when I went to see Nash were just that. I had two of those models, and they were a little bulky. Nash did something like it, and I don't think it was nearly as nice, and it was referred to as a bath tub.

Q That would have been 19\_\_\_\_?

A I forget what year that was. During the early part of the war. See, that was--it came out right after the war, so it would be in '42, I guess.

Q So, you'd think you had quite a bit of influence over the years.

A Well, maybe, yeah.

Q With certain configurations, certain styling details. Are you glad that you went into design?

A Oh, that's the only thing I wanted to do.

Q Have you had any regrets at all?

A No, except that I may not have taken advantage of all the opportunities I had.

Q Have you done any consulting work since you've been retired?

A No. Only through magazines. In several magazines. Special Interest Autos, particularly, featured a lot of my work, including my autobiography, and Automotive Quarterly did a little bit of what I did. I think there was a picture of the N Car with me beside it. And, then this one that I've been corresponding with in England.

Q The Austin magazine?

A Yeah, but as far as doing anything for production, no. Although, I'd like to. I would like to be involved. Sometimes I thought I would like to do something like Gordon Buehrig has done with replicas--modified replicas--like the old Mercedes, Duesenberg or the Auburn or something--make a variation of it. There's one--it's called Zimmer.

Q The Zimmer?

A Yeah. Long hood and flowing fenders and stuff like that. But, that was kind of interesting.

Q Are you still modeling or still drawing?

A No, no, except for designing sweaters and dresses for "Kaia Knits," my daughter's company.

Q You have had a long and interesting career. Any final words for students of design and what they should look for in terms of design history?

A Well, first of all, they'd have to have an education like I didn't have. Like [at the] Art Center in California.

Q But you did go to Cornell for a few years?

A Yeah, but that wasn't particularly helpful in my career.

Q Help you in any way?

A Help--well, I wouldn't say any way, but it--engineering--well, I wasn't there long enough in engineering to do any good, and I wasn't much of an engineer anyway. Architecture--I can see where a long study in architecture might be all right, but for anybody interested in automobiles, it would certainly be not a school like I went to. It would be a something that just featured design work, and that would be the first

thing. And, then, of course, well, they should have to show their samples.

Q Portfolio?

A Right, portfolio.

Q And they should have an abiding love of cars, too.

A I think so. I think that's very important "They should have gasoline in their blood," as Virgil Exner used to say. And, even the history of cars. I think lots of times there's certain things even in the new car that might be reminiscent of some older car or something that was done earlier. they should continue to take helpful study courses.

Q Does design history repeat itself, occasionally?

A Yeah, it....

Q We've seen recurring themes--themes that recur if you wait ten or twenty years.

A Yeah.

Q Designers seem to go back and say, "I like that. Let's use a variation of that."

A But, I don't think it's done as much as it could be, though--should have been done. Maybe it's a little different now, but....

Q But, overall--the overall thematic thread of your career would be that you were trying to push the automotive design out of an integrated, squarish, boxy mode into a--how would you characterize it?

A More aerodynamic.

Q Softer?

A Softer, aerodynamic, yes. And, flowing lines, not things that interrupt. Like sometimes in some cars it looked as if one person did

the side view--part of it--and somebody else did the back view, and they tried to put them together, and they didn't match.

Q Would you call that design by committee these days?

A Well, it might have been. The Mustang one year--not the first one. The first one was fine. One of the later Mustangs--gosh, I looked at that, and it looked like the back view was all right, maybe the front view was all right, but somehow they didn't seem to come together--like one person did one, and another one did another, and management said, "I like that front end. I like this side view and that grille," and hoped it would come together.

Q Of course, that happened to you a couple of times in your career, didn't it?

A Well, I can't think just where, but it probably has. But, as a rule, I had--I was lucky, I think. I had a pretty free hand. I could--in the early days we didn't have any product planners--didn't have anybody to make up your own package. I made up my own package.

Q Did you?

A Yeah, many times. My line drawings all had the dimensions, and they were integrated. Product planners are something else. I don't want my son to hear because he is one. They were kind of a necessary evil, as far as I was concerned. I didn't want somebody telling me what the car should look like. I'd rather decide it myself, but [today] I realize that has to be.

Q Do you remember late in your career at Ford they somehow seemed to move the planning of the car into the engineering area?

A Well, early that was more so--early on. The Chrysler is a good

example of that. Chrysler was known for their good engineers--[Carl] Breer, and Oliver Clark and [Fred] Zeder, and it was an engineer-designed car, and even right through into the Airflow. I think.

Q Later on at Ford, I believe, Bordinat established the primacy of the designers, and he made them the key people.

A Yeah. Even changed the whole name of the place. It's Design Center. It's not an Art and Colour thing like General Motors started out with. It was called Styling first. And even at Hudson, I was called an artist, I think. Something like that.

Q Well, but at length, in the mid-'Sixties, I understand that the product planning unit became part of the engineering group, and the engineers, again, took over the planning of the vehicle.

A Probably, yeah.

Q Well, one last thought about Mr. Loewy. How would you place him in the pantheon of industrial designers?

A Well, he was certainly very successful. He had many big studios, and, I think, he relied upon his designers. He didn't try to do it himself. I think he's a better designer than Norman Bel Geddes as far as automobiles are concerned, and he did some--maybe some funnies, but, all in all, I think he's a good designer. But, Gordon Buehrig and Exner would say, "He was more of a showman than designer," but I'm not sure that that's true, because he did some things for Hupmobile and his personal cars, for instance, that were good, and, I think, he did them on his own.

Q He did some British automobiles.

A Yeah.

Q One of which you worked on?

A Yeah, two--the Austin Co. and the Rootes Group--and--so he was a good man to work for. It was really very pleasant and fun.

Q Who else would you place in that level? Can you think of anyone who we'd know that you worked with? Did you get a chance to work with George Walker when you worked for Ford?

A Yes.

Q You did? He seemed to have been known in management rather than a designer?

A Yeah, yeah, both. Bordinat was a designer. He came up through the ranks. And, certainly Kopka has, and the other one that's the chief designer--Jack Telnack--he's a very good designer, and I think he is pretty responsible for the new Mustang--the last Mustang which is very good and the Sable and Taurus. I think he's a good designer. I remember when I talked to him when I went through styling one time, and we were talking about the new Mustang that had just come out.\* That was before the one that he designed now, and it was one that I thought, and I told him so, I thought somebody designed the front, somebody designed the back, somebody designed the side, and they tried to put it together, and he agreed. He didn't like it either. He didn't do it, I think. At least, I hope he didn't.

Oh, there were so many others. There's one fellow now that's got an executive job who worked for me--John Aiken. He worked for me for a long time.

\*Editor's Note: Telnack succeeded to the Vice-Presidency of Design at Ford in mid-1987.

Q Where did he work?

A He worked for me in preproduction. He did some of the cars that came out of preproduction that he had a lot to do with, and one of them was the Lincoln. The one that I was telling you about that he did that Ford liked. He did that, and that pretty much came out the way it was designed.

Q What year was that?

A For the '68, I think. It was the first one of that series. See, they kept them for several years.

Q Would that have been the Mark III?

A It wasn't the Mark. No, it wasn't a Continental. It was a standard Lincoln.

Q Aiken is still at Ford, I think.

A Yeah, he's an executive now. He's got a good job, and I respect his work a lot. And, you were asking about some of the others. Who were the ones--Halderman.

Q Gail Halderman, did you know him?

A Yeah. I didn't know too much about his work, nor Bill Boyer's because they were in Ford studios.

Q Boyer did some work on the first Thunderbird?

A I'm sure he did a lot of nice work. Yeah, some of the Thunderbirds, but some of them I didn't like. I don't like all of them.

Q I think he was responsible for the initial design on the first one.

A The two-passenger?

Q Yes.



A Well, that was great, except the only thing I didn't like about it was the stovepipe fender--came right straight out there. There was no curve to it--or very little. But, my son has got four of them. He's got--I've restored one of them, and he's got a good, big garage out here, and he's got another at his other property. He's got about 13 cars. But, the Thunderbird--the last ones--were very nice. And, the [1956-57] two-passenger is very nice. He has the last '57 T-Bird built.

Q But, you didn't care for those four-passengers in the 'Sixties?

A Not all of them. I forget just which one. I think the first four-passenger I didn't care too much about, but, then, the later ones are better, but one Lincoln I did like very much--the first one that had the curved side glass that was low.

Q 1961?

A Yeah, I think it was '61.

Q The one that Aiken worked on?

A No.

Q Do you see any of your fellow designers occasionally?

A Yeah. I see Rulo Conrad. Do you know him?

Q No.

A He had a Lincoln preproduction studio at one time.

Q Where is he now?

A He lives in Florida in the Winter. I see him in the Wintertime. In fact, I've seen him in the Summertime at Torch Lake.

Q Well, it's been a great career for you. You've enjoyed it.

A Yeah, yeah, it really has. And, in fact, my first boss at Briggs, Ralph Roberts, says, "I don't know why we pay you because you like to

work so much. You enjoy your work."

Q You'd do it for nothing?

A Yeah. I started at \$75 a month, and I thought that was great, and, it wasn't--of course, in four months Roberts doubled my salary--\$150-- and, so I got married. That was enough for me to get married.

Q You look back on those Briggs days as....

A That was--it was the most fun. Well, there was three great times.

Q Tell us about it.

A The greatest--well, I don't know if it's the greatest--but the first--Briggs--and that was so much fun.

Q And, lots of freedom?

A Once in awhile under Tjaarda I wasn't so happy, but most of the time I was, and then under Loewy, and especially when going to England in those times, and especially working on the '53 Studebaker. Not so much at the end, but during most of it. Then, of course, the Ford--not the first one--not the Edsel car--but the part where I had my own preproduction. Had six designers. And, I had modelers when I needed them. The modelers didn't come under me. That was an interesting thing about Ford, or it was interesting to me, but I didn't like it. I had to be careful how I handled modelers because they didn't work for me. They admired me, I think, and did what I wanted, but they worked for Al Kellum, manager of Lincoln-Mercury modelers.

Q You were a modeler yourself.

A Well, I wasn't a modeler. I was never registered as a modeler. I was always a designer, but the modelers came under Al Kellum, and he was their boss, and he would assign them to me as I needed them. And, I had

to be careful what I used them for. One time I got in Dutch with Kellum. I wanted a table moved or something, and I asked one of the modelers to help me move it. Well, they told Al, and Al let me have it.

Q Well, it's been a good career for you.

A Yeah, it has.

Q You've enjoyed it? You had mentioned earlier that you'd like to say a few words about some of the senior designers that you'd known in your career. Could you think of a few of them that you...?

A Well, one of them that I didn't know was Amos Northup. He was chief designer of Murray Body. They were in competition with Briggs. They had their own design department similar to Briggs, and he did the Graham-Paige back in '32--the ones with the first skirted fenders. He did the Reo Royale. They were cars that I really admired. They had-- instead of having a gas tank out where it showed, he covered them up, and he had nice, rounded fenders, and the Graham, of course, had the skirted fenders, and they both had nice moulding treatments. And, then he did a--the Graham-Paige--later one that was a very advanced with the radiator leaning forward, and he died during the development of that, and it didn't really come off like he would normally have designed it. But, he was somewhat responsible for that. The other designers....

Q You said Phil Wright was one of your--one of the men you most admired at Briggs. What what was his...?

A Well, he had had quite a lot of experience before I even met him, and he sat right behind me at Briggs, and we became quite well acquainted, and he helped me a lot in my renderings and my drawing. I was very inexperienced, and I remember one time he said I wondered why

Roberts ever kept [you]. He said I drew so terrible, but later I got better, and did get nice line drawings. But, he was such an expert at rendering and designing. Sometimes, you find a good--a person that's very good in art work and rendering and not such a good designer, but he really was. He designed the Silver Arrow--Pierce Arrow--which was way out in its day and later some other things. Also, the '35 Ford, and I did the '36 Ford, which was a facelift of the '35.

Q Tell us bit about Virgil Exner, Senior. You respected him.

A Yes, yes.

Q As a designer and as a person.

A Both. Once in awhile he did something--a car that was, maybe, a little funny here and there, but, as a whole, he did a lot of real nice things. He was, I'd say, an excellent designer.

Q He deserves his reputation.

A Yeah. I was sorry they didn't give him more write-up in the DIA catalog. It just mentions him in his biography but....

Q You, of course, had run across him at Studebaker in the early years.

A Yes.

Q When you first went there he was the chief.

A He wasn't the chief. Gordon came in as the chief according to the records, but....

Q Buehrig?

A Yeah, Buehrig did, but Exner seemed to be more of the boss. He had been there for a long time and knew the engineers and was more acquainted. Gordon came in as a stranger, and, so, naturally Ex had the

advantage.

Q You mentioned Paul Meyers. What can you tell us about him at Briggs?

A He was such a wonderful artist and a good designer too. Although, I don't think he ever had the opportunity to do an awful lot. Although, it says in his DIA biography that he worked on Cadillac and LaSalle, and I know those--some of those early LaSalles pretty much came from some of his designs. I had a lot of respect for him. Particularly as an artist.

Q Can you tell us about John Tjaarda from your days at Briggs what kind of a designer he was?

A Well, he did this dream car that later became the Zephyr. That's what he gets his reputation for, and then that was a nice car.

Q 1934?

A It was before that, because I started (at Briggs) in '33, and it was there then. They were starting to work on the metal car when I started. But, the other things he did, he did a rear engine--a small car. He did the same front end for Hupmobile and Graham-Paige, which used the Buehrig Cord body. Just the nameplates were different.

Q Did he stay on at Briggs after you left?

A Yeah.

Q What did he do then?

A I don't know except from what I heard that he got in trouble with some of the management at Briggs, and he was let go, and it was kind of abrupt, and it wasn't very pleasant. But, other than that, I don't know. I know he made a few people unhappy that he let go and then tried to hire

back, including myself.

Q You wouldn't go back. What about Gregorie, did you ever have a...?

A Yes, I did meet him. While I was at Briggs, I knew that Ford was having a design department, and I went over to see him--see if I could get in and work with him, and he came right out and told me very bluntly that he did all the designing there--or gave me that impression. And, if I was there, I'd be a modeler.

Q Not a designer?

A No. I don't know if he said that, really, but that's the impression I got, and that wasn't what I wanted. And, that's about the only impression I have [of Gregorie].

Bob Wieland, I've mentioned him before, I think he's a very good designer. He's also a very good illustrator, and he made some illustrations of old cars he has in his home in Florida. We're very close friends, and we talk about cars, and his son is an illustrator for cars. He does magazines and stuff, too. He does a lot of car artwork.

Q Did Wieland stay on at Ford after you left?

A It was sort of a sad thing in a way. He went to Germany and worked under Duncan McCrea for three years.

Q Duncan McCrea?

A Yes, and when he came back, he didn't have any better job than when he left. In the meantime, I'd been promoted, and he was to come back and work for me if I stayed on. However, I had just retired at that time, and John Middlestead took my place. So, Bob worked for him until he retired a short time afterward. We traveled together in Europe a couple of different occasions. And, he's an excellent designer, and I know

there are many others.

Q Did you ever get to meet Joe Oros? Did you ever know him?

A Oh, sure, sure.

Q Can you tell us about Joe--your impressions of him?

A I liked Joe a lot. When I came there, he didn't really have a studio of his own. He and Elwood Engel sort of were over all the studios. They had a free hand--could walk in and talk to anybody and tell them what's going on, and if either one liked something we were doing and wanted you to see what somebody else is doing in another studio, he could take you in another studio, while the rest of us, we weren't free to go to them. Later Oros became Chief Stylist of Ford studio, and Elwood went to Chrysler as Vice-President of Styling

Q Thank you, Mr. Koto, for these fascinating reminiscences.

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