Transcript for

AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH EUGENE BORDINAT, 1984

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NOTE TO READERS

This PDF-format version of the Eugene Bordinat interview transcript was created from a Word document, created in turn from the transcript available on the *Automobile in American Life and Society* Web site (http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu).

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).

Staff of the Benson Ford Research Center
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AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of Eugene [Gene] Bordinat, Jr.

Reminiscence from the 1985 Interview with Eugene Bordinat, Jr. Automotive Design Oral History, Accession 1673. Benson Ford Research Center. The Henry Ford.

This is David Crippen at the [Edsel B. Ford] Center for the Study of Industrial Design at the Henry Ford Museum, and this is June 27, 1984. Today we're interviewing Eugene [Gene] Bordinat, Jr.--long-time head stylist/designer at the Ford Motor Company and, for [almost] twenty years, Vice-President of Design. We've asked Mr. Bordinat to tell his story in his own way and in his own sequence.

A: In 1936, I went to the University of Michigan, and after being there for two years--a little over two years--I was informed of a school that was starting at General Motors. They were having difficulty in getting fellows--then known as stylists--because there were very few schools that were teaching any of that kind of work--even industrial design--which bears on auto design, and as a result, they decided to start this school which was the brain child of Harley Earl who was then the Vice-President of the Styling Section at General Motors and was working directly for [Chairman] Alfred P. Sloan at the time. The school was unusual in a sense. They selected thirty-three people from throughout the country. They had to submit samples and references and the normal things, and I was fortunate to be one of the thirty-three people. The group was unusual in that nobody had any experience in automobile design, but they had demonstrated a love for cars, were able to put together their concepts of cars for their samples and brought, of course, their other samples which were in the fields that they'd been in, such as shoe design, industrial design, dress design. Some were illustrators for various advertising agencies and so forth. This came as kind of a surprise to me because my own urge was to be in advertising. I could draw well, and I could write rather well, and I thought that that gave me two legs [up] in the advertising world, but this looked like an interesting opportunity, and I'd always had a love for cars, and so I decided to give it a shot. The school itself was interesting and rather pressure-packed because you were paid for going to school in the first place--the sum of $75 a month for the first three months, and at the end of the three-month period they would either fire you or they would graduate you to the next three-month segment and give you a $10 raise. Inflation notwithstanding, that was not a great deal of money in those days. At the end of a year, I think that I was making $105 a month and was graduated into the sanctum sanctorum of the Research Building B where their then styling section resided and was a given a raise to $150 a month. That was the beginning of my career as a professional automobile stylist-designer. I worked in an advanced studio for the first portion of that time and was happy to be recognized by Harley Earl because I had designed a front end for a car that had to be listed as his favorite, known as the LaSalle. It was his favorite because it was his entree into the General Motors design business in those days, and he paid special attention to it. Naturally, I was pleased to have done this for a man for which I got an immediate $25 raise. Their policies were a little different on giving raises in those days, and then was, of course, crushed to find out that they were going to discontinue the manufacture of the LaSalle. I then went into the Chevrolet studio and played a part in the

development of the 1942 Chevrolets. The war was approaching, the government was causing the automobile companies to cease and desist in the manufacture of cars, and so General Motors thought that there would be little use for their styling section. They dissolved it but kept a few of us in various places within the corporation where, I think, they thought that they could get us back again when the war was over. I went to Fisher Body and spent quite a bit of time working on the M4A2 military tank and had the privilege of designing many of the tools and fixtures that were used in its manufacture. When it came time to actually get into the manufacture of the tank itself, the pilot line was to be placed in the Fisher Body number one plant which was in the South side of Flint, and, at that time, they had no one that could help them lay out the plant so they asked if I had ever--if I thought I could do that kind of work, and I said, "No problem." Obviously, the optimism of youth, and I did. I was helped no little bit in this by the fact that my father, in the course of his career, had been the plant engineer for the Willys Overland Corporation, at that time defunct. He gave me the principles of how one lays out an assembly line, which, I might add, I had never seen in my life up to that time, and so I did it, and it worked, and then followed by doing the same thing for the permanent assembly lines in the Fisher Body Grand Blanc Tank Arsenal just South of Flint. As a result of that, I had the opportunity to work with Mr. [James E.] Goodman, and Bud Goodman ultimately ended up as the Executive Vice President in Charge of Manufacturing for General Motors and was in charge, at that time, of eight of the factories in Flint that were devoted to the manufacture of this particular tank. He was under the guidance and supervision of Del[mar] Harder who had the complete responsibility for the development of the tank at Fisher Body. Mr. Harder was interested in having an inspection manual that would fit into his hip pocket that dealt with all the assembly operations and product illustrations of all of the pieces, etc., that he could carry with him when he would go out to see how things were going along the plant line.

I was given the responsibility for supervising that particular operation. I believe I was 23 at that time. It was a successful operation. At least, it pleased Harder, and I only bring up this name because I was to run into him later when I came over to Ford Motor Company. However, I was hearing the drums beat and [watching] the flags fly, and so I decided to get into the service. This was difficult to do because of the various deferments that the corporation was giving me, and the only way you could get in was getting into officer's training, but they considered aviation cadets a part of officer's training and so I was given my release and entered the service where I became a cadet.

Q: Was that the Air Force?

A: Well, it was the Army Air Corps at that time, Dave, and then it changed to the Air Force while I was in it. But, at any rate, it was a rather uneventful military career, and, on my return, I went back to General Motors. In the meantime, Ford Motor Company was beginning to become active in non-military kinds of activity--car manufacture and so forth--and, in 1946, began to put together a group of executives. Henry Ford [II] had been called from the Navy. He, and as I understand it, under the guidance of his mother as well as using--what's his name--as his advisor--the fellow that had the financial....

Q: Ernie Kanzler?

A: Ernie Kanzler.* And between those two they gave him good counsel and put together a team of rather hard-hitting executives under Ernest R. Breech. The newspapers were beginning to talk about what was happening at Ford. They obviously had told of their fantastic financial

*Editor's Note: Ernest C. Kanzler, brother-in-law to Edsel B. Ford, was a longtime advisor to the Ford family.

losses, but it looked a little exciting to me. I was still fairly young, and it looked like it would be a very slow climb through the various steps at General Motors; and even though I was very bullish about myself, I was also very much in a hurry. So two people that I had known at General Motors had already left and gone to Ford Motor Company--two people in the styling end of the business. One was John Oswald, and John was a former chief body engineer for Oldsmobile and had been brought over by Harold Youngren who was formerly with Oldsmobile and had become the Vice President in Charge of Engineering for Ford Motor Company. John Oswald was in charge of body engineering and styling for Ford. In order to handle the styling affairs, he hired a fellow by the name of George Snyder. George Snyder had previously been with General Motors under Harley Earl in charge of Chevrolet, Pontiac and Oldsmobile, as I recall. He was sharing the duties of the total car line with Bill Mitchell who had Buick and Cadillac and, ultimately, became my counterpart at General Motors.

Q: Who did you say brought over Oswald and Snyder? Was it Youngren?

A: Youngren--Harold Youngren. After the usual negotiations I came to Ford Motor Company in charge of advanced styling.

Q: Were you recruited directly by Harold Youngren?

A: No. No, as a matter of fact, I had run into George Snyder, and George Snyder said, "Hey, you're missing out on a great opportunity," and so he said, "Get your samples together and come on over," and I did, and, of course, for me that was a quantum leap. I had had a taste of supervision, not on styling matters, but in the manufacturing end, and to go back on the board seemed to test my patience a little bit, and so I was more than pleased to come over in a supervisory capacity of some consequence at Ford Motor Company, and, of course, the money was pretty good too. So, that was my beginning with Ford Motor Company. In 1947--August, as I recall.

There was a fellow that was titular head of styling at that time whose name was Tom Hibbard. Did Johnny [Najjar] mention Tom?

Q: Yes, he did.

A: He did. Because John would have worked for Tom. Tom Hibbard succeeded Gene--what was his name?

Q: Gregorie?

A: Gregorie [Eugene T.], yeah--known as Bob Gregorie. Bob was very close, of course, to Edsel Ford--had worked with him on the development of the Mark I Continental, and, of course, was also responsible for the-about 133 through '39, maybe [19]42, kinds of cars, but Gregorie--I believe it was in there, sometime, [1943] that Edsel Ford had died, and Gregorie was not that solid and, besides, his interests were more nautical than automotive, and so he peeled out and, I believe, went to Florida. Tom Hibbard took his place. I had ran into Tom Hibbard at General Motors where he was in charge of an advanced studio. His reason for being at General Motors was because a fellow by the name of [Howard] "Dutch" Darrin was a partner of Hibbard's in the custom car world. They had an office in France. Mrs. [Alfred] Sloan happened to see this office and saw the cars, was quite taken by it and told her husband about this, and he thought it would be a good idea to get this fellow that had all this imagination, and so they brought Tom Hibbard over. The interesting thing was that Tom was the salesman and Darrin was the designer, but

Tom got into the design business that way. He rapidly demonstrated his inability to either administer or design when he was at General Motors. In fact, in all candors--he happened to have the studio which was juxtaposition to the one that I was in--and, as a result, I could look in and see him either (a) sleeping or (b) reading Yachting magazine, and not much was coming out of the studio. So, he left, but, on the reputation that he had--obviously, not too thoroughly investigated--was given the job in charge of design at Ford Motor Company. He lay doggo there. I happened to have an office that was next to his, and I continued to see more of the same, and so, nobody paid much attention to poor old Tom, and, ultimately, he left our bed and board, and I don't know what happened to him. I hope he went back to selling. But those were quite adventuresome days. I remember how shocked I was when I first walked into the place. The styling operation--occupied a corner of the now Triple E Building which I guess was the old Ford Administration or Ford Engineering Building, at any rate. It was really the Ford Administration Building before the one on--[3000 Schaefer Road]--yeah, because I know the corner office that Youngren had was Henry Ford's I former office.* I know it was a place of great interest with its high-vaulted ceilings and its floor which they had more people polishing than they had designing cars, and little mementos of Henry Ford's days of the square dancing during the noon hours and various things of that nature. This was fascinating but hardly my idea of what the business was all about. In one corner of that building was the then styling organization. George Snyder had managed to get some partitions put up dividing it into a few studios, and there were only about 50 people
when I first came over, and that included sweepers, shop personnel, designers, modelers, administrators, and the whole schmier. That compared--what?
*Editor's Note: The building at 3000 Schaefer Road was the main Ford Administration Building. The Engineering Laboratory on Oakwood Boulevard was the engineering administration building.

Q: Excuse me. Was this in the North end or the South end?

A: Oh golly, don't give me ends. As you face the door it was to your left.

Q: That would be the North end.

A: North end, yes. And I would say that it took up about, maybe, a quarter of the length of the building. Let's see, there was a Lincoln-Mercury studio, and a Ford studio, and an advanced studio, and an interior-trim-color combined studio, and the offices that we were using were the ones that were for the former executive corps of the whole corporation, which were not modern, but they sure were impressive.

Q: The old Mahogany Row?

A: Oh, it really was, and, of course, I had a desk that I could have built a bed on. It was a massive thing. Anyhow, to give it perspective, at that time, General Motors had about 450 in their styling section.

Q: For all divisions?

A: For all divisions, yeah. So even if you prorated it X [number of] people per division, 50 people were still not very many. So we were commissioned not only to go forth and do great and wondrous things but also to build up a cadre of people.

To talk a little about people [at Ford styling]. There was very little sophisticated technology, compared to what General Motors had, in this relatively small organization, and one of the jobs was to sort out the people that were not just there as a result of just having been there, but that really had talent and could go forth and do a good job. There were a number of very good people. They were, obviously, misdirected and were taking an awful lot of time to do things because they had no way of measuring how long it took to do things--at least at General Motors. And I don't think that General Motors was the epitome, it's just that they were there first and had developed a lot of techniques that didn't exist at Ford. Out of that group, that you could say was inherited by a cadre from General Motors, there were some outstanding people--and Bill Wagner, who was a former graduate architect, a fellow with great taste, [an] unlikely interest in trucks, who, because he was an aesthete, really, but was a great truck man and ran that part of the operation for many years.

Q: Is this Willys P.?

A: Willys P. Willys P. was, and his wife were, very active with the [design] cadre at Cranbrook, where, by the way, I had also spent some time but not as an enrolled, full-time student, but I'd taken evening courses at the Academy.

Q: What were the subjects?

A: Oh, life drawing and other things that are so useful in the commercial world, but great training, really, of the hands. But Bill was awfully good. Ted Hobbs had already gone over. He had formerly been with General Motors; in fact, he ran the Pontiac studio at General Motors.

Q: Do you have his name there, by any chance?

A: No, I don't. He was quite an important fellow.

Q: Could you give it to me again, please?

A: Ted, as in Theodore, Hobbs.

Q: I'm glad to hear that.

A: Ted was in charge of all the trim and color work at Ford and was until his retirement and a fine designer. He had run into a little difficulty at General Motors with Harley Earl--which wasn't difficult to do--and so he chose to leave and go to Ford, and really got into a field--the color and trim field--which he really wasn't all that familiar with but he did a masterful job of it for a number of years. He had Herman Brunn working for him at that time, and Herman was awfully good. Herman came from the old Brunn Body Works [Buffalo, NY]. His father had been in charge of that, so he was intimately familiar with custom automobiles and so forth and stayed with the [Ford Motor] Company until his retirement. Ted, unfortunately, as an aside, a few days before he was to retire took his last physical examination under the auspices of Ford for their executives down at Ford Hospital, discovered he had leukemia, and so he, rather than retiring to the golf course as he had planned, of course, a year later expired, but it was a tragic thing. Bill Schmidt happened to be there, and he was working on Lincoln matters at the time, as I recall, and Bill was very gifted. Unfortunately, he felt that his opportunities at Ford might be somewhat stifled because of the influx of people from General Motors. This was a fallacious assumption, by the way. He was very well thought of, and Bill was a fine designer and good politician--now, I use politician in the sense of it being a necessary piece of the business--and had great taste. But he had a lot of entrepreneurial drive, and when Jim Nance took over Packard, he was given an opportunity to become their vice president in charge of styling, and with certain conditions that made it very inviting for Bill, the conditions being that he could carry on an independent, industrial design business on the outside, which was fine, I guess, in those days, but would be considered a massive conflict of interest in these. And [he] went out, stayed with Packard until their demise and then became, already had the groundwork and a going, independent, industrial design business, and has been a very successful industrial designer in the interim.

John Najjar, who as I recall was on Mercury at the time, but I don't remember for sure.

Q: That's what he says.

A: And John always reminded me of "Shadow" in [the] "Harold Teen" [comic strip]. I don't know whether you remember that or not, but John just reminds me of that. Highly intelligent, beautifully-organized mind, not the finest designer in the world, but a good recognizer of design--an atrocious renderer and an absolutely brilliant sketch man, and it's an interesting example. One doesn't have to be a renderer, but when a lot of your competition is showing off by rendering, it's something of a disability, but John had other talents that showed through that. He gave it a whirl, but he wouldn't stick with it because he was too embarrassed to go against fellows who'd really been top pros of the business for some time. But, that boy can draw! He can really draw, and he has a good, analytical mind. A lot of design--you know, people think that you sit down and make sketches that, by some God-given fashion, are ultimately transformed into

some sort of an automobile. But, back in those days--and even today--most of the creative product planning comes out of the design center. Product planners are great at taking a known and making a determination as to whether or not it's financially viable, if you can separate their own biases from it, and determining what the absolute costs of the car would be and the cost of manufacture, etc., etc. But, I have never seen a product planner come up with an idea--not a car--just an idea for a car. Those were all generated in the design center.

So, there were others--Bruno Kolt was one that happened to be there, but Bruno didn't like the pressure of the building of things, and -- did Bruno Kolt's name ever get down there? [on Najjar's outline of Ford Design staff]

Q: Yes.

A: Charming fellow. I think he was Austrian, and he had. Some talents to offer, but a funny thing happens when there's a massive onslaught of people from the outside into what has been a rather carefully-cocoonized kind of an operation. Some say, "Well, okay, that's the way it is," and work to become a part of that organization, others are not that sure of themselves. They feel that they've lost their security blanket, and they feel that going someplace else might be more desirable. He went someplace else of his own volition, nobody said, "Hey, go," and he could have been a contributor; unfortunately, he wasn't of a personality that wanted to work with that change.

Jimmy Lynch was there. Jimmy Lynch was an excellent shop supervisor in spite of the fact that he had two fantastic disabilities--one, was the size and equipment in his shop which was very small, and the second was that he was caught up in what was then considered a perfectly normal kind of thing to do--taking care of all the electrical and other fabricating needs of the executives of the corporation that had boats or summer homes or whatever, and so the--it, apparently, had been a way that, to Henry Ford I, couldn't have been unknown, but it must have been a way that he helped reward them in addition to taxable salaries-witness [Harry] Bennett and all his houses, and he never had a salary, you know, that sort of thing. So, this was common practice. I found it fascinating. As a matter of fact, I found it sort of nifty, but it was, obviously, illegal as hell, and it [yet] really wasn't, not if you have an independent company that way.

Q: Unethical?

A: Unethical, certainly, and a double standard, certainly, and, of course, the minute we went public, then it became a shareholder interest, and it was downright illegal, but so Jimmy's time was being chewed up. I had mixed emotions about it at the time. I wasn't running the place, but, obviously, a lot of my things were in his shop, and my own performance was going to be measured on how those things came out of that shop. On the other hand, I suppose, Jimmy was doing one of the great political services of the world. There wasn't an executive in the place that didn't smile on that little function, you see. But, Jim was there until he retired, too.

George Martin, who had been with--is he there?

Q: I'm not sure.

A: Well, at any rate, George Martin was there under Jimmy Lynch, and they had never done a cast of a car at that time--a plaster cast or anything. Jim had been in charge of all the plexiglas work for the bombers out in Willow Run--all the bubbles, the gunnery bubbles and things of that nature. I only bring it up because when Jimmy Lynch retired, George took over his responsibility and was very active in developing techniques which certainly began to exceed what General Motors had in the business of full-size casts of automobiles and so forth. Before going out to Willow Run, he had been one of the premier modelers at General Motors, and so he knew everything from the modeling all the way up to through making these casts. Many of the techniques he developed himself.

So that was the matrix of what we had. I went over a few months, I believe, or a month before Bob McGuire, also from General Motors, came over, and when he arrived, my duties were changed to be in charge of all exterior, and Bob was in charge of all interior for all cars. We began to pick up people from other corporations and here's where I get a little out of order on sequencing. Gordon Buehrig joined us, as I recall, and Gordon, of course, has had a reputation for many years for being the developer of Duesenbergs and Cords and was less of--in his capacity with Ford--I won't say this about the Duesenbergs and Cords—but he was more an innovator of different kinds of cars. Example: up until his arrival we had a wood station wagon, and so did the world at large, but, of course, Ford was avant-garde with their [1929] wood station wagon, and, you know, Iron Mountain forests and the usual vertical integration that Henry Ford I believed in, and so we were pretty good at that, but it was getting more and more difficult to handle wood. As a result, Gordon had the idea of building a station wagon off of a 1949 Ford, that was all steel, and to which we could attach plastic wood pieces and various grains and so forth which sounds terribly hokey and artificial, and it was, but it was terribly successful. And he developed an interchangeability, at that time, for using many, many of the sedan components, so that the cost of putting this station wagon out was far less than any cost of putting out a wood wagon we'd ever done before. And so he made very good contributions there. Ultimately, [he] went on to be the body engineer for William Clay Ford in the development of the Mark II Continental when they set that up as a separate division.

There were many other fellows that came on board. What does John have there in his list of folks at the time?

Q: He mentioned Beneike and clay modeling.

A: Beneike was very good. He pronounced it Ben-i-kee, by the way. His son pronounces it Ben-a-kee. I happen to know both of them, and, yes, Beneike was the old--he was no young man at that time, and he was an old, pipe-smoking guy that really had a fine feel for surface. He was very slow, but very thorough, and I took to using him on smaller pieces, primarily, because bull work on full-size clay models is pretty heavy duty--I mean you're throwing around--you know, you put up a couple tons of mud and then you are working on large surfaces, and Dick was much better at smaller things. I mean, it was more within his then physical capacity, frankly, and we could take advantage of his great modeling ability and work it on stuff where he wasn't breaking his pick. Yeah, he was there, and Martin Regitko.

Q: Regitko was another, yes--the layout man.

A: Yes. Martin was not too sure about "us stylists," but I learned to love him. He was a fellow that was accustomed to having the designers pretty much under his thumb. You could develop a surface of the side of a car, for example, and if it did not fit Martin's "side-of panel schweep" well, then he changed it to his sweep, see? But we, after a lot of trauma, actually reached an understanding, and those of us that were trying to execute things there, and, of course, he was our first point of contact. He had to get it off the model onto the paper from which the tools were made, and if he didn't reflect the model, obviously we had no idea what was going to come out. But it turned into a really--quite a lovefest. It was one of the most delightful associations I can remember, all the time I was there, and, frankly, not too many guys in the design business can say that about too many engineers. But we got along famously, and he was probably the most sophisticated fellow in the art and technique of body development of any man I ever knew. It was tender and thoughtful and lovely that he had composed a book about four inches thick on how to key a drawing and how to really do sophisticated body engineering. Such techniques as foreshortening all the drawings, nesting sections and things of that nature that could tell you if you had a bump in a highlight or a lot of things very quickly. And it was also unfortunate because that was his legacy, and shortly after he retired, and I was privileged to be the master of ceremonies at his retirement, and I must tell you it was a tearful thing.

Q What year did he retire?

A I can't remember. It's in the archives! He was a such a delightful man. We all loved and respected him and thought that this tone that he had produced was absolutely wonderful, and it was for about a year, and then came computers, you see, and numerical control, and we began to take surfaces off with massive machines that would go onto a Gerber machine which would draft it out automatically, and the day of the draftsman was practically extinct which, in a way, is a tragedy. It's a great training ground for people, but that isn't to say that the body engineer's extinct, you understand. But he was a fantastically valuable contributor to our organization. Remind me of some other names, and maybe I can give you a little fill on them.

Q I have it here as J.[ohn] Walter or....

A Oh, Walter, yeah. I didn't know him very well, frankly, because he was there when Johnny [Najjar] was.

Q Right. This is the group.

A And as I recall, he had left before we came over, and I think he got into independent, industrial design, but I'm not sure. All of us were doing a little moonlighting in those days, and I think that Johnny had some work that he was doing for them, and I helped Johnny out on a couple of occasions. I remember--I think it was John that actually developed the logo for Whirlpool that is still used--you know, the one that looks like the Whirlpool.

Q That's John Walter.

A Yeah, well, John Najjar for John Walter. But, you know,

regardless who develops it, the guy that's the leader is the....

Q I think John did mention that. He mentioned also W. Kruke.

A Walter Kruke, yeah. Walter was working with Ted Hobbs. He was part of the trim and color operation, and Walter was a tall, heavy-set chap. The most gentle of gentlemen that I'd ever met and was married to a very attractive gal, and to see them together, they were the epitome of sophistication. He was very, very good at what he did. You see, we didn't inherit a bunch of bums, Ford had done their homework before. They had some good people there. They did not know up-to-date technique, but they had a hell of lot of talent. And Kruke fell into that category. He was a very--he and Herman Brunn were sort of the right and left hand bowers to Ted Hobbs, and the unfortunate thing about Walter was, and nobody could tell, that he was a dipsomaniac, and like so many fellows who develop a fantastic tolerance for whiskey, you never know that they are drinking even. I suppose people that chew cloves are kind of a dead giveaway, and it was a tragedy because he expired from cirrhosis of the liver, and it came as a shock to all but his most intimate friends because he was full of alcohol, but he was never drunk. He was a perfect gentleman. I was very, very fond of him, and it was really just a tragedy that he had this problem, and that it ruined his body.

Q What was his forte?

A Trim and color.

Q Trim and color with Ted Hobbs?

A Yeah.

Q John mentions as trainees, in this period, some of whom later came

on--G. E. "Bud" Adams whom you knew well, I think.

A Yup.

Q He mentions Barbara.

A I hired George, as a matter of fact, and, in those days, because the schools weren't really pumping out the kind of thing that they were supposed to, you know. Well, there wasn't enough need, really. As a matter of fact, you add up all the people that could remotely call themselves car designers now, and you'd probably undercut a thousand nationwide, and so schools did get so that they were cranking them out, but for a long time there really wasn't enough reason for the people to get into it--into transportation courses, I guess they called them. But, I remember George coming to--oh, no, he's not talking about George, he's talking about Placid Barbara, isn't he?

Q B is the first initial.

A Well, I think that he means Placid. Is he talking about a modeler, do you know?

Q He is just mentioned as a trainee.

A Trainee. Well, we didn't really have trainees for modelers, and Placid Barbara and George Barbas--is it Barbas, by any chance?

Q I think it's Barbara.

A Well, then it has to be Placid because there was only one Barbara-what did we call him? I never called him Placid--Benny!

Q That's what....

A Yeah, okay. Benny was an interesting story. The Barberas were,

perhaps still are, a big name in Detroit Mafia, and Benny was always surrounded by a lot of people who drove big cars and had expensive clothes, and Benny's mother had a little chat with him when he was a young man and said, "Hey, Benny, don't go that way," he said, "Okay, Mother, I do solemnly swear," and he never did, and I always admired the fact that he didn't because he was plagued with this fantastic urge to play like the big boys. He bought very expensive clothing, he never went to a shabby nightclub, he suffered from satyriasis, I believe, and always was on the make for girls, and this costs money, but he was an A-1 modeler, absolutely superb, had the filthiest vocabulary of any man I ever knew, and was a glutton for overtime. But every time--he would spend the money, of course--and he would work the overtime to satisfy his other urges--the clothes, the clubs, the girls and so forth. Well, it came to

Benny, as it does to so many, that he would take unto himself a wife, and he did, and overnight there was a changed Benny--no more chasing, still wore the nice clothes, began to save his money, bought a lovely home, changed his vocabulary. I never heard him utter one profanity or anything, from that day forward. I have never in my life seen such a 1800 transformation in one man, but he was crackerjack modeler, and he was one of the leaders of the sects of modelers--there were two sects--the Catholics and Protestants, and Al Kellum was the leader of ,the Protestants-Masons. This was one of the biggest problems I have ever faced because--I'll come back to George Walker--but George Walker was a Mason, George Walker was a consultant and was credited with the development of the '49 Ford, and, I suppose, much of this is a litany that's been put down by many other people.

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Q No. We'd like to have that story

A Okay. Well, George was a political animal. He was a very successful, independent industrial designer, and I have no aversion to political animals, but he would--he had a couple of fellows who were working for him--Elwood Engle and Joe Oros--and it was, obviously, important to him to toot their horn, and many of the things that we developed for Ford Motor Company were shot down by George in his capacity as a consultant so that his own boys could come in and "fix this," you see, which is how one keeps on top of the heap in that business, and Ernie Breech, who was a genius at so many things, did enjoy having famous people working for him, and George was internationally famous, and so this was rather nice. They both belonged to the same clubs, you know, and so this was a great arrangement. And George was not without talent, by the way, but he was absolutely merciless with things that didn't go quite his way, and, frankly, not the most ethical man in the world. He also had a third interest in an outfit called Trim Trends, and, as an independent, that was fine. They did about all of Ford's grilles and chrome trim and things of that nature. Well, after a fallow period, when they decided to create a bigger, more substantial design center and spin it off from--before they spun it off from engineering, Youngren had already left, and MacPherson had taken his place. MacPherson could not abide George Walker at all, nor could Bill Ford, and, of course, this ultimately augured to my benefit, but it was kind of tacky for a long time, because, you know, you were serving a couple of masters. But George was a Mason, and there was a lot of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," which I tend to think should not be in business, but it creeps in.

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[Al] Kellum was a Mason, and, of course, he became a favorite head modeler, supervisory modeler of George's. Well, obviously, the Catholics could see the favors that were being pushed in that direction. They could see people that were working for Al Kellum moving---sometimes only imagined, by the way--faster than they were and so forth. Both Al and George, knowing that I was a Protestant, were very anxious to get me to become a member of the Masons, and I have no--I'm not a congenital joiner, but I have no objection to Masonry, I mean, it's a fine organization, but I didn't like the way they were using it, and I could-almost could smell entrapment in this damned thing, and so I refused to join. I just said that I wasn't interested, and I'm glad I did it that way, because had I, and what happened subsequently, as far as my own career was concerned, I never would have been able to solve this problem. But, eventually, we got on top of it, and everybody was treated equally and so forth, but that was a toughie. You talk about palace revolts. It was on the edge. That can breed unionism. It can breed all kinds of things, you know. Well, just the morale stank. So, George was, ultimately, made the vice president of the place when it was spun off from engineering and was there for five years.

Q Excuse me. Were you there when the competition for the '49 Ford was going on?

A No. As you know, cars are developed, or, in those days, particularly at Ford, about three years before they ever hit the road, and I went over there in '47, so it was a happening, really, before....

Q Before you got there?

A Yeah. Harold Youngren should be given credit for making it

happen--not necessarily how it happened--but for making it happen, because the Mercury had already been developed, and the Mercury was too much car to be a Ford, and he noticed that immediately and said, "Hey, we have to get something that'll undercut this for size. We'll use this for the Mercury," that sort of thing, and I'm sure that Breech responded to that, and I'm sure George Walker got the commission because of Breech. The competition was interesting because George really never did the '49 Ford. A fellow by the name of Dick--Arabic name--went to Chrysler later--it'll come to me--not Arbib, but, at any rate, he had been at Studebaker as a draftsman, and he had come upon--don't tell me how--a model that was developed at Studebaker. The model developed at Studebaker was done by--oh, God, he worked for me--remind me, we'll come back to it, it'll come to me--by this chap that was also at Studebaker and who ultimately came and worked for us at Ford [Holden "Bob" Koto]. Calleal was the fellow's name--Dick Calleal--and Dick, in search of a job having left Studebaker, with model in little hot hand--talk about coincidental timing--took the model and his other samples to George W. Walker. George was right in the throes of this competition that you're talking about, and the essence of this car turned him on. Here was some way to go. This was a chance, and he took it, and developed it further, had a bunch of illustrations made, and things of that nature, of it and so forth, and it

became the winner of the contest. He became the fellow that won the contract and the whole schmier. Now that car--how people come by things in subtle ways--he rewarded Dick. He bought a design from Calleal. He didn't know where it came from--Calleal had it, that's all he knew. His reward for him--because George was very

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clever--he didn't want to hire him on. He didn't think (a) he had that much talent, and (b) he didn't think that he should sort of have to pay that kind of money. The way he rewarded him was [to] encourage Ford to hire him, you see, so he was part of the permanent party personnel at Ford. A nice fellow, by the way. When he left, he went: over to Chrysler in charge of their truck program, and was there for--I didn't follow his career very closely, but he was there for a number of years, and they did some pretty good work on trucks. The guy had some ability, but not on a par with the fellows we've been talking about right now. But that car was already in existence when I got over there. A fresh eye is always useful, and there were a few things about the front end that had to be adjusted, and I played a part in that, or I, and my people did, but the credit for getting it to Ford Motor Company, regardless of the circuitous ways, was George Walker, and then, of course, this terrible conflict between consultant and permanent party personnel began to develop, and they didn't think that they needed George anymore, so they let him go. So when they separated styling from engineering, they needed a head, and George served a useful purpose. He, obviously, wasn't going to come on at less than a vice-presidential level--after all, there was Harley Earl over at General Motors and so forth, and so he made that happen. He established the climate for successors to be vice presidents, for which I am eternally grateful. He and I--George Walker and--did not get along too well because when George came he brought Elwood Engle and Joe Oros with him, and so we began to divide up the responsibilities between the people at Ford, and those two fellows who were obviously going to get a couple of the key spots. And, not only that,

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I had known George since I was in high school.

Q Oh, really?

A Yeah. In fact, I must confess he's one of the guys that titillated me to going to General Motors because he had a Nash account back in those days, and he had an old Marmon that he drove--I mean it was a beautiful car, and his son and daughters went to high school with me, and he would drive down my street, pick me up, and I would see this work in the back seat and so forth,

and it was fine. But Pleasant Ridge, which was where we lived, was a very, very small neighborhood, and people get to know too much about people, and he knew that I knew an awful lot about him that was not probably as nice as it might have been and so forth. So, at any rate--and, besides, politically, it didn't serve him any purpose. He obviously wanted his successor to be one of his own boys, and that would protect his entree back into the place, and he wasn't too sure whether mine would or not. But, at any rate, his real mistake was in--a not, too well-kept secret--resenting Bill Ford who was our titular head. He was in charge of all design, and we had the design center under that, and he had other responsibilities, including central product planning, you see.

Q Did he resent him because he was young and inexperienced?

A Yes, and maybe because he was a member of the Ford Family, and George, who was the greatest user of nepotism in the world, probably didn't like nepotism, but that often happens, you know. Yeah, as a matter of fact, he used to refer to Bill as "the fuckin' kid," see, and there aren't any secrets. Those things get back to Bill. Well, Bill has always been known as the Kid Brother. In fact, when [Philip]

Caldwell was made the Chairman of the Board, it's because the Kid really didn't have enough years on him, see, and the fact -- what would he be, he's almost 60 now? When do you quit being a kid? [That's the way it works when you're] the youngest. How are we doing here? Q Oh, we're doing fine.

A I know we're doing fine, but how long have I been talking? I'm running out of spit.

This might be redundant, but, when I first went over to Ford, I was appalled at how little they had to offer. I think I might have spoken of that [earlier]. They had about fifty people and that included the shop people, the sweepers, and the whole shot. And I'd come from a place that had had 400 people doing the same thing, and their methods were rather primitive--not that they didn't have the talent, but that they'd never had the exposure to how other people had done things, and when you have the complement of people like they had at General Motors at that time and a fellow like Harley Earl who was a great experimenter. In fact, he went through all kinds of devices to try to figure out the best way to run a design operation. In fact, one of his problems was setting up some sort of a system. Nobody had ever done it before, and I recall once when he had a desk that he'd moved into an auditorium that we had there, and then had all of us move our drawing boards and taborets into this area sort of surrounding him. It was kind of like a city editor with people bringing copy up to him all the time. We'd been given a project, and he just sat there [while] we cranked out sketches and designs, and we'd keep putting them on his desk, and he would keep throwing them away. But that was merely an example of one of the kinds of things he tried.

We eventually worked out a format that, actually, we introduced over in Ford, those of us that went from General Motors and has been the format ever since, in a basic way, for how you go about designing a car. So, they really didn't have much of a way of going about it at Ford, and, at least, we had that in our hip pocket that we could bring on as kind of new boys on the block, and it worked pretty well. And everybody was working awfully hard, but we really didn't know what we were working on. That might sound sort of strange, but the Ford Motor Company was in such a state of flux at that time that they--and had had no experience--at least the group that had come on board--the high executive group most of which came on in 1946. They really didn't--with one or two exceptions, they'd had no exposure to the design systems at all. For example, the car that was to be the 1949 Ford had been pretty much developed by the time that I got there, and when it was--before it was introduced--you can't wait until you introduce a car and then say, "Hey, what are going to do the next year?" Nobody really was giving us any orders as to what to do. So I was in charge of advanced design, at that time, and decided that, well, if I'm going to be in charge of advanced design, I'd better try and do something, not necessarily advanced, but at least the next phase of what the cars that were to be introduced were going to look like. We reached a little far on some of this stuff, but Val Tallberg-I'm not sure I mentioned his name before--but Val Tallberg was administrative fellow for Harold Youngren who was in charge of engineering, and we fell under his aegis with John Oswald being our immediate boss and George Snyder, who had come from General Motors and was the reason for my being at Ford....

Q Had these moves been orchestrated by Breech, pretty much?

A I don't know how far down he went in the orchestration. He orchestrated the business of Youngren coming over there, I know that. And Youngren--his greatest contribution was, of course, to bring in and begin to build up the engineering cadre. His other contribution, and this is probably not too well known, and to a lot of people wouldn't mean much, but was very important as the history unfolded at Ford, was to decide that the car that was to be the Ford, which was the Mercury-well, it was too big, and he decided it was too big, and so he also decided that that would probably make an appropriate Mercury and that they had to start from scratch on the Ford. Breech got a hold of George W. Walker, who was an independent industrial designer, and who had had some automotive experience in that he had worked on the Nash account and had developed the Nash that had been introduced just before the war, and he was given the job of coming up with was what to be the 1949 Ford.

Q That had been his only automotive design? [the Nash]

A Yeah. Well, I take that back. He had worked for a very brief period for General Motors styling section and had left to become an independent designer. He didn't particularly care for either the potential pay or the constraints that are imposed in the car business, and George was a good designer but an excellent salesman, and those talents served him better as an independent

industrial designer. He'd gotten to know Breech because he--George--found that it was expeditious to be a member of Bloomfield [Hills] Country Club, and, of course, that was headquarters for a lot of the hierarchy of the automobile business--still is--and so he and Breech had gotten to know one another quite well

through that, and George's reputation was pretty good. He had a lot of accounts, and he'd made a lot of money. And, at any rate--and he was known worldwide. He had a hell of a press man, by the way, and so that was pretty useful. And Breech is an interesting sort of fellow. He really didn't shop too far for who might be the best in the business-pretty tough to determine anyhow, but he really didn't shop on it. He just listened pretty much to George, and he knew George,, and he knew his history and decided that he would be a pretty good fellow to bring in on that. For a number of reasons, which I'll touch on, it turned out to be a good idea.

George was having difficulty in coming up with something that would serve as the next Ford. A fellow by the name of Dick Calleal--I think his name was given to you by Johnny Najjar--had been at Studebaker, and Dick, when he left Studebaker, for whatever reasons, took a quarter-scale model with him that had been developed at Studebaker. And it wasn't developed by Dick, by the way.

Q That's interesting.

A But he took it, regardless, and George saw it and felt that that might have the makings of the kind of a car that would satisfy Breech and Company. And he developed a lot of illustrations to go along with it and some alternate front and rear ends, but the thematic idea was what became known as pontoon fenders, where the front fender, rather than being independent of the rear fender, flowed all the way through the side of the car, and the '49 Ford was the first car to have that, you might recall. So, that was introduced and had already been developed and approved by the time I came on board. There were a few adjustments that

were made in the front end and so forth that I had my folks do, but, essentially, the car was put to bed.

Q Your folks would have been?

A Well, the folks that I inherited--the Ford folks.

Q Yeah, right. Anyone in particular that [you can recall working on the '49 Ford]?

A Bob Thomas was one of the fellows that was working on it.

Q Bob was here [Dearborn] today, by the way.

A I know, I'm going to be seeing him on Sunday. [He's] probably on a fast track, but I think you'll find he's been, you know, studying up on his numbers. He just finished a book on Mark II. It's very interesting, and Bob writes rather humorously. It's hardly a book, but it's [hack work?]. It's better than that, it's hard cover, but it's still, nonetheless, a modest effort. So, Bob worked on it ['49 Ford], and I think, perhaps, John Najjar, but I don't recall exactly. But, at any rate, we made some adjustments to the front end, and they were approved by my bosses, and I don't think anybody above that approved it at all. The thing was just in the machinery, at that time.

Q Was Joe Oros involved at all?

A Joe was working for George Walker at that time, both Joe Oros and Elwood Engle--but after they had made their contribution of the '49 Ford, they beat a retreat.

Q Your people made the adjustments?

A Yeah, and worked with the engineering cadre to put the car to bed. 'm trying to recall--oh, at any rate, I was telling you about not really vowing what to do because there wasn't a product planning committee.

There was no one who was really thinking about what the next move should be on any of the automobiles. We knew that General Motors was into annual changes, and the way they usually went was a minor facelift, after you had an all-new car, followed by a major facelift, followed by an all-new car. That particular format went on for a good number of years, so we at least knew that's what General Motors' plan was, and that incited us to go ahead and try to prepare for it. George Snyder, who was the fellow that got me over there and for whom I worked for directly, had us also working on an X-100 which was a radical, very advanced car which actually was made and toured the country, at one time. But, that wasn't really--you know, it was a lot of fun and it was great exposure as far as we were concerned and served our purposes very beautifully, and in Ford at Fifty* which you might recall, it was sort of the centerpiece of the whole thing. But other than being a -hell of an interesting exercise, it really wasn't going to help us get any cars in the marketplace in the near term. So, anyhow, I was mentioning Val Tallberg, and I applaud him for this, found no way of getting a hold of any decision-making personalities because they hadn't solidified in any kind of committee structure at this time.

Q No product planning?

*Editor's Note: Ford Motor Company celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1953. One of the public relations products was a sumptuous picture book celebrating its contemporary achievements.

A No product planning. No anything, really. So, actually, for the 1950 Ford--well, Ford, Mercury and Lincoln--Val just came around and said, "I think you bastards are going too far with this stuff." He said, "We can't afford this kind of money. We don't even know if the 149's going to sell," you know. So he backed us off, prudently, to a modest change, but, at least, it was a change. I said, "Well, okay, we've done it. What the hell do we do now?" And he said, "Hell, Mr. Ford's busy; Mr. Breech, you can't get in touch with him; I'll approve it." Well, I give him "A" for brass balls. Somebody had to do something, and he did it. And so that's how the 1950 Ford was accomplished and how really the first cars, that were somewhat under my aegis, began to get out. In the meantime, it was decided, and you can tell when they decide to have-when things are really important (a minor facelift, that was nothing) but the next round of engineering budgets was something else! And so we--I'd never prepared a budget in my life. In the meantime, I'd been put in charge of all exterior design, and Bob McGuire had all interior design. Bob and I were both commissioned to put together a budget. I can't remember exactly what year it was, but it was fairly early on.

Q Are you reporting directly to Walker at this time?

A No. He's still a consultant, and....

Q So it is Snyder and Oswald?

A Yeah. As a matter of fact, less than a consultant because his commission was to bring out the '49 Ford. The Company was beginning to spend money to build up their own staff, and they didn't think it was a requirement to have George, frankly. So, at any rate, we prepared a

budget--figured out how much--how many pencils and how many people, I guess, is about the way we did it, and then we began to thrash it out in these rather mass meetings with the engineering folks, and then....

Q Who were still in the ascendancy?

A Oh yes, yeah. As a matter of fact, I don't even think that Earle MacPherson had joined the group yet. Now he may have, because I don't know exactly when he came in. Well, he must have, because he was a Dearborn Motors....

Q Late Forties?

A Yeah, yeah. He had some Dearborn Motors stock, I know, and was an early on optionee. So, he must have been on board, but his bag was chassis and engine, and so we rarely saw him. The

body engineering and the styling was under John Oswald. And, of course, body engineering was very important to us.

So, let's see, I remember the budget meeting, and I remember we got an approval, and, I think, some sort of commendation that we seemed to know what we were doing, which, of course, was bull because we really didn't. But, there were no finance people in attendance other than George Altmansberger. Why that name pops into my mind, I'll never know, but George was the controller for engineering, and I don't think that George knew a hell of a lot more about numbers than a lot of us, but, nonetheless, that was his job, and so he wouldn't--one thing he didn't know anything about was our business, and so he sort of had to nod yes. As a matter of fact, over time, that became a very useful ploy. The Corporation never, ever shorted me on money--never, ever. I mean when there were purges and things of that nature because we'd go into a

recession, why, then we'd all have to carry our fair load, but [never] in any budget meetings. As a matter of fact, at one time, Henry Ford [II] was in a state of shock, and I can't remember the exact year--I know I'd been an officer for some time, because I getting kind of easy in making these pitches--and had gone through this whole thing, and when it was all over, Ed Lundy said, "Now, Gene, are you absolutely certain that you have all the money you need?" And I said, "Yes, Ed, I think we do." In the meantime, Henry Ford was just about knocked out. It was the first time in his life that he--he was just laughing uproariously. It was the first time in his life he'd ever heard Ed trying to give away more money, you know. But that was sort of an attitude that they had, and, I guess we didn't spend it too badly or they wouldn't've had it. And, in addition to that, it developed that we had fantastic flexibility. About 40% of our budget--which got up around 32/38 million at various times-was on "advanced design". Well, you had to give them a list of projects on which you were going to work in order to establish a budget, it just wasn't carte blanche; but I'd had the flexibility of changing those projects to "suit the need," which was another way of saying to suit myself, and I think that this has been somewhat unheard of in the business. In fact, it's probably all stopped under. Poling. But at any rate, that was really the first trial by fire that any of us had in "almost" working with each other, and there was still an awful lot of sparring and suspicion and concern on the part of the Brunns, and the Najjars and the Schmidts and the Walt Krukes and others that were seeing this onslaught of hotdogs from General Motors. And, I know, I, for one, and Bob McGuire, too, both worked diligently to try to put their minds at rest. There was no way that we could do it without their help, and, over time, you have an opportunity to sort out the good guys from the bad guys but, going in, one of most disruptive things you can do is to try and just clean broom a place--a clean sweep, I should say. There was too much talent there, you could see it. But trying to get them to look upon us as anything other than the Nazis that had just taken over Poland, was something else, you know, and it took awhile for that to sort itself out. But being a charming, lovable, gracious man that I am, I prevailed.

Q Obviously, you did very well.

A But, they all got off it, and we were able, fortunately, to set up this structure where the people that were there had important parts of the operation, and I've always tried to work on the basis of giving a fellow his show time. I think it's vitally important that they get the kind of exposure. This can be very good or very bad. The engineering fraternity resented the styling organization just, fundamentally, because we did have exposure. We were doing our talking to, not only their bosses, but to Henry Ford and Breech and so forth, and they called us by name and so forth, and they called people by name two and three echelons down in our operation. A fellow that far down in engineering just never saw the light of day, as far as that kind of exposure is concerned. Well, it's one thing to resent it; on the other hand, when you have that kind of exposure, you have a lot at risk all the time. You don't have the usual organizational protections that guard some people that don't have that kind of exposure. So it's a two-edged sword. There are a lot of benefits, but you can make an ass of yourself in front of these people, too,

and they don't forget that, either. As a matter of fact, they're more inclined to remember that. But, nonetheless, there was no structure at that time. I remember a visit that we had where we had about a half hour's notice that Mr. [Henry] Ford [II] was coming over. It was the first time that I'd met him, and this had to be sometime in '47, and I expected him just to come over. Well, he came over with entourage. Every officer in the damned Company was with him, and they, you know, [were] walking around and oohing and aahing, and they didn't know what the hell they were doing--they really didn't. But that became the decision-making body--all officers--and it was interesting because it's very difficult. You can never get two people to agree on anything in our particular business--and in hardly any business--but certainly in ours, which is so subjective. Ford also discovered--both he and Breech-although Breech enjoyed his audience. He liked to bring his audience along, you see, and there was no question, at that time, who was running the place, and he had--I thought that he must have one of the keenest senses of humor I'd ever heard in my life. Not because of what he said, but because of the laughter it generated. I never heard so much laughter in my life whenever he would come up with something that was just sort of funny, you know. I then learned that's one of the techniques, of course, for getting ahead in business without even trying. He was a remarkable man. I'm not demeaning him in any sense, but he had a ego as big as all outdoors. Of course, everybody that he was with had an equally as large ego, but they knew who the hell they were working for. Breech could be mean. He didn't hesitate to put people down in front of people, if they invited it, I'd guess you'd say. It's considered a bad management technique, I think, but, nonetheless, it generated a lot of ill feeling toward him on the part of some, but, nonetheless, it was pretty damned effective. I remember once, for example, I used to pitch our cars, and you used to do it like the sales people used to pitch 'em for the dealers. It was asinine because you can't sell this cynical bunch of bastards anything. You can explain things to them--explain why you did what you did and why you reached that conclusion and try to apply as much logic to it as you can, that they understand. But, if they don't like it, they're not going to like it because you get up there and tell them about these great impact bars and these swoopings--you know, lines--and longer, lower, wider and all that sort of baloney. They just--you make an ass of yourself! But another thing that Breech would do--and he did it to me in this case-was begin to query--he would ask you a question. And, in this case, he asked me

the wheelbase of this car, and I gave him the answer, and then he said, "and the wheelbase of the Mercury, and the wheelbase..." and began to go through all of our cars. Then he began to go through all the dimensions of the cars--overall height, overall width, front overhang, rear overhang, interior dimensions, knee clearance, the whole schmier, and, of course, when you're getting this, your adrenaline is going pretty good. On me, it sharpens me up--on some people, it panics the hell out of them. He went through everything he could think of, and I was making comparative, dimensional evaluations between the Lincoln and the Cadillac, and he asked me what the rear knee room on the Cadillac Sixty Special was, and I said, "Mr. Breech, I don't know, but I'll find out." He said, "Never mind." I'd been up there for what

seemed like a half hour--it was probably five minutes. That was a wet armpit situation, and the audience can tell when Breech is on one of these wickets.

Q They get awfully quiet?

A They get dead silent, and they all look at each other like this, and they're saying--they're pulling for you, really. They think that there but for the grace of God, go I. Well, I always have made it a habit to bone up on dimensions before going into those meeting, anyhow. I think it's our business, we ought to know it, and if you don't....

Q Known as the package?

A Yeah. Well, the package, really--yes--inside package, outside package together, right. So I remember what happens when a fellow fails in this, and Neal Blume is the guy that comes to mind. I don't know whether you remember Neal or not. He was [an] initial optionee and was-I've forgotten his exact capacity in engineering--but he had been working directly for Youngren at Oldsmobile, and it was a responsible position--more on the administrative side than on out and out engineering, but over time he was--when we'd gotten to the place where air conditioning was becoming quite a thing, he was given the responsibility for heating and air conditioning for the cars. And they frequently would join meetings dealing with those kinds of things along with meetings that had to with aesthetic stuff that was coming out of my shop so I could be privy--they could be privy to my downfall, but I could also be privy to their's. And Breech got going on compressors with Neal. Well, Neal hadn't done his homework. He knew that, I guess, we were using the Tecumseh or something of that nature, but there are ten other

compressors out there in the field, and, of course, one of Breech's jobs before coming to Ford included Frigidaire, and they had the rotary compressor of some note, and Breech started off, and, Christ, I knew it was coming when he asked the first question--you could just tell. He asked

him what compressor we were using, why are you using it and all the usual stuff that goes along with that, and Blume had that in hand, but when he asked him about other compressors, the guy was like a kid that doesn't know his answers in school, and Breech wouldn't get off him. He'd just go on and on and on, and he could think of more questions to ask knowing that Neal didn't know any of them but just exposing the poor bastard and ends up with saying something to the effect: "Well, if you're responsible for this particular element of the car, don't you think you really ought to know a little about it? I suggest you go back and find out," and then he got off it, but he had-it was terribly embarrassing for all of us.

Q Had he, in effect, destroyed Blume's professional reputation?

A Oh, yes. He destroyed him. First of all, what usually happens under those things if a guy really blows one, if his boss is charitable, he tries to put him in someplace where he can lick his wounds and recover without further damage to himself or to his boss. You know, it's a hell of a reflection on a boss that have a guy out there that hasn't done his job. So, Blume went down, echelon by echelon, until he was about four echelons down from where he had been, and here he was a millionaire--made a millionaire, as an initial optionee, you see.

Q Youngren couldn't save him?

A Well, Youngren had difficulty saving Youngren. You see, Youngren left not too long after--it must have been '48/'49--maybe '49/'50, perhaps.

Q He did disappear rather quickly.

A Yeah, yeah. And MacPherson, who had been--took over for him. Now this was a rather unsteady period for those of us in the design end of the business because Mac, first of all, didn't like John Oswald at all. Mac was not a guy of very large stature, and Oswald was a giant, and John had a lot of experience and was a cunning bastard, but he is not what I would call a bright guy. Mac was rather quiet and laid back-very intelligent fellow, however, but his intelligence was more toward engines and transmissions and suspensions and things of that nature-hence, the MacPherson suspension [strut] which was on every damn car you hear about now.

Q It's plaguing the hell out of my car.

A Well, as a matter of fact, if they're good, they're good, but that damn ball joint and stuff on top could go kind of wacky every once in awhile. But Mac was not terribly appreciative of the fact that there was a need, really, for those of us in our business. But McGuire and I, if nothing else, were hard workers, and Mac would come down, oh, 6:30/7:00 every evening, and, of course, Oswald had taken off for the golf course, and so we intercepted Mac, and in the course of a few months of "getting to know you" kinds of conversations--small talk, all kinds of things. I remember Mac's wife was pregnant with their youngster, and Mac was in his--approaching 50, I guess, at the time, and McGuire, who was in his--well, he was 42, I believe, before his wife conceived--I mean she conceived on several other occasions and had some

misfires--miscarriages and stillbirths and that sort of thing--but both of them were sharing this, you see--older men having children and that kind of thing. In addition, he was curious about what made us tick, and it turned out to be very useful. He developed an appreciation for what we were doing, and would backstop us once he'd joined on to our wavelength. Those of us in the design business resented working for engineering. Those of us that came from General Motors were spoiled by working for Harley Earl, and Harley Earl worked directly for Alfred P. Sloan. Sloan was bright because he knew that this--in spite of the giant size of Earl--that the people in his organization would eat him up, if he didn't have some protection; because there's great resentment. You see, initially, in the business, the chassis/engine fellow was the whole schmier, and if there is anything done to make the car look like anything, why, that was done by him, too. When the body engineer came in, he was an enigma and resented by the chassis engineer, and it took a body engineer a hell of a long time to establish himself as sort of a separate entity. And, of course, when styling began to happen, you know, these fruitcakes, for Christ's sake, coming in and trying to tell them what to do. That was really resented; so there was an awful lot of bobbing and weaving just trying to keep alive, and, of course, when you work for engineering, and I say we resented it, it was for a very simple reason. Why would an engineer ever approve anything that would cause him any hardship? And, the answer is, he wouldn't. This, over time, began to be recognized. It was recognized when they decided that George Walker better come back in. Apparently, Breech was on another "I think I need my consultant," and then, ultimately, led to George Walker's

joining the Company at the age of 60, as I recall, as a vice-president. Well, George wouldn't come as anything but a vice president, and he obviously wouldn't work for any engineer. So, and, of course, he had a pipeline to Breech, and that made everything sort of hunkydory. That was George's major contribution in my judgment, because I succeeded him, and, of course, the groundwork was already laid for having an officer in that position. But, back in those days, just '48, '49 and '50, there were some staggering growing pains on the part of the Company. The fortunate thing was that the '49 Ford was a smash, and, all of sudden, with the leverage that you have in that kind of a business, the money began to roll in.

Q Let me stop you for moment, please, Gene, and let me ask you a simple-minded question. In your estimation, respective of your many years in the business, why did the '49 Ford become a smash [hit]?

A Well, first, it was unique. Perhaps, I shouldn't say first. First, you could sell anything.

Q Still a buyer's market?

A Yeah. It was--well, '49 was the first, with the exception of the Studebaker that came out, I think, in '46 or '47, because they had cheated and had the car developed down in Mexico, you know.

Q Really?

A Oh, yes, during the war. So they were in the position directly after the war to bring out a new car. But everybody else was effecting the transition from war materiel to domestic production again, and, everybody, in order to get off the grid in '46, which I think was the first year that they began to make cars after the war.

Q Early '45.

A Yeah. Was it '45?

Q Early '45--I mean mid-'45.

A Mid-'45--okay. At that time, all we did was dust off the stuff that we had, called '42's, and so everybody was waiting with bated breath for this great, revolutionary automobile that, obviously, had to be developed, and there was some sort of smell of it by what Studebaker had done. And Studebaker was an interesting approach, by the way. That was an advanced car, and for Ford to do it with a Ford car would have, been a mistake, in my judgment. They could have gotten away with it, I think, because of the times, but it still would have been a mistake. But for Studebaker that had limited production facilities, anyway--as we think of them at Ford or General Motors--they could afford to divide the country into those that loved it, and those that wouldn't have it, and out of the those that loved it, satisfy their production needs.' For Ford to do something like that or General Motors, you have to be a little more prudent. You hope a lot of people love it, and some always do. You hope that you have a massive middle ground of people that find it damned acceptable and very few people that hate it. That's your objective, but if--and, in fact, I think that on a normal basis, even the '49 might have been a step too far, but because of the circumstances, because of the anticipatory nation, the buying public at the time, and because, boy, if you could get 'em out there, people were hungry to buy, and it was a six-year, whatever it was, fallow period, and people had been making money, by the way--those that stayed home, certainly--so they were ready for a new car. So they gravitated toward it, and it was

great leg up, not only because it gave Ford money, but because it established a pattern of a design that we could work with for some period. You might recall, it was quite awhile before General Motors with Chevrolet moved in that direction, and we were beating on them pretty hard during that period. In fact, we knocked them over a couple of years, as I recall. But, that was the--really, the saving grace of the Company.

Q There was, of course, you know, a design award [for the 1949 Ford] that has always seemed to me to be some sort of PR cobbled-together kind, of design fashion institute award. Was that a legitimate award?

A I don't know whether it was or not. I remember we got it. I know the one that most of us felt was a more important award was the IDS--Industrial Designers Society award. Those began to go by the wayside because it was really an association of industrial designers voting for themselves, so which is hardly the fashion award, if it were really a true award--and, I can't answer your question, specifically because I don't know whether it was contrived or not--but it was damned useful.

Q They used its stamp in advertisements.

A Oh, sure. But the IDS award was laid on such cars as the '56 Lincoln, the '61 Lincoln, the Mustang and cars like that, and the Industrial Designers Society were having great difficulty in finding anything nice to say about automotive people, anyhow, and so those were kind of cherished, you know. In the meantime, the Whiz Kids had come on board, and we began to feel their presence. They had reorganized the company to the extent of putting Lew Crusoe in charge of Ford [Division].

I don't remember that year, but it had to be pretty close to '50. I became quite an admirer of his. It was really--I mean, here was this fellow that looked like a mouse--a finance background. Turned out to

have the damnedest product savvy of any guy that--well, there are very few that I have met in the course of the business, particularly out of the financial community--the only one to come out of the financial community that had that kind of really good product savvy. He began to set up product planning. Now whether he invented it or not, I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised. I think, at least, he appreciated it, because one of his favorites of the Whiz Kids was Jack Reith, and Jack had hired Chase Morsey, and they had a plethora of book carriers, and, man, they had the answer to everything, and they would come over and stand in sort of an echelon with Chase here, Bill Grimes, you know, and so on and so forth. Each just sort of a half step back--a little castoff from the military. It was the beginning of something pretty good, really. They exercised far too much power, but, on balance, it was a pretty neat thing. Neat enough so that General Motors figured that they had to get there, too. And, over time, it achieved an appropriate balance, but for a period there, you would swear that you were working for the product planners. We were not working for them. They were information gatherers and analysts and presenters thereof, and I think it's right and proper to have somebody that determines how much can be spent, should be spent, etc., work out cycle plans and things of that nature. But much of the product planning, per se, ended up being done in our place because it's very difficult for a fellow to conceive something out of whole cloth, and they would respond to what we developed and then

began to put their presentations together. But I don't recall them ever, as product planners, saying, "Hey, don't you think we need this kind of a product?" But they would take what they saw, or what people were responding to, particularly, their bosses and begin to work out the arithmetic on it. I remember--this is a bad example because Crusoe was so good on major things, but this is a very minor one that stuck in my mind, but major in that it gives you the measure of the guy. We had developed, unrequested, the [1950] Crestliner, and that was kind of a weird car with the big swooping line on the side, you might remember.

Q A black [scallop effect]?

A Yeah, yeah, black with maroon, and chartreuse and black, and what the hell was the other one?--a two-toned brown, I believe, but I've forgotten the exact....

Q You developed that unbidden?

A Yes. And, that's exactly what I mean. You see, but we 'had the right to do that. Obviously, if we'd gone off and begun to, spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, we would have been unbraided, and, probably, the right would have been taken away from us, but this was a relatively simple kind of thing to develop, and it was one of the first cars, other than the limousine cars of yesteryear, that had a vinyl roof on it. Actually, the cues were right off the cars of yesteryear--the vinyl roof being one, off the old town cars, and the sweep on the side was off of such cars that you can see right out here [in the Henry Ford Museum]--Bugattis and Duesenbergs and cars of that ilk. But we had....

Q Unusual for a mass-produced car?

A Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, it was a real crap shoot, and the question was, would it be a mass-produced car. And the risk of putting that kind of a roof on when we didn't know a hell of a lot about how to handle that material was also -- I remember the most persuasive argument that I advanced was, well, vinyl surface is the same as a paint surface, and if paint is okay on a car, paint should be all right on vinyl, and that's hardly persuasive, but, at least, there was an element of logic there. How to secure it was the thing that really got to be tricky after awhile, but we worked that out, sort of. But at any rate, on that car we had chrome-plated the little lock devices for locking the car on the inside. They had been rubber before that or some sort of a plastic. When Crusoe came over--oh, to further set the stage, General Motors with Chevrolet had just brought out its first metal hardtop with windows that looked like convertible windows, but it was a hardtop convertible, is what they called it, and it was taking the country by storm. Seems sort

of silly, now, but, by God, it was. It had to be, what, '50, I guess, and the car was successful, and we had no way of getting into competition with them on the short run. Crusoe saw this car, and, of course, being an older fellow, had memories of what these cues stood for, and he turned to Chase who was right with him and said, "Chase, I want to bring this car out. I think it'll take a little of the attention away from the hardtop at General Motors, and maybe we can make a little money on it if the pricing is right," but the throwaway line was, "I don't want you to change one thing on this car." Well, Chase had come back a couple of days later, and he'd gone over all the pieces that were to go on the car, and he had to make some sort of a

token gesture, I guess, to demonstrate to Crusoe that he was really on the stick, and he was going to go back--eliminate the little chrome buttons and go back to plastic or rubber or whatever the hell they were, and I said, "Chase, Mr. Crusoe said 'Don't change anything on this car.'" He said, "Yeah, but we can save a nickel," or something on that order. I said, "Well, okay, but I'm obliged to tell him." He said, "Okay, okay. Go ahead and tell him." So, Crusoe came over, and I tattled.

Q Not really a tattle.

A No, not really a tattle. I told the guy I was going to do it, and our orders were quite clear, and Chase was right there. I did it right in front of him. But, I said, "Chase wants to change this, and I remember you saying not to change anything," whereupon Crusoe turned to Chase and said, "We're not going to change it, Chase," but that was important to him. He had bought an entity, and he was very good at knowing that the total is the sum of its parts, and you begin to whittle away, you can whittle away on any car, and you end up with nothing but a standard automobile. But he was awfully good. He had good prescience.

Q He could deliver a complete package?

A Yes. Well, that was very useful to us because he was new to us, we were new to him, and, as a matter of fact, it probably did more than anything else to allow us the right to develop things outside the influence of product planning.

Q Very powerful, was he not?

A Yes, he was.

Q He had everybody's confidence, I think.

A Yup, he did. He lost it just before his retirement. It was kind of a tragedy, and there was no reason, really, for doing this. When a guy gets to be 64, he's only got another year to ride, anyhow, and I thought that it was rather cruel of Breech to wave adieu, because--but it was brought about, as you probably know, by the great dream of making Ford like General Motors and having separate, independent divisions, and Jack Reith, when he got back as boy hero--the great, white hope--sort of Time magazine articles and the whole schmier on the Ford of France issue, that, I think, Jack probably was taking advantage of Crusoe's desire to want to do this. He just needed a little pushing, and, of course, Jack was good at putting together all of the right reasons and burying all the wrong ones, and so they began that, and, of course, as a handmaiden to the division, of the divisions, or the establishment of the divisions, was the establishment of a special projects division which turned out to be the Edsel.

Q It was Jack's baby, initially?

A Well, the whole concept was, but Jack was pretty clever. He wasn't going to get stuck with such an unknown. He wanted Mercury, and got it, so, in a way, what he was doing was creating an organizational atmosphere where he had opened up the dike for more division heads, of which he would get to be one, and it was relatively short lived because Jack was a wild man as far as Breech was concerned, and, I'll say this, Jack was one hell of a fighter. I enjoyed working with him. I didn't get much sleep, but I sure enjoyed it because things were happening, and he wanted things to be different, and he wanted to beat Buick, goddamn it, and he was going to do it. The Turnpike Cruiser was the thing that

came along that led to his demise. He was working on the old business of all we have to do is to sell 10,000 pieces, and we get our bait back, and we have enough dealers out there, so that's in the bag, you know. Well, it wasn't in the bag, and Breech, in effect, accused Jack of lying to him or misrepresenting, which Jack didn't do, but what Jack did do was persuade him against his better judgment, and that was a heinous crime, you see. To say nothing of the Edsel and a few other things which Jack really had nothing to do with other than establishing the need for another car in order to make it a full--let's go head to head with General Motors on every front kind of a corporation. I find it interesting that General Motors has picked up on so many of the things that Ford really established like the centralization of various things and stuff like that. Product planning, which they began to establish only to discover that they hated to use product planning. It -- pride, you know, is a terrible thing, and because Ford had 'used it, and they began to write articles about Ford for having used, it and so forth. It was a big blow to General Motors to have to come along and create such a thing which they were perfectly willing to do, but to call it product planning was really boggling their mind. I think they now call it product planning.

Q But Crusoe was, in the early Fifties, quite powerful and a real mover and shaker in the upper echelon.

A Yeah. He not only was a hell of a numbers man, but with his product savvy and with the responsibility for the Ford car which was the backbone of the Company, he began to work hard on the truck part of the business, and I remember developing a crest for the thing, and that

pleased him.

Q The truck business needed help, didn't it?

A It needed a hell of a lot of help. Well, it was neglected.

Nobody had done anything, you know. So we began to get on that. In the meantime, Jack had gone over--Jack Reith had gone over to Europe, and they had absolutely no design facilities over there, and so we did all of the Versailles and Cometes and other cars that they had over there.

Q Oh, you did them here in Dearborn?

A Did them in Dearborn.

Q Did you?

A Yes. As a matter of fact, we did them in Bill [Willys] Wagner's truck studio, and Wes Dahlberg played a big hand in a lot of those. I found it fascinating because I went to France for the auto show where they were introduced. The other thing that we had thought was a pretty good idea was to introduce two-tones. They had never had two-tones in Europe, and there was a full product line there, and Jack deserves a hell of a lot of credit for what he did over there [Ford of France]. In the first place, I remember the union was Communistic, and they were going to shut him down, so he had a meeting with them, and, of course, he had to use Jacques Maronet as the interpreter--also his finance man-and he said, "Fellows, I don't have to be here. I can go back to the States, I have a job waiting for me. You, on the other hand, don't. You're stuck with this place. Here's what I propose. Let's declare a moratorium on all this crap because this part of the Ford Motor Company's losing it's butt, and if we make some money, we'll reconvene and talk about this"--sort of a promissory note. And they bought it. So that

was the first thing he had to do, I mean, they were just testing--the first thing that happened when he got over there was this test of strengths. Well, he won that battle, and then he brought out the cars, and they were shown at the Glace Palais in Paris, and their auto shows are unlike our auto shows in that they take orders right at the show with hard money down which you lose if you welsh on the deal, you see.

Q They used to do that with the Model A.

A Yeah. Well, that's--your memory goes back farther than mine on that, but then you've been studying! But, it was the most phenomenal introduction that has ever taken place. They sold out two year's worth of production at that auto show, and Jack had fulfilled his commission. It turned out to be a terrible mistake, but his commission was--Breech said, "Get this thing in some sort of shape so that we can sell it. We've got to dump it. Let's get the money out of it and put it into other important things." Well, they did, and Fiat worked a lot on the arrangements. They were really a blind for Chrysler, and Chrysler [of France], known as Simca, bought the operation, and it always amused the hell out of me to go over to France and see Simcas running around that came out of our truck studio in the United States of America. And they did quite well with them, by the way!

How are we doing on the tapes, there?

A I think it would be a good time to stop. We're getting close to the end of your hour.

Q This Dave is Crippen with another of our design history series of interviews [at the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center], and today [September 13, 1984] we're interviewing Eugene (Gene) Bordinat--longtime Ford designer, and Vice President of Design for many years, and we are continuing his discussion of the influence of product planning on Ford design history in the 1950's.

A Well, Jack Reith was a very bright guy. He was one of the "Quiz Kids" to become "Whiz Kids," and I think that was part of statistical control [section] for the U.S. Air Force under Tex Thornton. Tex, as you recall, brought a cadre of his officers, sold them as a package-offered them as a package, I should say--to the industry, and Ford, who was--Ford, the man, [Henry II] was short of people, and so it looked like an opportunity for him and also for Tex Thornton, and sold the whole package to Ford Motor Company. It was kind of interesting-they got the name "Quiz Kids," because for the first year or so, they went around to all kinds of departments and just asked questions--sort of getting a quick education in the car business. One of his stars was Jack Reith, and Jack Reith was very well thought of by Lew Crusoe who had taken over the head of [Ford] North American Automotive. I'm not sure that that's how they defined it at the time, but, at any rate, it included all the automotive parts that were made in US of A. Jack, obviously, was a very intelligent fellow, terribly enthusiastic and an extremely hard worker and had dreams--in fact, even mentioned that he would like to be sort of the second coming of the president and chairman of the board of General Motors--Harlow Curtice, known as "Red" Curtice-who had, in one year, pumped Buick sales from about 250,000 units a year to over 800,000 units a year, and, of course, made a mark that went down

in history, even though it scared General Motors, by the way, because they put him in a position of power where he had more than six years to exercise it. I don't know whether you've noticed, Dave, but General Motors has been pretty careful, except for their recent appointments, to insure that no one stays in a position of power for more than six years. It became known as the "Rule of Six," and Curtice probably prompted it more than anyone else because with the phenomenal success that he had with Buick and other successes that he had, subsequently, as he went up the ladder, he began to feel his oats, a little bit and began to do things that were not quite in accordance with the tried and true, longstanding policies of General Motors. Apparently, they began to feel that that would happen to anyone who was in a position of power at General Motors for a protracted period of time. It's a pretty heady position, and they began to feel that they're sort of--they've been deified before they'd even died. So that was Jack Reith's hero, and he felt that he could do that, certainly, with Mercury. But that gets ahead of it a little bit because Jack started off before he could have a division of his own. He had to persuade Crusoe that Ford Motor Company was in a position to be divisionalized the way General Motors was. We'd been very centralized, and they had been very divisionalized, and each of their divisions was more autonomous than you would find in any other corporation at that time. Almost independent, but under an umbrella of policy making that was handled by the board and other officers above the division general manager level. So Jack's first move had to be--you see, I can say this like I could read his mind because he's dead. There won't be any recourse on this. There is the possibility that it could

have been Crusoe's dream, too. I tend to doubt it. Much as he was a General Motors aficionado, I don't think--I think he needed--if he had the urge to go in that direction, he needed a lot of encouragement and pushing, and the pusher, if not the inventor, was Jack Reith. He, obviously, persuaded Crusoe to do this, and that led to separate divisions for Ford, Mercury, Lincoln and then "Special Projects" which, ultimately, became the Edsel. An aside on the Edsel, they keep talking about the $250,000,000 losses, those were only of record after it became the Edsel Division. All of the special projects part of it, which was the total development of the line of cars and all promotional work, etc., leading up to the introduction of the car, was "absorbed" by the various other divisions, and so the real cost was astronomical because that's the heavy-hitting part of any kind of a program. Well, Jack was aiming for a car division that was entrenched and yet was--had not begun to ascend any kind of a ladder of success, really, and Mercury was cut to measure. He didn't--wasn't interested in Lincoln. Lincoln hadn't generated a profit any year since it was bought from [Henry] Leland [in 1922] and came awfully close in 1956 when it had a winner--Ben Mills, another Whiz Kid who at that time was in charge of Lincoln, didn't have quite the nerve to ask for 1,000 more units, and, if he'd taken that 1,000 units, which obviously would have sold, they could have made money that year. It wasn't actually until the Mark III came along [April 5, 1968] that they began to generate some money. So the stage was set for Jack to come in and take over the--you can't call it a run-down division because it had never been

up far enough to run down, but, at least, an established division that had an identity, had dealers, and so they

began with that kind of a base which was far more successful than starting from scratch, or taking Lincoln, and he didn't feel that he had a chance, frankly, for the Ford Division because there were others among the Whiz Kids who were in higher station. He did a pretty convincing job, obviously, of selling some pretty hard-nosed people. The hardest nose of all being Ernie Breech, but Ernie was mesmerized by his own General Motors background and thought that this might be a pretty great thing to do. Product planning, as far as that goes, was an obvious way, and, here again, it's kind of hard to say who developed it, but statistical analysis in the Air Force is probably as analogous to product planning as you could get. It's the gathering of data and then applying it to logistics and supply and what planes you need and all that sort of thing which, I guess, is about as close as you could get to product planning in civilian life, and so it seemed kind of a logical thing to have happen. Further, Ford Motor Company was really dealing with a lot of neophytes. They really didn't have anybody, particularly-among the Whiz Kids, who had any experience at all in the car business, and those that came from General Motors and other corporations to head the various divisions--manufacturing, etc.--had been in high station at General Motors but had never been in charge of a product line. They had never been a car division head, and, as a result, they were pretty green in how go about the business of "controlling" a car. They all knew that given a car, they knew how to make it and make it in huge numbers and how to distribute it and everything, except how to design it and control the design. Now a lot of this might have been influenced, too, by the fact that when Harold Youngren, Vice-President for Engineering who came

from Oldsmobile, spotted, when he arrived, that the Mercury, which was originally planned to be the Ford, was too much car to go head-to-head with Chevrolet. I mean it could, but you couldn't make any money out of it, it was just the design cost was out of line. So it's possible that that might have suggested, too, that if you can make that kind of a mistake by just fooling around and developing a car and getting it approved, naturally, ready for production, only to discover that it was out of control, as far as design costs was concerned, that, maybe, there should be some sort of a system that would protect the ignorant from making that mistake again. So that's a possibility that that triggered it. The very nature of the statistical control people that had come in and were anxious to get on product. Their background, and the financial background of Lew Crusoe himself, would suggest that these kinds of controls were required. And the fact that he was in finance at General Motors and probably had seen certain sins being made over there in the design cost and developmental costs of cars. Dave, you know, I think that I must have a very hypnotic voice. I tend to put you to sleep, you know.

Q No, no.

A No, really?

Q It's just a post-prandial [condition].

A I see, okay.

Q No, I'm fascinated with it. Along that line, with Crusoe, did he promote people like McNamara and Arjay Miller along that line?

A Oh, yeah. Arjay was a totally finance-oriented man, but was very high on Crusoe's pecking list, but probably the guy that was most

admired was [Robert] McNamara. He was a very concise speaker, he was a logician and prided himself that he was. He knew how to handle those for whom he worked and impressed them, and, in coming out of the service, was, as I recall, second in command to Tex Thornton who was the colonel. I believe that Bob was a major, but, if not by rank, certainly by responsibility. He was his second in command. So he had those things going for him, going in. Frankly, Bob was not one of my favorite types and demonstrated it pretty much when given the responsibility for the Ford Division. He tried to apply logic to everything, and, frankly, in product, you're not trying to tell the person that the car he must have, you're trying to find out the car he wants, and, in that, there is an awful lot of emotionalism. In fact, the design business is probably 40% logic and 60% emotion whereas Bob was 100% logic and zero emotion. And this not only applied to product but it also applied to people, and you can't--people that worked for him--and you really can't handle people that way. I remember Sevrain [Sev] Vass, who was the controller, first for Lincoln-Mercury, then, as I recall, for Ford. [He was] a very dear friend of mine. We made strange bedfellows considering the practically diametrically opposite position that we had on things, but, regardless, we were dear friends. And I remember having a quarrel with him once and Sev said, "Well, Bob, is so smart that I feel perfectly comfortable having him take--me being a book in his library, he can take me down, open me up, take out what he wants, put me back and that makes me happy." And I said, "Well, you're obviously a whore," whereupon we had a big argument, but people were that way. Now had Bob stayed--he became President, as you know, and was for a month before he was drafted

by Kennedy for Secretary of Defense--but, had he stayed at Ford, it is my judgment that at the end of eight or so years that the people--and then had he left--the people that he would have left in charge would have been rudderless because they were all order takers and saluters and going

out and doing [a] beautiful job of what they were told to do, but all the orders would be coming from Bob McNamara, and there wouldn't have been any input at all from other people. Now that's, obviously, a very subjective view, but I think that Ford's savior was not necessarily the country's good luck.

Q As it turned out.

A As it turned out, because he was applying that same crap to the United States, and we ended up in Viet Nam and a lot of other things. The domino theory is very logical, you understand, but, at any rate....

Q But Crusoe, at this point, was fascinated by these mentalities?

A Oh, no question about it. Crusoe's a genius in his own right, and it takes one to know one, and he was fascinated--it's a good word. He saw not only brilliance but he saw youth and brilliance and energy. Crusoe was not exactly a youngster, you know, he'd been retired once and come out of retirement to go to Ford and....

Q His energy is waning, obviously?

A Well, he had a lot, but it had to be waning because he left the Company when he was 64, and I am now 64, so I know a little about the difference of energy I had back then and the energy I have now. You just run out of spit. So, anyhow, he admired Bob for the kinds of responsibility he laid on Bob for general planning and, perhaps, because Bob was busy doing other things. He relied on Jack Reith, and, of

course, Jack had won his spurs in product by having been sent to France to straighten out Ford of France, and his commission--at least as he told me--was to get Ford of France to a place where it could be sold because Breech didn't think that it was really a worthwhile enterprise. We all lived to rue the day, but, nonetheless, Jack went over and did this. He used--he had no talent over there in the design sense, so he used our people to develop the line of cars. A very successful line of cars--he used a lot of techniques--product techniques like two-toned color combinations and things of that nature.

Q New to them?

A Yeah, over there was the first time they'd ever seen a two-toned car since the days of Bugatti, and it was extremely successful, as you know--perhaps you don't--but, at any rate, at the auto shows in Europe they sell cars at the auto show just like you would at a dealership, and they take hard money down, and that's a commitment on your part, and you lose the money if you don't come through and buy the car a little later. When Ford introduced its line of cars over there, the Reith cars, they had taken two years' worth of orders--their capacity for two years--and that's the

first time that had ever happened any place in Europe. So that was money in the bank. He had further demonstrated his means of dealing with the highly Communistic auto union that was in the plant by working out an agreement with them that, "Hey boys, I can go home. I've got a job back there. You fellows are going to be out of work if we close this place down, so hang in tough with me, and I'll see that you get your reward in heaven or at least when we begin to make money," but at any rate, he made it stick. They understood the logic of this,

and so he got the place going. He did a remarkable job. They wrote articles about him in Time magazine, you might recall, he was the white-haired boy of business, and so he had that in his hip pocket, and that was obviously more in the product end, anyhow, and Jack really wanted to be a product man. That was his long-term goal. So he ended up with the Lincoln-Mercury Division.

Q The whole division--not just Mercury?

A I mean, excuse me, Mercury.

Q Can you explain how that split came about. I believe about 1949 or '50....

A Well, I've forgotten the exact time. I think it was a little later than that, actually.

Q Maybe early Fifties? [1955]

A Yeah. They divided it up because Jack had presented a paper--a series of papers to Lew Crusoe making the case. Now whether Crusoe said, "Hey, Jack, go out and noodle this out and come back with the evidence," or whether Jack said, "Hey, this is a hell of a deal. I think I'll put it together and show it to Crusoe," I don't know. But, at any rate, I do know that Jack made the presentation, and, interestingly enough, he--at Crusoe's suggestion--in fact, in Crusoe's presence, rehearsed this several times. I know one of the groups to which he rehearsed it was the design center, then the styling organization. Well, by the time he was through blowing smoke up our ass, why, we thought that this was the greatest thing since sliced bread, and we were all enthusiastic, and, frankly, he was very good at these kinds of things. He had all the pie charts and the graphs and evidence--hard-

baked evidence--of how successful this was all going to be. And, in fact, if we'd let it ride for awhile, perhaps it could have been. But it was fascinating that, as we got over the decentralization business and began to consolidate again, that General Motors began, very slowly, to centralize, and, as of now, they've gone through major centralization because it's a hell

of a lot cheaper, and what price the independence of divisions? In fact, the only reason, I'm sure, that Sloan allowed the autonomy that he did of the divisions when he picked them up was a ploy to keep peace [among] the heads of the corporations that he was absorbing. General Motors was buying up whole corporations and buying their executive cadre with them, and you couldn't take these entrepreneurial-personalities, that obviously had been successful, and shackle them under a dictator that was going to tell them what to do. And so I'm rather convinced that Sloan, even though he doesn't talk about it in his Adventures of a White Collar Man, but I am rather convinced that he thought that he would have a real bear by the tail if he didn't give these fellows their head, and he provided the umbrella of policy, etc. under which they operated. They could all see the benefits of having their bodies, for example, made by Fisher Body and things of that nature, but these were pretty hard-headed, individualistic kind of guys and used to having their own way, used to running their own thing, and I think that that probably was--rather than crush them, have them quit or have the morale go to hell, that he felt that it would be better if they all worked together and had a great deal of independence. And I think it worked, but over time, as new people come up and so forth, you can begin to mold them to your own image, and it was just the opposite at Ford.

It was a great, centralized thing, and the romance of being decentralized and looking at General Motors which, obviously, had a hell of a track record out there, all sort of augured for this being the thing for us to do. We weren't prepared for it, and so we, after a period, began to--after a period of failure, we began to consolidate again.

Q At this period, you are chief designer at Mercury?

A I was head of Mercury [design] under Jack.

Q Jack Reith.

A Yeah. He selected me, I'm happy to say, and I was very anxious to become a part of his dream. I mean Ford was nose-to-nose with Chevrolet. Heroes are not made just being nose to nose with Chevrolet, and, at those volumes, very difficult to break out more than a point or half a point or something of that nature. You're lucky to hang in tough. With the second, or Mercury Division, you stood a chance at becoming quite heroic, and, as a matter of fact, we did some good things and did get the sales up a lot on that car. Jack, however, made a tactical error. There was a Turnpike-Cruiser that was developed which was a piece of exotica which is probably the epitome of poor taste.

Q You know that his prototype still survives?

A I understand it does. Yeah, as a matter of fact, there's a guy that bought one after they were in production that was in touch with me not too long ago. Maybe he called you. Did he? I've

forgotten his name. But he was in the process of restoring this thing. Oh, yeah, anything that's that unique--and let me tell you, it was pretty

unique because Jack had sold it on the basis of with this kind of dealer organization that's running pretty good right about now, we can get rid of 10,000 of anything, and if we get rid of 10,000, we'll think we've died and gone to heaven because of the profit, or the accounted profit on the car.

Q At this point do you have separate dealer organizations? Has Jack come up with that kind of a...?

A They had some that were unique, but they were still marketing them through combined dealers, yeah. They almost had to. Those franchises were sort of locked in concrete. In fact, the wordage was such-apparently, they were so desperate to get Lincoln dealers at one time, that they made all kinds of concessions in the contract with the dealers --in the franchise contract. You could have an exclusive area, and, of course, these guys kept their areas at times when there was room for a couple of other points right close by, and that led to all kinds of legal battles and bad will and things like that. But, anyhow, this Turnpike Cruiser thing was really the undoing of Jack because it was an exciting enough car. The market began to falter a little bit, as it frequently does. You know, you're on a high, and then all of a sudden you hit a little, modest dip, and we. were eating a lot of Turnpike Cruisers. This provoked Breech, and you really had to know Breech to understand why it really provoked him: I mean, here was a fellow that not only was bright but, in his own mind, there was no one brighter, and he was pretty close to right, by the way, he was a bright guy. But as all fellows who get into positions of power, not only have egos to start with but their egos get reinforced as the power base builds, and he just hated anybody that would ever put him in a position where he had made a decision where the decision didn't work out to be 100% right. The same thing happened with the Edsel. The Edsel was enthusiastically endorsed by Breech.

Q The concept?

A The concept of the Edsel, and, you know, he was the chief approver along with Henry Ford of all the stuff that came out of our place and the whole product line and all that sort of thing. One of the fellows who was violently against it--almost everybody that was in on the Mercury side of things--was obviously against it because it was going to crowd their market. One of these fellows was Dick Krafve who was second in command of Lincoln-Mercury at the time.

Q Under?

A Under Ben[son] Ford, I believe, and, then Ostrander, and I think it was under Ostrander that Krafve was sort of second in command. And Dick was another military guy--not through the--yeah, as I recall, he was a colonel, too. But Dick was a pretty smart dude, and he stood up and

made speeches against it, and the irony of ironies is that he ends up by inheriting the damned division [Edsel] for which he was ultimately canned. So it was really crazy. But at any rate, Reith was doing battle with Breech, and I think you almost had to call it doing battle. We would go in and have our ears soundly boxed on some sort of a program or the look of something that we'd taken in, and Jack would come out and say, "Okay, we're going to regroup and come up with another battle plan." That's a quote. Of course, Jack was in the military. I don't think he ever conceived of a battle plan in his life, but, nonetheless,

he was still filled with these militaristic things, and we would, and we'd go back and hammer on the committee until, by God, they just--I guess we just wore them down.

Q The design approval [committee]?

A Yeah. Which in those days was every officer in the damned place--[Henry] Ford, eventually--well, I had suggested to him that these mass meetings are awful, and he had agreed but for quite different reasons. I knew that you couldn't get unanimity in a group like that if you wanted to. If there's a powerful leader that says, "Okay," everybody else will say okay, but in their heart of hearts, you know, you just can't get them together. That was my reason for wanting it reduced. Ford's reason was that he was beginning to discover that his own quotes were being aired around the Company, and he wanted to be able to speak with a little more candor on product matters, and so--sometime subsequent to this time, of course, he reduced it down to about--well, actually, he went down to about three people one time, but then it grew to about five and then the various, hangers-on that had to make the presentations and so forth--the walking file cabinets. But, back to product planning, Jack was a--you can use it any way you want. It was a fact-gathering operation. The problem was that if a product planner didn't like something, he could kite the numbers to make it a more than unattractive program, if he, personally, didn't like it. That was the shortfall. If his boss liked it, he could frequently send him back and say, "Well, let's restudy the numbers. We want this to sail." Then, all of a sudden, numbers that made it impossible, one day, came out to make it look pretty good the next, so you know that was some skullduggery

afoot. That gave them an awful lot of power. It did not give them the innovative feel for things. They were a control. They weren't inventors. Now, Crusoe had ideas and good ones, and....

Q He used to hang around the design shop a lot.

A Oh yeah, and Reith, ditto. In fact, you could tell the guys that wanted to be a part of it and had constructive criticisms and good ideas and would listen to ideas, good or bad, but had a good filter system for being able to select the good from the bad. They're good product fellows.

DeLorean was a good product man, for all his other faults. But I remember asking John--I was a pretty good friend of his--it is not true that people that work at Ford never speak to people that work at General Motors.

Q After you'd come from General Motors, you still maintained your contacts.

A Well, yes, but that wasn't a contact at that time. I'd 'met him socially, subsequently, and we just became friends. A couple of subsequent marriages kind of pried it, apart because you find yourself having to take sides whether you want to or not. But I asked him once, I said, "John, how do you control a design cost on a Pontiac?" He was in charge of Pontiac Division at that time. He said, "Well, I have an accountant that comes with me, see." Well, "accountant" was a euphemism for his product planner, but they hadn't quite gotten to the place where they were using the word. And he said, "He really keeps close tab on design costs." Well, he had a cadre of people that were keeping--he was the spokesman for his people, I'm sure, but, actually, too much money is spent on that sort of thing because they get it down to fractions of a

penny for every part. When I was working in the Chevrolet studio, they had a chief body engineer and--no, a chief engineer and a chief body engineer--Waterbury and Luxmore were the two names, and they were the only two fellows from the engineering fraternity that ever got into the then styling section at General Motors, so they had to do their job. They also would cost a job, and it was very simple. They would walk around a car--now, remember, we're talking, perhaps, fifty years experience, anyhow, between the two fellows. They would walk around a car, and it was up a nickel, down a dime, up fifteen, down ten, and by the time they got around, if it worked out to zero, you had a program. I am convinced that they were every bit as accurate, if not more accurate, than the plethora of product planners who were inexperienced and taking each of these things to purchasing and having them put a cost on, with all its protection and then they're taking it to manufacturing, and, you know, the tooling guys and so forth. Everybody building in their safety factor. It's a wonder we ever built a car, frankly. But it was a way to do it, anyhow. The other difficult thing that came up, and this was a policy matter that the product planners had to work with, and that is a system that really never allowed you to ever introduce a unique automobile because they had a constant volume concept and would never make any allowance--so if you wanted to bring out a unique body style or something of that nature, you had to justify it within the constant volume. Well, if you do that, that means something else has to back off. So if you're bringing out a car, it better be one that generates a lot of economic profit or you can't make any sense out of it at all, and frequently you can't make any sense out of them, anyhow,

and that's when emotionalism got into it, and every once in awhile

our management would say, "Well, fuck the concept. Let's go anyhow." But, I suppose it was a control, but a very bad one because it was stultifying as far as bringing new stuff to the marketplace was concerned. I think their great concern was something that actually happened, anyhow, and that is that they--that we had this fantastic diversification of product, and we really glutted the marketplace with added models and so forth, and, I suppose, we could have been a lot more selective on that sort of stuff. But, actually, it was a hell of an inhibitor, and in the business of product, you want to be--any self-respecting designer knows that you cannot go to press with a car that is out of wack too much, design cost-wise or you're going to fail, and if you fail, you're blamed for the failure. They never blame the guy that did the engine unless the damn thing blows up or other parts of the car. They always blame the guy that cost them the money to change the look. That's why I'm so amazed that I wasn't--if it hadn't been for this great diversification of models and so forth, I think I would have been canned after the first year or two. There was always something that was hot, and that took the onus off of the failures that I was doing, too, but that's a dicey business as far as staying alive. But Jack, anyhow, was very good at what he did, but he did tend to--for want of a--and it's not a very charitable word, but for want of another one, he would rig numbers to get his own way, and if it blew back in his face, as it did with the Turnpike Cruiser, then that was the thing that Breech would hang on to: "I, Breech, did not make a mistake in judgment. I, Breech, was given a royal shafting by this son of a bitch that gave me the bad

information." He said, "I can't trust him, obviously, so we won't exactly can him, but we will send him up to take charge of Ford of Canada, if he wants it." Well, Jack didn't want Ford of Canada. You might recall it was essentially a sales arm in those days--still is, I guess--and the manufacturing was all under manufacturing here, so Jack didn't want that at all.

Q By rigging, do you mean sales figures?

A No, by rigging numbers to make things look like they will generate more profit than they might. Really, not ethical. I mean there are ways of even rigging ethically, but there are ways to just lie, too, and Jack was so sure that anything that he did would be right that he didn't hesitate to warp the truth a little bit in order to make it happen because he knew he'd be vindicated in the final analysis. It's sort of like a guy in the service that disobeys an order and then captures a hill or something like that, he received a hero's badge. On the other hand, the guy that disobeys an order and doesn't capture the hill is shot, frequently. Well, Jack got shot, and he decided that it wasn't a good time to be going over to Canada. That was a blow to his pride, and he didn't want that, and so he ended up, as I recall, as president of Crosley [AVCO] which isn't the little car company; it was an electronic outfit of some consequence, and things did not go well there, and, for whatever reasons, Jack disposed of himself. A lot of people thought it was an accident. Bill Grimes, who was very close to him and was talking to Maxine* about it, is of another mind. I think that they allowed him to have an accidental death because of the extreme Catholicism of the

family, and that was a gracious way to do it. It didn't make a damn as far as his insurance or anything like that was concerned; I mean, it wasn't a swindle, but it was very important to the family that he not have disposed of himself. But Maxine swears he did. Q It was a classic case, then, of sort of going too far, too fast, too soon with a fatal flaw in terms of ethical concern?

A Yeah. Excepting, regardless of that, frankly, Breech made a mistake, in my judgment. You cannot take fellows who have had absolutely no experience at all and put them in a--well, no experience, you know, minimal experience. Everybody makes mistakes, and the higher up you are, the more costly the mistakes when you make them. Most of us get our training by making mistakes that don't cost too much or, at least, you have the protection of a couple of layers of supervision that either get blamed or protect you or something, but you're awfully vulnerable when you're a division general manager, and it is your responsibility, and, by God, whether you've been accepting bad information from your own people--regardless of all that, it is your responsibility, and when you make a mistake, it's usually a blinger. The reason I say that I think that Breech was wrong is, here was a guy in his middle thirties, perhaps, and limited experience, given this fantastic responsibility, and it was--he makes a mistake. He's a smart guy, you think he would have made the same mistake again? I think not, and I think that if you, as the top manager of an organization, give these responsibilities to fellows who are bright enough to learn and do their job and the whole schmier, and they make a mistake, you should be prepared for them to make a mistake and count on their intelligence not to make another one, but don't wipe out a man who

had what, fantastic potential, even if it is such a thing as being of questionable honesty where it comes to numbers. He wouldn't do that again, so it's a--it wasn't really an amoral issue with--I should say it wasn't an immoral issue, it was more an amoral issue with Jack. He just knew he was right. Well, he wasn't--so he learned--but he was never given the chance, you see, to relearn. Ford's history, by the way, is surfeit with fellows that made "the one mistake," and that is ridiculous because fellows that get to that position--particularly, after they've had about 20/25 years experience, you can't send them down again, so you give them another chance. You have to or you fire them. And it was only until recently that--well, recently, within the last 5/7 years or something like that--that they began to give fellows another chance. I think-why, I'm sure that you don't have these kinds of things recorded on General Motors, but if you were to look at their lines of ascension, as far as officers were concerned and so forth, versus Ford and the number of

people that they had to "remove" compared to Ford, you'd think we were living in different countries--Ford Motor Company in Russia and General Motors in the United States, and I've heard they have it behind them now, as best I can determine. For example, it's really Ed Blanch's own decision to leave Ford Motor Company after the European fiasco. He was brought back to be given another responsibility. [James] Capolongo just didn't like the way the things were going, so he bailed out; but Lutz, who could be held accountable for it all, is still an executive vice-president*, and it is no secret about Lutz' part in the whole act. So, I think that this shows a great deal more forbearance than it did. Of course, there was another thing that was happening at Ford that was unique and that is that the

*Editor's Note: Robert Lutz was given a position in Ford Truck. He soon opted for a Chrysler offer to create an international organization. As of early 1988, he has assumed the responsibility for Chrysler Motors.

chairman of the board was the chairman of the board for a hell of a long time, and he had a tendency to get chapped off at people, and it's sort of like John Dykstra, you know. John Dykstra once told me, "Hey, Gene, I never fired a guy in my whole life. Of course, there are a hell of a lot of guys that aren't working here that I didn't like, but I never fired one, see?" Well, Henry Ford never fired a guy until it came to Lee, I guess--Iacocca. But all he had to do was let it be known that a guy was a bad guy, in his mind, and he had all kinds of lieutenants out there that would see that that guy was, in effect, set up to become a nonfunctioning eunuch.

Q It happened many times.

A Yeah, many times. I think that a lot of times if Henry Ford had known his damning with faint praise to some guy was going to lead to the fellow's industrial execution, that he probably would have said, "Oh, hell, I really didn't mean that." I really believe that.

Q But no one ever told him?

A But nobody ever told him. It's kind of interesting traveling with him because, after a couple of bottles of Pommard or a few Scotches or something, he was given to giving your performance review, you know. I remember once when Will Scott--God, he took off on Will because he didn't like his haircut. Will had a butch haircut. He was emulating [Ed] Lundy at the time who's never changed his.

Q Henry Ford didn't mind that?

A Well, Ford thought it was okay on Lundy, but he thought--he could see what Will was doing. "Why don't you let your hair grow, Will, goddamn it?" And, Harley Copp--the infamous Harley Copp--was in the group

at the time. He said, "Harley, there isn't a-soul in Ford Motor Company that likes you." He said, "I, on the other hand [think] you're all right, you're all right, but nobody else likes you, it's really terrible." What the hell does Harley do, you know.

Q Right, jump out of the airplane?

A Yeah, and Charlie Baldwin was in the group at the time, and he took his turn. He said, "Oh, Charlie Chipmunk, aack!," 'cause Charlie had this full jowl look, you know, and he leaned on him. I hesitate to say this for history, but I will. He looked at me and said, "Gene, you're the biggest brownnose I've ever met in my life." I said, "Well, I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Ford, because anything I do, I want to do well," and he laughed. Now, if he hadn't laughed, I would have been in deep shit, but he laughed. But he was filled with that kind of thing. It was one of the reasons that we got rid of the 727 aircraft because people didn't want to travel with him, and it looked embarrassing for him, to end up someplace with two people getting off that big mother, you know. That, and the fact that his wife thought that it belonged to Henry, and didn't have any regard for the fact that it was costing a modest $80 an hour in the air, on the ground and everything else which....

Q Out of the corporate coffers?

A Out of Henry's pocket.

Q Oh, Henry's pocket.

A Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's the way we booked it. Obviously, it cost thousands of dollars an hour, but the government stood still for that. You didn't have to earn back the plane. All you had to do was cover the cost of the fuel and the wear and tear and that sort of stuff.

Eighty bucks an hour--you couldn't do it now for five times that. But, it was sort of interesting.

Q So, you had this marvelous troika of yourself and Crusoe and Reith.

A Well, I wouldn't say it was a marvelous troika. I'm not sure....

Q In retrospect, at least.

A Yeah.

Q It must have been.

A I spent an awful lot of time with both of them.

Q Trying to lift Mercury out of the doldrums?

A Yeah, and Jack was very good at it. In fact, he was so absorbed in what he was doing that we would--he would meet at 7:00 in the morning in my shop, and wouldn't call a break for lunch. He would send a couple of the younger product planners over to the Dearborn Inn to pick up some club sandwiches or something like that. We would set up a massive round table and carry on a business meeting while eating. Now, it takes most of us about a half hour to get rid of a full club sandwich. It takes Jack about ten minutes. I never saw a guy get stuffed down so fast in my life, and that's the way he did everything, and he was hyperactive, frankly, but he channeled it all on the product, with one exception, he also tried to channel it on the wives of some of his subalterns, etc. Now, as long as the guy's a winner, his sins are forgiven.

Q They are overlooked.

A Yeah. Overlooked is a better word. If it were going to mean a lot of money to Ford Motor Company, they'd buy him a girl, if that's what he wants, you know. But, it was a game with Jack, and he wasn't at all above intimidating the hell out of his lesser people in order to see if this would work out. Not unlike George Walker--my predecessor, who sort

of had a go/no-go gauge for girls when they would come into the place.

He hired all the girls, or they all had to pass his--excuse the expression--muster. As a matter of fact, Ed Roberts, who was the furrier in town, was the guy that put the mouton carpet in George's office, you see, and called upon with great frequency to come and repair little patches in the carpet because that was a great romping ground for George, and it did really kind of mess up after awhile, you know--a terrible thing to say, but George was very candid about this. In fact, when they did the Time magazine cover....

Q "The Cellini of...?"

A "Cellini of Chrome," yeah. Great editorial joke. Because

they thought that was great. They really couldn't come out and say exactly--they--you know, they researched the hell out of these things. They went back and chatted with his old English teacher, whom he had presumably bedded, and, yeah, you know, she thought that was sort of interesting--he was sort of a gay romantic--and George was just a horny, old goat, you know. But, that "Cellini of Chrome" is one of the great lines of all time, particularly, if you know anything about Cellini! I mean, that's what makes it, and the editors thought it was great. That's as close as they

could come to really saying the way it was--great double-entendre. But, anyhow, Jack ran out the string. He wanted the cars to be the most advanced, and, of course, it's fun to work with a guy that does. In those days, we'd come up with such things as integral bumper/grilles and that sort of thing which were new to the industry, and a number of innovations that were unique. Not that they hadn't been conceived by other people--competitors and the like--but they never got

off the ground. Jack was a great guy for approving all that stuff.

Q The impact of his kinetic personality on your design decisions then was....?

A Well, as a matter of fact, it was delightful working with him. It was not delightful trying to sell the stuff to a more prosaic management, but Jack could be pretty persuasive. See, I'd get up and have to pitch it, and, in those days, I learned as a result of this that you never really try to sell a car. We used to stand up and sell them like when they would make these annual presentations to the dealers. They would get a pro up there, you know, to really hoot and holler about the car. Well, that was my commission, see, to do that. Well, all that does is provoke people. You can tell that the ship is sinking just by looking at their faces while you're standing up there like a song and dance man making an ass out of yourself, but you go through with it.

Q Excuse me. Is this the process called "The Dog and Pony Show?"

A Exactly, and it was. It was just a miniature version-of the same kind of thing that you would take out to the dealers, and the dealers, of course, unlike--I mean, they want to be hyper. They, you know, they put on funny straw hats. They looked like the Republican or Democratic convention; I mean, they're real asses, but we have these dour personalities sitting there with Breech drilling holes in you wondering when the hell you were going to wet your pants, you know. It was awful. Well, we got over that. I said, "Look, just explain the car, establish a rationale for why it's there, but if they don't want--they're looking at the car too, you know, and they're looking at it with more jaundiced eye than a customer, even, because they can see the dollar signs as well." But at any

rate, it was a very exciting period, and Jack, I think, made a contribution. He probably also was a warning to other fellows in high station on how not to play Breech or anybody else--any of his successors or anything. You begin to fool around with numbers--even if you're not lying about them--but by misdirection. That kind of legerdemain is dicey, yeah.

Q At the least. As someone mentioned to me one of his techniques was instead of ten-day reports from the dealers, he, eventually, wanted to have a [sales] report every day.

A I wouldn't be surprised. That's stupid. He might have wanted it, but it's stupid because the vacillations of ten-day reports--if they were consistent with, say, everything your competitors were doing, they don't take into account contests that one company is having and another company isn't. Ten days isn't a broad enough margin. As a matter of fact, you might recall that American Motors no longer makes them. I think that they're on a monthly basis or something like that, and it's -a lot more sensible. In fact, you could even do it on a quarterly basis, but then the newsies wouldn't have anything to talk about every ten days. Ben Bidwell frequently said that his whole life is measured by ten-day reports because he was always in sales, and, you know, if the ten-day report is high just before bonus time, you make out like a bandit, but if you got two bum ones in a row just before bonus time, why, you don't make so much money, and ditto every other decision that's made during the year. Ben is very good, by the way; unfortunately, he's at Chrysler.*

*Editor's Note: Bennett E. Bidwell, formerly Vice-President of Sales for Ford Motor Company, after a sojourn with Hertz, rejoined Iacocca at Chrysler where he is (1987) Vice-Chairman in charge of sales strategy.

Q I have this picture of--far too simplistic and far too ignorant-

of your association with Reith, as you described it, and with Crusoe looking [on], benignly, from his elevated position as group vice president, and then suddenly both of them began to run out of steam, gradually. Crusoe is losing his health and energy....

A Well, losing health is one thing. Yeah, he had a modest attack. He could pump like hell for a long time, thereafter. That wasn't the reason he left. The reason he left is because he sponsored the divisional situation, and it turned out to be floundering or foundering, and so he was held accountable for it, and so they let him go. Now, that's typical of the way they used to do things. They let him go at the age of 64. Now, that's patently ridiculous. They could have allowed him to coast for one more year and walked away with face, but they didn't give a damn about that in those days. He obviously didn't need the money, but he was so damned provoked that the minute he left he got rid of all of his Ford products and bought two Rolls Royces and a Mercedes. I don't know whether you knew that or not. That's being mad! So, it wasn't affecting any ten-day reports around our place, but it was sort of an indication of how offended he was. Well, the same thing happened to Breech. You might recall, I happened to be the guy that was on the catching end of both sides of this thing, and I've forgotten exactly what the specific was, but Breech had come over and had said--Henry Ford had been over by himself and said, "Hey, I want this to go this way," and Breech had come over and said, "Well, it isn't going to go that way. It's going to go this way," and Henry Ford was out of town at the time. That's why he'd come over early because he wasn't going to be in town, and when he came

back, Breech had gone out of town, and Henry came over and said, "Why are you doing it this way?" and I told him why, and he just went like this [facial expression] and left. And it was directly after that that I was told by Bill Ford that he called Breech up, and he said, "I think I've matured enough so that I can handle the affairs of Ford Motor Company by myself, and Breech, you might recall, was 64 years old. So, he could have, you know, been a nice guy and let him stay for another year, but Ford--that triggered it. He'd been thinking about it, I'm sure, for a long time because he was--you know, Breech had--and Henry had always been very careful never to have any quarrels with him or anything like that, always deferred to him, but knowing Henry's personality as he began to have different views than Breech, this was beginning to stifle him, and so he decided to remove this inhibition. After all, he'd--Breech had made a hell of a lot of money at Ford Motor Company--14 or 15 million dollars, and he'd outlived his usefulness. I mean, a lot of people thought that he ran the company; you see, what he was doing was tutoring Henry. That was his prime responsibility, as Henry saw it, at any rate.

And the vernacular at that time was that Henry was reported to have said to Breech, "Ernie, I've graduated."

A Yeah, yeah, exactly. He'd had the tutor long enough. But another kind of personality could very easily have had a little chat with Breech in his office and gradually allowed Breech to divorce himself from top responsibilities and, you know, all kind of devices can be made that are great face-savers, and that, obviously, hurt Breech. It would hurt anybody, and it was--and without Breech and Breech's ability to gather executives and make decisions--some good, some bad. I remember his coming

over after the--I had Mercury, then they began to centralize again, so I ended up with Mercury, Edsel and Lincoln [design responsibilities], and we had reconstituted the Edsel. It seemed ridiculous for us to have it off of a Mercury. We were taking it off of a Ford, and we could have worked it like BOP--like Chevrolet/Pontiac/small Olds, so forth, and so I had just eliminated those, arbitrarily, because nobody was really telling us what to do. All I knew was that we had to have a face-lift, and so I concentrated on the Ford one which, because of the anatomy of the body at the time, was--and it was not an interchangeable body, they were unique bodies at that time--the Mercury body didn't lend itself to certain things as well as the Ford body did, and so [we] concentrated on that, and we came up with--believe it or not--an execution of the original concept of the Edsel, which was a handsome machine. We took a lot of the gewgaws and gingerbread, and so forth, off, and Breech came over and looked at it, and he said, "Gene, it's a good-looking car, but I've already made the decision that we're going to eliminate the Edsel." Well, it was no skin off my tail, but 600 dealers went down the tube, and some guys jumped out

of windows, you know, and, in my judgment, once you make a commitment to get into it, once you have a dealer organization in place, and the biggest thing that you need are stalls in the marketplace. These guys were hanging in tough, and all they needed was a product, and they could have made it, and we could have used 600 dealers, importantly, as time went on. Much as we could have used Ford of France, as time went on, but we sold it, as you recall, through a big mishmash to Simca which was owned by Chrysler. It was kind of interesting to go to France and see cars that you designed at Ford running around with the Simca nameplate on. Well, Dave, why don't we call it quits [for today]. I've run out of spit.

AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BORDINAT, EUGENE

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VOL. II

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

Q This is Dave Crippen of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, and today, October 20, 1986, we are in lovely Pine Knob Manor talking with Mr. Eugene (Gene) Bordinat continuing our series of interviews we held a year or so ago. We're asking Mr. Bordinat to trace the history

of design in Ford Motor Company and also to elaborate on some of his experiences at that establishment.

A Well, Dave, the first time that I saw the 1949 Ford, or the car

that was to become the 1949 Ford, was when I joined Ford Motor Company in 1947. I went there, as you may recall, in charge of advanced design. George Snyder, who was the director of design at that time under Tom Hibbard, asked my opinion of it, and I must say that I was rather shocked, primarily, because it was the first time that the so-called slab-sided design had been implemented in three dimension. Sketches of it had been made while I was over at General Motors, but they were still staying pretty much with the individual front and rear fenders, and, so, it was rather startling to see this new concept in full-size clay. Naturally, from a designer's point of view, it was quite exciting. So then you began to ask yourself, how did it happen, who did it, and being a designer, naturally, I found fault with some things and was commissioned to make a few adjustments in the front end which I did, not losing the theme at all but just a little adjustment here and there. I don't think any designer can ever totally embrace another person's design. They always say, "Well, it's very nice, but not quite the way I would do it" and then hoping that somebody will say, "Well, show me how you would do

it." But the '49 Ford was a rather exciting machine, and I began to ask about the car, and, at that same time, I'd also seen what was to be the 1949 Mercury as well as the Cosmopolitan--a Lincoln. And the three cars, obviously, did not look like they had come from the same womb, and this piqued my curiosity because normally when cars in the company are done, why, the mark of the leader is usually on the car. In some form or fashion they all have a certain character that is unique to the leadership in the place. So even though the cars had been created in separate studios, they take on a certain character that goes from the Ford through Mercury up into Lincoln, as an example. Even as it did at General Motors going from Chevrolet up through Cadillac. A lot of this, I suppose, is not only the mark of the leadership, but it's also the fact that there is interchangeability and, consequently, pieces from one car are used on another, and this tends to breed a certain--not exactness-but similarity of character, at least, in these products. So I began to query people, and I was told that Harold Youngren--at that time, the vice president of Ford Motor Company who had come to Ford Motor Company from General Motors. I believe he'd been the chief engineer at Oldsmobile prior to coming over and was part of Breech's team of former General Motors' people, and when he first saw the Mercury, it was being proposed as and had been approved to be the Ford, and it was, in his judgment, too much car to go against Chevrolet.

Q Could this have been the Bob Gregorie design?

A Yeah, it would. I don't know exactly when Gregorie left. He'd, obviously, been in charge, but when I first got over there, Tom Hibbard

was the fellow that had been put in charge, and whether this was done under his aegis or Gregorie's, I really don't know. I know that the individuals

who had worked on--had the responsibilities for the cars--were Bill Schmidt who was working on the Cosmopolitan and Johnny Najjar on the Mercury. And both of them were reasonable automobiles. They'd stretched out pretty far, and, as they should have done it seems to me, considering the fact that there had been a hiatus of some four or five years because of the war, and the public was looking for something a little more dramatic, and, I think, that that had been expressed in their response to the Studebaker which had come out in 1945-6 as an all-new car and quite a radical car. And although it probably would have had difficulty in meeting either Chevrolet's or Ford's volume criteria because it was radical--that radical--it certainly was well conceived for the limited production facilities that Studebaker had at the time. We, as designers, and certainly the corporation, resented the fact that they were able to bring that car out, I might add, parenthetically, because they had people working on it down in Mexico.

Q This is Studebaker?

A Studebaker. All the other corporations had closed down their then called styling facilities, and everybody was doing a 100% war effort.

Q Was this a Loewy [operation]?

A I presume that Loewy was the one that sort of set up business down there because he was the consultant to them, and he claims that these cars were his, and as a consultant, I'm sure he had a lot of influence on them. I tend to think that Bourke and--oh, the chap that went over to Chrysler.

Q Macadam?

A No, no, prior to Macadam. His name will come to me. I'll get back to it. But, isn't that awful. At any rate, they probably had more

hands-on responsibility for the cars than Loewy did. Consultants actually rarely create something.

Q Oh, Exner, you mean.

A Exner, Virgil Exner, yeah. His son worked for me, and, by the way....

Q Yes. He's still at the Ford design facility.

A Right, and he is a good designer. As a matter of fact, he also-he, the son--also established the design program at Notre Dame.

Q Did he?

A Yeah, which was his school, and, I believe, that he had his masters out of there before he joined his father as an independent. But, Virg, of course, was a bit of a wild man in the design world and claims--and can have claimed, and we all allow him to claim and are delighted that he claimed--the fin era in car design. Some of the Chrysler fins were....

Q Stratospheric?

A Yeah, rather exaggerated. One of the high points in, car design history.

Q Or, as I think you characterized it elsewhere, one of the low points.

A Yeah. Actually it's a--we got carried away. It was fascinating. It has nothing to do with the Ford, but it has do with designers per se. Designers normally work under very tight constraints--financial, engineering, manufacturing--a plethora of constraints, plus a resentment of the fact that they're causing the company to spend money which, of course, doesn't make them popular, anyhow. But, after World War II, and in the

'Fifties, in particular, it became apparent that people--the public--was responding to the car that apparently looked the best, and, as a result, even though they hated to do it, corporations began to give the designers more and more leeway, and, as a result of this, the designer who had always reached for the moon hoping just to get half way there, because of these constraints, was now reaching for the moon, and they were saying, "Okay, go ahead and get the damn moon," and that's when their own immaturity and lack of practice in accepting responsibility showed up, and that led to some of the cartoons that were put into steel, and the public bought them, but they were hardly tasteful. Triple-tone paint jobs with anodized aluminum in gold and silver really are not the epitome of good taste.

Q There's a word for it, I think, the age of....

A Schlock is one.

Q Gorp was another.

A Gorp is another. But, at any rate, we overcame that.. Almost too late, by the way. There were a lot of--there've always been a lot of purists, but people began to listen to purists, too, and they

thought that we were just a tad excessive, and, of course, they were right. But, back to the '49 Ford. It was a fascinating looking car, and the public was ready for the car. There can be a lot of fascinating looking cars, but if the public isn't ready for it, then you've really blown it. But the public was, in fact, ready for it, and it was a highly successful automobile, of course. Well, it's like so many cars, or anything else, actually, a great idea has a lot of fathers, and poor idea is a bastard, so this particular great idea had a lot of fathers. I will tell you

right here and now, I was not one of them. Now, George Walker--I expect you can start with Harold Youngren, really, because it was he that recognized that the Mercury would have been too much car for car to compete against Chevrolet and Plymouth, and made happen the package--that is, all the exterior/interior dimensions--that led to the '49 Ford. Then it was a question of who is to do it? They were in very much of a hurry because they had already okayed the one car, and they had to just go on a forced draft in order to get this other car done. I think it was that, as much as anything else, that led the company to think in terms of getting a consultant at all. But there was another reason: George Walker, who ultimately ended up being the consultant, was a good friend of Ernie Breech, and Breech at that time was--I guess they called him the Executive Vice President of Ford Motor Company. They were fellow members of Bloomfield Hills Country Club, and George, if nothing else, was a great, glad-handing personality, and he worked diligently at going out of his way to be very, very friendly with people in high station, and Breech was one of those people.

Q I believe he had the Recess Club, earlier on, too.

A Yeah. In fact, George actually was the president of the Recess Club and had redesigned the whole thing, I might add, gratis, which, of course, made the people love him dearly. But he was very good at doing those kinds of things. He made a point of it. He would actually deprive himself and his family in order to belong to various associations and clubs and things of that nature that were meaningful to his making and maintaining contacts, and I don't fault him for this. He was in the industrial design business. The

industrial design business was a relatively new business. It was actually created, I guess you'd say, by Harley Earl over at General Motors. I shouldn't say it was created by him. He had an industrial design department, and they dealt with all of the things that General Motors manufactured such as diesel trains and earth movers and things of that nature that didn't fall into the category of automotive or truck. There were fellows like Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy and others who had been in the industrial design business.

Q Walter Dorwin Teague?

A Walter Dorwin Teague, Henry Dreyfuss and so forth, but they were-and they were very good, and they were making money, but that about represented the group that was out there, and they were all, not only talented people, but very good salesman, and, by the end of the war, George Walker was well known, internationally, as well as throughout the country, too. But the thing that really made industrial design happen was an expanding market for it, and Harley Earl having this, in his particular place, felt, well, hell, this is--if it's good enough for General Motors it must be good enough for me and, therefore, all people that manufactured product began to hire industrial designers because they couldn't afford to staff them--have a staff themselves. Only the largest companies could do that. So out of this came George Walker, and he was hired by Ford to do the Ford--the '49 Ford. Well, he was having great difficulty with the two key designers that he had at that time--Joe Oros and Elwood Engle because, although they had gone through the same school that I had, they --neither of them had stayed in the car end of the business. Elwood Engle had spun off and had gone to--had gone with George Walker which took him out of the car business and into the product business, and Joe

Oros had never been in the car part of the business at General Motors, anyhow. He'd been in the industrial design side of it, and so he spun off and went with George Walker, too. Both of them very fine talents, I might add. Both of them quite gifted. Joe, the smarter of the two. Elwood, not terribly smart, frankly. In fact, IQ wise, quite a low level, but gifted hands. He had great hands. He could sketch like crazy. At any rate, they were both exactly what George needed, but when it came to his having this account, he had only done one other car, he himself having left General Motors ages before to become an independent. He had only done one car before this commission and that was a Nash which was fairly successful but, obviously, a quite close copy of the last LaSalle. But, nonetheless, he had done that, so....

Q What year was that, by the way?

A Well, it was before the war so it would be '42/'41 something like that. Probably 141--142 possibly.

Q The grille was very much like the LaSalle grille.

A Yeah, narrow and high. The LaSalle that never hit the market is the one that I did. I was very pleased. I thought I was on a hell of a roll because I had only been in this sanctum sanctorum for a relatively short period of time, and Harley Earl was smiling on what I had developed, and they had taken it to the point where I had done all the preliminary drawings to put into full-size clay. And then I was called to one side by Julio Agramonte, and Julio said, "I hate to tell you this, Gene, but the corporation has decided that they're going to discontinue the LaSalle automobile." Well, that was sort of like a punch in the stomach to me, was too young to accept this very graciously. I wanted to hit somebody

but I didn't know who to hit, and the disappointment was, obviously, in my face, and so Julio said, "Gene, I want to tell you something. This is only the first of many disappointments you're going to have in this business, and you're measured in this business by how quickly you can recover from these blue funks. If you want to wallow around in despair, why, you go ahead and do it, but every day that you're wallowing, you're not contributing a damned thing, and so you'd better get your act in gear. Put this behind you and have at something else." And, I thought that that was good advice. That was great advice. But, at any rate, here was George. He had a contract, and he got the contract because of friendship, because of a good reputation and because he, and his two associates, had, at one time, been with General Motors. I mean, that sounds like pretty good specs. But they were having one hell of a time developing a car, and so on stream comes Dick Calleal. Dick Calleal, as best I can determine, was not even a designer but a draftsman in the design function at Studebaker/ Packard -- well, it was Studebaker at the time. I don't know whether your part of this story has been duly recorded. You want me to go ahead and say it?

Q Please.

A But I was advised that Dick had appeared on the scene at George Walker's studios. He was in need of a job having been recently released from Studebaker/Packard and was advised by George that he would be happy to see some of his samples; namely, in three dimension--namely, of a car of a specific size. Dick went home and solicited the help of Bob Bourke, who is the older brother of Bill Bourke, who ultimately ended up by being executive vice-president of Ford North America, and Bob Koto--Holden Koto,

actually--who, I guess, noodled this out on Calleal's kitchen table.

Q In Mishawaka?

A In Mishawaka. I think that, obviously, Bob Bourke takes the credit for certain portions of it, as he should. It was sort of, in effect, done under his aegis. Holden Koto, in my judgment, would have been the fellow that offered most of the innovative design technique and did the modeling because he was a modeler--a designer, but also a modeler. At any rate, it was that model, that Dick really had very little to do with that he put under his arm and took to George Walker, and George Walker smiled on it because it was better than anything that had been being done in his shop at that time, and with the appropriate supporting illustrations and the model cleaned up, in more professional fashion, was offered to Ford Motor Company, and George, if nothing else, was a persuasive salesman, and that was the one that was determined to turn into full-size clay, and it was approved, after it was seen in full-size clay.. When a person is accused of being a

salesman--George used this himself as a--if he wanted to demean a fellow as being a good designer, he would always tell somebody like Henry Ford, "Well, he's a hell of a salesman." He used to say that about me, and, of course, that's his way of saying, and, consequently, he was a piss-poor designer, you see, but George was the consummate salesman, and was, in fact, a piss-poor designer! But, nonetheless, he did make happen, the car, and that's what it's all about. Nobody paid him to draw lines. They paid him to come up with a car, and he came up with a car. He insisted that that was the car that the corporation should have, and it's the car that went out and did great work.

Q Excuse me, would you say that Engle and Oros took this model and ran with it, so to speak?

A They did. They took the model, and they were the ones that converted it into full size using modelers at Ford Motor Company. George had neither the room nor the--you see, the ideal situation would be for him to have a large studio that would support a full-size model. On the 12th or 13th floor of the New Center Building, you just do not have that kind of space, and so they used Ford's then limited facilities and clay modeling talent in order to transform it, but it was done at the direction of both Elwood and Joe, and....

Q Elwood having some expertise in clay modeling, right?

A Yeah, well., almost every designer knows how to model, but....

Q He had special talent for it? He's not talented, he loved to do it.

A Who?

Q Engle.

A Engle. He--not, necessarily. He could push mud around about the same as anybody, but he liked clay. His idea of good fun was making warm clay balls and throwing them at great velocity at the ceiling of the studio and making them stick. He was not a very smart guy. I can only define his intelligence level by saying that when he was drafted into the service, his general classification scores were sufficiently low as to qualify him for little other than the MP's, which is sort of at the low end of the spectrum. Oros, on the other hand, was academically smart-reasonably politically smart, but he was smart enough so that at the Cleveland School of Art, for example, he graduated at the top of his class--at least high enough so that he was the fellow that received the

fellowship to travel abroad and so forth, so he, obviously, had something going for him in that regard. Besides, he was an indefatigable worker. He just would work very, very hard. I think most of us were, at that time, because we were all Depression kids, and so our attitude toward work was quite different than a lot of the fellows that followed us.

Q Known today as the work ethic.

A Yeah, exactly. We all worked awfully hard, and it was either go 110% or lose your job because there were a hell of a lot of guys that were right behind you. This had nothing to do with upward mobility, this was just clinging to the job. I remember I used to, when I was at General Motors, I would work all day then go home and work until one o'clock in the morning in trying to improve and had stuff I could take into work the following day. Which reminds me, by the way, of the first time I met George Walker, I was a sophomore in high school. My parents lived in Pleasant Ridge, as I did, and so did George Walker. George was really just beginning to get off the grid as a professional industrial designer, but, even then, he had the things that--he lived in a very modest home, but he had a Marmon convertible, four-door sedan which was a plumb elegant car in those days, and he had more hand picking on his suits than I have seen on many a body, and he had a big body that had a lot of hand picking. Because these are the things that people would see. This was very important. I say this in thinking about George, in retrospect, but that's the kind of person he was. However, he used to stop and pick me up on the way to school. I went to school with both his daughter and his son, and in the back seat he would have illustrations of things that--like scales for weighing yourself, and stoves and refrigerators--things that he'd

done on his kitchen table. In fact, I guess, that's the first time I ever really realized that anybody did that sort of thing for a living, and my parents knew him quite well because Pleasant Ridge was a very contained little society unto itself. They had their own little clubs and quite a social gathering which was almost incestuous. But, it was a delightful place, and everybody got to know one another. George was not the most popular guy in that particular area because he was quite a name dropper, and people really didn't think they needed that kind of thing, but there wasn't any question as to where he was going.

Now, interestingly enough, he also became a partner with a guy by the name of Bozell, and they--in fact, George owned one-third and Bozell two-thirds of a company called Trim Trends. Trim Trends was an outfit that manufactured bright work for automobiles, and, at one time, George, probably as a result of his being a consultant to the project of the '49 Ford, had all of the bright work on the exterior of that automobile [done] in Trim Trends. In fact, he had the whole front end ensemble, all of the side moldings, all of the trim around the back end of the car and so forth--everything that was stamped. I suppose today that would be considered a terrible conflict of interest. But, even after George became vice president of the corporation in 1956, he--with full disclosure-advised that this was a conditional acceptance on his being able to retain his holdings

in Trim Trends. I don't think that would ever be allowed to happen today because the pressure on the designers, for example, to not do things in die-casting or plastic but to do them in

stamping, was very, very tough because George wanted as much stamped on the car as possible, so that he could feed it to Trim Trends, obviously. Well, George made a fantastic amount of money out of that particular piece of the operation so when people just sort of look at his income as being based on what he did in the design world, they have to add to the fact that he was the head salesman for this Trim Trends operation and owned a third of it. George--you know, some guys are lucky. Always go with a guy that's lucky. Some guys have talent, some guys are very bright, but are they lucky? And George was lucky. George, for example, as a side bar sort of thing, but it's typical of his character and typical of Breech's character, and, of course, they were both actors in this stage. Breech bought a couple of lots on the ocean down in Florida, and these were pretty expensive lots, and Breech was planning on building a house on them. Breech is also an inveterate golfer, and, on one vacation, he was down playing golf at one of the more exclusive clubs in the neighborhood of where his lots were. And after the golf match and after the 18th--well into the 19th hole, the conversation around the buck dice table turned to politics, and Breech, of course, was pontificating on this matter. A fellow that was right with him there--was the president of the club who had views 180° in the opposite direction--they took to quarreling, and this annoyed the president of the club, and so when Breech's application for membership came up, Breech was blackballed. And that made him feel that sand and surf was not worth a poop--that the dry climes of Arizona and Camelback and things of that nature were much more to his liking, and he divorced himself completely from Florida, never return again. But that left him with two lots, so George was put upon

to take those lots off Breech's hands, and he did. He bought both the lots from Breech for the magnanimous sum of $50,000. Well, when George sold those lots out with a place probably not too different from the one that you saw in Arizona, it's the one that people would--when they would take these cruises would point to and say, "That's George Walker's place." He, obviously, got in excess of a million for it, and so he was sort of pushed in, you see, to making that kind of money, but it was sort of amusing, I thought. Another thing that George did which I found very dispiriting. He was a 32nd degree Mason. I have absolutely no quarrel with this at all. My family is filled with Masons. But I was not about to become a Mason-because the Knights of Columbus contingent in the place was really provoked.

Q Was that on the design staff?

A On the design staff. And there were two camps, and the vice president was the leader of one of the camps, and it seemed to me that was a totally inappropriate thing to do. George asked me--he

invited me to invite him to join the Masons. They cannot invite to join, you see--you must ask. But all the signals were there, and I turned it down which did not endear George to me, but I figured that I needed the--that the worse thing that had happened under George's reign as a vice-president there, was this great division--this terrible morale problem that we were facing because of the Knights of Columbus on one side and the Masons on the other. And George would join these organizations with the express purpose of using them. He had no qualms about it at all. Maybe that's what they're for, but, at any rate, he didn't hesitate to do it. So he had this ethical--right on the edge of being dishonest, almost, and I

never appreciated that, and, of course, he knew I didn't. And this, in spite of the fact that I knew George for many years, I was not really ever on his team, and he needed, in his mind, to establish either Joe or Elwood as his successor for obvious reasons. He would have been out of the industrial design business, still be an owner of the Trim Trends business, and your opportunities go up when you have stuff designed into a car that you can bid on for manufacturing, and it was very important to him to have the door open into the design center after he left.

Q This was after the success of the '49 Ford?

A Oh, after the success of the '49 Ford. After he had been released from his contract, was brought back as a consultant, and I can't remember the time frame, but he was brought back between, say, 1947 and 1956 when he became permanent party. In there he was a consultant again.

Q Somewhere in the early 'Fifties?*

A Yeah. And, of course....

Q He'd left Oros and Engle in place there, had he not?

A He had put them in place, yeah. And, put them in--no, I beg your pardon. He did not. They stayed with him even though they would work, at times, in the facility, when he was a consultant, but they were not part of the staff at all. They joined Ford Motor Company when he joined Ford Motor Company. In fact, I know that both Bob McGuire and I were terribly disappointed. Not the fact that they had joined the company,

*Editor's Note: George W. Walker was an outside consultant to Ford Motor Company from 1945 to 1955. He was appointed Vice President for Design in 1956 and remained in that capacity until 1961 when he was succeeded by Eugene Brooding.

but the fact that the first bonus year--and they'd only had about a half year in--they took all of the bonus pie, and Bob and I got crumbs, and that didn't....

Q This was Walker's doing?

A This was Walker's doing, and I cannot, for the life of me, understand why they allowed him to do it because, subsequently, any massive swings in bonuses were challenged, and, you know, you really had to go to the mat to justify them, but nobody, apparently, challenged this too much and just went ahead and did it, you know.

Q You can attribute this, apparently, to his patronage with Ernie Breech.

A I expect. Yeah. It was a very uncomfortable time when George was there. He had all kinds of things that he could do, all kinds of threats that he could make. He was very wise in that he always worked for the head of the company, and designers almost have to do that., You never work for--if you're going to be working for American Motors, for example, you don't work for anybody but Romney. at the time that he was there. If you do, they walk all over you. You have no clout, and then you're destined to fail. [Harley] Earl worked for [Alfred P.] Sloan. I always worked for the head of the company, either the president or the chairman-it would alternate depending on what the politics were. Well, for Bill Ford, but it depended on who he worked for, and Bill was there, rarely, I mean, in later days, so I was really working directly for them. But the ’49 Ford really saved the Ford Motor Company, and George deserves a lot of credit for his contribution in that regard. Obviously, the world ,doesn't know about the business of Dick Calleal. George always made sure

that--he was a great "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" guy--and he insured that Dick was well placed at Ford. He ended up working for me, and it became my unpleasant duty to have to let him go because he really didn't know anything. By the way, you mentioned the fact that his daughter was interested in kind of cleaning up his name. It's going to be a very difficult thing to do at Ford Motor Company because she won't find anybody around that can say good things about him other than to be nice to her. It wasn't that he was an unpleasant man at all. As a matter of fact, he was lot of fun to be with, but he had absolutely no talent for the business and, consequently--and yet something happened, because when he went to Chrysler, and George was instrumental in getting him into Chrysler. George being a good friend of Tex Colbert at the time, he gets Dick over there, and he was a dear friend of Tex Colbert's. I mean, Larry Fisher and Tex

Colbert and George Walker go up to Fisher's place in Minnesota, you see, for hunting and boozing and what. have you. George knew them all. But Tex took him [Calleal] on, and he ended up in charge of trucks [design], and did a workmanlike job on Dodge trucks and stuff like that. Now that is, if you get the right support, if you got the right designers working for you, why, of course, you can pull that stuff off. And I think that Dick's bent was more mechanical anyhow, and that's a good place for you, for trucks. That's why Johnny Najjar was good at trucks by the way. But, anyhow, Dick ended up in my lap.

George went through, you know, the business of being a consultant when every time he was a consultant, why, naturally, you could just sort of see the people begin to gravitate toward him because he had more clout than any of the organized people--that is, people of the staff, in the organization of the staff, had, and he would smile, but he would rule by--

there was one hell of a mail fist in this velvet glove. He had absolutely no compunction at all about emasculating someone.

Q Often publicly.

A Yeah, yeah. He was a tough hombre. Very unfair hombre. Anybody that wasn't totally for him--it was very black and white--either you were for him or you were against him. If you're against him, you're an enemy to be disposed of. Now, I presume, that that's--well, that's a way of being. He had the morals of a goat, of course. Even in his Time magazine--oh, the interviews that led up to his face being on the cover of Time. It's kind of fascinating because in those days--today they would write about it--in those days, they were a little hesitant, and they thought that they had one great editorial joke when they called him the "Cellini of Chrome." Sort of a headline on one of the cars. Well, Cellini, as everybody knows, Cellini was a great artisan, but in addition to that he was one of the great cocksmen of the day. As a matter of fact, he was quite a remarkable man. If I can believe. what I read, he was one of few fellows to have ever of had syphilis and gotten rid of it-I'm talking about Cellini, not Walker, you understand--and gotten rid of it because he contracted Scarlet Fever, and the fever went sufficiently high to kill the spirochetes or whatever they are, and so he was cured. B t it was a great line, and, of course, the editors of Time were giggling over it, because George was quite candid in telling them about having, you know, bedded his high school English teacher and a few things like that, and, of course, George had a fantastic sexual capacity. Or, at least, he had to keep proving to himself that he did because it became

quite dangerous for the girls in the design center. It was quite unpleasant for many of them. When youngsters are 18, 19 and 20, they're not used to dealing with, I guess you'd call it sexual harassment today. And George--no woman was ever hired by Ford in the design center--or, at that time, styling operation--that didn't have the personal okay of George, and his evaluation was dimensional as well as, can I knock this personality off--can I intimidate this personality? And he would do it with models. Ardis [Keaneley],* as an example, can tell stories about George wanting to hire her to come with them. What the hell would she do, you know, maybe be a receptionist or something like that. Well, [with] George, you know, that's very difficult for girls. I had a secretary by the name of Ann Nebozenko who was rather an attractive girl at the time. I remember George was putting the arm on her, and she said, "Well, that's fine Mr. Walker. I'd love to go to dinner with you this evening. I'll call Norm," her husband's name, "and where would you like to meet us?" He immediately began to crab crawl, of course, and got out of it, but not too many people know how to handle things like that, and some of these young girls were quite intimidated. George also had black mouton carpets in his office, and they were very soft and very comfortable not only for the feet but other parts of the anatomy, and Ed Roberts, who was the furrier, is the furrier, would be called upon to cut pieces out on occasion and replace them because they had been badly stained. But this was George. I was talking with Will Scott just the other day.

*Editor's Note: A top-flight model for automobile shows and, later, a well-known radio and television performer in Detroit.

Q Just retired?

A Yup, and Will said that he'd been down in Tucson and had seen George, and that he looks remarkable for a fellow his age, and he didn't really realize how old he was. George is 90. He was 65 when he left Ford Motor Company, and he did a terrible thing when he left by the way, and that was 1961. He--Henry Ford had granted him some options that were very good, and for

him to be able to realize them, he had to stay on the [salary] rolls beyond his 65th birthday, and Henry Ford arranged for him to be an advisor, and I was elected a vice president, but George was still there, which was a little uncomfortable, but--and Bill Ford had taken over the whole design responsibility, and this was before the Detroit Lions became an active part of his life, and Bill was working very hard at things there. And he could see what happening that I was being damned with faint praise by George, and that things weren't going to work as long as George was here, but they still wanted him to be able to put in his time so he could realize the benefits of these stock options. Well....

Q Are these Ford stock options?

A Ford stock options. So they arranged for George to take a three month, around-the-world trip--all expenses paid--with his wife to all-and visit, just to make it technically okay, each of our [Ford] places around the world. Well, this was sort of a bonanza, going-way present, but it came back to Henry Ford very quickly that George was bad mouthing the family in the worst kind of way, mostly for the decision that they'd made relative to me and that they just didn't know what kind of a problem hat they were going to have. And, in fact, it's difficult for Americans

to understand the feeling that the heads of the various operations like Jimmy VanLupin who was the head of the Brussels operation, for example. Jimmy has, subsequently, became a baron, by the way, but he was a loyal and dedicated servant of the Ford Motor Company, and the Ford family was practically deified in his view. And to have George Walker as Jimmy's guest, by the way, because Ford said, "Hey, entertain him," begin to vilify the Ford family was just more than Jimmy could stand, and it was he, really, who began to pass the word back, and then, of course, one person begins to talk--Sir Patrick began to talk about it and all that sort of....

Q Hennessey [Chairman, Ford of England].

A Hennessey, yeah, and it was just awful. Now here was a guy that was being treated so far beyond the call of duty by the Ford family. They set it up so that he could take another $750,000, net, you see, out of the Company and through the stock options, and he was out there badmouthing the hell out of them while he was making this absolutely wonderful trip, and I just can't understand that kind of mentality. In addition, he was trying to sell the people that were still working with me--Oros and Engle--to other people, and Engle went to Chrysler, as you recall, as a vice president in charge of design [to succeed the departed Exner].

Q How did he get that job?

A He got it because--well, first of all, Tex Colbert [President], but in the meantime [George] Love had moved in as chairman of the board, and he was a friend of George's, and George just gave him a hard sell. In fact, it came to the surface when at some Economic Club meeting where

Love and Henry Ford were together, and Henry knew the kind of a person that Engle was as far as--I mean, a gifted designer, but to run a place, you know, it was beyond him. And so Henry asked Love, "Why did you take Engle?" You know, "Of all the folks there are in the business, why Engle?" He said, "Because your own man, George Walker, was selling him to me." So, it right after that that Henry came back and said, "You don't really see any reason why we should keep George around do you, Gene?" I said, "Not I, Mr. Ford," so the next day he was gone.

I was just talking to Dave Crippen about the development of an instrument panel and of the way Benson Ford would conduct business under these circumstances. He and Stan Ostrander, who was his second in command [at Lincoln] would come over, and I would hear relatively little out of Benson Ford other than an aye or a nay or little sidebar comments but nothing really quite specific. Ostrander was the one that was carrying on most of the decision making, and he would look to Ben Ford to get his nod, whenever there was a decision to be made. This one particular instrument panel had sort of an aircraft theme with aircraft-type controls, toggles and things of that nature on it, and a binnacle that you could read between the spokes of the steering column, and Ben Ford and Stan Ostrander had approved this. Well, Ernie Breech came over, and, of course, he was the supreme commander, under Henry Ford, but, nonetheless, had assumed supreme command at the time, and he look at it and he said, "I don't like that instrument panel," he said, "I think we ought to try again," and Benson Ford then, to the surprise of all of us who were near him, said, "That's my instrument panel, Ernie. I think I want to go with it," and then I had the delightful experience of watching a supreme

ego crab crawl and back off and agree that, well, maybe, it was a pretty nice looking instrument panel. But I thought it was a great expression of how Benson, who rarely used his power, obviously did in that point. I think that this probably, by the way, Dave, was the sort of thing that began to bug Breech. That he knew where the power was, and it didn't make any difference how old these kids were, they had the power. They had more time with Henry Ford's ear than he, Breech, did. Most of it out of the office, and you have to be very, very careful about that, and this had to really bother him, but I think that Ben has been maligned. He was put in a position where--and about his drinking, I don't know. He would drink when we would go to Chicago together, but he--I never saw him drunk--never, ever.

Q This was part of territory, too, wasn't it?

A Oh yeah. I mean everybody was doing their share of serious

drinking. Now, whether that became aggravated over time, I don't know. I

know that, in Bill's case, it became quite serious. In fact, it was

kind of fascinating because I was put in a position that I thought was quite frightening. You know, you never get over being afraid when you're in a

company, regardless of where you are. I got a call from Henry Ford, of course, I had been going out every evening with Bill and Dick

Morris, who was, at that time, his executive assistant, I guess they

called him, but, in effect, his PR man, and we would go over after the close of business and have a pop or two at the Dearborn Inn. A couple of things always impressed me: Bill was always in a hurry because he always

had to get home, but that didn't--he had four, double martinis before he would leave the table. The fact that he was in a hurry didn't keep him

from having four. So he would just quaff 'em down faster, and, naturally, inasmuch as the Inn came under his aegis, I believe, at that time, we never had a problem with getting a seat or any service, you see, and, of course, our habits became known to the better waiters over there and stuff would appear on the table, you see. Except that Bill would always have to leave right after four, and it never occurred to me until I got a call from Henry, that the four drinks were probably just settling into the bloodstream by the time Bill hit downtown Detroit, and then, of course, if you're doing a lot of drinking, sometimes you can drink forever, it seems. I have some experience in this, and you are completely sober. Now, maybe you just think you're completely sober, but, really, I do think that you can be completely sober. Other times, you can have two drinks and be tipped over, and I remember, with that as a format, one other little fillip, I--Bill always got out before the bill came. I was running a big charge at....

Q This was a personal charge, wasn't it?

A It was a personal charge, oh, yes, at the Dearborn Inn, and if anybody ever just plain old looked at that charge, they would really think that I was in the sauce. But I figured that was, you know, part of the territory. But Bill never, ever picked up a bill. At one time I thought, well, you know, if you've got that much money, you just don't think about those things. He thinks about those things! When it came to big stuff, man, he was generous. And that little piddling stuff, you know, "I'm paying these guys enough, let them pick it up." But it was of amusing. Well then, time went by, and one morning, my secretary "Mr. Bordinat, Mr. Ford is on the phone." Well, you know, you

always have to go through a qualifier--"Which Mr. Ford?" "Henry Ford II." Well, you kind of wonder what the hell's happened, you know, and he said, "Gene," and I said, "Yes sir, Mr. Ford." He said, "I want you to take my brother Bill's car keys away from him." Well, we had car keys, of course, for all of his cars.

Q Right, which one?

A Yeah, which ones, and he said, "All of them." Well, I said, "Mr. Ford, I will do this because you asked me to do it, but I sure as hell would like to know why I'm doing it because I might be asked, you know." And so then he treated me with five minutes of candor, and I always felt quite flattered. Frequently, quite frightened because there are some times when, you know, when you can know too much, but flattered that he would know that I would sort of preserve a confidence. But he called me and asked me to pick up his brother's keys, and then he told me that Bill had had an accident--not a real accident--he'd sideswiped a half a dozen cars on the way out Jefferson to his home, and then he said, "Well, that wasn't so bad, but he did it again last night," and he said, "Of course, we know the police and all that." But he said, "He's been drinking a little bit," and, he said, "we've got to get on top of this, and I don't want him to have any keys." He said, "He can have somebody drive him from Central Office or something." I said, "Okay." And so brave as I am, I called Ed Polley who was running our garage and said, "Ed, I want you to pick up all of Mr. William Clay Ford's keys."

Q What did Ed say?

A Ed said--pause, long pause. But Ed's been around for a long time. know Ed Polley.

Q No. I've heard of him, yes.

A Ed was a driver--first of all, he was one of the most delightful men I ever knew. Six feet, two inches of bear, and he was a B-17 pilot during World War II. He'd been a driver for the Company before the war. He had made two tours over Europe and was decorated all over the place, and he'd had many of his crews shot up and killed and so forth and wounded, and when he got out of the service, he did what I consider the most remarkable thing. At his own expense, he went and visited the parents of all of his crew members that had either been killed or wounded, and he said it crushed him because some of them would say, "You're the son of a bitch that killed my son," you know, and this came as quite a shock to him. But he was a very fine man--is a very fine man-and he had driven for Earle MacPherson, for example, and Mac treated him like a second

son, you know, it was a very close relationship. In fact, he was the guy that Mac called on his deathbed, and said, "I have a quarter of a million dollars in cash in a safety deposit box,. Here is a key, and here is my authority. I'm going to die. I probably won't make until tomorrow. I want you to pick up Lucille, take her down there and get that money out before I expire--before they seal this up." And Ed did. He said, it was the first time in his life he'd ever seen a quarter of a million dollars in cash. Put it in a case--a couple briefcases and walked out.

Q Just in time, huh?

A Yeah, because he was worried that Lucille would have no operating

expense money and all that sort of stuff. While they seal things up,

although I think Mac's estate was pretty well organized. I don't think

that this was a function of trying to beat taxes or anything. It was a function of trying to keep something liquid in her hands while probate and other things took place.

So that was the kind of a guy he was, and he knew the family because those drivers get to know the family, and there was a long pause when I asked him to pick up the keys, but, of course, he knew of my habits with Bill, so he was, obviously--he said, "Okay, I'll do it." Well, Bill made it very nice for all of us. He never showed up. He and Martha had decided that he'd better do something about himself, and that's when he went up into Canada to Toronto to Don Wood, and I admire Bill, you know. He could have gone through the John Doe detail. He is-his face is not that well known, wasn't then. And I admire Martha for going along with him. They both just signed in, "Mr. & Mrs. William Clay Ford," and he took the treatment, and it stuck. I don't know whether you know it or not, but Bill, to this day, has a rescue kit in his trunk and has been called, on a number of occasions, when he will hive himself out of the sheets and go down and attend some wayward soul that slipped off the wagon. He's quite a guy.

Q He certainly is.

A So I'm very, very fond of the family. In fact, I saw Bill and

Martha, in fact, Teresa and I were down to one of our favorite watering

spots--the Van Dyke Place--and we'd finished eating and gone upstairs, a d our waiter--it's filled with gays, you know.

Q Oh, is it now?

A Yeah. Well, I mean, not customers. The place is--waiters and so

forth, and they do superb work, by the way. They're very prideful of what

they do, and they do it well. But, one of them came over and said, "Mr. William Clay Ford is here." I said, "Oh, that's very nice. I didn't know that he came here." So, the way they have it--are you familiar with the place at all, Dave?

Q No.

A Well, it's on Van Dyke just off of Jefferson--just almost opposite the UAW headquarters there.

Q Which was the old Edsel Ford place.

A Yeah, it's the old--I think it's the Fink home--of coveralls and things of that nature which surprised me. He was not Jewish. I don't know what Fink is.

Q German?

A Yeah. And this home is just precious. It's been beautifully restored, and there's an intimacy about it. Rococo as hell--but just delightful--and they have a great kitchen, and good service, and fine wine, great cellar. And it's expensive, but we.... Q It's not private?

A No, no, but if you want to go, call early. I mean, several days, because they're booked, and bring checkbook. But, at any rate, they have a way of conducting business. You have your dinner, and then you go around their dessert table, and if you're going to have dessert, coffee, after-dinner drinks or something like that, you go upstairs to a sitting room, you see, and eat up there. So, as is our wont, as they say, Teresa and I went upstairs, and we're having our dessert, and Bill and Martha and Sheila and her husband, whom you should [know] ... Steve Hamp, were

there.

Q It was an anniversary of some kind, was it not?

A Yes, it was Martha's birthday, and it was the first time they'd ever been in the place, and this was Sheila and Steve taking them out,

and they'd had a good time, and it was really good to see them again.

Q They were pleased to see you, I understand.

A Oh, is that right? Well, that's kind of nice. It's an interesting family. I had to make a decision years ago. Do I want to pull a Johnny Reinhart, for example, and become a part of their social set, and my late wife, Edelgard, and I decided if they're interested in having us for certain things, fine, and we will reciprocate, fine, but let's not crowd this. They've got their friends and so forth. Well, it turns out that many of their friends are my friends, anyhow, but I just didn't want to get that as a part of the issue. I wanted Bill to be able to feel free to tell me what he thought about me in the business world without being-having it hampered, and I wanted to be able to tell him the same thing. And the beautiful part of our relationship is that he always invited me to tell him. I always appreciated that, because I would be candid as hell. You know, it was interesting, it was the same way with Lee Iacocca, you could--I think I've probably told you this: Write it on a legal pad, but write it. Don't ever dictate it to a secretary. The minute you do that, regardless of how closed-mouthed your secretary is, you're the only one that knows that, and the rest of the world thinks that they all blabber like hell, and it's no longer confidential; but if you write it and send it longhand--and, fortunately, I'm not too scribbly--you can all kinds of things that they would otherwise damn you for. And I've ways appreciated the fact that they were interested. I fully believe

that I saved the Ford Motor Company one of the greatest aggravations in the world when I advised Bill not to stage a palace revolt.

Q Over the Mark II?

A No, no, no. This was the promotion of Phil Caldwell. Q Oh, later on.

A Yeah, much later on. I think Bill was mad. I have never, ever known him to be this mad about a business matter, particularly, when it involved Henry. I mean, he got awfully mad at George. You know, I was a fortuitous beneficiary of the old--"not that he loves Caesar less but loves Rome more." He hated George Walker, and George, you know--typical of him--George used to put a glass against their wall. You know, our offices were juxtapositioned, and George used to eavesdrop. Why the hell he would eavesdrop, I don't know, because all he could have heard was bad things that Bill might have been saying about him. Bill did not appreciate George. George represented a kind of animal person that was....

Q Predatory?

A Yeah, and Bill is genteel--hell of a competitor, but genteel. The ground rules were totally different, and he just does not like--did not like George.

Q That leads us into my main question for the afternoon is that what happened in the five-year period that when George was finally brought back and why he was brought back as vice-president for design or styling?

A Well, as a matter of fact, it wasn't a bad run. He had a number of good cars coming out. I think the most impressive one, and the one I got a kick out of--you might recall that Bob McNamara was a leading character in this thing. Well, he didn't understand George at all.

George was so much the antithesis of the McNarama type that he thought there must be something kind of great about the guy. That there was something sort of magic. That he was a real prick, but he was a genius, you see. And it shows you that even McNamara could be fooled. But the interesting thing--I remember the development of the 1958 first, four place Thunderbird. That was done--obviously, all this was done under George. But that was personally directed [by]--and if he took credit for it, and he deserved to--Joe Oros. But this was a sort of a dichotomy. Here was Joe Oros who was hero number one, and here was hero number one-A--Elwood Engle. But George chose to join with Elwood Engle on the design of another candidate for the Thunderbird, and they came up with two cars. And I was not a part of this at all. One of them was the one that Joe did--which was quite boraxy. If you really analyze the 1958 Thunderbird, it had enough design on its side, back and front, for five automobiles.

Q What do you mean by boraxy?

A Well, hokey. It had a lot--schlocky--but it had a very formal roof on it. Well, this is typical of the way the uninitiated view a car. McNamara would say, "Well, that looks pretty formal." Formal, your ass, it looked just--I mean--it looked commercial, but it had a spear on the side and a hook coming down onto the spear and double headlights on it and a great, big bumper grille and not three but six taillights coming out the back end. I mean, you know, it was really an adventure--but with a formal roof. And, it's interesting, it had more to look at. The other candidate was a very severe, svelte, nifty-looking automobile. It was rejected, and the one that Oros did was accepted. Now, George had to be

kind of fast on his feet, because he was spending every evening with Engle doing this svelte--now, this svelte one was absolutely non-Engle.

Q Is your word svelte?

A Svelte, yes. George was sitting there coaching, because Elwood is

a schlock artist. So, here are these two machines. They buy the one that Joe did for the Thunderbird, and the other one's an awfully nice automobile. What are they going to do with it? It became the 1961 Lincoln Continental--or Lincoln, I should say. You know, with its very clean sides and sort of a bumper-in-grille kind of thing--very nice automobile. That was George's car, and he, obviously, he could and should take credit for everything that was developed under his aegis. I might have told you this before, but I asked Ken Kopock who, many years ago, was leading the Chevrolet studio under Harley Earl, and I worked for him, and I once said to him, I said, "You know, I see Mr. Earl coming around, all 6'5" of him, 250 pounds, looking like bandbox and pointing and directing and stuff like that." I said, "Is he any kind of a designer? Does he ever design anything?" And Ken said, "Gene, he designs everything that comes out of this place and don't ever forget it!" And, I think, that's probably true, you know. It's very difficult to--if it's done under your aegis, you're the one that directed it, and you are the one that lives or dies by the sword, by the way. Not your subalterns, they're the ones that can crab crawl and say, "He made me do it." "The devil made me do it." But it's a--that is the one piece that I recall, specifically, that George really did. I mean, he knew that this was a turn point kind of a thing, as a car. This was getting away from the two-place Thunderbird which had been modestly successful--more successful

than the Corvette--and going to a four-place job, and, if it took off, to be--you know, everybody wants to hang on to the successful cars, you see. Hang on to the tail.

Well, as a matter of fact, it's one of the few things where McNamara was right. The wrong part was he should have done it without abandoning the two-places. But, regardless, we went from 18,000 pieces over the total of three years for the 1955-'56-'57 two-placer to 60,000 pieces a year with the four-placer. So....

Q The upward, mobile family wanted the kids in the back.

A Yeah, exactly. At least the pet. So....

Q Well, that, as you're probably about to tell me--I don't want to anticipate you, but that '61 Lincoln design had quite a history in terms of Walker and Elwood's later development, did it not?

A Well, it became--first of all, it became the Lincoln, and it was a very successful car in a design sense. It was an unsuccessful car in a package sense. In fact, it was I that asked George--asked?. I said, "George, you can't bring this car out and have it exactly the same size as the Thunderbird." I said, "You know, this is taking the--look at the Cadillac. I mean, that's the competition."

Analogous, really, is the Mark VII, vis-à-vis the Mark VI, for package, and I think the Mark VII was a mistake, in that regard. You are abandoning a big, wallowing machine that--the '56, which was a handsome machine, by the way--and [then] comes the '61. The '57 got a little hokey with its fins, but the '56 was--and Bill Schmidt and I were the ones that really did that--and it was a winner, a design winner. In fact, we always hated Ben Mills as a- result of that. One thousand more pieces. If he had ordered them, Lincoln would have made money for the first time in its history.

Q At that point, what was Ben Mills?

A Well, he was in charge of Lincoln.

Q Why didn't he order the thousand pieces?

A Abject cowardice, I guess. Which is rather strange, because you can always get rid of 1,000 pieces! I really don't understand why. But Ben was just a hyper-conservative. He was playing it safe. All of his career, he was nimble--dance out of the way of trouble. I am somewhat ambivalent about Ben--gregarious, great voice, wonderful piano player, smart enough to be a Whiz Kid, poor boy, afraid he might get poor again, so he played it very cool and didn't really do for the company what his brain power could have allowed him to do. It's too bad. Very nice fellow. I always feel guilty, really, when I say these kinds of things about him because he was one of the few fellows on my side on the business of becoming an officer. In fact, I remember how dear it was of Helen to come over and spend time with my late wife, Edelgard, telling her how she appreciated what, she, Edelgard, was going through, sweating this thing out with me. It's nice. Just a delightful couple, but he could have been so much better for Ford Motor Company. And so he got into purchasing, which is sort of a....

Q Cul-de-sac?

A Yeah. Staff, actually, and he was writing policies. I remember

even at that I had a little problem with him. I had developed an industrial design function for our operation. We were doing space planning stuff for Philco at the time and all that sort of thing. And I was always running against this damned problem of--you know, we had to get paid for this kind of work, particularly in space planning--and, all of a

sudden, Wally Ford would end up with the goddamned business. I've known Wally Ford for years, and he's a competent pro. As a matter of fact, he took his lessons--he was at General Motors the same time I was, you know.

Q Harley Earl hired him?

A That's right. The only Ford in that damn parking lot!

Q Well, no, another Ford--another Ford.

A But he, nonetheless, well, yes and no. By the way, Josie looks bad, I think. But, regardless....

Q He was--well, yeah, he was married very early in the War. I think about [1941].

A Sort of the amalgam of two great fortunes. In fact, the older of the two moneys is Wally's.

Q I wonder if that has any pecking order....?

A I don't know, but I don't think he has to take any of her crap.

Q Incidentally, you were about to say, earlier on, that Harley Earl and his industrial design operation was, I think, one of Wally Ford's earliest opportunities to....

A Yes, it was.

Q Get into the industrial design business.

A Yeah. And, not only that, they became closer friends, over time.

Q That's right.

A Because remember it ended up being Ford and Earl.

Q I noticed that.

A That was back when you could establish an outside business, and as long as you didn't take any accounts that were in conflict with the

mother lode, why, you were allowed to, and Earl actually became a partner of Wally Ford's before Earl left General Motors.

Q I understand it was initially set up for his son. Was that true?

A Well, perhaps, but Bill Ford, his brother, played an active part in it for a long time. I don't know what his son, if anything, has done.

Q I'm thinking of Earl's son.

A Yes, I know. I know that they just inducted Harley into the Automotive Hall of Fame, and Teresa and I went down to the--I was shocked to see 1,000 or 1,200 or 1,300 folks down there, and the MC was J. P. McCarthy, but the fellow that was the guy meting out the award and all the good stuff was Don Petersen. He did a nice a job, too. And, of course, Roger Smith was the recipient of "The Industrialist of the Year" or something as esoteric as that. Which was sort of funny on the heels of all of the bad-mouthing he's been getting, but he had his cheering section down there. It was really quite interesting, but, Earl, when he was inducted, the award was accepted by his grandson, and so, I guess, I just assumed that his dad--grandson's dad was dead. Maybe he just couldn't get there.

Q I understand that he is still out in Arizona and not feeling too well.

A Is that right?

Q And Wally pretty much runs the firm.

A Yes. As a matter of fact, I don't think that Earl is even in the name any more.

Q Oh, yes.

A Is it?

Q Yeah, still there. Ford & Earl Associates.

A But I know Wally was quite a competitor of mine.

Q Was he?

A Yeah, and what I found out in talking to Ben was that Ford & Earl had an open purchase order for anything in the industrial design world that needed to be done at Ford Motor Company.

Q He did some interior stuff at the World Headquarters and other places.

A Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, he did all the executive offices the last time around, and he's a competent pro, but I, of course, was

pleading Chinese dollars, you know, why not pay me, I'm here. But, at any rate, Ben had written a policy letter saying that, you know, there will be three bids, and there will be this, and there will be that, and defining exactly what the policy was, so I called him up, and I said, "Hey, Ben, my informants tell me that there is an open purchase order for industrial design work in the files of purchasing." I said, "I have an industrial design function here. I want my purchase order to go

right next to Wally Ford's." I said, "I don't want any preference, or anything, but," I said, "I want consideration, because what happens is people will look in that file, they see that it's an open purchase order, they see the name Ford, they think that this is an edict from Henry, and," I said, "my boys don't have a chance." A lot of crab crawling on the other end, but eventually, by God, we got it. It was interesting.

Q That's another story I want to hear about later, but tell me, basically, what was--how did Walker hold on for five years? It seems to me rather....

A Well, it's not too tough. You hire a guy for five years. That's not too long. Secondly, all of us that were in contention for his job-contenders for his job--were about the same age which, in industrialize, was too young. And, of all of them, I was the youngest. And, I think that they felt that they had to tread a little water. Not only that, at that time, and it varied, depending on Henry's mood, frankly, he didn't think it would look good to hire a guy, make him a vice president, give him a lot of press, he's in Time magazine, I mean, the music goes on. So, there is very little point in letting him go. Besides, he was an enigma. You know, he was--he didn't look bad, he was well dressed, well known, nationally and internationally. Yeah, he played the game of, because I'm screwy in this world of industry, that's a mark of my genius, and he tried to sell that with Elwood Engel. He said, "Yeah, he just doesn't understand the stuff because he's a genius." Well, that's the biggest crock of shit I've ever heard in my life. He didn't understand it, because he didn't understand it! Now, a genius might be awfully lopsided but usually he's got an IQ so he really understands other pieces of the action. Engel couldn't be elected vice president at Ford because he was a crook! He felt that it was all right to wear tennis shoes back into the studio because it ruins your regular shoes, you see. So, okay, then we would find that he had charged the shoes to Ford Motor Company. Well, all right. Well, that wasn't so bad, but he was playing as loose as he could with expense accounts, and, of course, George doesn't know how to read, and he would just sign his name to 'em, and....

Q Elwood could probably do no wrong?

A Well, that's true, but, you know, George really was, in his own way, a genius, but very stupid in others. He was playing fast and loose with the government, for example. He was examined every year by the auditors because he was brought in for tax fraud, and they tried to indict him. And the grand jury--it's funny when he tells about it, you know--he said, "I look at the grand jury, I think there's some broads out there that I might be able sort of smile at, you know." And, he said, "I look at them," and he says, "Christ, they're all a hell of lot older than I am," and he said, "They look mean." He'd gotten some terrible advice, you see, from

these tax attorneys. They said, "Look, you know, go ahead. You're a designer, you've got to have a good front, charge your tailor off. You've got to have a house that looks great. Charge your landscape gardener off," and they said, "then if they do call you in, what the hell. You settle, see." Well, they figured that he just overstrained on this. He'd had Marge, his daughter, working for him for $500 a week for a hell of a long a time. She never showed up down there, see, so little stuff like that, and she had never paid taxes on the $500! I mean, he was in really deep trouble for awhile. Well, his attorney--obviously, a different attorney than his tax attorney--said, "George, you're not going to like this at all," he said, "but I'm going to have to take--what I'm going to say, I don't want you to hit me. You're bigger than I am, you're stronger than I am, I know all the stories about your playing in the same backfield with Jim Thorpe and the whole shot." He said, "Just don't hit me, but I'm going to have to plead that you're dumb--that you just don't understand this thing. You're a goddamned design genius, and that's where your mind is, way out in this creative heaven, but when it comes to this sort of thing, you just are dumb!" Well, they

pulled it off. They pulled it off, and George had to sit and squirm while they called him "dumb." And so the grand jury figures, well, maybe the guy is dumb, maybe he was inadvertent. But George is the biggest crook in the world, I mean, if he could have gotten away with it, he sure as hell would have. But a little bonus that went along with avoiding the indictment, was the fact that he was audited every year. But, typical of his intellectual approach to these things, the guys that were sent out to do the initial audit, before they brought him into court, before the grand jury, was your typical--"I don't make very much money. I am not a terribly sophisticated guy, but I do pretty fair arithmetic"--kind of government employee, and he went up to George's office, and, of course, the lobby and things of that nature of George's office are designed to sort of throw you on your butt, you know, they're way out. And here comes this guy, and George invites him back into his office which, once again, you see, is a magnificent sort of thing. And he says, "You know, I resent the fact that you're in here trying to tell me." He said, "Look at the tie you've got on, for example, that tie does not go with that suit," and he begins to tear this guy apart, you see. He said, "You have any idea how much I make, how little you make," and, well, of course, these little guys that don't make very much can kill you, and so the guy proceeded to do that. Well, they became pretty fair friends over time. George took to giving the guy ties, for example! He'll straighten him up on ties, if nothing else, but that was funny as hell. George would tell about this stuff, you see. Well, now that's just not good, common sense. He also was a good friend of Harry Bennett. You see, Harry Bennett liked the sports type, and Harry Bennett, at that time, was a hell of an

influential person. George wanted that. You've got to be careful about your bedmates. It's interesting. But George was--is a remarkable guy.

Q His impression--forgive me--I just recently saw "Das Rheingold

out on the West Coast and was impressed by the fact that George seemed to be sort of an Alberich who has these gnomes, these dwarfs, these Nibelungs that are working for him in the salt mines while he's out hustling the [gold].

A Well, that's true. George was the salesman, and it's a thing that happens in industrial design, that is, you're selling a personality, and you must talk to the hierarchy, and, frequently, you will bring one of your gnomes, as you call them, on to show the world that you do have gnomes working for you, and, hopefully, that they will keep their mouths shut and just be well-dressed and be there. And that always happens. It was one of the great difficulties George had in selling his business when he went to Ford Motor Company. That business had a lot of accounts, but it turned out that the only things that George could sell was (a) his goodwill and (b) the assets of his office. And that kind of a business has damn few assets: a few drafting tables, some draperies and that sort of stuff. And yet the business that he had--the accounts that he had--were worth one hell of a lot of money, but they can't be sold, and this is some sort of a fluke in the tax law, because the accounts were with him. They have to be renegotiated to go with somebody else, and he sold out to Larry Wilson, and Larry bought the whole kit and caboodle for about $300,000 which was--I mean he had, perhaps, five times that coming in, in the course of the year, from the accounts. So it was a great deal for him. Now $300,000 when you're working for George is hard to kind of

accumulate, but what they did was form a little corporation, and George gave them a little time to buy him out, and all the fellows who were working for George--ex Elwood and Joe [Oros]--got together and mortgaged their houses, took second mortgages on their houses and got a business. But it was very rough sledding for them, because Larry is a competent designer and a very attractive man or was--wherever he is now--but he wasn't George, and he had met all of these people, but he wasn't George. When Sundberg and Ferar died within a month of each other, they had a hell of a time. When Bill Schmidt wanted to retire, he said, he went down, and he figured that he had $60,000 coming out of the business and then other things from investments 'that was enough to keep him, you know, down in the Keys in good shape, and he turned it over to Stan Thorwaldson. Well, Stan used to work for me, and Stan is not a very pretty man. He's a nice guy and a brilliant designer but not a very pretty man, and all of Bill's accounts wanted Bill, so Bill is now the happy commuter, you see, spending about half of his time up here trying to keep his accounts glued together. So, it's very much a personality oriented kind of business, and that makes it tough. Well, George played his cards right out there. He knew the world. He's got some interesting stories to tell, but you could be sure that he would badmouth anybody, at a stroke of a pen. In fact, I gather from what you said that he was really taking off on the world at large when you were talking with him down there.

Q He's still very bitter.

A Why would he be bitter? They made him--they threw another million into the kitty for him.

Q It didn't matter. The fact that they let him go.

A He was 651 I know, but isn't it--that was a rule. Let him go, shit, why did they hire him, you know!

Q Well, you can't expect him to take that attitude.

A Yeah, no.

Q Interesting to me would be what were you doing during these five years? How did you manage to survive?

A Well, I was running Lincoln-Mercury efforts, then the--I don't know whether the Edsel started at that time or not.

Jack Reith had Mercury, so for awhile it was spread out, and Jack had selected me for Mercury, but when that was over, Lincoln came back into my umbrella, and I did the preliminary work on Edsel for about a month or two--long enough to put Roy Brown in charge of it and to endorse Roy Brown's approach which was a very good one, by the way. It would have been a unique car, and it would have not--I mean, it was quite simple and direct in its approach. Then they became a little more formalized in the business of the special products operation, and Krafve, Emmett Judge and others were spun off along with Roy Brown, and they took it from there. Well, Roy, of course, thought he'd died and gone to heaven. This was the greatest thing that had ever happened to him to be party to this birth of a new automobile and to have the total responsibility for its appearance and so forth, was very heady stuff. Besides, Krafve and company were good at building esprit, and they had that group --even though Dick hated the idea....

Q In fact, had opposed it, as you said earlier.

A Opposed it, but, nonetheless, okay, that's my commission. I will

do it, and he had those guys whipped into a lather. Well, Emmett can be very persuasive--highly intellectual--and ....*

Q Very interesting fellow.

A Very interesting guy. Ran into him--Teresa and I ran into him just a few months ago up North. He and Kita came into the--I can't think of the big dining place South of Harbor Springs near Petoskey. At any rate, they walked in--as did Bob Conn, by the way, who at one time headed up Ford of Europe. In fact, Bob Conn was one of the fellows that was in the Navy with Henry Ford. In fact, he stood a Christmas watch for Henry Ford. As a matter of fact, when Bob got out, he came to see to see me, he said, "Hey, you know, I've never had a job in my life. How do you get a job?" And, at that time, Floyd Rice [Ford dealer] was good friend of mine, and I said, "Let's go talk to Floyd. He'd know more than I." Well, Floyd was a pragmatic son of a gun. He said, "Who do you know?" Conn said, "Well, I know Henry Ford."

Q From the Navy?

A Yeah, from the Navy. He said, "Look, I'll tell you what to do," and Floyd actually set up the appointment for him. But Henry was hungry for people back then, and so Bob came in, and Bob spoke Spanish in addition to other things, and so he sent him down in charge of--after he went through the little training thing that they had--he sent him in charge of sales for the Caribbean area on trucks and tractors, and then, eventually, he became cars and everything else for the whole Caribbean. We took a couple of vacations down there were really quite nice because of the contacts that Bob had down there. You see, his younger brother-

*Editor's Note: Richard Krafve and Emmett Judge were named vice president and director of marketing, respectively, for the new Edsel Division.

younger by a year--was my roommate at the University of Michigan, and so we were fairly close.

Q Leo Beebe was another that came out of that Great Lakes matrix.

A Yes. He was Henry's PT instructor, as I recall.

Q Handed out basketballs.

A Leo gave his family and his life for Ford Motor Company. I am an admirer of Leo's, and we would get into the sauce every once in awhile when we'd be abroad together, and he would begin to wonder whether he had done quite right. Of course, there was no way he could live with his [legislator] wife. She was just too politically oriented and totally bad news for him as far as going to Europe. I mean, shoot, he got over in Europe because the commander said, "Hey, go to Europe," and then she'd go over and spend about a week with him and then bug off to come back and keep her political irons in the fire.

But Leo--in fact, John Bugas had a theory about that. He said, "If you're going to leave them over there for more than a month, you'd better send the bride, or else they'll go native." That's about as

long as a guy can stand not going to the Kit Kat Club or something like that, and he said, "There aren't any secrets in the goddamned world, and the word will get back, and the trouble sets in and Ford is the loser."

Q Bugas was head of Ford International for some time.

A That's right, and he was responsible for establishing a number of policies that were a little more humane. It should have been. He carried the battle to the IRS on a lot of this stuff saying "Hey, you just can't--we're not doing anybody a favor. This is a business expense. We want to pay it. We want that guy to be able to keep zeroed in on his

job and not be fighting a domestic battle." He said, "If we don't provide for this, why, the domestic battle is going to loom, sure as hell-real or imagined." Because the gals--you know, some gals can't swing it over there. Fascinating! I wish Henry'd been just a little more patient with John. He hurt his feelings by one year, and that was too bad.

Q Seems to be a pattern--that one year?

A Yeah, that one year. Ditto Breech. Well, it seemed rather unnecessary. There are things--although the thing that you don't know, at least I never found out, and I was pretty close to John--I did a lot of traveling with him--is what Henry really said. He might, have said,

" John, I want to--look, you're 64. I want to work somebody else into this job, and I don't want to wait until the last damned minute. I want your input," and, I mean, he could have put it that way, and John said, "Look, it's my job, goddamn it, and," you know, "my nose is out of joint, if you want to do this," and so he quits. Obviously, they had' enough money to do it, so we don't know that. Or it could have been, he said, "John, you've outlived your usefulness, get your ass out of here. I've got somebody else I want to put in." We don't know that. The second is probably more close to it, but we really shouldn't prejudge.

Q Well, Walker seemed to lead a charmed life there for awhile.

A Five years isn't too long to lead a charmed life, and there was good stuff coming in. After all, the minute you're there, whether you had anything to do with how it got there, is of small moment.

Q Who were the people in that era who really produced?

A Well, there were a number of them in the lower echelons, but I don't say that Joe and Elwood were not producing.

Q Let's hear a little bit about that.

A Elwood was put into Advanced--in charge of it, and it was a good place for him because he did not know how nor did he ever in his whole life put a car to bed, you know, where you take it and actually get it ready for production. He didn't know how, but he had a lot of creative genes, and he would knock stuff out. Had terrible taste because the fact that it came off his fingertips made him think that it was great, but nobody keeps knocking out home runs all the time, you know, and he would think that a single looked like a home run quite frequently, but he was a creative guy, and so he ran Advanced. Joe Oros was given really the plum of it all, and when you really think about it, George was not so dumb, you see. Don't give something that calls for this kind of day-today infighting with the various personalities that had to make the approvals and so forth to somebody like Elwood--he'll blow it! Give it to somebody that has a modicum of intelligence--a little political savvy, known as Joe Oros, and he did, and under Joe, a lot of good things happened, and Joe--things happened under his aegis that were very good, including--George tried to sell him to Romney, you know, but he turned it down. He came in, and he and I had quite a little chat because I knew that Joe was smarting because George had already told him he had the job --my job. And then he had to backpedal, and, of course, it was a very difficult thing for him to do, I imagine, it's always tough. But George was so vindictive that he tried and did get Elwood out over to Chrysler, and he tried and failed to get Joe out of Ford over at American Motors.

Q That's because Oros didn't take it.

A No. Lord, he didn't want it. Further, Romney did not have anything to

offer. Well, he did, but he wouldn't, and then he tried for McGuire. Now, McGuire was the third party, you see. McGuire had all of interiors and some other sidebar stuff under him. McGuire was the oldest of us. He was 12 years my senior and a very capable designer. Interestingly enough, he thought of himself as one of the world's great administrators. He'd been a major in the Air Force in an administrative capacity, and he thought that, you know, he was really great at it. He was a very poor administrator, but he was a very fine designer, and, [with] design, he had very little confidence in himself. It was very funny how these things work, Dave. But he was a great, great asset to Ford Motor Company. His demise came when a fellow by the name of George Johnson who was in charge of personnel for us, who thought that he was wired in pretty well with [William] Bill Gossett.

Q Yes, legal head. [vice-president and general counsel of Ford Motor Company]

A Yeah, because they'd both gone to Columbia not realizing that there can be a world of--there can be a hell of a spread between people in Columbia. I mean, George was not married to George Evans Hughes' daughter, for example.

Q Charles Evans Hughes.

A Charles Evans Hughes, that right. Nor did he have a portrait of him in his foyer. In fact, Bill was always very candid about that, he said, "If you want to get ahead in the law business, marry the boss' daughter." But, remind me to tell you, by the way, about my experience with Gossett in New York the eve of his retirement from Ford Motor Company. But, at any rate, the personalities, to review the bidding, in Advanced was Elwood

Engel; Ford Division was Joe Oros; all interiors was McGuire; and I had Lincoln-Mercury. And, obviously, the battle to succeed George was between the four of us. McGuire eliminated himself because he got himself in the hands of George Johnson, who was a kingmaker, and he began to--he reasoned that Bob, who looked a little like Anthony Eden, had the look, had the age, had enough talent, you know--I mean, how much talent does anybody have to have, really, with this millions of dollars of talent that we hired?--that he would be, that he could make him George's successor. Well, the word got around, and certain actions took place that were rather overt and not too covert, and so, George gets this--well, he knows how to shoot a guy down in nothing flat, and McGuire ends up worrying about whether he's going to have a job.

Q What happened to the kingmaker?

A The kingmaker was released, forthwith, ultimately to hang himself. But Lowell Krieg picked him up to help sell stuff when he was' with OlinMathieson in charge of the Remington Division, but it was downhill for George. He ended up working, and from that to in charge of labor relations for Cudahay--the meatpackers. Comes on board just while they're in the process of negotiating a contract, gives the store away, so they're not happy with him, they can him, and he hangs himself. And George was not very good anyhow, frankly. Engle made the mistake of taking his wife to England, spending four weeks touring England, posting all the bills back on an expense account to Sir Patrick Hennessey. Hennessey okays it, bucks it over to the United States. You know, there's a little difference in what they consider perks in England than they do over here. Well, the stuff comes back over here, and would you believe--probably by

a very careful arrangement of a couple of the financial minions--he submits another expense account over here which George signs.

Q Identical?

A Identical. Lundy's desk is in receipt of two things, both of which are in excess of $4000.

Q Carelessness or deliberate?

A Deliberate. He thought he could play it at both ends, not knowing that all that they do over in Europe is bill it back to mother, you know. Lundy goes in, talks to Henry: "We have here something that I suppose could be called grand larceny." And, although they didn't want to raise a stink about it, etc., etc., they had a hell of a talk with Elwood, but it, obviously, just foreclosed on any chance he would have to take George's place, and that was the guy that George wanted because he knew he could really work in, you see.

Q He'd have a plant there?

A Have a plant--a mole. So, he....

Q That left you and Oros?

A That is right, and, unfortunately, he had moved a little too late. You see, this all happened a little too close to decision time, and he didn't have the time really required to do a hell of a buildup on Joe. He tried to spread the word that he'd already told him, you know, and everything, but Bill Ford, of course, wasn't having any of it.

Q Then heading up design operations?

A That is right, and George's boss. Bill resented, and I don't blame him for being referred to, in much too loud a voice, by George, as "the fucking kid," and, you know, you don't do that. George was a real

dichotomy, I mean, he could be so clever on one side and so dumb on the

other. So, Bill took him on as a cause celebre, and I was going with Chalmers Goyert and Dick [Morris]--At that time, by the way, I happened to receive an offer to become the president of a middle-sized organization that was a supplier to Ford Motor Company--one of considerable worth, I might add. It was not a fly-by-night thing, and this was a hell of a deal. We had reached the place where all we were debating about was shares and fringes and things of that nature. I was serious about it. And we were having a little difficulty, and the headhunter of Sturgis or Strudgers or Struggles, or whatever the hell it is out of Chicago, and something, which is a big one, was the one that was putting this together. And I had met all the criteria, and I didn't know what to do. I'd always resented the fact that people would come in and try to lever you, you know, and when they would do it to me, so I talked with my wife, and she said, "Talk with Bill. Just go in and chat with him. Don't ask for any guarantees, just ask him if you're still in the running and explain what the situation is, that you've got to make a decision here." Well, that

was good advice. I don't think I would have done it, if she hadn't nudged me. Gals can be useful at times. So I went in and had a long chat with Bill, and I made it perfectly clear that I wanted no guarantees but that I had to make a move here, that this job would be open until after George

retired, and I did want him to know that this wasn't a threat but my age, which was 41, that if I didn't get it, I was going to leave the Company because I would see no future there because all of the other fellows were contemporaries of mine--only one or two years older with the exception of McGuire who was twelve--but I mean Elwood and Joe were just a couple of years

older. So, I had these sidebar luncheon meetings that were held at Bill's request, obviously. Bill was asking his buddies to come over and find out if I were for real about the business of leaving the company, and....

Q You'd had a good relationship with him over the years?

A Oh yes, and he was--the fact that I would leave, made sense to him, and it made sense to me. I could not see myself in grade for a protracted period of time--20 or so odd years. I felt that I needed more security. Those are very dicey jobs. At least, if you're the officer, you can point the finger at other folks or at least try to, but if you're on the firing line year after year after year, I don't think anybody's good enough to sustain it for that length of time. You make enemies, you can't help it. You make a lot of friends, but the enemies are the ones that go after you, and I just thought that it was too dicey, that I would need a change of venue in order to do something. In fact, I could have made quite a bit more money by leaving. So, it wasn't a function of money, it was more a function of just feeling that I would have been blocked short of somebody being in a car accident or something like that for the next quarter of a century.

Q At this point, did you regard Joe Oros as a serious contender?

A I didn't think he should have been, but I think he was. He certainly had George's ear. George would have been quite disappointed in Joe, had Joe made it. He's not as malleable as Elwood. Elwood's a whore. I mean, you know, he had no principles at all. Joe is a very principled guy. I always liked Joe, but he's a cornpone, and he's really strange in that regard, but, nonetheless, I always admired him. Hard working, lot

of talent, horribly naive, didn't have a good feel for what was in back of a lot of the thinking that was going on in the company that would have a direct bearing on what he trying to do, and he would always look wide-eyed when I'd tell him these things which are so important when you're trying to develop something. You know, the public is fine, but you got to get it by our own mentors before the public will ever see it, and this he couldn't quite handle. But, regardless, he was a fine designer, and, as I said, highly ethical. He was the antithesis of Engle. You could leave hundred dollar bills on the table and not even worry about counting them, if Joe were sitting there. Not true with Elwood. He's just a very nice fellow, and he was terribly bent out of

shape, as I can sure understand why he would be, having been told he had the job only to find out that he didn't.

Q Do you think he gave up the American Motors job in anticipation of Walker's promise?

A Well, it could have been except that anybody that took the job [AMC] would have been foolish, anyhow, just from a dollars and cents point of view. I know that I had a rather strange thing happen to me. Maybe I told you about it. I was invited by Mike Radock. Do you remember him?

Q Oh, yes.

A Well, Mike left Ford Motor Company public relations to go up and be Harlan Hatcher's PR guy [at the University of Michigan], and Mike and I our paths have crossed on a number of occasions, we sort of liked each other. And Mike was the guy in charge of sending out invitations to appropriate personalities to come to the football games and spend them [in the] press box having brunch with Harlan Hatcher and other dignitaries of the university.

Q Ernie Breech had a permanent seat there.

A Is that right?

Q Yeah. I know, because I sat in it once. One day he couldn't come. Radock said, "What the hell is Crippen doing in Breech's seat?" His functionary said, "Well, Ernie can't come today."

A Well, anyhow, I was invited up there by Mike, and it happened to be the same day that they invited George Romney. Romney had been pecking away at my folks for a few months there, and he was there with his wife and his son, and this was before he was governor. He was still heading up American Motors, but it was obvious that he was going to be running for governor, and obvious to a lot of people that was he was going to be a shoo-in for it, and so the university personalities were beginning to lobby with him, even at that time. In fact, it amused the hell out of me because they had, in addition to Harlan Hatcher himself, the head of the medical school at Michigan, the dean of it, apparently, who was trying to convince Romney that when he got into office, he, obviously, should ignore Michigan State's plea for a medical school because it was going to divide up the moneys too thinly and so forth. So, I found this kind of interesting. I'd never witnessed this kind of play before, but then it occurred to me that that's what the president of a university is, he's their chief salesman and....

Q And fund-raiser?

A Yeah, fund-raiser. So, I was having brunch with George, and I said, "Well, it's kind of nice to know you, but I think I know a lot about you, anyhow. Not so much for what I read in the paper, but what my fellows bring back to me, George, after they've been talking to you." He looked

a little embarrassed, and I said, "Don't feel badly about it, I mean, [if] any of them are willing to go, they can go." And he said, "You know, you pay them too much." I said, "No, George, you offer them too little." So we sparred a little bit like that. It was kind of academic. I always felt that Romney pulled one of his smartest acts--any guy--first, in being able to sell the public, at that particular time, on small cars because he was stuck with them. That's what he had, and during that period the stock went like crazy, and he was kind of a romantic guy as far as the public was concerned. They looked upon him as kind of heroic type, you might recall. But he got rid of some stock options stocks, and the newspapers came out and beat on him for it saying, "Here's the president the company. He's selling his stock." Well, the following day, why, Romney explains all--another headline where he says, "You know you got to sell a little to buy some more." and they accepted that. But it must have told him at that time, there isn't any way I can divest myself of

this damned stock without doing harm to me as a personality, like I'm abandoning ship or doing harm to the other stockholders because they might drive the stock down. So, how can you divest yourself of stock without causing this to happen? Run for office! Then, of course, you are not going to be bound by any of these pressures from industry, etc., etc. You can almost hear the speech, and so he divests himself, you see. Well, the market happened to be damned high, and George made himself a few million bucks, but I found that quite interesting and quite a ploy, and I am absolutely confident that it wasn't that he was as interested in being governor of the state, although that was sort of a nice piece of fallout, as he was to solidify his gains at American Motors and get out

of a crumbling operation because he couldn't sustain it at that level, and he knew it. So, I thought that was sort of interesting, and am I not clever to have thought of all that?

Q So, he'd been after, not only Oros, but other key people on your staff?

A Oh yeah, he was after McGuire then. He took 'em in order.

Q McGuire would have been pretty attractive, at that point.

A Yeah. Bob actually gave it a lot of serious thought. Oros was-well, he knew where he wanted to be. Bob gave it a lot of thought, and I said, "Well, Bob, do me a favor." I mean, he was candid

with me. He came and chatted with me. I said, "Before you make up your mind, let me send you over to talk with Ed O'Leary. All I want him to do is to tote up your worth for you.

I mean, [not] whatever else you have outside of Ford Motor Company, but your Ford Motor Company worth. "I just want you to know what you're dealing from," and Bob came back and he said, "Well, hell," he said, "I'll go back and talk to, George," but he says, "It's no contest." People don't realize what they've accumulated. They don't realize what they have in retirement. I mean, that's up for a loss, if they move. And Bob, of course, had been around since about a month after I came into the company he came in, so he had a lot of years there, and he'd been making good money for a long time, and when it was all added up, plus his options and a few other things like that, Romney had nothing to offer. I mean, salary and a title, but the salary was well below what Bob's base was, and their fringes, of course, couldn't come close to ours. So, Bob, who is an arch conservative, anyhow, when it comes to his

own personal career. You know, I thought he was going into a apoplectic coma when he moved from General Motors because there's always a hiatus between the time you saw off at one company until the time you sign the contract, so to speak, at the other, and during that period I thought I was going to lose Bob. I knew him, you know, from over at General Motors, and he was dying because he was unemployed, you know. This is really scaring the hell out of him. So, he had that kind of a mental makeup, anyhow. Bob needed his security. It's interesting, fellows of that particular genre--"poor boy." His father--not poor--but his father was in education and never had a lot of money. Bob, I think, would have been happier in the world of academe, but he was a great designer. Had fine taste. I know he did--at one time I had him handling advanced things, too, and he came up with a car that became the European Capri. This was when Stan Gillan was heading up the Ford of Europe operation. Stan was funny. He went native over there, like no one I've ever seen. Fellows, you know, can kind of adjust so that they don't stand out like a Yankee sort of thumb over there. Others never do. Their Yankeeism becomes more intense. They're going to prove to the world who they are. But old Stan with rolled bumbershoot, the Chesterfield coats, the derby, waxed mustachios. He looked great!

Q He should work in the Bank of England, not Ford.

A Yeah, exactly. It's just a damn shame that he wasn't English because he became quite an Anglophile, and, you know, the guys that head up Ford of Britain, if they're native, are knighted, because they are the greatest exporters of all England.

Q Almost all of the chairmen got knighted.

A Almost all the chairmen were knighted. There was only one, and he was offered a knighthood, and he was going through a divorce at the time, and so they--it was okay with the Queen, but other wiser minds said, "You know, it just wouldn't be the thing to do under these circumstances." But, at any rate, they--that's the only guy that didn't make it.

Q But Bob was involved with Stan Gillan at one point, did you say?

A Yeah, he was in Europe for awhile.

Q How did he do?

A Good. He was a top-shot guy, and he wasn't there too long. We didn't want him there too long. But the fellows that went over there, fortunately, their wives took to it. That makes so much difference. I'm trying to recall the name of the fellow who was second in command in Cologne. Second in command of manufacturing. There was a German chap who was the head of manufacturing [Grandi]. He was part of the Vorstand [Corporate Executive Committee]. Pat something or another--an Irish name--[Massey] heavy set, wore glasses, but he was really the American that was over there, and he had brought all the American expertise to the Germans which sounds funny because the Germans were awfully good at that sort of thing, but there is also a Ford way within that theater, and he was bringing the Ford technique there. And I was traveling with [John] Bugas, and he said that he was going to have to--not be with me that night because he was going out to Pat's house. He had to chat with his wife. It turned out that Pat and his wife had a daughter. The daughter was getting married, and they had invited the Vorstand to come to the wedding and not one showed up. Well, Pat's wife had been a little annoyed, anyhow--didn't like it over there--didn't take to the language

barrier--I mean, just was not....

Q Hard to assimilate.

A Yeah, some people just can't do it. Well, yeah, because of the language barrier, essentially, and if you're not built to go out and, you know, fight your way through it for awhile, you become so introverted that you just don't move. You just keep waiting for your husband who's busy all day. He has no problem.

So, John went over, and, of course, John Bugas could be one persuasive son of a gun. He talked them into staying. Morrissey comes to mind.

Q Chase Morsey?

A Not Chase, no. This is John Morrissey or something like that.

Well, Chase was an interesting guy. He's a real prick! Smart. A lot of people thought he was one of the Whiz Kids, but then, of course, things get all confused. They thought I was one of the Whiz Kids too, so, you know....

Q We'll have to hear about Chase sometime, but at the moment, if I may, this is now 1960. One by one your rivals have been eliminated. What happened then?

A Yeah. Well, Joe stayed, McGuire retired, but....

Q Voluntarily?

A Yeah. He just decided that--you see--when would that have been?

He was 12 years older than I. I was 41, that would have made him 53, and he retired at 62, as I recall. So, he worked for me during that period. We were very close friends. We just liked each other. He was a strange guy in the minds of many. Give him a couple of drinks, and he was the

most gregarious man in the world, but short of that, he was a very stern looking man. He'd walk down a hall, he wouldn't say hello to anybody. So people got so they wouldn't say hello to him. But, it was a form of shyness. He had difficulty bringing himself to saying, "Hello." But, at any rate, you're right. One after another they left, and Joe, of course, took early retirement, too.

Q But a few years later?

A But a few years later, yeah. I think he was 57 when he retired, and that, again, was his own desire. He just sort of had the urge to--I think he was burning out, frankly. I think, perhaps, his wife was encouraging him to leave. Joe was always a very penurious guy, so he didn't ever have to worry about money, and he wanted to go to the West Coast, and his wife is--Joe would kill me if he heard me say it, but she had more talent in her little finger than he had in his whole body. She was very, very good.

Q Interesting sidebar there. I found out, when I was out there, that she had worked for Frank Spring back before the War.

A Yeah, back in Hudson's.

Q Back with Hudson [Motorcar Company]. He had hired her as an interior designer. We figured out that she probably was the first female designer in the industry.

A I wouldn't be surprised. She was very, very talented.

Q But she always subordinated herself to Joe's personality.

A Had to. I mean, he was sort of Middle Europe, and that hadn't quite gotten out of his system, and he was very sensitive about it. He's Rumanian, and Oros is not his real name--something else with a few more

syllables on it.

Q She was Betty Thatcher. She had graduated--they'd known each other at the Cleveland School of Art. She's a graduate [of that school].

A But she was awfully good even then, and I've seen things that she'd done, subsequently, and she got a little arts and crafts after awhile because it's a thing to do, but she's really a very talented gal and a very pretty, younger woman. I don't know what she looks like now. Sort of dark and swarthy. She was terribly puritanical and tended, like so many people that are looking down their nose at other people, their mouths take on a little bit of a frown, and it gets so that it's the way their face is in repose, but when she would smile, the moon came out, the sun was there. I always sort of liked her.

Q Did Joe take his being passed over with a certain amount of grace?

A Yes. I expect there was much beating of the chest and wailing when it happened. In fact, I called him in, and I said, "Look, Joe, I think I have a feel for the way you feel because this could have gone either way," and I said, "I would have felt like hell," and I said, "I sense that you probably do, and for that, I'm sorry, but the die is cast, and I hope we can continue to work together."

Q And you did for a number of years. He took it well?

A Well, yeah, it just crushed him, I know. It's one thing to sort of be running for the flag and be beaten. It's another thing to have somebody tell you you've got it. Send him out to have his picture taken again and stuff like that. Yeah, that was part of George's ploy. You see, it's funny. If you set up the duck with most of the people in the corporation like that, they'll say, "Aw, hell, he already knows," and, you know, they

don't feel strongly one way or the other, frankly, unless some guy has really upbraided the chairman, in the case of Ford. Joe hadn't. Joe was a nice guy, and Joe had been in the Ford Division, which was the muscular arm of the organization, and, really, all I had--the meeting that

was held, that I found [out] about, subsequently, I, obviously, wasn't privy to it--Bill Ford, Ben Mills, Jim Wright, Bob McNamara, I think that was all--got together to discuss this.

Q All Ford Division stalwarts?

A Most of them. Well, Ben had been on the Lincoln-Mercury side, and Bill and Ben did not like George well. Whatever you say about Ben, he was a gentleman.

Q You say Ben Mills?

A Ben Mills. No, Benson was not a party to this. These were guys that were really on the firing line, and Bill heard them all out. Well, McNamara, and, oh, Iacocca was there. Ben Mills thought I should get it. Everybody else didn't know me, really. Certainly, Iacocca didn't. He was a new boy on the block, and most of the work that Bob McNamara had done had been done with--after all, Bob wasn't president very long, and so up to that time, why, you know, well, I did a little business with him, but very little, really. Mostly, Joe had done it. Well, these guys don't know what a good designer is and what a good designer isn't. I mean, Joe could be much better than I, but, nonetheless, they don't know, so they go on who they know. And, you can't blame them, they've got to have some measuring stick. Well, then Bill held forth. He made a speech. People do not know that Bill makes speeches. And he sort of said, "And as far as I'm concerned, he is the only fellow for the job." End of meeting!

Q Looking back on it, he was right. There wasn't any other candidate, was there?

A No. He was right. I did a far better job than Joe could have done, and this hasn't anything to do with the design aspect of the business at all.

Q Administrative?

A Yeah. It had to do with just the running of it and the building of it and the manipulating--the thing grew under me.

Q And liberating?

A Yeah, and liberating. And Joe would have always been suspect, by the way. Even though it was--he would be the last guy in the world that should be suspect because he was so contrary to George. In fact, that's why George was a little nervous about him. "Yeah, I'd like to have one of my boys in there, but better Engle, you know. I can handle Engle." I mean, it's sort of like, you know, having a....

Q I think you characterized it earlier--a mole, really.

A Yeah. But, at any rate, that’s the way it worked out, and....

Q Obviously, Bill won the other men over?

A Oh, sure. It's amazing how flexible they can be when it gets down to a member of the Ford family. Really, it was that. Bill was working at his job, remember. And then, Bill did something--I mean, people don't understand this about Bill: When he really wants something, he knows how to fight for it. That's how he got the Lions. There are a number of things that you can see where he's done this, and I happened to be one of them. And Henry had mononucleosis, you might recall.

Q About that time?

A In '61. Because I know he was still in the hospital because Bill-or was in the hospital for some reason because Bill had to go down and get his proxy from him, and he got his proxy from him, and, of course, I had had the good fortune of having a fine relationship with Ben[son Ford] for all the years, you see, that he was running Lincoln-Mercury. Then, he went over to--John Dykstra was the president. When the hell was that? He was only president for two years. You're the guy with the numbers!

Q '61 to '63--something like that.

A Yeah, and Dykstra was an old bull of the woods, you know. He was a beautiful looking man, but he was one tough hombre, and....

Q What was that anecdote you told about him, earlier on? He said, "Gene....

A "I ain't never fired nobody. Of course, there are a lot people [who aren't] around....

Q Dykstra was sort of a--I get the impression that [his appointment] was sort of fitting in with Henry's attitude of not being too involved [yet]?

A Yeah, and it gave Henry the opportunity of not having to make up his mind right then.

Q For a couple of years.

A Yeah, he bought a couple years, and with a fellow that [who], sure as hell looked like he ought to be president of something. And his white, wavy hair--good-looking man. And John was--I was fond of John, but John was funny. At any rate, Bill knew that--see, Walker was a good friend of Dykstra's, and so Bill, at the last moment, called Dykstra and said, "John, I'm going to put Gene up for [vice] president tomorrow, and I have

talked with Henry." He didn't give him much choice--"I've talked to Henry and Ben," and, you know, "all the guys." And, he said, "And I worry about George. I think he's going to get on your back. I'm afraid he'll call you and try to upset things." He says, "Don't worry, Billy, if he calls me up, I'll knock him on his ass." And, sure enough, George called him. He said, "George, my recommendation to you is, take this in good grace." Well, that evening--Bill's timing--I mean, he'd been working for weeks on this--but his timing was such that it all came down to the night before the meeting. So, I went home the evening of the meeting--oh, by the way, when I'd had this little conversation with Bill, he also asked if I would do him a favor which, you know, one doesn't have to ask. He said, "Will you tell McGuire that he doesn't have anything to worry about as far, as his job is concerned?" He said, "I know what's been going on," and he said, "I know he's worried to death. Just tell him that, will you?" Well, it was fine. I told Bob, and he was delighted to hear it, but what he was really telling Bob was he was out of contention, too. So he waited until just the very last minute to set this all up, and the next day--oh, but that evening I was home and, of course, obviously wondering what the hell was going to happen, and, I guess, around 8 o'clock that evening, I got a call from Dick Morris.

Q This was?

A Dick was assistant to Bill.

Q Personal assistant?

A Yeah, right....

Q High level gopher?

A Yeah, exactly--bag carrier.

Q A what?

A A bag carrier?

Q Right, yes.

A And he said--Dick was very funny, you know, he's a Southern boy, and he got very serious about things. You see, he'd never been serious about anything in his life as far as the two of us were concerned. He said, "Mr. Bordinat, are you going to be there for a moment? Mr. William Clay Ford will be calling in about four minutes." I said, "Well, Mr. Morris, I'll be here," so we

hung up. [In] about four or five minutes, why, Bill gets on the phone or calls up again--why this preliminary, when I don't know, unless it was just to determine that I was home. And, Bill said, "Gene, I just wanted you to know that tomorrow I am putting your name up to become the director of styling and the vice-president of the corporation. I hope you will accept this. And I said, "Bill, I sure as hell will." And he said, "I don't anticipate any difficulty at all."

Q He had completely prepared the way.?

A Well, he did. He had all his ducks in a row. Now, people don't know this about him. They think he's just a, I--in fact, he told me the other day--not when I saw him last but not too long ago. He said, "I'm

getting sick of being called 'the kid brother'. He said, "How long are you a kid in this world?" He's five years younger. He's 61 or something

like that. When do you get over it, you know? Well, he's had a very good feel for whether he could--don't ever kid yourself about his feelings about the Company. He feels very strongly about it, and he just felt, literally, that he would do more harm than good by being there all the time. And Henry's a ham, he didn't need another brother clouding the

issue. That was the way Bill would do it. But Bill has a lot of energy and a lot of brainpower that he's got to put to use. He loves football, but I think that's why he took on the Lions.

Q He's back in full measure, as you know.

A At the Company.

Q Yeah, as vice chairman. He takes it seriously and is head of [corporate] design. [He succeeded HF II--1987--as chairman of the finance committee].

A Well, I told him he should. I mean, I hate to put it that way, but I did. It was when he was having--you know, you can't just say, "Hey, don't do this." I said, "Bill, you have a mistaken idea of how much clout you have. You told me that when you went to New York, the deal was set for the Ford family to have 25% of the voting power, and you didn't like it. You thought that 40% was a requirement. That stuck in my mind. You told, me this, think 40%. I have looked at the amount of stock' that you control. You control about 40% of 40%. That's about 12%. I said, "Unless you can get the rest of the family to rally around, you ain't got enough." And I said, "Frankly, there is a tendency for older brothers to get the confidence in the family, and, not only that, every member of that board is there as a friend of the finance staff or as a friend of Henry Ford II," and I said, "I don't think you stand a chance. But [what] I recommend that you do, is begin to pay attention to business. If you're serious about it, spend the time here--not at the Lions' office--and get as high on the pecking order as you can, and if it's vice chairman, take it," and he

did. Phil Caldwell was vice chairman and, actually, was Henry Ford's deputy, I think is the word they used. "Acts for the chief executive officer in his absence" which made him in charge

of Lee Iacocca as chief operating officer. So, Bill took that over. Now, whether he's a deputy or whether he isn't, is a moot question, as far as I'm concerned. But as far as the world is concerned, he's putting in his time as vice-chairman. And I said, "I think that you can do more for your boy, there--for young Billy--and I think you will do better for the Company there. If something happens to one of the chairman of the board, well, then make your play."

Q He's apparently taken it to heart as he's very much in the thick of it.

A Well, I'm delighted to see it and hear it, and I think that if he wants to do anything good for young Billy, and I know he does, he can do it from that position better than he can from the Lions' office. This is all a function of power and position, and has absolutely nothing to do with money. Billy Ford could get along very nicely just on what he makes as the secretary/treasurer of the Detroit Lions.

Q Irresistibly, it comes to mind, what was George Walker's reaction when this decision was made known to him?

A I asked Bill--not that same moment. I mean, I sound like a goddamned sadist. I wanted to ask him, I must say. But, when I did ask him, which was the following afternoon, he said, "I thought he was going to die from apoplexy." He said, "I went into his office and told him," and he said, "He slumped back in his chair and I thought that he might buy it. He just--all, for a brief moment, all the air went out of him." Now, the very next morning, I came to work--pretty well scrubbed up, I might add--and George met me in the hall and congratulated me and was very, very nice. He was obviously working behind my back even then, but, still

is. He's tenacious. He never gets over [anything] easy. He reminds me of a godfather. It's just that he just will never get over it.

Q I have a couple of photographs which have stuck in my mind. You know them well. One which appears to have been taken about, oh, the late 'Fifties. It appeared in a company publication called The Ford Book of Styling or something like that. It's a color photograph, and, obviously, the placement has been done with some care. Bill [Ford] is standing looking at the camera, characteristically, with his arms folded, feet crossed, he's standing, leaning against the desk. Rather insouciantly. And he's looking at the camera, and he's got a big grin on his face. Next to him, a little bit further down, is George Walker, who has a somewhat lesser grin, but still

grinning. The spectral figure of Elwood Engle is in the [center]--still placed back but looking rather....

A Good word--good word, spectral. The Ichabod Crane of eternity.

Q Yes, looking rather gaunt and, perhaps, not knowing what to make of all this. But, you're sitting--it looks like the catbird seat, in retrospect. You're sitting looking rather pleased, and then the rest of the group is--here's Johnny Najjar, and here's Bob MacGuire, and here's two or three others all recognizable from that period in staggered ranks. I've often wondered, what was the occasion? Do you remember that at all?

A. I haven't any idea. I haven't any idea. I do know that George Haviland, when he took over from Dick Morris, got one edict from George. You know George--do you know Haviland at all?

Q Oh, yes.

A And, he said, "Now, Mr. Walker, there are going to be occasions

when the press is going to want to talk to you and when someone will probably want to take your picture. I sure would appreciate it, if you would allow me to make these arrangements on these rare occasions." George says, "Let's have an understanding here, George, if there is a camera in this place, you come and grab me and you just get them to point it right at me, okay? Pull me out of meetings, anything!"

Q That's typical. The second photograph was taken about two years later. Apparently pulled together rather hastily to award the staff when the '61 Lincoln got an award of some kind--and here is this strange photograph which, apparently, was taken about the time George got the--had just received the word that he was out, and you were in. So, here's George, in the forefront, for the last time, looking rather--with his public relations smile. You're sitting next to him sort of peering around his formidable superstructure there, and you look like you're quite satisfied, and then the rest of them--all those who were on the Lincoln--Johnny Najjar and the rest--who are hastily assembled to receive the plaudit from the [design] organization. The difference between those two photographs--a couple years apart--yet mirrored the fact that you and William Clay had a sort of a--shared a secret that this windbag [Walker] was eventually....

A Well, I don't think it was much of a secret. But, yeah, I know what you mean. I think you're really reading too much into a photograph. I think usually when they say, "Hey, smile," you just smile. But, and where you are in the position of things, really has a hell of lot to where the photographer wants to tuck you. But, it was always kind of interesting. George loved publicity. It was--you see, when you're an

independent, industrial designer, you develop these habits because you can't afford to advertise yourself, and you can't buy space in a book or a magazine, and so you count on all the editorial space you can get and do everything and anything to get it--short of knifing somebody to unfavorable publicity, of course. And, George had this great smile. No question, and all his own teeth, and he was--that Indian was very pleased, see, and he loved to smile, and he knew exactly how to hold himself to minimize his girth, to put his foot up on a bumper or something like that and hold a pencil, I can do the poses for you. Well-rehearsed, all set to show him off to great advantage. In fact, it was from one of those kinds of portrait pictures that Artzybasheff, I think it was, did the painting for the Time magazine [cover].

Q The radiant smile?

A Yes, in fact, to such a point that a couple of letters to the editor indicated that, you know, why is the guy with a denture like that showing off so? The Time italicized note under the thing was charitable enough to credit George with all his own teeth, but, gosh, that was funny, that "Cellini of Chrome" thing. That's a great line.

Q I think you're the first one who has, really, pointed out to me that was an inside joke. That was the only way that the editors could live with it.

A Exactly. Yeah, they had to say it, but they couldn't. You know, in those days you couldn't say he's been screwing his teacher or something like that, but it's a great line. They thought it was great, and I think it's great. It's kind of appropriate.

Q You'll be pleased to hear that George never caught on. He still

thinks that's one of the high points in his career.

A Well, it is. There was another one. I remember George had a white cowboy outfit with a white ten gallon hat and a white 1958, four-place, drop head coupe Thunderbird and a black Great Dane, and he would get into that car--no place to go--put the Great Dane next to him and just cruise.

Q Around the compound?

A Just around the compound, into Birmingham, around. Obviously, people looked at him and wondered who's that, who's that? He says, "That's living!"

Q The adulation.

A Well, he was very clever. You take that office of his--mouton carpet, black; everything else was white; his desk was black.

Q Where was that, by the way?

A Where was it?

Q The Design Center?

A Yeah. It was the office that I took over and redid.

Q And, whose office is it now?

A It's now--it's just the other side of dividing doors in the hall along the administrative part of the....

Q That would be Telnack's office?

A No. Telnack's is on the other side of the hall. It's Kopka's office. So, it's a--but the guy was clever. Now, that's dramatic, you see. Black and white, and besides that, you could be color-blind and do it, and you could be color blind and appreciate it, and if somebody--if you put a splash of red in, I mean, you could do a hell of a job with

that office. But you see, somebody might not like that, and so that's the way he lived his life. You saw his place down in Tucson. I've never seen it, but I'll bet you I could almost sketch it out for you. I can still sketch his monogram. It's a great one, too. He did it himself. Big loop on the top of a G like that which came down into this kind of a W. Those, I have been told, are on the posts to the entrance to his house down there. Now, he had those on lamps that were on either side of this couch that was in his office. When the office was being broken up, every bit of that furniture somehow or another fell to Engle--in Engle's home. I presume he paid for it. But, see, Elwood bought--he was trying so hard to emulate George, and he was having great difficulty because he--George had a cunning and a sixth sense for how to sell, how to get to people, how to ravage women, I mean, the whole schmier, and Elwood didn't. All Elwood had was the urge, so Elwood would try to emulate George, and he was constantly fouling up. He tried to get immoral with women. Now this was really sort of funny, you know, he'd--George had a great deal of sex appeal because George knew how to talk to women. Elwood didn't know how to talk. "Let's screw," you know, I mean....

Q A tough kid from New Jersey.

A Yeah. It was really funny to watch him try to do it. As a result, he fell into some rather interesting deals. He managed to buy the place on Franklin Road that he had. It used to be the old Chalmers estate, and they split it up, and it was going to be torn down and all subdivided. In order to keep that relatively small lake, Chalmers Lake, from being overrun, they sort of--three people around the lake got together and bought the whole thing up. for 80,000 bucks and divided it into two pieces.

The garage, for example, was an eleven car garage with servant quarters above it, and they turned that into one piece of property with swimming pool [which] went with that. The other piece of property had the baronial manse on it, and that was priced at $40,000. Can you imagine that? I mean, it had brass pipes, I mean, it was just a fabulous place, see. And, they got it for giveaway. Well, the $40,000 plus the $40,000 for the garage--which sounds very strange, but it was a hell of a deal-constituted the amount of money that the three people around the lake had in it, and so they took the remaining property and got six or seven acre lots out of it and sold those off at premium prices and made a little money. Elwood, on the other hand, ended up with the house. And, it was a nice house--beautifully built--just a wreck of arrears and needed a lot of work to be done. Well, George Walker had a Great Dane, so Elwood had a Great Dane. The only difference is George wouldn't let that damned Dane close to his, you know, white carpet. Elwood would allow this, Dane to poop all over the floor, and, you know, you go over see him--I lived right around the corner from him on Chalmers Lake, you see--so you'd go out in the evening, walk down and say, "Hi," go in and have a drink, that sort of stuff, and you had to be very careful where you walked. And, so he had all these urges, and he fell in love with his secretary or something like that, and rather than being cute about it the way George did--George carried on affairs all of his life, even had a gal that he kept, and, damned if I know whether Mrs. Walker ever knew about it, but a lovely girl, by the way. And he had all this love life going for him-other than using it as his own bragging rights, which is a little stupid-he carried it out with a certain élan, you know. But, Elwood, you know,

he bangs his secretary, and the next thing you know, he's in divorce court, and his reason for trying to get rid of his wife, you see, is-she's extravagant. Well, let me tell you how extravagant, it cost him about a million bucks to bail out, so, that's extravagant.

Q There's something I meant to ask you. How did Walker sell Engle to Love and Lynn Townsend?

A Well, because, they just--particularly, [in] our kind of business, you have to take the guy on who recommends him and his face value. How are you going to, I mean, academic credentials

mean nothing. I mean, you have them and it's fine, but it isn't the measure of whether the guy has anything or not.

Q Of course, there had been the '61 Lincoln.

A That is right, and, well, George could make him sound awfully good. All he has to do is say it. I mean, it could be true or untrue, but he's talking to guys that were his friends. I used to go to a lot of these $100 a night charitable dinners and things like that, you know, fund-raisers, and you're doing your corporate duty, so to speak, and I'd run into Lynn Townsend who would, in those days, was always in the company of Bob Anderson. Bob Anderson quit Chrysler and is chairman of the board of North American Rockwell or Rockwell International or whatever it is now, and has done a remarkable job for them, by the way. But, he-when it became apparent that Lynn Townsend was going to favor other financial personalities as opposed to--what do you call them--product types, and Bob was an engineer, he--Bob Anderson--quit or allowed himself to be wooed away. But, I would meet them at these things, and, of course, Lynn would always have a few pops, he enjoyed drinking, and when

he'd have a couple, he'd come over and say, "How the hell did you control Engle?" I said, "Well, fortunately, I never really had to worry about it too long." And he said, "Well, he's a madman, you know, how do you handle...?" I said, "Look, caveat emptor." "You bought him, you handle him."

Q But, George must have been the world's greatest salesman?

A He was awfully good--awfully good. And, you know, you don't--he had a reputation--he had a lot of accounts, as an independent--and the accounts that he had, their stuff looked good, and they made money, so, you know, he was an authority.

Q That had been a decade before. How he maintained his...?

A Well, you know, he was only out of the business as an active, independent designer for five years--you can count them--five. From '60 to '65. I mean, that's his age, not the years when he ... and he, obviously, never lost a stroke when he went to Ford. He was in front of [the] camera all the time. So, why wasn't that a good reputation-to add to his--you never saw anything about George where it didn't say "internationally famous."

Q I don't suppose Townsend was any great shakes as a [product man]

A Townsend was nothing of a product man. I remember Lynn--I'd run into him periodically, and I said, "How are things going?" He said, "Great. All the public wants to see is sports." So, he was driving his stock all the time and did a hell of a job--ruined it for the industry, by the way. In fact, Henry Ford, unbeknownst to many, but he personally told me this. You might recall when

Townsend and every one of his executives--his key vice presidents and so forth--dumped their Chrysler stock, and Townsend made $4,000,000 in one minute. And, you know, it's okay

to mete it out a little at a time and so forth, but they all did it, collectively, because it looked like it was ripe, and, obviously, somebody had said, "Hey, it looks like it's about time," and they all dumped it. This was just when the Congress of the United States was debating the issue as to whether or not stock options were appropriate, and there had been many, many violations of them, because there was no real control on how they should be set up. I mean, you could go in, [and] in one day, if you want to pay to short-term tax, you could grab a batch and turn it over and make a ton.. Well, Ford had always had a very, very conservative approach. You had to have the stock, you had to have it for two years, you could only get rid of it if--it took you ten years to divest yourself of the whole thing. During the period, if you needed the money, you needed 25% in order to take down this stuff, the Company would lend it to you, with practically zero interest. Well, Lynn Townsend and company dumped the stock, [and] the guys in Congress are ready to really hammer us. Henry goes to the Senate Committee meeting, as an uninvited guy, to testify, and, of course, they're interested in listening. He said, "You know, I had a good time. I got in there. I defined our stock situation right to the word from the beginning to the end." He said, "The only thing that I recommended is that the person--the employee--has to go to the bank as opposed to getting the money loaned to him from the Company," and he laughed like hell. He said, "Of course, we got our own bank," and it's true. I went over and borrowed $1,200,000 in three minutes. They had a guy over there, Clarence Pembroke, who has since died.

Q He was the Ford man?

A He was the guy that was assigned to the Ford officers. You walked

in, and you spent 10 to 15 minutes with him but mostly because he was trying to get an update on what the hell was going on over at Ford Motor Company. In the meantime, he was having something typed out by his secretary, put two pieces of paper in front of you, and you sign them like that, she took them, went out and typed a check, and you walk out.

Ed Polley had driven me over because I didn't know what to do with my car, at this one time, and I showed him the check, and I said, "Can you believe this?" Of course, it just stuck to my hand long enough to go over and give it to Ford Motor Company, and then I got the stock, you see, for which I owed my soul! But I asked Russ Pembroke once, I said, "How--if I were a businessman--a small businessman--maybe, had a business with $10,000,000 or something like that, and my credit was great, and I had a contract but I needed money to buy some machines, I needed a $1,000,000, how long would it take me to get it?" He said, "A minimum of three weeks." "It has

to go to the committee, to this, to that...." Three minutes! Of course, once I went over and got some money like that, and the market dropped down and then you find out that they are still very friendly. But, they're sure on your back, and, fortunately, after six months of paying exorbitant amounts of interest, it seemed, I mean, it doesn't change, but your attitude towards it changes. For a period of about six or eight months the market responded, and I was able to make a little money, but, I'll tell you, that scares you to death.

Q Like buying futures?

A Exactly. Except that it's a wonderful thing that the Company does. You know, you don't have to accept it, you'd be a fool not to, but, they're not pushing it on you. I'm talked out!

Q I think we've pushed you to your limit today, Mr. Bordinat. I'd like to talk to you next time (and I hope that there'll be several next -times) about your first few years tenure as design chief, the sort of changes you wrought and the liberating influence you brought.

A It'll be a great study in--calm and collected on the outside and quivering like hell on the inside.

Q Well, whatever it was, it brought results. Thank you very much.

A Okay, you're entirely welcome, Dave.

Editor's Note: Eugene Bordinat died in August, 1987, of a heart attack. Among the many laudatory comments from his former associates in his Automotive News obituary, was the following:

" Friends and associates say Mr. Bordinat's most valuable contribution to Ford was bringing the design department into its own by wresting design leadership away from engineers and outside consultants."

END