IB: Today is October, October, today is January 23, 1992 and we are here to interview Mr. Fred Green about Reo memories.

Green: Glen.

IB: Glen.

IA: Glen.

IB: Glen, I beg your pardon, Glen. I know I think it is, isn't it the 22nd? I thought today was the 23rd.

Green: Probably .... (can't hear)

IB: From the Today Show, huh?

Green: Yeah.

IB: He was a vicious little ... I guess we could just start with some of this stuff, maybe I'll get it. Um, were you born in Lansing?

Green: Yes I was, yeah.

IB: Okay, and I remember at the lunch that we went to a few weeks ago that you said you went up to the ninth grade?

Green: Yeah, I think we changed schools, yeah, we went in to Lansing in '29 out to Okemos in '31 and out to Grand Ledge in '32 and we said we are not changing.

IB: I just want to make sure I'm not missing anything.

Green: Absolutely. That's what it is for, but after moving out there then I worked around various little jobs and got a chance to apply at Reo in '37. So I hired in there in the ah, receiving department and I worked there until after the strike of '37 and they started cutting back on manpower and went to powered vehicles for trucking the stuff throughout the plant. So then I got laid off there then and they weren't taking anybody back because that's about the time see, that they quit making cars. In '37, I was I was telling Shirley then, in '37 they made model, show models for the New York show and that was it. They didn't go over big, so they just dropped the whole thing and they had a real nice car, but it wasn't for the public. I mean they, you know, they just didn't go for it. And I liked what I said out there, they were built to last and something like seven years for the first owner to hold on to his car. No, I mean there is no turnover, you saturate your market and you are all done. Then I think that was one of the things, but ah, they started out trying to make a good product and we always thought we had a real good product. But then I came back in '41 to work for the summer. My dad wanted me to take a job at Reo, so I went in there and got into machine repair

and I was there just a month and they asked me if I wanted to move over to the tool room and I liked the sound of that better, so I went into the tool room. Then in January of '42 I went into the Air Force and came back in '46. I went back to work and worked my way up through the tooling division and ended up supervisor of tooling for the whole plant. Held various jobs on the way through, you know, and including back into machine repair as foreman there for about two years or so. So I got a chance to get all over the plant and see things and then past history from my dad and my grandfathers working there and I have always felt a kinship and like we were talking at that luncheon

IB: Right.

Green: a family feeling.

IB: Right, right.

Green: People that maybe you didn't really like in the work area, but outside you see them and they are old friends and I think that is the key to the whole thing, all the way through and it is terrible that Cappert put it through bankruptcy. That's the terrible part. People were really hurt. We had people commit suicide because they couldn't get jobs.

IB: In the seventies, when that started to go down.

Green: That was after '74, after they went into bankruptcy.

IB: '74.

Green: Yeah.

IB: They went into bankruptcy in '74?

Green: Yup. I retired August 1 of '74, because they were after my hide, because I was trying to keep the place going. I would drive all over town and pick up parts from heat treating or something like that to keep the line going and this friend of mine, he was engine plant superintendent at the time and he went with me. We picked up that stuff to keep the engine assembly line going. And they were trying to do everything under the sun to put it into bankruptcy, so we couldn't run. And then they fired this friend of mine. Then I knew my name was on their list. So, I took vacation and called in and said I'm retired. But I kept my retirement papers signed for three months ahead. So any time I wanted to I could just say put it in to affect.

IB: Were you able to get any retirement benefits? I understand some of the workers got nothing.

Green: Yeah, we got our pension benefits, but what they did when this was after the government took it over. See they passed that law in sometime just prior to this year or so prior.

IB: Chapter 11?

Green: No, the ah, no the pension benefit guarantee.

IB: Oh for the pensions, I see. Okay.

Green: Yeah, and yeah, so but when they took it over, when the government took it over, they come out with a ruling that they were going back five years, then pay us off at the pension rate from five years previous because they would, the law said in their interpretation that they could not pay any pension program that had been in effect less than five years. So they went back five years. They cancelled our life insurance policies that we had, that we had to pay our own Blue Cross-Blue Shield, that takes all of one pension, all of my hourly rated pension and so a little bit of my contributory pension. So we are getting very little out of that pension, but if it will pay for the Blue Cross-Blue Shield, fine. I can survive on that.

IB: Good, did they do. Did the company, it doesn't sound like it, did the company do anything to help these people who were going to be out of work, or were they slowly, slowly

Green: No, no, no.

IB: laying people off and they didn't do anything to help them get new jobs or retrain them.

Green: They didn't have any concern about the employees. All they wanted to do was to get the place into bankruptcy so they could collect money. Because they made money out of that with their financing corporation and stuff like that, trucks that had been sold and financed through them. They could care less about the factory.

IB: Compared to the previous types of management.

Green: Oh the previous types of management ah, we had some good ones. Ah under White, the only thing was that I guess real employees always wanted to be an independent company. And I was there when Bohn Aluminum and Brass took it over and I was there when White took it over, I was there when they merged us with Diamond T.

IB: Who was that about, I don't need an exact year, but

Green: Gee, I don't really have a place for them, because I wasn't too involved in any changeover because they talk about we merged with Diamond T, but Diamond T came up here because we had much better facility than they had, so everything was just merged in piecemeal

and they started building Diamond T trucks and then it went to Diamond Reo, it changed name over. And ah, so the thing is kind of a shadowy feeling. I suppose it is some place in the archives that it tells when it happened. But it was a friendly type of merging. It wasn't

IB: It was a merge, it wasn't a takeover.

Green: No. And some Diamond T people come up and worked in our plant, some of the engineers, some of the people that were in management positions, so that it was easy to merge it in and go ahead and work. They always kind of rankled the old-timers that we were not a private company anymore and, in fact, when we heard that Cappert bought the place, knowing that he was an Alma native, we thought oh this is going to be heaven, you know, this guy coming in here, but their program from the beginning, as far as I'm concerned, they went in and wiped out the accounts payable, put in all new people that would do what they were told. Wiped out old-timers in the purchasing department, put in new people to do what they were told. So they had the financial end of it tied up.

IB: They simply gave them their pink slip and those folks were out.

Green: Oh yeah, they were out completely. In fact, this engine plant superintendent, they called him up to the front office at 3:30 on a Friday afternoon and said you are fired, we want you out of the plant before 4:00. You go back and take your personal stuff out of your desk and don't come back on the property. So his wife called me that night and wanted to know if I'd come over and talk to him. And he was really despondent. And I told him, I said go back and check with the union because we have union rights. That was something they didn't take, but they wanted to take it away and the union wanted to do that because, you know, they don't want supervisors having any preference of going back to work and stuff. But I talked to a few of them and they agreed that they would let them accumulate seniority equal to the amount they had before they went on supervision. So I would have had, I don't know, probably 18 or 20 years and Ernie had about that same amount. And so he went back to the union and they said you bet he is going back to work. So he worked until they closed up. But then he went to the Olds and got a job and he is retired from there with his ten years. But it was always a troublesome feeling when these other companies wanted to take Reo. Now as far as I'm concerned and I've got to believe what I was told, that Bohn Aluminum and Brass milked the company. Now they took stuff out of the company and so when White took it over, I suppose to them it was a bargain because the thing was down and we weren't really sure if it was going to keep going or not, but White did, they put a lot of their production down to us. We built trucks for them and different outfits and so it went along real good under White. Well then Cappert, had apparently got them to sign some kind of a sales agreement and pretty soon he called them on it and said I want to buy

that Reo. And they said no, we know what you are, what your situation is, what your program is and we are not going to sell it to you. So he took them into court and they backed off and sold it to him. So it was a forced sale really. I think White would have kept it and I think had they done it, we would both be in good shape now. But, it didn't come out that way.

IA: No.

IB: You mentioned Bohn Aluminum and Brass, is that Bowen

Green: B o h n.

IB: B o h n.

Green: Yeah, out of Detroit.

IB: Bohn Aluminum Brass out of Detroit, okay.

Green: Ah huh. But I can remember so many things that my dad would tell me, you know, they didn't have any significance then at the time he told me, but different things that went on in the plant like when the strike, well of course, I saw a little bit of this when the strike in '37 was over and they went back to work, and everybody was on piece work, they only got paid for the number of good pieces they produce. People in the paint ovens, I mentioned that to you, the paint lines, where they ran them through dips and painted parts, some of those guys had six, eight weeks worth of work stashed and ... all ready to go, but they hadn't turned them in and the company just said hey, these are hours. They should have been turned in and they weren't, so they are hours, you don't own anything. Some of the boys were real unhappy, they said we are not going to put out anything anymore, but they came around and everybody got back to work.

IB: Ah huh, what did your dad do in the plant?

Green: Well my dad he started in along the assembly line, the truck assembly line and during World War I they wanted him to become foreman in tank track manufacturing of the tracks that they. Yeah, so he went in there and ran that until the end of the war and then he moved up into ah, well like parts and service and then he went into tool grooving and processing. And so he was in tool processing when he retired.

IB: You said he started in 1904?

Green: I'm not sure if it was '4 '5 or '6, somewhere in there.

IB: Okay. ... years.

Green: He had a total of ah, a little better than 50 years in there when he retired in '55. So ah, how that is figured out, I don't know. But

you see, when he started working there, he was only working part time. Because they were driving trucks. He and his brothers were driving trucks from Lansing plant to Chicago, overland, they didn't have any haulaways then.

IB: Ah huh, oh to deliver them for customers.

Green: Right. Deliver them to dealers, yeah.

IB: Oh to the dealers.

Green: Yeah. But see Reo started in working winters, because they could hire farmers that couldn't work on the fields and stuff and then in the spring when it came time for planting they'd shut down and maybe build up a supply of parts to work the next winter. And then pretty soon the demand got up to where they started in working the year around.

IA: Ah huh.

IB: But your father drove vehicles from the factory to where they were going to be sold to the dealers?

Green: Yeah, they were dealer orders, yes, they were dealer setup. And because he told me about one time they were going down and it was somewheres down around Berrien Springs or down in that area, and they got on the wrong road and they ended up on a farmer's barnyard and had to turn around and drive back up the road and they could go on down, so it was not very well paved.

IB: I was just going to say probably an adventure

Green: Oh you bet.e

IB: that kind of traveling in those days. The roads weren't good at all.

Green:No and those outfits weren't that road worthy, you know.

IB: Yeah.

Green: To just take off on your own, but I guess ah, he had done enough mechanic work around so that anything that broke down on the way, ah, if it was possible to fix, they fixed it.

IB: I imagine they did have some breakdowns because the early cars would do that.

IA: Oh yeah.

Green: Sure.

IB: Ah they used to sell a tool kit or something when you bought a car, didn't they,

Green: Always, always.

IB: so you could, and I understand

Green: Spark plug engine or stuff like that always had em.

IB: And the parts in the early days, if you got a part it wasn't exactly standard, you might have to gnaw off some rough edges or something

Green: Oh yeah.

IB: to make it, your vehicle like today you can run down to the store and buy a fuel pump and it will fit.

Green: Well you can go down now and buy factory authorized parts or replacement parts that are supposedly as good as factor authorized. Now everybody can manufacture these parts, they don't have to sell them under that name. But they will fit this model of car. Then they didn't have that. It is like the spark plug wrench. Now a monkey wrench.

IB: Right.

Green: There was an L shaped wrench with an adjustable lower jaw and you could make it fit most any nut. They used to have fun with some kid would come in off the farm and start working around there in the mechanic area, they'd send him for a left-handed monkey wrench.

IB: Oh (laughter)

Green: Nobody had them, nobody had them, he'd come back and he'd say well okay use this one, but put it in your left hand. (laughter)

IB: Was your father a farm boy before he started working there?

Green: Yeah, yeah. Ah, yeah he, his folks had two or three different farms

IA: In the area?

Green: Well out around south and west of Grand Ledge.

IA: Grand Ledge.

Green: Ah huh.

IA: What was your father's first name?

Green: Howard.

IA: Howard, Howard Green.

Green: Howard L. Ah huh.

IA: Howard L.

Green: That's where I got my middle name.

IA: Oh what does it stand for?

Green: No, Howard.

IB: No, no, I mean you are Glen Howard.

Green: No, he was Howard Leslie.

IA: Oh. Okay. Did he in those early days he must have seen R.E. Olds or Richard Scott or those folks.

Green: No. He didn't know Richard Scott. He knew Dick Scott.

IA: Oh yes, yes, that's right, that's right, he was known as Dick Scott, wasn't he.

Green: Yeah. Yeah.

IA: So that says even more.

Green: I said how would you know him, he said he come down and talked to me about a job that we are having trouble with. Then he was really disappointed when Dick Scott was let out.

IA: Oh he was let out.

Green: Yeah. Yeah, well

IA: I don't know my history well enough.

Green: ... politics. You know what I mean.

IA: Now he was general manager, was he or

Green: Yeah.

IB: Through the '20's mostly.

Green: Yeah. Yeah, yeah my dad knew him and anybody that was up, in the upper echelon of management ah, had to at some time, come in contact with my dad. Because he was like I was as far as being all over the plant. And now there again, he had a fourth grade education.

IB: Oh, but he was obviously very mechanically inclined on machines.

Green: He was and when he got up in processing he always had to estimate the cost of jobs and stuff and he'd have a column of figures like this and he'd shu, shu, shu, like this and people said, how do you know that's right. And he said, check it and they put it on the machine and check it and one day they took columns of figures, gave one to this person in the adding machine and the other my dad and he was done way ahead and he was right. And those things, you know, ah, I suppose it is a natural talent that somebody is born with that, but it is

IA: But he honed it.

Green: Yup, yup, they couldn't take it away form him. Al Zimmer was plant manager and he was going to cut cost, so he laid off all the people out of processing. We don't need that kind of stuff, it is just paperwork that is wasted. My dad was pretty well broken because he said, I never figured that Reo could run without me. And I said well now that you know it, I hope you are going to retire when you are 65 and he says, not if I can help it. And I said if you don't, I'm going to break your legs so you won't be in the next day. And he says, well maybe. So then, after he was laid off for, I don't know, five or six weeks, something like that, they called him and wanted him to come back to work in a different job. He said absolutely not. He says I don't have to work and if you want me, put me back on my regular job or I don't come back. Three or four days later they called him and put him back in his regular job. And then they ended up bringing back the other guys too. Because they found out that they had to have that to make, because they plan every part manufacture that came along. It came out of engineering, went through the processing and routing department. They had to determine what machine it would take, what tooling it would take for every step of the manufacture and the cost of it. And then present this to management, to upper management to decide if they wanted to produce it. Well, he flabbergasted me because I was in the tool room, while he was still working in processing and a print(?) would come down and call for somebody to go and get this particular old fixture that was outdated for the job that it had been running and I happen to get one of those, you know, get it out of storage. So I called my dad and I said, ah, where would I find that thing. He said you go down under heat treat and he told me right where to go and he said, what bay number it was and he said it will be back in on the last skid on the bottom row of fixtures. There would be two rows of fixtures on a skid. I said how do you know that. He says I know that's where it is. He said I had to look it up before I processed it. I went down there, sure enough there it was. And I just couldn't believe it. And other people would come to him and say, Howard, this old fixture we used to use, well they are work on this particular part, he'd look at it and say sure, I can tell you right where it is. The guy would go down and get it, and check it out. Sure enough it was okay to

work and ah, they'd alter it, that was our job mainly on some of this stuff. If we had an old fixture we'd have to alter it. Maybe it would be a pump jig type with a handle that clamped the part down while we drilled holes or something in it. And ah, we'd have to make some new locators or something like that for it. But ah, it was amazing to me what a memory the old-timers had. Almost as good as computers today.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Because it was their life. And their whole live revolved around Reo. I've known a lot of the guys that have worked up there with my dad and everything and ah, they were all pretty well cut out of the same cloth, you know. They weren't highly educated people, but they knew their job.

IA: And you felt proud about

Green: You bet. Pride was the big thing.

IA: Um, and so you say his whole life was kind of wrapped around Reo and that included your whole family with activities?

Green: Yeah, yeah, ah, we considered Reo as our second home, you know, of course we weren't allowed to make tours through the plant. But it was something like that, if you don't like the Reo clubhouse, ah, that was a must for every Friday afternoon. Us kids would go, because the folks lots of times they didn't care about going to the movie or something, but it gave a place for us to go.

IB: And they could feel like you were safe there.

Green: Yeah, right.

IA: It is just like after school you could go down for a matinee performance.

Green: Yeah, well yeah.

IA: And was there a charge?

Green: No. No, you had to have the Reo clubhouse ticket.

IB: But you were telling us though that some kids would sneak in though.

Green: Right. Yeah. Stu Harton and he was the guy that ah, always watched, you know, because you'd come in, you had to go through these double doors and everything. He'd stand there and he'd watch, wouldn't say much. Everybody called him, not to his face, but they'd say oh horse face is here, we are going to have trouble getting in. He had a long, quite a long face and he was a pleasant guy, if you ever caught

him laughing he was the jolliest guy in the world. But he could put on a mean looking face and scare kids, you know, they are trying to sneak in and he'd kind of scare them in .... I'm really not supposed to be here, but go ahead. And he'd let them go in.

IA: What was his name?

Green: Harton, I don't know what his first name was, but they called him Zook, Z o o k.

IB: Zook.

IA: Okay, and the last name was?

Green: H a r t o n.

IA: Thank you.

Green: Now that's a long ways back. That's back when I were a children.

IA: Ah huh, and how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Green: Ah I had four brothers and one sister. I had well really two sisters. The reason we moved back into Lansing from out by Potterville in '29, was my sister died. She was only four years old. But then

IA: She needed medical

Green: Well, yeah, and ah, they said she died basically of strep throat, but then there was some other complication and that was in, it was way early in the knowledge about strep throat.

IA: Yeah, yeah, they didn't have antibiotics or any of that.

Green: No but we had the veterinarian out three or four times for her, but he couldn't help her.

IA: You touched on something I wanted to ask too. You were talking about the Reo family and the things that you all did there and you talked about your sister being ill and I'm just wondering, were there any kind of medical ah, any kind of medical benefits or help for families of the workers.

Green: Oh good gosh, no. No they had no idea of that at all.

IA: So there wasn't

Green: No that was, that was something that came in in later years after the union got in there and

IA: Oh okay.

Green: it was a negotiated item. And the company agreed to pay that kind of stuff as a part of the wage package.

IA: What other kinds of things would the company do for an employee though, loans or

Green: I didn't know, but Louie Garcia was telling me that they would help you buy a house. Now I think what they did was to ah, guarantee your loan from a bank. Now I think that is what it was?

IA: Like a co-signer.

Green: Yeah, I don't think they took a mortgage on your property. I think they just said we will guarantee this.

IB: Can you imagine that happening now.

IA: Oh no.

Green: Well you couldn't do it now, because

IA: No, there are so many people now.

Green: And you have so many diversified people in a plant and like the reason I didn't go to Olds was because I would just be a number. And while I worked at Reo, I don't care if I was just doing tool room work and building fixtures. If I didn't think the design would work, I'd call the designer and he would come down and go over it with me and he would say you are right and it would go back through processing, get the approval of something and then come back down as a change and we'd go ahead and do it. But if I went over to the Olds, ah, I would have been better off today financially, because my pension would have been higher, but ah, I didn't want to give up that feeling of being a cog in the machine, you know. Everybody has a place in the operation of this big machine and I didn't want to give that up to become nobody over at Olds.

IB: All the people who worked on the things, knew something about what they were doing.

Green: You bet.

IA: Obviously, you were appreciated for your worth then, you felt appreciation or

Green: That's what we always felt until Cappert's gang came in.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Then we were nothing and

IA: This was in the '60's or '70's or

Green: Oh no that was well

IA: Early '70's?

Green: Early '70's, because I retired in '74, and I would say he got it probably around '70 or '71. It wasn't too long ah, and I really think that he thought if the place was going to make him a mint of money in the first year or so, he would keep it running. But if it didn't, he was all set to bankrupt the thing and he was going to draw money anyway. It wasn't going to make any difference. But, ah,

IA: There were a lot of people then out of work, weren't there?

Green: Oh gosh yes, yeah. And a lot of them with a lot of years just short of qualifying for pensions.

IB: Oh gosh.

Green: My oldest brother he ah, he stayed there until they quit manufacturing and he drew a part of his pension. I say a part of it, yeah, he couldn't draw full, but he had enough years in in enough years in and enough ah, working time there that he could draw a oh, I guess he got about 70, 80 percent of his pension.

IB: Ah huh, you were telling me earlier that the members of your family that worked there, would you tell me again who worked for Reo.

Green: Both of my grandfathers.

IA: Oh your grandfathers too.

Green: Oh yeah.

IB: Golly.

Green: That's what I said, we go back a long ways. Both of my grandfathers

IA: To the old Olds plants before Reo even, when it was Olds

Green: No at Reo, just at Reo.

IB: Just at Reo Motor Car Company.

Green: They just start into Reo. Um, my mother's father had been a school teacher and ah, he went to work at Reo and my dad's father went to work at Reo and that must have been well it was before 1924, because

in '24 we moved out to the farm by Potterville, so it would have been in the late teens or early '20s.

IB: Ah huh, were they on the assembly too?

Green: No, my grandfather Bigleston on my mother's side, he worked in the engine build up, which was right along Washington Avenue at that time. That was when they set them on a table or a cart and built the engine piece by piece and shoved it to somebody else before they set up the moving line over in the motor plant.

IA: So that was like 1904 or something you are thinking?

Green: No, no, I'd say probably in any time up until, well in 1926 is when they put most of the machines into the motor plant. That's when the motor plant was built was around '25, '26 somewheres in there. Ah, they were building John Bean when I was at Christensy Street School and we left there in '24.

IA: And John Bean was just across the street from the EAST side.

Green: That was Reo, it was built as a paint, as a body paint shop and stuff for Reo. That's what it was built for and then they had the tramway went over Cedar Street, over into the buildings over across the Lake Shore Tracks and they come in on the fourth floor over there and the body, they would pick up boxes, cabs and stuff like that going through that stuff. So, ah, my grandfather Green probably went there in '17, '18, somewheres in that era.

IA: .....

Green: Yeah and ah

IA: Or during the war.

Green: Yeah, and then ah, my grandfather Egelston, I don't know exactly when he started in there, but ah, probably somewheres along that area, because my mother worked at the old ~~Roosen~~ Ruessy High grocery store at the corner of Baker and Cedar and she, she saw my dad come and pick up his sister who was working there with her and the next day she said that's the man I want to marry.

IB: I remember that grocery store. But I didn't know it was such a romantic trysting place.

Green: But ah, then she got a job working at Reo, but she didn't

IA: What did she do?

IB: Yes, what did she do?

Green: I don't know exactly what she worked on, but I don't know if it was in the seats or something, but

IA: Did the sew, actual production work or

Green: Yeah, she worked there until about the time they got married.

IB: ... doing the sewing for the seats and stuff.

IA: Yes that's right they did.

Green: Yeah, ... handwork then, but ...

IA: Handwork, was that paid piece work too?

Green: Oh I presume so. I think everything along that line was.

IA: And she quit when she married?

Green: Yeah, or maybe just before. I'm not just sure about the sequence of that.

IA: I was just wondering if they didn't want married women working there or she just quit so she could be home with the family.

Green: I think so, I think so, but she ah, gee I almost told a family secret, she thought it was a big joke and it was a big joke but

IB: We can always turn the tape off.

IA: We won't get sued now maybe.

Green: No, but back in those days, the women didn't talk about such things as being pregnant and like that, but ah, they were married September 26, I believe in 1914, no yeah about, I think it was 1914, they were married. And they went downtown and got married by justice of the peace, named Force and so she

IB: Oh, ... already.

Green: Yeah she'd go around and talking with friends and stuff and she says well we were married in September by force and Charles was born in November. And at that time everybody was just shocked. But then she explained that it was year later and Justice Force was

IA: I think I know where he gets his square eyes (laughter) from his mom.

Green: You know, but she did work there and then my dad's sister that used to work at the grocery store with her, she went there to work for a while. And different ones in the family. All of his brothers and some of my mother's brothers. She had three brothers, I think two of

them worked at Reo for a while. So we had been associated with Reo as, you know, a family thing and ah,

IB: Did the family members get the other ones .... the shop on the jobs.

Green: I think so, ah, my dad in '41, he asked me if I, he said would you like a job at Reo and I said well not really, I don't want to work inside, but I said if I can get a job for the summer, that's okay with me. But

IB: That's right, you were saying that Reo was the longest summer job that you ever had.

Green: Right. And so he made the arrangements for me to go to the employment office and fill out the application and when my name went through, boy they picked me right off. Come on you are going in. So, I didn't think anything about it until .... all of 10, 12 years later, I went over to the drinking fountain and got a drink of water and these two guys were standing there talking together and they saw me stop there and I just straightened up and this one guy said, well he said I don't suppose it bothers you any that somebody is going to get laid off. He says your dad got you a job in here. I said, hey, remember one thing, anybody can get you a job in here, but you've got to make your own way and I said there is no way that I would ever do anything that would jeopardize my dad's reputation. And I think that was the biggest load I ever carried was being careful that I didn't jeopardize my dad's reputation. Because it has made me feel real good in past, well in recent years. Um, Larry Coon lives up at St. Johns, he worked down there for years and we were at the reunion up here at Coral Gables and he was talking with a couple of guys and I walked up by there and he said now there's a guy that um, how was it, he made some remark you know, about me not working when I was there. He said he is a lot different than his dad. He said his dad was the greatest guy you'd ever seen in your life. I thought, that's pretty darn nice, you know, for him to say that. Because he didn't have to, but my dad was well respected and ah, I've always been proud of being able to follow him. But it is, you know,

IA: Now you said your family had a farm in Potterville?

Green: Oh north of Potterville.

IA: North of Potterville?

Green: Yeah. And my dad, he worked at Reo then.

IA: Yeah.

Green: He would come home from work, jump on the tractor and go out

IB: After work?

Green: After work and run until dark, come back up and milk cows, go back out and run until close to midnight, get up at 3:00 in the morning go down, he had 26 cows to milk by hand and milk those cows, go down to Reo work all day and come back out and run the. He was thankful for a rainy afternoon, you know, so he could take a few hours off. But in the worst part was along in '32, this was after we thought we were out to Grand Ledge which made him about a 12 mile drive, '32, '33 in that area in there, '34 maybe, um, they shut down. They closed down the work four hours a day.

IB: Through the Depression?

Green: Yeah, you come in and work as long as we have any work for four hours or something like that. And you go home, he says well why can't we work three eight hour days. We are not working unless we got the request, got the orders.

IB: Got the parts and stuff.

Green: And so he would drive that 12 miles each way, work four hours. I don't know how he ever had anything left out of his paycheck, you know.

IA: What kind of a car did your father drive? Did you have a Reo?

Green: Oh yeah, I was telling you about that one Reo ah, this is when we were, he had Reos previously, but he also had a Maxwell and a couple other cars, I can't remember. It seems like he had a Star, but I'm not sure. I know he had a Model T Ford and ah,

IB: The competition.

Green: Then in ah,

IA: I was just thinking,

Green: Then in about 1926 or '27 he bought this Reo with a Brisco Body and ah, gee, we thought that was just great, a Brisco Body was something fantastic, you know. Then it had roll up windows in it, it was a wooden frame body,

IA: Roll up windows were rather new then, weren't they?

Green: Yeah, yeah, and ah, yeah his other cars had side curtains, snap-on side curtains, rain or wind, you know, you snap on the side curtains. And so, ah, but then he bought another Reo, gee, it seemed like it was a '34, yes it was, it was a '34, a black one. It had flair fenders about like that ah, Detrick body, it had flair fenders about like that and the doors opened from the front. They were hinged in the back.

IA: Oh like the suicide door?

IB: Yeah.

Green: Right.

IB: That's really dangerous.

Green: Right, '33 Ford and them came out with it and they put all these cars out without realizing if somebody starts to open that door when they are going down the road, it is going to jerk them right out of the car, and no seat belt. But he had that car, I got a picture of him standing beside it and the angle I took that picture, it looks like it must be a 15 cylinder straight engine, you know, it looks like that hood is 8 foot long.

IB: Well they were big cars.

Green: Yes they were a big car, but they weren't that big, it was just the distortion of the angle.

IA: Oh I see.

IB: We had a touring car here that had a 16 cylinder engine in it, 1907 touring car, I believe it was. And it is being restored in Florida now, hopefully.

Green: Oh really, huh.

IB: Talk about the, the same thing.

Green: Yeah, yeah, ...

IB: For every.

IA: Yeah.

IB: The biggest engine ever built.

Green: I think Cadillac came out with a V-12 and I don't know if they ever came out with a V-16 or not, but they had a V-12, but that was shorter you know. Because you put just 8 cylinders, 6 cylinders on the side, it was a shorter engine. But ah,

IB: You were telling me, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Green: Go ahead.

IB: You were telling me that there is a picture of your family that was taken at Reo?

Green: Yeah. And it seems to me, but I'm not sure, it seems to me we had like an 8 by 10. I know that Hilda Smith, used to work in Personnel, and she called me and told me to ah, come up and pick up any pictures I wanted when they were closing the place out. She said I've gone through a lot of these and I've sorted out some of you and your family and I'd like to have you come and get them. So I did. Some of them were ~~two~~ a room gang pictures and some of them were the family. But I know that in, I'm not sure if it was Reo Spirit or Reo Items, they had two or three different papers that were published over years.

IB: I ... Spirit.

IA: The item was a paper, like a newspaper?

Green: Yeah, oh yeah. Well, not like, it was color print and everything, it was

IA: Did it come out once a week or

Green: No, once a month. Usually, sometimes I think they put it out every two months like during the summer or something. They had little variation but ah, Art Sinclair was the artist. How come you know everything that I don't.

IB: Because I've read all this stuff already. Art Sinclair also was the one involved with the clubhouse too.

Green: Right, right. Yeah.

IB: He used to manage the clubhouse.

IA: He managed it?

IB: Ah huh.

IA: Okay.

Green: And ah

IA: I think I ... his name.

Green: So I got that picture, but I'm not just sure where it is. I know he done it, I ..... Because my sister called me yesterday from Florida, I told her I was coming down there and she said are you going to take along our picture and I said I don't know where it is now.

IA: I'd love to see it.

IB: Yeah. That would be great to see.

Green: I will, I will find it and bring it down. But it is ah, it is not one of those things that it is someplace up there and our house isn't that big. But my wife built or made a 16 by 20 crewel picture of an Indian chief. She has put it away now where she can't find it.

IB: I understand that.

Green: So the picture may be hard to find, I don't know. But I'll find it and bring it down.

IB: Now during the Depression, did the farm help, having the farm help a little bit? Because you know, you mentioned ..... farms.

Green: We had some of our food from the farm like ah, beef or pork, chickens, things like that, which helped out tremendously. And then we always had a big garden spot, raised a bunch of potatoes and things like that, ah huh.

IB: Because I read some letters to to from Reo people to the company during the Depression, they had them in the archives. They wrote from their farms in St. Johns and all the outlying areas saying we are out here waiting, whenever you have the jobs for us, we'll come on back, you know.

Green: Absolutely.

IB: And they, you know, they at least knew that they could survive out there on the farms

Green: Right.

IB: until they had

Green: Well yes you can get by, but my gosh my dad sold some ah, good hogs for very little money. I think he sold four of them, he got $32. Which little or nothing, but ah, he had to have it to pay the taxes.

IB: Yeah, so you could eat what you needed and then sell the rest?

Green: Oh yeah, yeah, well and you'd raise grain and stuff and ah, and sell that off. Or they used to ah, raise wheat and they'd take it over to Portland to the flour mills and trade it for flour. So they'd bring the flour back and women would use the flour and stuff.

IA: What was it harder to work on the farm or in the factory, do you think?

Green: It is kind of a toss-up. You see harder, I don't know, ah, farm work was difficult because back then we didn't have all the mechanized stuff they've got now. We had tractors, better tractor and things like that but there was an awful lot of hand work involved on it.

And then ah, but you were your own boss. You decided you will do this today or that today, whatever you want. You got to the factory, you punch in that time card and there is somebody got an eye on you, you feel that you are being watched and if you don't produce things they are right on your back.

IA: Yeah.

IB: So a bad storm doesn't ruin, you know, a whole season's worth of work.

Green: Right, right.

IB: So it is a little more regular.

Green: Oh yeah, it is regular, but like I say, which is harder, I don't really know. Making a living is easier in the plant, than it is on the farm. When we were out at Potterville in 1926, monsoon rains, I say monsoon, that's from India, monsoon, the equinoxal rains came and dad had 26 acres of beans, navy beans, all ready to pull. The ground got so wet they couldn't pull them. They stood right there and rotted.

IB: Oh.

Green: And so that was a little bit of a tough year.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Right.

Green: But that was the year beans were high priced.

IB: That's probably why.

Green: Right. That hurt.

IB: What kind of wages do you think your father was earning at the shop in those days?

Green: I don't know. I know that when I started there in '41, I got ah, 40 cents an hour.

IB: I wanted to ask you that, 40 cents an hour.

Green: Yup.

IB: Um, when you came back after your wartime experiences, what kind of wage did you start out at?

Green: We started out at 60 cents. So when I, I worked

IA: INCREASED ... 20 cents.

Green: Yeah. I worked there for ah, oh well, of course, I worked in the tool room in the tooling business there for the rest of the time, but ah, I'd say probably close to six months and George Barnett was our superintendent then and ah, and I knew he knew my dad and I went up there and I said George, I kind of think I deserve more money. And he says, ah, well I think you do to, he says I'll put it in for you. So he jumped me up to 80 cents. So I went along pretty near a year and Frank Keltz and I, Frank is dead now, and ah, Bruce Lozway, I believe it was, he was working in there with us, all three of us doing the same job in the tool room. And Frank and I got together and we said, hey, let's go talk to them about getting a raise. We ought to be getting a dollar an hour. So, Bruce wasn't there that day, he was in school. He was a part time student and so Frank and I went up there and talked to George and George said, ah, well, he said the only way I can do that is if two of you guys can do the work. Then I'll have to cut you back, take one man off and let the two of you do that work. And so I can pay you guys each a dollar an hour and we'll let Bruce go. He is part time anyway. So, ah, the next day Bruce came in and we told him what George had said and he said, that's fine with me. He said you guys are going to stay here and I'm not. And the last I heard of him was that he had joined the Lansing Police force.

IB: Oh.

Green: I don't know, you know, all the ins and outs of that or anything. Ah, but that's the way you got your raises back then. You had to put the boss in ... one.

IB: They didn't just come along automatically because of the good work and

Green: Oh no, no, no.

IB: you had to go fight for a raise.

Green: You had to go and talk to them and you know, nobody got mad, we just talked about the situation and he said that's fine. Well then from then on I got my raises pretty regular, but they weren't rapid. They weren't rapid. You, you could work six months or a year before they'd finally give you some more money.

IA: Did they take things like how many children you have to support and things like that into account?

Green: Not to my knowledge.

IA: No.

Green: I, I, I say not to my knowledge. At that time I wasn't involved in that. And so ah, when I was married, but we didn't have any children right then and so um, I think that supervisors in those days had a lot more concern for their workers and if they were having a rough go on the outside, I think they would say, well, hey we'll give you a little raise here.

IA: Ah huh, to help you along.

Green: All they had to do is justify it to their boss. And they were, they were rather humane about the thing, you know, and caring and ah, but things did get out of hand because inequalities. And that's why I spent one year on the ah, well, I mentioned Lester Washburn, and ah,

IA: The union man.

Green: Yeah, that year, the one they call the labor holiday, um, that that year he was up for, I mean I don't know if it was that same year, but when he was up for reelection,

IA: After the war? After World War II?

Green: Yeah, ah huh. He was up for reelection as president of the local. And ah, a bunch of guys came to me and my brother and three other guys. They picked the biggest guys they could find. Guys they could trust.

IA: Ah huh.

Green: He said, we want you guys over there guarding the ballot boxes. So we had to go over there and stay all day and all night up there where the Reo radio station used to be, above the showroom across from the clubhouse.

IB: Oh across from the clubhouse. It wasn't in the clubhouse.

Green: No, it was across from the clubhouse. And ah, that's where they held the election.

IA: Was it a contract election or

Green: Yes, well it was the office, union official, yeah, it was him, it was him for election.

IA: Okay.

Green: And they had somebody running against him and ah, going up there and watch those ballot boxes and they told us watch it because they are

apt to gang up on you and try to throw you downstairs. So stick together.

IB: My goodness.

Green: So we did. But we were five pretty good sized guys and they'd get together and talk, but they wouldn't, they didn't start anything. Came out, he was thrown out. The election went our way because and they were just so shrewd they would stuff the ballot boxes.

IA: And they might have.

Green: And they could have very easily. Because you never have 100 percent vote and all they got to do is run in some more ballots, voting for him.

IA: Let me ask you this about the union. There are obviously lots of people who belong to the union.

Green: Oh yeah.

IA: There are workers .....

Green: I did.

IA: But also who felt very, very um, good about the company too.

Green: Oh absolutely.

IA: So they weren't contradictory, those things.

Green: No, no. Well what has got me. I was in the union. Of course, then when I went on supervision, I had to resign from the union. I was, they dropped me out.

IB: Right.

Green: And whenever we would have a problem, the guys would say you are a company man. I said, aren't you. Well, no I'm union man first. I said if the company doesn't make money, how do you get paid? Well, and they'd start thinking. Well, the stewards would come to me and say, hey, you've got to do this. Wait a minute. He says, you are the enemy and I'm for the working people. And I said, look, my job is to insure the future of the company for the future of the workers.

IB: Ah huh.

Green: And if this is detrimental to that, I'm not going to sign it. I said if you want to take it on up to Personnel and if they want to agree to it, that's okay. It is surprising how many people I got convinced that management is not an adversary. Management is somebody that has

to keep the place going. And an awful lot of people didn't want that responsibility. Some people thought it was just a cushy job, you just sit around and look smart whether you are or not. Well, ah, you had to make decisions that maybe was against your own ah, beliefs, but it was for the good of the company you had to do it. And so, I was on both sides of the fence. I never was a firm believer in an autocratic rule by union, because of the fact that somebody has got to protect management's interest to keep the place going. For instance, when there was nobody protecting management's interest, it went bankrupt. And I think that is just as true today and I really feel that this is one of the reasons we are having all this problem with Japan importing stuff is because the management and Oldsmobile is guilty of this too, they don't want you rocking the boat

IB: Right.

Green: with the union. Give them whatever they want and we will just raise the price. Pretty soon, now, I can't go buy a new car. I'll buy a used car. Because I don't want to dip into reserves to buy a car when I can get one that will run and do the job and ah. And I think that this is a factor that somebody is going to have to face. Unions in their original concept were good, really good. They were to insure that ah, workers were treated equally. But then you got, it got reverted around to where we'll tell you what you are going to do. And that is bad. And to me, the worst thing about the union was that they can brought everybody down to the lowest common denominator. If you had a crew of 20 people and three or four of them were super and the rest, some of the rest of them were good and you had a couple of bad apples. These upper people are going to drop right down to the bad apple because he is drawing just as much money as I am. So, ah, I've seen both sides of the picture and I can see good and bad in both of them. But they each got to be in control. I mean they've got to be controlled. Management can't run roughshod over their employees and the unions shouldn't force the company into doing things that is going to jeopardize their future. Because the future is what we are all looking at.

IB: What kind of changes did you see in the shop from what you did and I guess I also want to ask you, what kind of changes did you see in the way of ah, people, did they feel the same. Did they have that family feel right from the straight, right on straight through do you think?

Green: Oh there is no doubt in my mind yes. When I first went to work there, the first thing they did, does your dad work here? And you know like my foreman, Ed Cavanaugh down in receiving, he said does your dad work here. I said yeah, what's his name, Howard Green. Oh, I know him and I was a member of his family, you know. And as far as the working was concerned, ah, and I think it held that way. It might have, no I can't say really that it eased off in the later years. We went through a lot of employees because we had the military contracts and they boosted employment up to what somewheres

around 4500, something like that. And so we got a lot of people in that weren't real oriented.

IA: Did they hire a lot of women?

Green: Yeah. Yeah, no problems.

IA: Oh no problems, I was going to ask you about that.

Green: No, the one problem that always came up it seemed was women had a weight restriction. Not their weight, not their weight, no,

IA: I was going to go wait a minute.

Green: No, no, but like down in Department 32 in the engine plant where the machine parts, they would put them in stock pans. Well maybe that stock pan would weigh pretty near 50 pounds if you small bolts or something like that and too heavy for a woman to lift. Pretty soon the guy says well hey wait a minute, she is drawing the same money I am, but management worked around it. They got things set up so that one thing, they put in some conveyors so the stockmen that put their pan on a conveyor, she could just roll it right down the conveyor to her machine, work on it. And the conveyor was moveable, they could take it to another machine and set it up and things like that. So, ah, together they worked things out. Ah, as far as family feel, those people that were there for temporary type job. You know I mean they were there because we had

IA: Because of the war.

Green: high production, but when we dropped back down to standard production, we had basically the old line people there and ah, and a few, even a few of those people that worked there just maybe a couple of years during the high employment period. If you see one of them outside now, you know, out in the store or something like that, they'd come right up and talk to you. You used to work at Reo? Yeah, yeah, and so you get reacquainted, but they still have that feeling. Now, if they only work there two years, the rest of their work time was at some other place. But they remember you from Reo. So I think that Reo made a deep impression on whoever came there to work. If there was a satisfactory employee. Some employees weren't satisfactory and they didn't stay maybe more than three, four days or a couple of weeks. But anybody that stayed there and worked, I think made an impression on them because of management's primary attitude. And that was that we make a good product, we need good people. It wouldn't just do anything to satisfy people's demands, I mean they had to be reasonable demands if they wanted something. But I think that filtered down from the top. I think ..... good people working there.

IA: You are speaking about the top, I'd like to if you don't mind just a minute and go back and ask, we touched on it earlier and I was asking you if what your father remembered of Dick Scott, did he ever make any comment about R. E. Olds himself about how the men felt about him or did he come out and talk to them or

Green: See at that time, when R. E. Olds was there, my dad would have been working down on, on the assembly line or in the tank track department or even maybe, maybe he was still just driving cars to Chicago.

IA: Oh okay.

Green: But after he got to working into the plant is when he knew all these guys.

IB: There was a Doug Chapan that used to drive cars, ... or he used to test cars or something?

IA: Roy Chapan.

IB: Roy Chapan.

Green: Roy Chapan, now I've heard that name.

IA: I have too, I'm trying to think

IB: He did that um, PAGE TO New York

IA: Yes he did, yes.

IB: You know I thought of him when you mentioned your dad, because he did something like that too.

Green: Oh yeah.

IB: He was main engineer there. Okay.

Green: Yeah and you hear names like that, but a lot of them you don't associate with them except in regards to what they did at Reo or something like that, you know. Somebody mentioned names, hum, I've heard the name

IB: Yeah.

Green: But if they could say well he worked on this, oh yeah, yeah.

IA: So you wouldn't have known ah, R. E. Olds to get back to what Shirley said?

Green: I don't, I doubt that he would have known him personally. Ah, because his workstation at that time, I would think, would have been driving cars to Chicago.

IB: So you wouldn't have been

Green: Yeah, and then when he first went in to plant to work he is a new employee and probably wasn't ah, how do I say, hobnobbing with people in all strata of the plant.

IB: I'm kind of interesting Ed too in the radio station and you were telling me it was across the street.

Green: Oh yeah, WREO.

Side 2

Green: .....

IA: But we were just talking about WREO radio.

Green: Yeah. Yeah, as a kid, I can remember the folks sitting there listening to WREO and ah, I think they just talked about generalities, you know, maybe a little bit of news, local news and stuff like that and maybe some of the happenings in the plant or something of that nature. But ah, and probably played some records or something like that, you know, for music. But it ah, I don't have any vivid recollection. I don't remember any jokes they told.

IB: Not everybody had radios back then.

Green: Oh no, no, no.

IA: Well that's a good point.

Green: No.

IA: I hadn't thought of that.

Green: Not very many people did. Like I said the old crystal set, where you had to turn a crystal to bring it into frequency. You didn't have radio tubes and stuff. I can remember in about 1927, probably '27 or '28, my dad's brother, he lived out there by Potterville too and he was working at Reo at the time. And he ah, he had bought an Atwater ~~Kemp~~ RENT radio. It is a real old one. Then it had speaker standing up like this, you know, and he had to adjust about three dials to get this in. And it was going to be a prize fight and I almost believe it was Jack Dempsey, but I don't know. And they were all sitting there listening in to that radio you know, and some of us kids made a little bit of noise and outdoors, shush, outdoors. So we went out and ~~it was~~ THE radio was sitting right by a window and we got right under

the window and sat down on the ground and listening to that thing, but it, you know, we weren't really interested in the fight. But they were listening to it, so we wanted to hear it, you know.

IB: Yeah.

IA: What kind of things did you see when you, were you taken to the clubhouse for ah, oh like I was saying at the luncheon that Major Bowles ~~Bows~~ came ~~more~~ ONE time.

Green: No, no.

IA: Did you go to see different things

Green: Oh yeah, we went to see different things if they thought that we were interested or if we thought we were interested. Ah, they were called vicium(?) numbers.

IA: Oh that's right.

Green: And ah and they would bring these people, acts and stuff like that in there and this is prior to the movies, I mean the colored movie. Yeah. And they would bring these people in and they would put on their show, musical shows, anything like that that they could book and ah, that was always on Thursday night, but I think it was only once a month and when the Reo Spirit came out, one of the first things they wanted to do was look down through and see what's on, you know.

IB: To see what's hopping?

IA: That's right, everybody got a spirit.

Green: Yeah.

IB: They had good movies there too, because I used to watch to see what they had showing.

Green: You bet, first run.

IB: I remember being taken

Green: They had first run movies there and

IA: Ah did they?

Green: Yup and they were the first ones to have colored cameras. Put on colored movies. Ah, I went there and the first colored movie I saw was Trail of the Lonesome Pine.

IB: Is that right/

Green: And that was back, that was about ah,

IA: Now they must have had silents too?

Green: Oh yes, yes.

IB: Yeah with Chaplin and all of those.

Green: Yeah.

IA: What about some of the clubs and things, did your parents belong, like your dad and then did you, like the bowling and baseball

Green: My dad never ah,

IB: He was farming though.

Green: Never got into, yeah, he never seemed to have time to get into any clubs or anything like that.

IB: Because the Reo baseball team was supposed to be very good.

IA: That's what I wondered. Didn't they have a football team too, didn't they?

Green: I mentioned Larry Kuhns talking about my dad. Larry Kuhns came down to the Reo ... Jerry somebody was the Personnel manager and he was a great athletics booster and he hired Larry on the spot, because Larry was a good baseball player and his main job

IB: Are you thinking about Cy ~~Ralph~~? RATH

Green: No, no, I knew Cy ~~Ralph~~ RATH, because he is one my dad talked to about getting me in there.

IB: Okay.

Green: What the heck was

IB: I'm trying to think too, but I can't remember. Jerry.

Green: He was there quite a while. But anyway, he hired Larry and his main job was to be able to play baseball. I mean he had to put in an appearance, but he wasn't going to be working, yeah, he wasn't going to be working on sheet metal or something...

IA: And ruin those hands.

Green: No he had

IB: Maybe he did an inspection job or something where he could walk around

Green: Well he ended up in the materials division, supervisor there but ah,

IB: Yeah, because if you read the Spirit, that's such a big part of it is all the different teams

Green: You bet.

IB: .... and baseball and

IA: That's right, somebody mentioned a rifle range didn't they.

Green: Yeah yeah.

IB: Where was that?

Green: It was up, I think it was on the I think fourth floor maybe. They didn't back of the main office building.

IB: Then you know what they mentioned also? ~~Clots, quotes~~ Quoits,

Green: ~~Cleets~~ Quoits, horseshoe, horseshoe pitching.

IB: Oh is that what that is?

Green: Yeah.

IA: ~~Clocuts~~ Quoits is horseshoe, ah.

Green: Yeah, yeah, they had tournaments and

IB: They said that was very popular too.

Green: Yeah.

IA: That was outdoors someplace near the

Green: I don't know exactly

IB: They said they did it in the fields.

Green: Yeah he had some other properties too, ah, they had a lawn mower testing plot out south, I believe around Logan and Washington, somewheres around in there.

IB: Out by where the old fair grounds used to be, out that way, maybe.

Green: Yeah, yeah. And so it might have been some of it out there. Ah, about the only thing that I got into was our steering gear club, that was all management.

IB: Oh that's right, that's Louie mentioned that.

Green: Yeah, any level of management went there. In fact, you were expected to go.

IA: Now what was that, just a social group?

Green: Yeah, well and also the boss man, now like Claire ~~Logenslogger~~ Loodenslager, he was always, he'd get up there and give us a standing of the company, how we stand and ah, what we had to do and any new program that was coming out, he'd let us in on it. And things of that nature. And ah, it wasn't a confidential type thing, but before they announced it to the press or anything they would tell us. And ah, if the company was having trouble with finances, you know, we weren't getting enough, he'd jump on to us about getting more production out for the man hour and stuff like that. Ah, then we'd go into the program and they always put on a big feed and um,

IB: It makes me hungry.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Hum, the guy that had Ye Old Country Caterers out in DeWitt, he Leon, he worked in ah, engineering in the chemical lab, metals testing and stuff like that with ah, Ankosky, Clarence Ankosky. He was in charge of it. And ah, Leon, oh he made stuffed pork chops and you talk about a meal, and we'd get all through, you know, everybody had been served and some of them maybe even went back for a seconds, they'd go up and grab the mike and say hey, still a lot of food left back there, go back and eat all you want.

IA: Did you all meet at the clubhouse?

Green: Yup. Always did, well it was about the only place that was big enough.

IA: Yeah, right.

IB: There must have been a lot of rooms in that building?

Green: Well the main ballroom is where we had everything.

IA: I see.

Green: No, I say we had everything, no. Smaller groups, like if Claire wanted to talk to his production people, he would have them in a back room, when you went in the doors and around to the right and they had

a room back in there. Ah, if it was just a foremen's meeting, ah, like when ah oh, the guy that was head of Diamond T, when he came in there, I had his name before I started to talk. When he came in, ah, they brought him in, they brought all the supervisors in and we were in that back room back there and ah, Zenin Hansen, that's the guy, and he come in there and talked to us and everybody thought well, you know, this is going to be great because he was going to be president of the company. Well, his ideas didn't last very long. He had some ideas, but ah, he couldn't cope with our style of production because we had moving assembly lines and at Diamond T, they pushed them by hand.

IA: In the '60's still they pushed them by hand?

Green: Oh yeah. Yeah.

IB: I didn't know that.

Green: Oh yeah. They would take the frame and set it on the axles. They had the wheels on them. They'd bolt them on and then they started building up from there and when these guys got done with theirs and they pushed it to the next station.

IB: Oh pushed the body.

IA: Oh I'm sure low electricity bills. Right?

IB: They did push the bodies, yeah, I do remember that now.

Green: So ah, he just couldn't quite adapt to our process and things that he wanted to do didn't go down well with White and so ah, he just left there and went and took over Mac Truck.

IA: Oh.

Green: So ah, he still had a good job. But then ah, the you know, we just went along as a part of White. Now this Claire ~~Lonslaugher~~ LOUDENSLAGER, he was the production manager. And he was good. I mean he was the kind of a guy that you ~~worked~~ WANTED for a friend, because he could be a terrible enemy. Anybody that you know that didn't want to produce, now, he didn't take things too personally. I mean you could tell him what you thought and he didn't get mad at you. But he ah, he would he knew who wasn't producing. He didn't care what their level was. He'd tell them either you produce or you are out the door. And if they didn't produce, they didn't change their ways, they were out the door. He could be quite ruthless, but he was loyal. I'll tell you, anybody that he knew did the job for Reo, he'd go to bat for them and he didn't care if he had to go clear through the top of White Motors. They got a fair shake, which was very good. I had him mad at me one time, the year I was committeeman, it was a contract year, and we wanted to change from piece work to hourly rate and so they got up a

slate of candidates. I was one of them, my brother was one of them. I don't know why we always ran in pairs, but the thing that happened

IA: There is safety in numbers.

Green: Yeah, and I think this dates back to my dad.

IA: Oh.

IB: Oh really.

Green: You know, respect for my dad, they said well hey those two guys are honest, we know we can trust them.

IB: I think you ... ah huh.

Green: But I was instrumental in negotiating the contract and we convinced Herm Everhardness and the rest of them and Claire that the company would be better off with an hourly rate and a production standard than to have piece work where one guy could make $4.50 an hour and another guy couldn't make a $1.50, we said that isn't fair. So they agreed to it and we put it in. Well then probably ah, six months or so later, we had a job up on the cab line. The solderers, now the cab was put together in three pieces, they had the back and the top came together with the front cowl and then you had your side panels, but the ah, they would put them together, clamp them into place in the fixture and spot weld them. This seam went right across oh about this far above the windshield, went right across the top of the cab. It was spot welded together. But then if the dyes weren't quite right, there would be a gap, maybe it would be three-quarters of an inch wide and about this far back in. And they had to melt lead and fill those in and then polish them off.

IB: Yeah.

Green: And so this one guy up there, he was doing the leading part time. Now they didn't need, I think they had two guys doing it full time. They didn't need three guys full time, so they used a guy that was working at a station right near there and he could, he could lead them in and everything, do the job. So they had him work, he'd work maybe three or four hours a day. Well the guys doing the leading got a nickel an hour more than his job called for. And so I went to Claire and talked to him as a union leader, you know, the representative and so I talked to Claire and I told him about the situation and I said I really think the guy deserves that extra nickel. And ah, he said okay, I'll check with the foreman up there and see what the deal is and if that's right, he'll get his nickel. The next day he called me and said the guy got his raise. I said great, so probably a couple weeks later, I was walking from the motor plant over to the shipping area and Claire met me right in the middle of the railroad tracks. And boy did he jump on to me. He said what

are you trying to pull on me anyway. I don't know what you are talking about. He said you talked me into giving that guy a nickel raise. He said now 16 guys down the line want the same raise. I said, Claire, as far as I'm concerned they don't deserve it. So I said don't give in them. They don't do that work. This guy was doing the special job for the company and I think that he deserved as much money and then so they are using that amount of lesser job, he is always available to fill in for vacation or anything like that. He looked at me and he said, boy I'm glad you said that. He said that is exactly what I wanted to hear you say. So, that's what I said, he could jump on to you, but you prove your point, everything was fine. He was without doubt the one guy that could keep Reo going. But they fired him.

IA: They did, why?

Green: Oh well, they trumped up, well I don't know if they trumped up a lot of charges, but I mean they threw in a lot of things. I don't know exactly who fired him. Whomever was up at the top, yeah. Um, but they said that he had a little company set up to overhaul what they called dummy trucks, the power lift trucks. And that he was sending Reo trucks out there to be rebuilt and bringing them back in and then the company paid his company. Nothing really wrong with it, as long as he was doing a good job and doing it cheaper, but then they said somebody saw him stealing stuff or not stealing, he'd tell some guy put this on a truck and take it up to my place at Houghton Lake on the lake there. Some materials and stuff. Maybe it is scrap material, but they didn't care, they just said he is stealing the company blind, out you go. It wasn't too long, I don't know, maybe a couple of years or so, and he came back. And I remember I was in the office upstairs, this was after I went up to superintendent of tooling, and I was up there and Claire came in there and he looked at me and he said well I hope I didn't hurt your feelings when I fired your good buddy over, Ovard Bryd had come in as a specialist in efficiency and everything and he was head of all this area and I was working for him. I said no Claire, I think you did what you had to do. I said you are going to have to fire other people. If you have to fire me, go ahead and do it. He looked at me and said, well I thought you were on his side. I said no, the only side I'm on is the company side. And I don't care who I'm working for or with. Boy did he mellow right down. Why I was one of his boys. And ah, and I think that that is an attitude that everybody looked for when they wanted to make somebody into a supervisor. Of course, my boss told me he said you are never going to get a promotion until you get somebody trained to take your job. Good thinking, so I did it.

IA: You said earlier that everybody in the plant was cut from the same cloth, but

Green: Well I'm talking about the old-timers, the guys that worked with my dad.

IA: The old-timers, right.

Green: The guys that worked with my dad. And here again, you don't know if they are cut from the same cloth or if they are molded to the same pattern.

IA: Yeah, that's a good incident.

Green: They can go either way.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Working made them better people, working with these others made them better people or if they just happen to get the type of people that, you know, that had those values.

IA: Right. That's what you really mean, you mean values and attitudes and things like that.

Green: Right, yeah. Yeah.

IA: Okay.

IB: And that came from similar backgrounds too, didn't they, and they were probably raised in the same kind of mindset.

Green: At that time they pretty much did. Then in later years, we had all kinds of experts come in that had done this for this shop or that for that shop and boy, everybody thought they were going to cut a wide swath and they couldn't cope with the complexity of our problems. Because we built what the customer wanted. Oldsmobile goes down the line and they put out parts by the thousands and this part goes on that car and that's it. Reo, if a guy wanted some little special valve and we had a case of this out at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, this little valve was made and this guy wanted it, we didn't normally stock it, engineering had to find a way to incorporate that valve in this truck for him for his. That was when they were building just trucks.

IB: Wow.

IA: When they would order an item, a car, they would specify if they wanted something special?

Green: Trucks, this is strictly trucks.

IB: Just the trucks.

Green: Right.

IA: And then it would be built for their particular use.

Green: Right.

IA: Would be built to their specifications.

Green: We had a couple, well I guess we made six of them. We took the Reo V-8 engine and modified it so that four cylinders could be used as a compressor or as a compression addition to the engine. This guy was hauling dry concrete powder and he'd haul it to the silos and then they had to have a blower that would shoot it up into the silo from the tops. Because they always had to fill them from the top.

IA: Right.

Green: And so he came to engineering and asked them if they could give him something. So they come up with this modification for a V-8 engine and they made him one. And we had the machine, the cylinder blocks even in the tool room. We had to set them up and machine them by hand because they were experimental and nobody else had the equipment that would do it. And we made special parts for it that they needed. They weren't ready for production. There wasn't enough call for it. And so we made him up this one and he took that thing, I believe it was in Ohio, that he took that thing and tried it out. And he said it worked like a dream. He had a switch that would cut the ignition off to these four cylinders

IA: Oh but kept the other one.

Green: And so the other four were running and they'd push these up and down and as it come up on compression, it pushed air out and through the pipe and that was his compressor for blowing that powder up in the silo.

IA: Right.

Green: And we made him six of those, but then there wasn't any demand, any great demand for it. This guy liked them, but ah, maybe there weren't too many truckers in that situation. Because a lot of them in later years have gone to bottom dumpers on those things. They go over a pit and they bottom dump in there and they have a blower that shoots it up. But this guy he wanted it so we spent money, he paid for it I presume.

IB: Yeah, I'm sure.

IA: I'm sure he did. It was good you were willing to do that.

Green: But it, yes, yes, no matter what they wanted engineering and that's where Spartan Motors originated from out there in Charlotte is Reo people. Reo engineers and stuff like that that have started that up and now they are going great guns. They are building motor home chassis and ah, fire trucks, anything somebody wants. Like that

special equipment, ah, big power brooms for sweeping airport runways. A lot of things like that. So Spartan Motors is an offshoot of Reo Motors.

IA: Well isn't that interesting. I just talked to somebody the other day when I went to the new firehouse opening, grand opening just across from Waverly High School

Green: Oh yeah.

IA: and it is either the new pumper truck or the new air, what they call their new air truck was built there. I think it was the air truck.

Green: At Spartan ah huh.

IA: And so when you said that. Um, I wanted to ask you, what about safety. Say when your dad was working there, what kind of provisions were for the employees who say they get hurt on the job?

Green: Well there was one thing a Reo organization and I belonged to that at the time I worked there too, for I don't remember, I think that went out, they called it the Reo Benefit Association

IB: Mutual Benefit Association.

Green: Reo Benefit, ah huh.

IA: Oh okay.

Green: Where everybody

IB: Like $50 or something like that.

Green: Well I think that

IA: Oh you had to pay into it.

IB: Yeah.

Green: Yeah, I think I paid 12 cents a pay day.

IB: Twelve cents a pay day.

Green: Yeah, that was taken out for Reo Benefit. And then after you were off work seven days, you could draw and it was only $2 or $3 a day that you could draw, because it was based on values back in the way early years, see. So, I mean, for somebody that is getting $12, $15 an hour, $2 a day wouldn't mean a thing. I mean buy a couple cans of coke or something like that, but that's it.

IA: Oh for $2 or $3 you could probably buy a sack of groceries then.

IB: Oh yeah.

Green: Well that's the thing of it. That did, see you could draw, I think it was $2 a day. And so that would make you $14 a week. Well that kind of kept the wolf away from the door a little bit. See at that time, because in those days they didn't have all the prepared foods they have now. You used to buy basic staples and they prepared it. So a little money went further in that respect. Today it wouldn't because $14 my gosh, you can't walk in and out the door for that. But ah, that was the one thing. But as far as until the state and federal compensation laws, workers compensation came in, until that time, ah, I think that it wasn't an accepted policy. But I think that they did do things for people who were hurt in the factory. Ah, like they would put them on as elevator operator. Something that you could do

IA: Instead of not lose their job.

Green: Right.

IB: Yeah.

Green: Ah, we had a guy who was clerking the tool room and he was very, he took care of the orders called in and stuff like that for repair work or anything and ah, then he kept the records of how much work was done on this project and that project and he had polio when he was a kid. He only had this, his right leg was doubled up like this so he couldn't get that anywheres near the ground and this one he had a brace on it that came up here and fastened on just above his knee and it had a pivot there, went down and hooked into the sides of his shoe and had a strap across it to hold it in. One day his rods was getting pretty well worn through and so ah, my boss, Herbert Swick asked me if I could make him one. I said sure. So I took his old one apart got my dimensions and I went and got the material and I made it up and we sent it out and had it chrome plated and he put that on so he could go with crutches. Now he had been on crutches since he was about five years old. And so he said boy that is the best working one I've ever had. And his other ones cost him money, but this one here was free. We made it just for him, you know. And he told me that from the time he was 11, he was on his own. His folks abandoned him.

IB: Oh my.

Green: And he was on his own and he told me about helping haul milk from the far into town on a wagon, horse drawn wagon or a sleigh in the wintertime, how going around on crutches and that guy had the strongest arms and shoulders, oh, he'd take a hold of you like that and you didn't get loose. And he did, you know, I've always said, Reo was full of characters, but they were good characters. You know.

And we had an awful lot of fun down there. It didn't interfere with the work, you know, at least we all got our jobs done.

IB: Kept every body's spirits up.

Green: You bet, yeah. That's where they got the name Reo Spirit.

IA: Reo Spirit. You know, thinking back on it and hearing what you have been talking about, I think that was the perfect name for that house organ, Reo Spirit.

Green: Oh I'm sure it was, I'm sure it was. Because they'd have little articles in there, little stories and stuff. I remember one about Con Mulger and he worked in the machinery repair for me when I was over there, that couple of years. And ah, he was getting up to retirement age then, had this little article about him. Now here was a machinery repairman that people in the front office wouldn't know. They didn't recognize him, but this, this told about him going up and I believe it was up by Newberry and they were getting low on gas and he saw this farmhouse and he says I'm going to go and wake them up and see where there is a gas station. So he walked up towards the back door and here was a little like a lilac bush or something there and a pumphouse and as he come up this way, he came face to face with a black bear and just coming up from the other way. And so he said, he got back to the car faster than the bear got up in the woods.

IB: Boy that's good.

IA: They can run pretty good.

Green: That was to me was typical of Reo Spirit magazine. They published the story about that little buy that, you know, didn't mean peanuts to the company as far as management and like that is concerned, but it was a human interest story. And they had every issue had some human interest stories, usually some little funny anecdotes about people and ah, us kids always, we wanted to look at that thing as soon as we'd get away from dad. We'd look at it, we'd look for the little cartoons and stuff.

IA: Or just add it to the family .....

IB: .....

Green: Yes there were.

IB: I'm going to go and get some out of our archives and look through them. I never had time when I was working here, I was too busy.

Green: Yeah. It is ah, well aren't we all in the same boat now. We got two little grandkids, a boy and we just look forward to the time of spending with them. That's what we are down here for this weekend to

see her mother and her grandkids and stuff. And at the time I was working, I don't know if I was so busy that I didn't have time when our first grandson was born, he is 26 now. Ah, but I didn't have time to play with him like I do with these. And it seems such a great thing, you know, to have a little kid around to play with and ah, I know that a lot of my work carried over to home. And when I'd get a call in the middle of the night and the guy that was on nights down there, I didn't have a foreman, we just had a couple of guys in each department working and he'd tell me about what the breakdown was and I'd say this, now wait a minute, tell him just what to do to check it out. And I said, if that doesn't work you call me back in an hour and I'll come in. I didn't get paid for it. It was just the attitude that if it is your responsibility, you see to it. And so I'd lay there and didn't know if I dared go to sleep or not but pretty soon I'd go to sleep, the phone wouldn't ring, so apparently it worked. So, the next morning go in and the machine is running and everything is going fine. So ah, that is to me that's a lot of the spirit of Reo. That you took your job seriously. You could have fun, but you still had the responsibility of we had some great, great people in top management. We had some lousy ones, but ah, the lousy ones didn't last.

IB: Now Louie said that one of the other things that was important about the Spirit was that you felt you could take care of your family.

Green: Oh absolutely.

IB: That Reo let you take care of your family.

Green: When you got a job at Reo, you felt that you could go right up through the years and you had a job. As long as you kept your nose clean, you did your job and a little bit more. You were going to be right there and they'd find a way to keep you there. If your department was cut out, they'd find a place for you. Ah, they were always looking for certain ones. Like I said about Al Zimmer when he had gone into production department and I told him no, I liked tooling and I didn't want to do that. But he would have taken me under his wing and I would have probably moved up maybe into a production manager or something like that. That wasn't my cup of tea. I don't want it.

IA: But you had job security.

Green: You bet. Ah, with here

IB: And you could take care of your family.

Green: You bet.

IB: You didn't have to worry about your wife going with ~~Fo~~ out or anything like that, you'd take care of your family.

Green: Right. Ah here in about 1953, we just destroyed some old checkbooks stubs and about 1953 they were packed in and I couldn't just burn them, throw them in the, they wouldn't burn, so I'd tear them apart and this one caught my eye, balance 14 cents on our checking account.

IB: Oh no. (laughter)

Green: Fourteen cents.

IB: That's cutting kind of close.

Green: And we were paying $52.50 a month for our house on a mortgage.

IA: Ah huh.

IB: In the early '50's.

Green: Yeah. We had it built in '52 and we moved in in February of '53. And ah, it just seemed like a and I had one of the better paying jobs as far as workers are concerned. You know, in the work force, I was getting more than production workers were because it was a skilled trade. But ah, it was still kind of hard,

IB: It was a little tight though.

Green: yeah, but then as thing started moving up, the wage scale. I remember Larry Kuhns one noon we were eating lunch and he said fellows I'm telling you, within ten years the average production workers is going to make over $10,000 a year. And we said no way, no way will that ever happen. Production isn't worth that. Now, Olds workers making $40,000, $50,000, $60,000 a year working on the line.

IB: They make more than college professors.

Green: Yes.

IA: Yeah, a janitor gets $15 an hour.

Green: Sure.

IA: Could I ask you how to spell Larry Kuhns last name.

Green: K u h n s.

IA: Oh good, okay, I got it. It will be easy later on when this is typed up.

Green: Yes.

IA: Who is typing say,

Green: Yes, right.

IA: The other thing I wanted to ask you was um, in the Spirit you also read about um, different types of people coming into the plants, like I was showing Shirley when she came to my office the other day that they had a big article about the Syrian workers.

Green: Oh.

IA: That there were Syrian workers and also there were some, a few black workers, not that many, certainly not like in Detroit.

Green: But they were not castigated, they weren't, they were treated like everybody else.

IA: Right.

Green: They come in and they did their job. There was no, and I can't really say that there was no ah, racism involved.

IA: Ah huh.

Green: Because we had one, now see here is where I'm reserving the right to not to name names.

IA: Okay.

Green: But we had one ah, personnel manager, no, no, no, no, he wasn't, he was in charge of hiring and ah, so he called me up there because see here again, you are kind of a trusted person. He knew we had a requested him for maybe two or three men and he would call me up there and say, Glen, here is the people I got on file. Do you want to go through these and see which one you want to interview first. Sure. Then he'd start whoop wait a minute, I want to take that one, he's black.

IA: Oh.

Green: I said what difference does that make. He said you show me any skilled trades that's got very many blacks in it. He said this guy doesn't really have the qualifications, but he wants to work into it. So he said if you can't get enough people and you want this guy, okay. I said how can you tell he's black. He said you can tell by his name,

IA: Where he lives.

Green: by his address.

IA: Yeah.

Green: And he said we don't want to get started into something like that where we let him work his way up and then everybody wants to do that. He says we can't do that because we got to have skilled people. So, I'd go down through and I'd say okay, take this one first and then this one, jump around and okay he'd call them in and I'd go up there and interview them and if they suited me, we'd put them on. But the other side of the coin a black committee man ....

IA: This was in the '50's and '60's already?

Green: Yeah probably in

IA: Later.

Green: Probably in the '60's.

IA: Yeah.

Green: And this Korean man came down there and ah, he came right up to me, he says, Glen, how many black people you got working for you? I said gee, I don't know I'd have to think about that. I said I never considered them black or white. I've got people working for me. Oh, forget I even said anything. So now he came down there with a burr under his saddle, but when he found out that I wasn't concerned, then I got to thinking I had, I think, two of them, but they were working in like compound, mixing and cleaning out and stuff like that. And ah, one was on that and one was oiling. They weren't in skilled trades, they were just in a portion of the skilled trades operation. In other words, these people were assigned to the machine repair department for work assignments and stuff like that. But they were not machine repairmen. But ah, this racism to me was always somebody else. I wasn't concerned about it because ah, oh black Joe that worked on the cylinder blocks, he was the jolliest old guy and everybody liked him and we'd talk with him. Carl Dixon worked on holding the cylinder sleeves and things like that, he'd he ah lived on Olds Avenue and one night going down Olds Avenue and he must have been mad and just floored that thing, because he ran off the road and hit a tree and killed himself.

IB: Oh dear.

Green: So ah, but not you know you can go down through and I can recall associations with blacks. Had some people working right in the department with me that I would never consider going to their house or let them come to my house. I'd much rather have these blacks doing this than I would those guys, because to me they were kind of trashy people and I just didn't care about associating with people like that. Not that I'm a paragon of virtue or anything like that, but you know, you have your likes and dislikes.

IB: Right, and it doesn't always correspond to skin color, yeah.

Green: Right. It has no bearing on it, either a person is a good person or they are not and but when you mention Syrians and like that, ah, these people were absorbed into the work force.

IA: Yeah, there was a lot about Americanization and these people wanted to become Americans.

Green: Sure. And what better way for them to do it than to get a taste of the work ethic and stuff like that. But most of those people, if they were fairly fresh or maybe first generation, ah, from the old country, had a good work ethic, they'd come in there and they were workers. They didn't try to shirk their way. I had several people mention the fact that well, if I don't have to work as hard as somebody else, I'm making more money. Now that's a fallacy but in your mind, I'm making more money because I'm not working hard.

IA: Shirley, do you want to take a break?

IB: I was just

IA: So you can get your tape going here again.

IB: Yeah, I can put another tape in and I was just sitting here thinking ah, are there some more things I wanted to ask, but Glen's covered so many wonderful things.

IA: There was a couple of things I wanted to ask too, but maybe we should take a break, because you've been going strong.

Green: I'm not worried about it. I'm not worried.

IA: Really?

Green: No, no.

IA: Okay, let's let her do her tape and I'll just turn this off for a second.

IA: And I taped the whole evening of stuff, turned the tape over and got it home to play it back and there was nothing on it.

IB: Oh no.

IA: And I don't know what happened. You know,

IB: I hope that doesn't happen to me. I'll be really upset.

Green: Well you can always get a copy of hers.

IA: That's why we are both doing it. We figure both of us can't mess up at the same time.

Green: Yeah.

IA: At least we hope not.

Green: Yes.

IA: Um, one of the things that I'm very interested myself, for my own research, is ah, how the work changed over time.

IB: I'd like to know that too.

IA: Yeah, Shirley is interested in that too. The time that I've mostly been doing my work in it would have been your dad's time. You know, like the teens and the twenties.

Green:Yeah.

IA: And how the factory, you know, got the factory expanded tremendously then

Green: Oh yes.

IA: and it went from being a very individualized craft where most of the workers knew how to make a car almost from the beginning to the end.

Green: Absolutely.

IA: Til by the end when you entered the plant when it was much more regimented, you know, where people know parts and bits.

Green: Yeah, ah,

IA: And I'm interested in how people felt about how those changes were affecting them.

Green: Well some people welcomed the change and others didn't.

IA: Yeah.

Green: A lot of this stuff you are talking about was what we would call layout and drill.

IA: Okay.

Green: Somebody would take a scribe and a scale or whatever they needed to mark cross lines they center punch that, move over here so far and lay that out. They'd lay out all these holes and you can understand that there can be some variation in which it is not as high a quality, but then they'd make the other piece to fit that. But maybe if one hole was a sixteenth off location, the person would put them back together had to rotate it one hole or the other to get all four

of them to line up. So, ah, that was somewhat, not heavily into it, ah when I went to work there, because we had a lot of jigs and fixtures that had been built and so those had drill bushings in so all holes were the same.

IA: So all uniform.

Green: Right. And I think that in Frame Reo, even when I left there in Frame Reo for special holes, they still had layout in drills. But early drill presses were hand operated. You had to pull them down by hand. And then after ah, I don't know if you call it the industrial revolution or whatever, but

IA: The automation. It was .. automation

Green: After we went in to power driven machinery more, ah, then all a guy had to do was push a button or pull a leaver to engage it and it went through its cycle and back out. So, ah, modernization eliminated the handwork to a great extent and it kind of took away some of the pride of production for those people who used to lay out and put those holes in.

IA: Yeah.

Green: When I first went to the tool room, all of the machines in there were driven by what they call a line shaft. That was, they had a big motor, a big electric motor running a belt, flat belt up on to a big pulley up there and they ran oh, I'd say we had one that ran at least 100 feet and some more that ran like 20, 30 feet and then they'd have drop belts out there for the different machines.

IA: Like an octopus.

Green: Right. Now that was in vogue in the toolroom when I first went there. Well then they decided to motorize each machine because here this thing is running all this time and made only one machine running off of it. And what they could do is to motorize each one with a motor big enough for that capacity of that machine and you could start and stop that whenever you need it. But when it is shut off, it is like ah, tractor versus ah, horses. Horses you have to feed them all the time whether they are working or not, but tractor you shut it off, it isn't burning gas. Well the same thing applied there and they went through the whole plant and motorized all of the equipment in the plant and that took away the hand operation and all this sort of stuff because it is motorized, it's own power unit and then in golly, I can't remember the year now. But I'd say around ah, '60's, early '60's probably. I think maybe a little before that that we went to not automation as it is known now. But ah, more automatic machining that all the guy had to do was to load the piece into the fixture, clamp it down, make sure it is located properly, clamp it down, push a button and the thing automatically fitted

through the machine and came back and unclamped and unloaded. Ah, whether it was crankshaft grinding or whatever, ah, they were pretty much automatic.

IA: Right and now they have the robotics that do the ...

Green: Right, and ah, and we never really got into that stuff.

IA: Right, because that's more recent.

Green: Yeah, yeah, and I would be lost in today's tooling.

IA: Yeah.

Green: It is just out of my category altogether. But that was one of the major changes. Well like I said in '37, we used to hand truck from the receiving room at the end of Platt Street down by the tracks, all the way out to Baker Street, across the tracks over at the motor plant and we used to have to go up on the fourth floor and go over into the John Bean Building with stuff. And then after the strike, they went to motorized equipment, they cut the manpower terrifically down.

IA: Yes, right.

Green: But, when we went to these more or less automatic machines, I think manpower jumped up because we were running more pieces.

IA: Because the .....

Green: Yes, and before, you see when we started in ah, machining parts with a hand operating machines, maybe they would build 8, 10, 12 engines a day. Well then, when we got through we might be building 40 or 50 an hour. And so, ah, where we'd have one guy maybe running 8 machines down through there by hand, you'd run all these operations on these parts and pass them to somebody else. Well, when we got the automatic machinery in there, we'd usually have to have a man operating one machine or if it was a long cycle, you might run two machines, because you'd alternate loading and unloading and keep them going and so ah, I'd say that's probably the most change that I saw and then, of course, the transportation of parts and stuff within the plant went from single trucks to ah, ah, a tug pulling a whole bunch of four-wheeled wagons with parts on them and stuff like that. So, the whole thing just evolved. You don't recall a specific break when this changed over to this.

IA: I see.

Green: It is something that just evolved up and pretty soon here they are, guys just standing there watching the machines run.

IA: Alright, so guys who originally did the line drawing that you were talking about would eventually end up doing

Green: They could.

IA: They could.

Green: They could, ah, huh, yeah, but their job was easier. But,

IA: Not as satisfying sometimes.

Green:Right, right.

IA: Yeah, did they get paid less too?

Green: No.

IA: Not necessarily.

Green: No, I would say they probably got paid more because production was up. Or it went right on in to piece work yeah.

IA: Right. That's right. They could do more

Green: But I can remember ah, my granddad Engleston talking about over there in that engine setup room they called it, over there along Washington Avenue. And I got a picture of him back in there someplace, my mother had a picture.

IA: Oh another good picture.

Green: And ah, he would tell about oh terrible day we got parts that wouldn't fit together, you know. And somebody would have to rework them or something like that and so it is a complete change from that type of operation to having machines that will turn out hundred pieces in a short period of time and they'd go over to the assembly line, engine assembly and didn't make any difference which one they picked up, it fit.

IA: Yeah.

Green: You'd grind a crankshaft to exact sizes. All the pieces fit on to it. And we had a little problem once with the risk pin in the piston that went through the connecting rod, it connected the pistons with the connecting rod to the crankshaft. And they couldn't get a fit on the things. Ah Al Zimmer was there, he was kind of a rough character anyway, but engineering called for a pound fit to push that risk pin into the piston. And so ah, he called me out there, he said I want you to get a set of scales and a drill press and I want to know exactly how much pressure it takes to push that pin in. I said, Al, I don't believe you are going to find that out, but I'll try it. So

he got the engine plant superintendent and tool designer down and they come up with all sorts of things and he said I want you to balance out this spindle on the drill press so it weighs absolutely nothing. So, all you get is the pressure exertion. Ah huh. So, I tried it. We could not get the part lined up accurately enough so it would go in. When you are doing it by hand you work it just a little bit, push it in. So I said, Al, what is the big worry. He said if we get the wrong fit, because they had seven different sizes of ah, risk pins and seven different sizes of holes bored in there. So you had to fit them right. So, I got a hold of the engine plant superintendent, I said, Archie, I'd like to try something. He said what do you want. I said I want the smallest possible hole in a piston, the largest possible hole or largest possible risk pin. We can find them, so we went and got some. So I ah, I went up and I pushed it in and it was hard getting in there. I had to tap it to make it in there. He says what are you going to do and I said I'm going to hang this in the hot water tank on that parts washer. That is 180 degrees which is cool for inside the engine. He said what are you going to do, I said I'm going to see what happens. So I left it in there about five minutes. I pulled the wire out of there, tipped it up and the risk pin dropped right out. The piston expanded so much faster than the risk pin it never could set up. They said forget this thing. (laughter) We just cancelled out. Now I'm going to take a break.

IA: Okay.

Green: Alright.

IA: Okay, sure.

IA: I'll leave that on in the Mutual Benefit Association booklet that I have, because that I found it is form the teens.

Green: Ah huh.

IA: Very early. They had a clause that if they caught you drunk in the plant they would take your benefits away from you.

Green: Oh yeah.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Sure.

IA: I mean and no smoking either.

Green: Right.

IB: No smoking in the plant?

IA: No.

IB: You had designated areas or

Green: No, well when I went there, when I went there the ah, they allowed smoking in the plant, but ah, you had to go usually to a restroom or something or in the dining room because of the oils and stuff that we used in the manufacturing processes.

IA: Oh sure that makes sense.

Green: Yeah.

IA: What about cafeterias and um, the snack carts that come around now, did you have a decent cafeteria and that sort of thing when you first went there? Or every brown-bagged it or everybody had lunch pail?

Green: Well I think that the majority carried their lunches, but they did have the Reo cafeteria in the basement of the clubhouse.

IA: Clubhouse.

IB: Oh okay.

Green: Now I think originally that it was operated by the company. I don't know.

IA: Yeah, it was. In the beginning, in 1917 it was.

Green: But then the ah, they rented or leased it out to ah,

IA: A private contractor.

Green: darn, oh Bob, I had his name on my tongue too. He ran it and then his son ran it, but ah, business dropped off for them, because ah, like people up in the front office maybe they'd like to go out to a restaurant, you know, someplace else and ah, just take a little break and people in the plant weren't, we had what they call the canteens. The real benefit canteens, they were little stores that had ah, oh, light lunch material or milk or something like that, you know, you could buy stuff there or some tobacco products or

IA: So they were near your, was there one somewhere near in the area.

Green: Yeah, there was one in the motor plant hum, there were two or three of them, one in the motor plant, I know, because I went past that every day for quite a few years. But it ah, the things that workers would want and ah, all the proceeds the profits from it all went into benefit. It wasn't company sponsored. The company gave them the space and made a secure room for them.

IA: I also read about a collective store that one of the Reo people opened.

IB: What was that?

IA: It was in the Spirit. Again, it was in the teens or the early twenties. Stanley somebody opened it or maybe his last name was Stanley. It is a collective store.

Green: Not Jeff Stanley.

IA: It could have been.

Green: He was an old-timer back then.

IA: Yeah, he um, it was a nonprofit thing where the Reo workers could come and buy.

IB: Oh could buy like groceries

Green: Like a co-op.

IA: Right, that's right it was a co-op.

IB: Oh the beginnings of co-ops.

IA: Yeah, just for the employees of Reo.

IB: Just for the employees of Reo.

Green: Yeah.

IA: I only read about it once, so I don't know how long it went on for or anything, but

Green: Now see, I never heard anything about that.

IA: You don't know about that. Yeah.

Green: But I know the name, I know the name Jeff Stanley. It might have been some other Stanley, but

IA: I'll check.

Green: Yeah, but Jeff Stanley, my dad knew him.

IA: Yeah.

Green: See, I've got associations with old-time names like that through my dad.

IA: Yeah.

Green: Ah, when he first mentioned Cy Rath, it didn't mean anything to me. Until I went in there and Cy hired me in.

IA: I've read a lot about him.

Green: Yeah, he was an old-timer.

IA: A very big important guy in the .... Yeah. The other thing I'm real interested in is um, Reo as an important company in Lansing, you know, and how it helped the city grow, you know, and how the, you were talking about this earlier how um, people liked the fact that it was a home grown, home owned company.

Green: You bet.

IA: You know, and that you Reo was doing good things for Lansing, Lansing was doing good things for Reo, you know, that they work together. And that so many of the Reo people came from Lansing, or the surrounding areas. And felt like their work was not just building Reo, but helping to build a community. Because Lansing wasn't much when Reo first started.

Green: No.

IA: I have some pictures of it, it was really not a big place.

Green: If you go back to the reason that Ransom Olds formed Reo, it was a conflict with the people that were taking over Oldsmobile is what happened. And he didn't want to knuckle down to them. And I think that he instilled that attitude in the beginning of Reo and I think it carried all the way through ah, probably in the quality of people they hired and things like that. And ah, they didn't like the direction that Oldsmobile was taking us. The Oldsmobile could have had this same type of thing. If Ransom Olds had stayed at Oldsmobile, Olds would have been the same way. But they got into the General Motors

IA: Right, they were pulled into General Motors.

Green: and so doing that, by all these plants combining, they had a hodgepodge and no loyalty.

IA: And the owner was, you know, somewhere else.

Green: Some far away business.

IA: Right.

Green: But there was no loyalty. Now Reo seemed to be predicated on the fact that if you are loyal to us, we are loyal to you. And they showed their loyalty from the very beginning. Just like we said, you got a job at Reo, raise your family, you knew.

IA: Right, and also, it said this in the Spirit a lot too, to patronize the local businesses and to go to the local church, go to the local grocery store.

IB: The workers were encouraged to do that, you are saying?

Green: Sure.

IA: Yeah, because that is how you built up the community and made it a better place for everybody. So there was a lot of that

Green: If everybody participates in a community, no matter how big or how small their contribution to the community, it makes it a better community. There is ah,

IA: So it wasn't just you went to work and then you came to your house

Green: No.

IA: and had your paycheck and your family, but it was a larger thing.

Green: And the other side of that, there never was any widespread interrelationships between workers and their families. Now there was some, you know, some close friend, somebody that you liked at work and if their family was compatible with yours, you could get together and maybe go on a picnic or do something or just have an evening of conversation or something. But, so many of them, like I said about these two guys, I wouldn't want them near me. And ah, I always said I could put up with anybody for eight hours a day, because I got the rest of the time to myself. So, ah, you just go along, you try to ignore them or you cooperate, but you don't get involved with them.

IB: It sounds like the Reo people were respected in the community then, because they worked at Reo.

Green: Certainly, certainly. And

IB: Or do you think the flip side was

Green: It is a nebulous thing, but when you talk to people and they say oh, you worked at Reo, yeah, oh, and they seem to look at you with a little bit more respect than they did before they knew where you worked. We had a guy that left, well when they closed the plant down, he went over to the Olds in the experimental engineering machine shop and ah, they had to have a certain gear for something or other and they said ah, well we'll have to get purchasing to buy us a

gear, but that will take us probably six months to have a special gear made. The guy said, well you got a milling machine here haven't you, yeah, you got change gears for it? Yeah. Dividing gear? Yeah. Then why don't we cut our own gear. They said, never heard of such a thing. So he went around and got the stuff together and cut this special gear for them and he had it done in a day's time.

IA: Called initiative.

IB: That specifically tells you something though about the mindset of both places.

Green: Where did you learn that. I said I worked at Reo, oh.

IA: Oh I see.

Green: Anybody that worked at Reo knows stuff that people didn't know from someplace else.

IA: Or at least has the get up and go to go ahead and try to do it.

Green: Yeah. I had a guy that used to work for me on nights at Reo, was over at Motor Wheel and he was a foreman over there in the tool room and he called me up and asked me if I had a gear cutter that would cut this certain gear and I said I'll have to check. So I went down to the tool crib and checked and found the gear cutter, it was all sharp and everything, so I called him back and I said yeah. He said can I buy it and I said no. You want to borrow it, he said yeah I'd like to use it for a couple of days. I said fine, come on over here and tell me when you are going to be here, I'll meet you at the gate and give it to you. So, he took it, went over there and had that gear cut that they needed. He brought it back to me and I put it back into the ~~crypt~~ CRIB. He told me probably three or four months later, he said boy and I a hero. He says you are the hero, but he said I'm considered a hero because I could cut that gear. Now here is Motor Wheel that didn't have the equipment to do that, but Reo did. It is a, but like I say it is nebulous, you can't put a finger on any one thing and say, this was

IA: They way, yeah.

Green: It was just a combination of a loyalty and everybody says the best place to work in the area.

IA: Ah huh, so you wanted to be there.

Green: You felt secure, you felt a oneness and I don't care if you were talking to the sweeper or to the general manager, you are now on a common ground and you were able to discuss problems or ideas.

IA: Because of the open door policy, I think Louie mentioned that, you always felt there was an open door, you could go in and talk to someone who had a problem.

Green: Right. Well you know, some other places well, if you are working here, you got to talk to your boss and then he's got to talk to his boss and his boss and pretty soon you say forget the whole thing. But, you know, ah, if this worker has an idea, it is better that he can go to whatever level he needs to to see if that idea is practical. But if he goes to his boss and his boss tells his boss and his boss tells, the story is all twisted. And nobody has got

IA: ..... two years later.

Green: Yes.

IB: Well and I was thinking too, I just was think that when you said that, because I know at GM ah, an employee can make a suggestion on a better way to do something to save the company money and if it flies, eventually sometime down the road, he might get some money for it. Um, but there at Reo could a worker suggest an improvement and get um, repaid for that or ah .... for that.

Green: At one time we had a suggestion plan and ah, and we got quite few ideas. The biggest problem we had was in convincing the person that had the idea that it wasn't going to work because this, this and this. Maybe it affected some other pieces, maybe you could only use this on one job, one particular truck.

IA: They didn't have the big picture.

Green: Right, right. And so trying to convince them that management wasn't just pushing them aside and then put the thing into operation and make the money.

IA: Yeah, well that's a good point.

Green: So you have a problem trying to convince the people that you are on the up and up.

IA: Did you children go into Reo work too?

Green: No.

IA: They went to something different? They've worked the legacy a little bit.

IB: Maybe because things have changed over the workplace.

Green: Well um, yes and another thing

IA: There was no Reo for them to go to.

Green: There was at the time.

IA: Still?

Green: Oh yeah, they graduated in ah, hum, '64 and '66, I believe it was.

IA: So there was a Reo going

Green: Yeah, there was a Reo there. Ah, I asked them, I said do you guys want to go to work in the factory as they graduated from high school. And the oldest one, he said well, I've heard about a program with the State Highway Department where I can go to school part time and work part time and then when I get through with my schooling, I go on full time. I said that sounds good to me.