

IB: January 28, 1992. This is Shirley Bradley and Lisa Fine and we are taping Reo Memories. Our subject today is Louis Garcia.

IA: And if you don't have any problems with when, telling us when, what year.

Garcia: Huh, ah, no big deal.

IA: We'll have to worry about the women, I guess, when we ask that question.

Garcia: 4/19/21.

IA: Okay, 21, and how long were you in Mexico? When did you leave?

Garcia: I was in and out of there until I was two years old and then about two years, maybe more 30 months but then I went back. See, I used to go, my mother used to go back. My dad always stayed here 'cause he came in in 1914. In fact he's registered in the First World War but then we, he never went back because the family started gettin' big so from then on, just stayed here, ..... Gratiot County.

IA: Gratiot County, oh. What, in the country or the city?

Garcia: Country, farm yeah. We farmin'.

IA: And um, there was something else I wanted to ask you about that. Did the whole family come at first?

Garcia: Only two of us at first, my mother and then I got a brother who was born there and he was about 18 months when he left, I mean, us two, my mother and dad, they stayed with .....

IA: Did they come to Michigan 'cause they knew people here?

Garcia: No.

IA: They just...

Garcia: That's the way people traveled back then. They just, no my dad came first ..... 14, I think was 16 but he was in United States before that.

IA: Ah, huh.

Garcia: But he moved to this, the first place was, he come to Durand and from there he went to ....., Michigan. Then he came down 'cause at that time he was tending the forest ..... woods apart. Then he got into farming.

IA: Okay. Um, the other things was, that we had on the list was, you know, when, well, let's deal with the family first. I talked to your wife so I know you have a wife and children?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 2

Garcia: My children?

IA: Yeah, your...

Garcia: I got five.

IA: And your parents were born in Mexico.

Garcia: Right.

IA: As their parents before them?

Garcia: ..... why down to the <sup>present</sup> age.

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

Garcia: There was 13 of us. There was eight brothers, eight boys and five girls.

IA: And they all eventually, well, you were, you were the oldest?

Garcia: Um, hum. I was the oldest and John was second and the other ones all were born here. We would a been born here but my mother wanted to be with momma, which was my grandmother. So she'd go back, see, and she'd stay there for, long enough so I could walk or whatever. I don't know. Then she come back and see her husband and then she'd, when she got pregnant again, she went back down again and she came back when he was 18 months.

IA: Well, it's nice to have the help, I know that.

Garcia: Well, I think she felt lonesome.

IA: Sure, sure.

IB: Especially when you're...

Garcia: English, she couldn't speak English. My dad spoke English but my mother was very limited at that time. She really couldn't speak English probably till the war time, 1920, '22, '23. If it wasn't a Polish, he was a Russian. If it wasn't Russian, Italian so they had a heck of a time in those areas, back in them days, there was no, English was spoken only in the town and when we went to visit a house, whatever they were, that's what they was speaking.

IA: And when you went to school, did you go to school up in Gratiot County...

Garcia: Uh, huh.

Louis Garcia

1-28-92

Page 3

IA: or was it down here in Lansing?

Garcia: Two country schools.

IA: Country schools.

Garcia: Little dinky one room school with a big furnace in it. That's how I was educated. I liked it. I still wish they'd teach that way.

IA: I know Glen felt that way, too.

IB: More personalized. Yes, he did.

Garcia: ..... teach that way. One teacher controlled. I mean, she could control. I got slapped. I got, hit my hands like, put your hands out there, slapped on top with a ruler. So.

IA: Did you go to high school, too, or...

Garcia: Yup, high school, then I finished that in Maple Rapids.

IA: Oh, okay. And you said, I think I remember from the luncheon that you started working at REO during the War?

Garcia: No, right after the War. I went to war first. I got into the Second World War. When I come back, I applied for the job.

IA: So it was 1945, '46?

Garcia: '46.

IA: '46, okay.

Garcia: Oooh, boy, whether it was in May..... 'cause I went to Mexico first ..... with my folks.

IA: Oh, they were back down there again?

Garcia: I took 'em down.

IA: Oh, you took 'em down. Oh, that's nice.

Garcia: I drove 'em down and then they came back. I think it was in May. I got the records but ..... Charlie Farrow was the personnel manager at the time. Of course, he's gone now, Charlie Farrow and he interviewed me. He says, ....., of course, I think everybody hears that when you young.

IA: 'Cause you had gone to college, I mean to high school?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 4

Garcia: Yeah. .... graduated, .... service and I went to the non-com school. I went through all kinds of schooling there, too, and then I went in there .....I said, what do you mean, over qualified. I says, I want to work. I don't care what it is. He put me to work.

IA: Yeah, 'cause it was hard after the War.

Garcia: I said, I don't go by ..... qualifications .....  
You put me in the door and I'll tell you what I'll do after that.

IA: And what did they put you on?

Garcia: They put me on, the first thing was a little dinky room that they cut bar steel and it was dirty and dusty and everything.

IA: Cut bar steel.

Garcia: Cuttin' steel ..... a lot of it was a bar, heavy bar .....  
..... to me ..... probably was a 75 ton press cuttin' ..... and anyway....

IB: And you'd feed the bars into it?

Garcia: A certain length, give a dimension, you ..... so much dimension except that's nothing to me 'cause I already knew a lot of that stuff through schooling or through working 'cause I had worked in a press area, Seattle, Washington, when I was in service. Used to sneak after work *AND.. G.O. D.T. AND WORK*

IB: You did?

Garcia: Oh, yeah. .... any ..... a dollar.

IB: You heard there was some jobs, some employment there so you did that, moonlighted and did that?

Garcia: Yeah. That was in Seattle, Tacoma, Washington, both places, several little plants in there and ..... work so then, but I already knew how to, you know, read and scale and all that stuff. That's all you need for that stuff. So they, worked there and then I guess the supervisor thought I was pretty good so they moved me out of there and put me...

IA: What did you start at, what pay do you know?

Garcia: What page?

IA: Pay did you start at, how much per hour?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 5

Garcia: Oh, money, it was piece work but they started you at 90 cents or 85 cents an hour. I'd have to look back. I, it was real cheap an hour. I mean, it was good money, don't get me wrong. You could buy a car with that. I mean, 85 cents an hour so then I went out of there and I got into the 90 cents an hour or 92 cents an hour into the press, what they call the press division. It is just a little cutoff from, I guess, from where they bought the raw material and then cut it then send it in to the press area for machineries ..... It was kind of a ..... remember, I could still see it. So they put me in the press division in there and then I started workin', I guess, what they call helpers where ..... operate and pretty soon I was the ..... operator. So then they asked me if I could set up a die, you know, so I says sure, I can set that thing up. You sure? I says, you just let me know and ..... did those little dies, piece a little better ..... little in Seattle and Tacoma so I got in there.

IB: So you kind of ..... basic operation.

Garcia: The basis, this thing is just like pickin' up the phone. Talk the same for everybody, just switch languages, you know, same thing, the die's bigger with different mold or somethin' ..... punch it the same way, the same adjustments anyway and they had me settin' dies. So then I got promoted to <sup>die</sup> setter and I think that was \$1.15.

IA: And this was all within a few years?

Garcia: No, no, no, ..... very short.

IA: Oh, no, it took a long time?

Garcia: Short.

IA: Oh, even less than that?

Garcia: Very short, yeah. I climbed pretty quick, pretty quick. I didn't go ask. They just must a seen ..... No, I was ..... quick and then the ....., I had a rough time. ....young guy with this old timer ..... to do that.

IA: Um, hum, that you were moving up?

Garcia: They couldn't touch your, yeah, you couldn't touch their machine. That was their machine. Their machine had a name and I remember ...

IA: A nickname?

Garcia: Yeah, .....

IA: That they made up?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 6

Garcia: Yeah, like Mary ....., that machine was called ma..... machine. I always remember Mary ..... Wilson, ..... Gaylord was, we all..... Gaylord was the old setup man, the old leader like. Well, you couldn't tell him nothin'.

IA: He's an old timer from the '20s, '30s?

Garcia: Old timer that was ....., yeah, and ready to retire the next five, six years.

IA: I see.

Garcia: Ten, you know.

IB: So here comes this <sup>young</sup> shooting upstart.

Garcia: Yeah, here I come young <sup>up</sup> start and, what do you know about this and get the heck out of my way and then he used to, I just didn't pay attention. .... when they ..... about three and a half inch diameter ..... and he said somethin' about, well, he was always being snotty to me so he says to me, okay, can you help me tighten up the nut or can you tighten that nut. Sure I can, I says, but I can break it off for you if you want me to. Don't be smart! You can't break it off. So I give her a yank and I broke that inch and a half diameter bolt .....

IA: Oh, my goodness.

Garcia: Now, I mean, I couldn't break it off .....

IB: I think you like a challenge.

Garcia: Well, he was always mouthin' up at me, see, and you know, like, old whipper snapper, I was a strawboss, I was everything because I was a young guy. But he told me I couldn't break this and I ..... machine that much longer .....

IA: Oh, Lord.

Garcia: Well, Glen did the same way. He probably done some things he shouldn't a done but, well, we taught them old buggers some things, you know. I mean, they, I had a rough time. I'll never forget those people but you learn from 'em and I took that, that's the way I started lookin' at it. They won't learn from me, knuckleheads. I called 'em knuckleheads. A bunch of knuckleheads what you guys are 'cause you know I'm gonna learn without you even teachin' me.

IA: Ah, huh, you could just observe.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 7

Garcia: Sure. I said, I might not use your language but I'll tell you one thing, I'll learn whatever you got on top of, you know, whatever, because they didn't want to teach you nothin'.

IB: They felt threatened, I suppose.

Garcia: Yeah, they felt threatened, yeah, they called that job security in them days and I didn't believe it. I believe in teaching everybody and everybody's got the same job security because the one that performs the best is the ones they gonna keep anyway.

IB: Sure.

Garcia: And so he went, so then from then on, I don't, I don't, I have to look at my records, then ..... what they call a strawboss, a real strawboss ... I worked for awhile and then they put me on foreman. Well, no, I went in tool and die room. They ..... me up and so I took two years, two and a half years tool and die room. That's when Mr. Zimmer came.

IA: Zimmer, I was gonna ask you about him and he's the one that picked you out.

Garcia: Yeah, he told, told me I got to pull you out of here and I didn't wanna 'cause I wanted to finish and get my journeyman card which was five years training, see, and I think about, I have to look at my papers but I think it was about two and a half years which is good, the basic things are taught in the two and a half years. From then on, most of the other two and a half or two years is mostly actual internship like. You really applying everything in the .... back what you learn so when you graduated or when you received your certificate in five years, why, you earned it both ways by studying and by actual application. But he pulled me out about, it was about two and a half years and then they put me on supervision which *WAS NOT* a strawboss. Now you went on salary. Strawboss was on hourly so went to strawboss. Then I went on salary. From then I kept going from there.

IA: How did those, those old guys think about you, when you became a supervisor?

Garcia: I had a ....., I had a little ..... so they had what they call a power hammer department and all they did was hammer material ..... I mean, it was an art. You don't have those arts anymore. There's a lot of 'em gone but power hammer, ..... old geezers in there. I mean, to me they was old. They wouldn't a been old if they'd a been nice but to me they ..... and ah, and old Hank Foresman was in there. He just passed away two years ago, 90 some years old. He told me that, you know, he says, I'm moreless *trained* this group, he says, and you just can't do too much. You're nothing but a strawboss

and you just get your little butt over there and, ..... he said, ..... get over in that other department and you stay over there and you just watch from over there. We'll do the work and all this and all that. Well, I have to go in there and line 'em up and what to do, you know, the schedule, you know. I says, well, I'll be here in the morning, I says, every morning and I'll be here at noon and I'll be here in the afternoon before you go home. First I'll give you the schedule then I'll review it at noon and then I'll check it out and I'll check it when you go home. See any problems, I'm still gonna tell you about it and I walked out.

IB: Didn't he anything, much better to do with his time.

Garcia: So, I don't know what happened but they give me a rough time, I don't know, I think the third or fourth week and he .....and they all got in an uproar and they said, well, we just gonna walk out of the job and I says, I'll tell ya what. You guys all get the hell out of here. I don't need any of you, see, and they walked out and, well, the superintendent come down. Do you know what happened? I says, yeah. They said they wanna walk out. I told 'em to get the hell out of here. I'll run the *division* if I have to do it myself, I says, union or no union. But you ain't never done this! Hey, you be surprised what I could do. You just, so I went and got another guy, Ernie Kaveson(?). I don't know, he's still probably around, Ernie Kaveson, and they got, some guys that I associated with, you know, they were young guys just like me and go ..... brought 'em in there, three of us counting myself. We would hammer those down for us to keep the line going and we did, kept going and going and I put some more, finally I have about five or six people in there with myself and then something went wrong, they have a leather that just strap that goes in the *head*. leather strap and you thread that and that's the one that gives you the cushion of the hammer and it's what takes the impact and does the whole thing, the operation, when it vibrates and so, then Ernie come in ..... Aw, he says, there's no problem. Oh yeah, I said, that's an art. I says, all we got to do is look at that one that isn't busted and do the same thing to it. We'll get it. Don't worry. You watch me. I said, I'll do it, then you learn it. Those old buggers .....

IB: Did you ever have any problems from the union for letting those men go?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, so I told the superintendent, I'll take, I'll answer. You just, just send 'em to me. Don't argue with 'em 'cause I want to handle them people. I says, they're workin' for me, I want to handle it. I'm gonna take care of it. So then, in the meantime while I was doin' all this and tryin', barely making the, meetin' the line, they're, I mean, I guess, I started gettin' a call from Hank at home. Louie, he says, I'm ready to talk. .... get ready to settle this ..... You must have production down. Oh,



no, we're runnin' beautiful. No problems at all. In fact, we're ahead of production, you know,..... 'cause he couldn't come in there 'cause they walked out, see, but he could check by calling, you know, but he knew that the line wasn't going down. That's all I was gonna tell him. He, how would he know if I didn't have a few pieces hid some place, you know. Who would know, so I said, we're runnin' real good. I said, I don't really need you. Well, we're ready to talk. I said, you might be ready but I'm not, I'm too busy and I played it like that for about three, four days and then he said, he was gonna get the union to get into it. I said, you get the union anyway. I don't care what you got. I said, when you come back, I said, you comin' on my conditions. No more of this, you know, that I'm this and I'm that. I am the one that's gonna run the department. I'm never gonna boss you or mistreat you but you gonna listen when I got somethin' to say. So he, they finally settled that down. In the meantime, I trained these guys. .... none of us knew anything about nothin' but we trained ourself and then, it's quite an art. I mean, you have to, it takes you, that takes you about an hour, two hours to explain how that metal is, you got to shrink it, know how to shrink it, how to expand it and still control the dimensions of the whole top or whatever you're makin', a fender. You know, you can't make it humpy like this. You got to make it the same as the print calls for, see. This is ..... part but we learned that ..... take it easy. We really ..... take our time and to ruin a piece, see, but we did it but then they come in and then we have a meeting naturally with the union and I still talked. My superintendent, don't say nothin'. I'll do the talkin'. Don't, I says, you might say somethin', I says, you're gonna fire 'em up again. Not that I care, I says, we could settle, I says, these guys are alright. They're not goin'. They just think they're ..... I says, don't worry about it. So we settled and they come back and Hank, ..... best friend ..... till he died last year, he always send me a nice card ..... He was a beautiful writer. .... every time he send a letter he says, don't ever forget, Louie, you was the best boss we've ever known.

IB: Hum, quite a compliment.

Garcia: He always ..... Yeah, he changed his tune, I'll tell you but he was a smart man. I couldn't take it away from him. Carl ..... and the other hammer man, he was a smart man. The other, all them guys that worked there were old but they were smart because they had a trade and...

IA: And lots of experience.

Garcia: And you couldn't blame 'em to be the way they were because it took them probably all their life to know what they knew. They were not graduates from Michigan State or, you know, it's that college town there, agriculture college. They were not graduates or anything.

They come up the hard way. Some of 'em didn't even have 8th grade education and now you take Robert Webster, he what you call a wire beader machine, wire beader operator. That's the one that put the bead in the fenders, you know, ..... Well, that was an art and I was in that one, too. I learned how to wire, too. I might a ruined a couple but I learned how to do it and, but it was an art. You realize that it's an art and those guys was proud because without a mark or anything, they could wire that whole thing all the way without any marks, I mean, just because they had, it's just like runnin' this oil machine. They had a nice feel. They knew how fast that machine went and that's the art thing you control with a foot pedal down here so it's, you know, you couldn't, you couldn't take it away from 'em and that man, that wire man, that's all he done for 40 years till he retired 'cause he was a wire beader. You ask some young man now what's a wire beader, he wouldn't know...

IA: He wouldn't know what you're talking about.

Garcia: what you're talking about. He wouldn't even know what a machine would look like and so I, that's what happened to that one but not because of Bob Webster. Bob Webster was a nice old man but he got sick on me. I think he had a operation and like I told you, they never wanted to teach nobody else.

IA: They wanted to keep ...

Garcia: And so there was no follow-up and so I got stuck into that one, too, and I trained two. I trained two, three young people to do that. I had to do that ..... sewing machine. Just practice on raw material, you know, not a fender or a hood ....., you know, the hood ..... has a ..... the old days what they call butter .... opened up like that?

IA: Yeah, ah, huh.

Garcia: Yeah, well, well they got a bead on there back in them days. Now they don't put it in. They made the fender, the hood top real sturdy but we practice on metal so they could learn to do that. That was a art as the rest, the rest like your tool and die setup and press adjustments and all that. That was a, it's so skilled that they had like camera people and, well, even toggle press operator, you have to know exactly how that metal flows or you don't make a good piece. You break it. So those had to be watched and learned <sup>From</sup> those old buggers .....

IB: Now, you were, you were not supervisory for a few years, you know, when you first got into the plant. Did you join the union then?

Garcia: No, I think, I think they made me ..... When I went in there, you had 90 days or 120, I forget what it was.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 11

IA: To decide or before you had to?

Garcia: Before you had.

IA: Before you had to.

Garcia: Well, then I didn't know you had to.

IA: Was it ..... check off?

Garcia: Yeah, they come over and threatened me. They told me I had to join  
or somethin' and ~~NOT THE~~ <sup>BOSS THE</sup> union. Well, I didn't like that.  
.....

IA: Did they check it off? In other words, did they take it out of your  
pay anyway whether you wanted it or not?

Garcia: Eventually.

IA: They checked off.

Garcia: But they come and asked me first and I told 'em I didn't want to be  
that. I says I'm no farmer. I don't believe in anybody, but I says  
I'll do my own bargaining but it didn't work. They, ..... then the  
superintendent called me in and he says, no, you got to sign it but  
you won't be long, he says, which I wasn't. You won't be long. Just  
sign the paper and tell 'em to go to hell or somethin', whatever you  
want. I said, I already told 'em that ..... So I was  
never a union...

IB: Not very involved or anything?

Garcia: No, no.

IB: And then once you were supervisor it's not a problem?

Garcia: No, I was never, I was just a farmer. I didn't like anybody tellin'  
me nothin' unless he knew more than I did and I didn't like that  
.....

IB: Did you have many problems with labor?

Garcia: The union?

IB: Unions after you became supervisor, not in the personal level but, I  
mean, did you have...

Garcia: Oh, yeah. They wrote me up. I had a grievance against me ....  
threaten this and threaten that. But I got ways, I had ways of, I  
had one guy, you know, I got away with some stuff. .... he gave

me, gave me a rough time and I caught him in a corner and he was a steward..... he'd just been elected into ..... can't even think of his name now. I'll think of it. Anyway, ..... he was hot to show the people what a steward he was gonna be and all that good stuff and finally I got him, I says, you don't know *me do you?* He says, not really. I said, I don't know you too well, I said, but I'll tell ya one thing, I'm gonna eliminate you and I says, I belong to the Mexican Mafia.

IB: Oh, no.

IA: You really mean eliminate.

Garcia: Yes, and I said, without nobody ever known, you're gonna be eliminated.

IB: Ooooh.

Garcia: Unless you straighten up.

IB: And he was scared, right?

Garcia: Do you believe that. I don't know, I think he thought it over for an hour and pretty soon everybody *SAW him. and he never came back. BACK UP HIS DINNER PAIL*

IA: Oh, my.

IB: Oh, for heavens sake.

Garcia: ..... got rid of a steward.

IA: While you're speaking of steward, that makes me think maybe I can just ask you a quick question. What is the structure in the shop? Is it, from steward what does it go to, the chain of command, so to speak?

Garcia: Well, usually it's a steward, then a committeeman, then a committeeman at large, then, well, depends, for our company, just had I think steward, committeeman, committeeman at large, then they went to the president.

IA: Of the local?

Garcia: Yeah, the local.

IA: Of the local.

IB: That was where they could have redress for problems, they could go to one person and then...

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 13

IA: Up the line.

Garcia: Yeah, if they didn't call, the steward is the one that give you the most headaches. They didn't call the committeeman until it was gonna, was going to negotiate or some move, some big drastic move beyond the steward's control. The steward is more like an overseer around, but they get big headed some of 'em because they're radicals. I always called 'em radicals and they, so you, usually if they got too radical, I get the committeeman. But if it's a new one like that one, I eliminated some way or other but if he's a regular, good worker who been there a good long time, I mean, and he just got a little bit out of control and I'd go to committeeman and say, you straighten that guy and I says, if you don't, I will, you know. It can be done. I mean, they're not that, it's just if you get some new ones and then they think, the committeemens usually are pretty decent and so is, the president is usually a...

IA: So is the committeeman a worker, too, or not?

Garcia: Yeah.

IA: He is, too?

Garcia: To a certain, they got a, well, it depends on the contract, the way they ..... The steward has got to work all the time.

IA: Yeah, I know.

Garcia: The committeeman, I think, in hours, I think, they had to work at least four hours. The president don't, but our president always worked.

IA: Really?

Garcia: Yeah, Ray, Ray, Ray, where's, hey, Glen, where are you. Ray ....., gosh, you know, he's a nice guy. I know his name is Raymond. I can't remember his last but he always ..... He ..... and the committeeman, committeeman at large, usually they got all day. They just sit in the office ....

IA: And be a bureaucrat.

Garcia: Yeah, but I think our committeeman was four hours ..... But I have, ..... I had control *I GOT ALONG FINE*... until some new ones start comin' up but mostly ..... nice relation 'cause I knew just how to handle 'em. You have to know how to handle 'em. You can't, but you can get in an awful mess with them. So I spend ..... time right in the first division and there's a big division, see, and then, *like we SAID OVER AT THE*.. dinner, or lunch I mean, each division was like a neighbor, you know, and then all

neighbors were always together but you had a, you had a awful big family relation in there. Person who got hurt or got sick, everybody was concerned.

IA: In your group?

Garcia: In the group and then the other ones find out about it and they check it out and see how everybody's comin'. It became, REO was a real family. That's why it was hard to break up and even now, you know, they still stick together.

IA: Now, did you stay through to the end, too, like Glen did?

Garcia: Yeah, I .....19.... What was it, April the 4th, .....  
*I FORGOT THE DATE....* when we walked out. Well, when they closed the doors. We didn't walk out.

IA: Yeah, yeah.

Garcia: Yeah, .....

IA: And what was your last position there? Were you still doing the supervisor...

Garcia: I still superintendent but, yeah, the title was superintendent or supervisor but I was a superintendent ..... attach another sign or sign *Y*..... because they brought their own, see.  
*UNATTACHED*

IA: Oh, the new owners.

Garcia: Yeah, well, the .....

IB: What was his name, his full name?

Garcia: Caper.....

IB: ..... that's right.

Garcia: Frank...

IB: Frank Cap....

Garcia: No, no. I got pictures .....

IB: But he was the general manager or he was the new owner?

Garcia: He was the owner.

IB: He was the new owner.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 15

IA: He was the one that brought .....

IB: .....

Garcia: Kerr and Mildred Johnson was, I always call her the lieutenant. She, she was a, .... lady under him ..... Temper..... right here from Mt. Pleasant. That's where he was born. Clare, in fact his mother, I think she's still living, he owns that, what's the name of that hotel downtown Clare there?

IB: Oh, the Dougherty.

Garcia: Now, he owned that.

IA: Oh, oh, the Dougherty, yes.

Garcia: Mother owns that, well, his mother is, he owned but his mother is the one that runs it or, I mean, I don't know if she's a live yet or not.

IB: That's been in the Dougherty family for 78 years or something.

Garcia: Al Cappert.

IA: Al Cappert, he just said.

IB: Al Cappert.

Garcia: And ah, he, he bought it but they brought their own. .... he *didn't* then he hired this Stanley Eaton and he was suppose to been the president. To me, he was just president in figure of speech and then he hired all us, he hired all of us ..... but they still couldn't run the presses without me behind it somewheres in the background so I became attached *UNAssigned*... he give me a office up the front office and anything come up, why .....  
..... sometime we get together *we'll*...play hardball and not tell 'em nothing ..... but we knew it was gonna go belly up so we, I mean, that's what it was bought for 'cause I come right out and asked Cappert, I used to get together with him and Frances and go out drinking, Mildred and I asked him one night, I says, Cappert, you came in here, saw this thing bankrupt ..... I said, don't bull shit me and he, no, ..... but you just stay till the end. Oh, I says, I'll stay till the end, but he told me so I knew.

IB: Is he still living?

Garcia: As far as I know he was. Glen asked me the other day but I used to have his phone number ..... and I quit doing that but I got along with him.

IB: Did you? After the, after the breakup, after the place closed, did anybody get together again or were all of you that worked there and were old REO employees, did you ever get together with Cappert and his people afterwards?

Garcia: No, I went to see him because he had always invited me, he said, you ever go to ....., Mississippi, he says, Louie, the town is yours.

IB: Mississippi?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: That's where he was...

Garcia: That's what he said, that's ..... He's got a, he's got a building there, a house, I mean, a big building.

IB: Big business enterprise?

Garcia: Yeah, it's a, it's kind of a round like, he's in the center, but most of the, if you go in there and ask for him, they'll tell you he's not there but he's there. So I called him and told him that I and Gordie Jones, another *REO..EMPLOYEE*. go south on vacation and traveling and he's gonna stop and see him and he says, oh, you do that and so we did and ..... her, I can't remember her name, secretary, the main secretary he got on the front door, tell us he wasn't there. He was in Europe.

IA: But he was there?

Garcia: Yeah, yeah, 'cause he saw us ..... he'd been up to Lansing before ..... you guys wait a minute, I got to talk to you, you know, and she covered it up so she took us to another room and he says, I thought you said he was in Europe. I says, ah, he's here. Well, for you guys he's here. For you guys he's here. He's waitin'. She says, he knows you're coming up. .... so we couldn't, I don't know what season I went, we couldn't find a room, just to show you how powerful that man is, couldn't find a room, you know, that we wanted. We found a room at some God forsaken neighborhood, you know, it's was alright, ..... people nice ..... we found that little hotel room so we went over there and he says, where you guys stayin', so we told him. .... Hey, they told us there's no room. He says, did you go to Magnolia, I says, yeah, hotel and they said no room there. I'll bet there will be room.

IB: He made a call.

Garcia: He made a call. He owned the darn place.

IA: He must have far flung businesses, then.



Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 17

Garcia: He had all of 'em in there. He, he, got us a room, I mean, I don't mean a room.

IA: A suite.

Garcia: This was like a suite, everything, telephone in the bathroom. By the time we got there, the refrigerator, probably a 19 cubic foot, big mother, was full of Kesslers, which I like. He had all the beer that Gordie liked and everything else we wanted was stocked before we got there, see. He, before we got there 'cause he entertained us in his place there and then he took us over to his house, took the car, you know, he had a fleet of cars, so, you know, a big four door Cadillac and we could drive around. See, we went on a train. We was just having a good time, me and Gordie. Yeah, he give us a big Cadillac. Got it all fixed up, right there they got the gas pumps at the house. He got everything there. He's got a black dude takin' care of oil changes and everything, a mechanic and everything right there. So he fixed everything. So then, ah, I thought he was kiddin'. No, no, no, you, car and I want to give you this one so you guys can use it while you're here. He said, in fact, you might even take it to Michigan. You don't have to go on the train. I says, we got tickets. I don't care, you can cancel. Yeah, we brought one back but every place, we went to the Maxwell nightclub, he owns that. It's a beautiful place. Then later on, about, I don't know, it was the second day, 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, he took us to another bar and the thing was closed and so he, he a big man. He weighed about 270, he's an old ex-football play, you know, about 6 foot 2 or something. He's a real big man. He pulled back, sat back, stood back and then he took his foot and he kicked the door. I says, Cappert, we're gonna get in jail. He says, how can, it's my God damn place. He owned that, too. We went in there and he gave that help hell. It wasn't suppose to be closed. It was only, not quite 12, and they had closed it. Suppose to be open till two, and <sup>you</sup> ~~he says~~ know, you pick up the phone and call and have that door fix or put together for the night and he says, we gonna stay here until closing time and you serve us. He had those poor girls workin' and that bartender. Every place we went, he owned.

IB: Do you suppose he was able to buy into some of these new things with some of the money he took from REO?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, sure. He owned the airport.

IA: Oh, my.

Garcia: Right there in town.

IB: In...

Garcia: ..*Vestburg*...

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 18

IB: What's in, what's the town in Mississippi.

Garcia: Vestburg.

IB: Vestburg.

IA: Vestburg.

IB: Vestburg.

Garcia: Yeah, he owned the airport. He took us right through, a tour and everything and that time he took his limousine 'cause he got telephones and everything in his car and we got in that one and he took us down there and I thought he was, go right through there and they flagged him down and he says, don't you know who this is. I own this place. If you want to work, you better not flag me down again.

IB: Sounds like something out of the movies.

Garcia: Oh, he used to be a rough talker. He was tough. I mean, I felt bad for the people the way he talked, just because they worked for him, you know. Well, I knew how he was 'cause I seen him over here.

IB: He wouldn't be the person that would really have loyalty to his employees.

Garcia: No. I wouldn't want to work for him.

IB: How did he treat people when he was in Lansing, like all you supervisors and other people? Did he kind of rough with you, too?

Garcia: Well, he, sometimes he got kind a rough and that but he used to use Mildred. Mildred was a wonderful...

IB: Oh, she had to do the dirty work.

Garcia: She was the one who fired 'em. I was ..... with her, with him but I knew they'd fire me just as quick as the other ones. They'd go over there and buy 'em a cup of coffee in the morning, said, this is the last cup of coffee I'm buyin', you're done *pick up!* He done that to a lot of 'em. *your stuff.*

IB: Oh, gosh. This is all people in supervision, you're saying?

Garcia: All the people in supervision.

IB: And they'd have no recourse to union or anything to get...

Garcia: No, they had no, besides ..... but that's the way they did it. If they had a replacement and they knew it was gonna

bankrupt, you know, they should a bankrupt with the ones that were there. They didn't have to do it the way they did it. I don't got .....

IB: It didn't bother him then what he was doing to the employees who had their life savings and their pension and everything tied up?

Garcia: Uh, huh.

IB: That had worked there for years.

Garcia: See, that isn't the only place he's done that. He done it to a lot right here in Michigan.

IB: Right. That's what Glen said. He said it was his job to do that kind of thing.

Garcia: Yup, ..... I know there's a trailer home manufacturing ..... I think it was in Brighton, somewheres in there, ..... right on the street. He come in .....

IB: I wonder how he sleeps?

Garcia: I don't know but he's got guards all over the place.

IB: Has he really?

Garcia: Like a *Security* guard that building where he works.

IB: I remember talking to some visitors off and on through the years that I was at the Museum, people who would come in, ex-REO employees a lot and they would say, you know, express the desire that they wished they could of throttled him, you know, shot him when they had the chance and things like that, you know, those that lost everything.

Garcia: No, they, they, a lot of 'em *got that feeling* I'm surprised he's still living.

IB: Glen said when we talked to him last week that a lot of workers committed suicide.

Garcia: They did. I even got ..... you know, ..... if you want to use the word transition ..... from the job you had and then expecting ..... what you ..... Like some people couldn't ...

IB: Couldn't make the same ....

Garcia: I can't think of his name, ..... mechanic that we had at REO, one of the mechanics, I don't remember, but he, he went to work at Demmers, mechanic. In fact, well, I kind a helped him but the man

really didn't have to work. The man had, I think *had* farm .... equipment was \$140,000 and his wife worked and if he didn't want to work, he didn't. But it was, he took it too hard. He didn't have that mechanic position he had at REO. Okay, now this mechanic position was just as nice. He brought all of his tool box, everything set up and I said, oh, ..... you'll have somethin' to do now. Fifty some year guy, you know, *nothing to do*. I think he worked three days and he *killed himself*.

IB: Oh, my.

IA: How long had he been at REO before, his whole life?

Garcia: Oh, years, oh, yeah, all his life.

IB: That, it becomes your identity, though, doesn't it?

Garcia: See, as I said, the transition is too, it's still mechanic, right? But I guess it wasn't REO and you take ah, the other guy, Tim ..... I have to look at my sheets ..... he got out and, you know, he's a young man, I think he was 30 something. He blew his head, brains, too. .... quick, no mess, ..... quite a few suicides. And quite a few of 'em, I think, lost it, too. They're not here. They're here but not...

IB: Never .....

Garcia: Capacities, you know.

IB: Just more than they could handle.

Garcia: And so they'd call me. Quite a few of 'em would call me. Louie, how you stand it? Aw, I live one day, have good time, go out and drink, chase women.

IB: .....wife .....

Garcia: Well, she knows it..... and, no, I mean, I wasn't gonna set there and worry because I had already, well, that's, I had already went to work for John Demmer so, 'cause he told me, when, you ..... and I sent my resume ..... but ..... I say, I'll stay in Lansing so I got his card and he had my card ..... and he says, don't forget to call me when you're ready 'cause I went to Mexico to vacation. I ..... but when I come back, geez, these guys was callin' me.

IB: Well, he knew a good man when he saw one. You know, you're gonna keep track of people that you know are...

IA: Yeah.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 21

Garcia: And then they want to know, how ..... how you take this. They thought, you know, I was gonna just mope around. No. .... good time. If ..... work ..... I won't have to. I says, ..... make me think that's all there is in life? Sure, we spent, you know, you might as well say you spent two-thirds of your life there, I mean, because, you know, works where you live. You know, you go home for the other third and that's about it. I mean, if you ..... time, you never home. You're at work.

IB: Maybe some of those other people didn't have a family though. Maybe the REO was their life. On the outside, maybe they didn't have as much to fall back on.

Garcia: Yeah, maybe that's true, too. Maybe they weren't quite as attached *as I am*.... different ..... kill ~~them~~ <sup>themselves</sup> leave the kids, especially my girl. They'd kill me before I could kill myself. But ah, they took it awful hard and still right now, when we get together, especially on the .....

IB: In August?

Garcia: Yeah, they get in a corner sometimes and they start talkin'. You know, they still can't get over it and it's, I don't know, I only, it's the only time think of it when I talk about it.

IB: Well, we're glad that you.

Garcia: And mostly, usually, I remember, I remembering the things I did, the things I went through, things I learned the hard way, you know, and also the fun parts, you know, you remember those. Just to reminisce about 'em but not to say, geez, it was ..... you know, you got to...

IB: Kind of like another life almost.

Garcia: It's another life. It is. You got to go out and see what the rest looks like.

IA: You participated in the supervisor's group. I forget what...

Garcia: The Steering Gear Club?

IA: The what?

Garcia: Steering Gear Club.

IA: Yeah, the Steering Gear Club.

IB: Steering Gear Club.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 22

Garcia: I went to the ..... and became president of that, too.

IA: Oh, you did?

Garcia: Went to the ..... Industrial Club of Lansing and became president of that.

IA: The Industrial Club of Lansing?

Garcia: Yeah, that was, that represented all of the industrial ....

IA: Right, right.

IB: Oh, I haven't heard of that one. From all the different factories?

Garcia: All the different factories and manufacturing, *especially* where there was an industrial club which was affiliated with the YMCA, I went, I sat on the board of directors of that for years. Then I went to the ..... and then one day they told me, you want to run for president? Well, I might as well, I run for everything else so I was president for one year. In fact, the year I was president, I think it was '75...

IA: Oh, the same year that REO went .....

Garcia: Yeah, so I gave *Demmers the credit for helping me*.

IA: Oh, I see.

Garcia: And I said, like I was president out at Demmers and I think I signed, I don't know how many 25 year certificates ..... for working in industrial areas. My name's on there 'cause I was the president of the club and the REO Motors, I forget what year I was president of that. I think it was in, well, those guys told me, yeah, ..... and all this.

IA: They were the ones that made you the president.

Garcia: Yeah, well, they voted...

IA: They voted for you. They wanted to keep you out of trouble.

IB: Then they don't have to do *it then*.

Garcia: There was two or three runnin' and I said, I'll never make it and these guys says, yes you will.

IB: They got their Mafia.

Garcia: Yeah, they got their own...

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 23

IB: Industrial Mafia.

Garcia: ..... and ..... yeah, so they had me in there. Every, every year they had a new president, see, and it's quite an honor because you get the, you already know it, in my case, I already knew the club 'cause I was a board of director for years so I knew how the club functioned but when you become president, then every, I mean, function the president does of the company, you're with him because you're the president of the, of the organization that he backs up which is his supervision, his management team, you know, so you function with him and the vice presidents and it's quite an honor for that year. And at that time, Jack Adams was the president and got along with, well, I got along with all the presidents but I got along with ..... come here, I want you to say ....., you know, ..... he really, he used to get me involved, especially if he had a few drinks, you'd better get up.

IB: What was his last name?

Garcia: Adams, Jack Adams.

IB: Oh, Adams, thank you.

Garcia: I think he's in Washington, D.C. I don't know whether he's retired or not. He came down one time, over Demmer Corporation and he knew I was here so him and John ..... me up. But he ..... he was a nice person. Oh, they all were except Kappert.

IB: The last one, yeah.

Garcia: The last one.

IB: And going to that club was very important for fostering that, well, you were all talking about that at the lunch, too. That was an important club.

Garcia: Yeah, it was because it kept the unity and it kept, like for instance, you and I got fight over somethin' and you ..... wrong with the line, you know, and ..... get in a hell of a argument 'cause you slow my production and you thought you was gaining your production so you go over there and drink a few drinks and forget about it. Tomorrow be another day which is, they had, and it was all furnished by the company, I mean, of course, they had a bar, a regular bartender there, you know.

IA: This was at the club.

IB: At the clubhouse?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 24

Garcia: The clubhouse, yeah. We had it reserved just for the Steering Gear. They call it the Steering Gear room for them. If you ever went up there, they had a big steering gear in the middle, hanging as a headlight, not a headlight, it's a lamp, a chandelier like.

IB: I wonder where that was put after the place was torn down?

Garcia: Somebody's got it. Somebody's got it. Maybe .... knows.

IA: Where it is?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: Do they really? Check up when we go in there.

Garcia: Yeah, that's a beautiful gear and that was in the middle and then in the corner we have bar and that's where the bartender, and of course, we used to volunteer. I used to be good at that. I went back and *paid myself* myself anytime so I *didn't* *work* bartender. *didn't* *work*

IB: But this was upstairs in the clubhouse?

Garcia: Huh?

IB: This was upstairs.

Garcia: Upstairs, yeah. A big room. We had T.V.s there so you could sit in one corner and watch your program, a lot of the things, you know, we wasn't kiddin' when we bring some of them dancing girls in there.

IA: No, I didn't, I didn't think you were kidding.

IB: Gee, I did.

IA: No, I didn't.

Garcia: In fact, ..... time when you had, I forget, we had the one armed bandit till they clamped down on us.

IA: Oh, the gambling.

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: Like with the oranges, lemons, and things.

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: Like you see in Las Vegas.

Garcia: I don't know where they went but they was up there.



Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 25

IB: Is that right.

Garcia: Yeah, but they made weld, they made us weld ..... just keep 'em for...

IB: For show.

Garcia: Yeah, show, whatever.

IA: ..... or whatever.

Garcia: Somebody go those.

IA: Slot machines, that's what they're called.

IB: Yeah.

Garcia: Yeah, I can't remember, one armed bandits.

IB: That's all I could think of.

Garcia: Slot machines, yeah, they ah, I can't remember what year that was, yeah, because it used to be all the dignitaries in Lansing used to come up and see us. It was a good PR, you know, it wasn't just for the, for us for PR ..... but you know, you had the mayor, the chief of police come up and they ..... found out. Somebody ..... State Police .....

IB: I think the chief of police .....

Garcia: State Police, .....

IB: But this did add to a community...

IA: Feeling.

IB: Feelings, where the REO reached out to the community. I wonder what other things, besides the fun, I wonder what other things REO might have done for the community, for the City of Lansing.

Garcia: Oh, they done a lot of things. They done, helped the Boy Scout, Boy Scout, Girls, I mean, not .....

IB: Girl Scouts.

Garcia: Girl Scout girls and the boys, they done a lot 'cause I was a boy scout leader for a while and I could get, I could get a lot of things just because REO said, yeah, go ahead, you know, take this, take that and we'll pay for it.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 26

IB: Things for handcrafts and that sort of thing?

Garcia: Um, hum, or for trip.

IB: Oh, for trips.

Garcia: They'd furnish the milk and the cookies and the whatever, the donut 'cause I was, when I was, I didn't have no problem. I just go up there and they give it to me.

IB: .....

Garcia: Now, across the street, a Quality Dairy, the one across the street, so he was well known amongst us. In fact, I think he used to come to the club, too, after he closed up so, I mean, we could get in and they had the accounts. I don't know how they settled it though. We just went and got the stuff and put it on, and give it to the kids or also we'd have a small ballroom, we'd have the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts certain nights and we, maybe they'd show a movie, a educational movie, you know, and then they also treated 'em to pops and everything, you know, kids go for that. They would attend a meeting for anything like that. So they done a lot of that...

IA: They were the kids of the employees, a lot of them?

Garcia: Yeah, a lot of employees and also neighborhood kids.

IA: Neighborhood.

IB: And whatever cub scout..... girl scout .....

Garcia: Like in my case, I probably had anywheres from 15 to 30 depending on what year ..... kids ..... be there and they weren't, probably two-thirds of 'em weren't even...

IA: REO kids.

Garcia: REO kids but they're from the area. So that they done and then ah, there was ..... blood cross, for the Red Cross, they always .....

IB: Oh, the blood drive.

Garcia: Yeah, we used to always have, and perform it right there. They use a small ballroom, set up the tables, our tables and bring 'em in there and donate blood. There's another, no, they, charity things like Thanksgiving, they donate, including the employees, not just REO 'cause they go and say, you know, we gonna make a charitable drive, anybody want to donate turkeys and, you know, then they'd buy so many turkeys and then take it to these poor families. They make a list. In fact, like they call me, say, Louie, you know any poor families.

..... by people you know ..... word by mouth and say, yeah, well, I got a neighbor three doors down. He ain't been working and he ain't gonna have a good Christmas, good Thanksgiving. We done a lot of that, too. No, there's a lot of things that, you know, I know I got involved 'cause I used to get involved ..... which I probably shouldn't a, I was runnin' milk, deliverin' milk, all that good stuff. .... social, REO was good for the city.

IA: Yeah, I've read all about that kind of stuff, all the way from the very beginning, in fact, it was always doing things like that for the community.

Garcia: Oh, the community, the schools, the churches, they did help everybody. .... somebody ..... come in there and invariably be somebody at REO that worked there, too, you know, that belonged to that and they knew about it so they got stuck on the committee and...

IB: I know in the early days according to what I've read that R.E. and his family were very civic minded so maybe that feeling just kind of came on down through the years.

Garcia: Like I say, that family, the family never lost its culture, the Reo family, whenever it started and that's before my time but whenever it started, that culture carried down and there wasn't, ..... sometimes a newcomer and I says, you see this culture in this division. It's the same culture in the other divisions. Might be a little different but the culture, the main culture is there. So if you get transferred from here to here, don't ever feel uncomfortable because you're not gonna lose, this *Country* you gonna *also* another one because sometime people have a fear of gettin' transferred, you know, ..... operate in ..... 'cause they don't know about those people over *here*.

IB: I know these people. I'm comfortable here.

Garcia: Yeah, and REO wasn't that way. REO, you could, could ask any of 'em, ..... really ..... used to this group but the culture will be the same over there. See, and no matter where they moved to. I know I ..... the company, especially in the last years, I used to ..... 'cause they give me a special assignments and I'd move out ..... boy, this family ..... Cappert ..... I think, I think though that group is ..... a few, a few. I think if you talk to all, especially the ones we have lunch together with, if you talk to 'em, you know there was a ..... created so that they couldn't get along with this division and the other. I know I felt it but it was hard ..... because we knew, we .....

IA: It was because of him.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 28

Garcia: Just slide that stuff off and still do our, you know, go our way but it did create friction.

IB: I'd like to ask you a couple questions, too. What accomplishments were significant in your career? What do you think happened while you were there that, might not have happened if you weren't there. Or what important things did you see happen during your time, your years at the shop?

Garcia: In manufacturing, you mean?

IB: I think I'm thinking of manufacturing but I'm also thinking of the human side of it, you know, but manufacturing is.....

Garcia: Well, yeah, when you take manufacturing, REO as a whole, a great contributing factor in the military which we needed at the time from World War II and through the Korean and into Vietnam and we came in with some different design trucks, design motors and one of 'em was the multi-fuel engine, which you never read probably too much about it.

IA: No.

IB: The what engine?

Garcia: The multi-fuel.

IA: Multi-fuel.

IB: Oh, multi-fuel, oh, yeah. No, what was that?

Garcia: That's a engine that was helped developed with the government research and REO engineers that will burn anything that liquifies, you know.

IB: Oh, wow.

Garcia: If you, like if you melt butter, they'll burn it, it'll run.

IB: For goodness sake.

IA: So you could be in the middle of nowhere...

Garcia: Yeah, so, yeah, so if you melt it down or liquify it someway or other with heat, grease, and they had quite a demonstration. Of course, it was, I don't think it was ever opened to the public but it was a pretty good size V8 motor which is now applied in some vehicles, somewhere. I never followed it up but that patent went out and ..... this is extreme cases because they ..... I seen it demonstrated with different types of oils like lard and...

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 29

IB: Cooking oils?

Garcia: Cooking oils but, you know, you have to warm it up to run ..... cases like extreme emergency, you know you can do it to keep going but it burned different gases like kerosenes and stuff like that was already liquid but it was, it's really, they have a machine that told you ..... because now this fuel is burnin' or that fuel was burnin' and ..... machine.

IA: Was there, there were big contracts for those, for Korea and Vietnam through the government?

Garcia: Yeah.

IA: I was not aware of that. I knew about World War II.

Garcia: There was, yeah, there was some ..... for us then we at that time, we was making trucks for them.

IA: Oh, okay.

Garcia: Yeah, but for us, and then I think eventually they started making trucks for 'em.

IB: For the Army, for the military.

Garcia: In Korea, yeah, and also for the other that fought with, you know, with, on our side but that was, that was somethin' that was never wrote up too much.

IA: No, it really hasn't been.

IB: That's interesting. That would be an interesting...

Garcia: Yeah, it's a multi-fuel and any kind of fuel that would burn and...

IB: Did you ever get anybody, any military person that came back and said we use these. They really work?

Garcia: No, the only thing is I happened to read it in a magazine that they were using it and I said, oh, I know of that, you know, but that's the only thing that I saw a change outside early improves that they make in their vehicles that also incorporated in the cars, you know, because the engineers at REO were always developing something, you know, the research and development employees, they was always workin'.

IB: Yeah, that's what Glen said, too.

IA: He said if somebody needed something special, then the REO people would work on it.

Garcia: Work on it, yeah, if the government ..... we work on it, you know, we developed it and then it went out and there's a lot of things that never got leaked out but I don't know how you'd ever find it but there was a lot of things developed in there.

IB: I'm thinking about two of the lawn mowers after the War, they went into lawn mower production, too, didn't they?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: But there were lawn mowers even back before that which surprised me. A power lawn mower, we've got one at the Museum that's quite old and it's a REO. Where did they, that makes me think too, where did they test drive their cars and their trucks, their lawn mowers, you don't test drive a lawn mower but I mean test it...

Garcia: The lawn mower was tested right down there by the corner of Washington and Baker and there's a cellar, a basement in that building and that's where they tested the motors for so many hours and that's about all you need tested and up on top, that's where you, where you assemble 'em and they come out either as REO or the blade type, or, let's see, the REO, the blade, I thought there was another one ..... 'cause we made snowblowers, too.

IB: That's right. I'd forgotten that.

Garcia: We made snowblower. In fact, I curled, we had a machine that curled that blade and *heat treated* our own but we done just about the whole thing and we "...." our own blades for the lawn mowers. We done everything right there. That was, that was from the corner of Baker and Washington to the next, well, you don't want to say building but the next room. That's where they done the heat treating for those things, ..... and the whole thing ..... blades and the only thing we purchased was the rubber wheels 'cause we made the wheels, *DM*.. quite a few *mowers* purchase the chain and a few other things but the rest was all manufactured there until we sold 'em.

IB: Where did they take the trucks out, like the Army truck they'd take 'em. Now, did they take them out somewhere and try them on a track or...

Garcia: Yeah, they had a, they had a grounds, I don't remember where they were.

IB: Testing grounds?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 31

Garcia: Yeah, they got testing grounds out here somewheres. You have to ask somebody ..... where it's at.

IB: I hadn't, I'd never thought about that before till last week, Glen said something about testing something and then I got to wondering...

Garcia: Yeah, they had, they had a grounds to go and the Army, of course, tested, took them to, I think, Abilene and done their own testing.

IB: Oh, okay.

Garcia: But there are tracks for testing but I forget where the proving ground were but they have 'em. You'd have to, I never paid too much attention .....

IA: You didn't, yeah, it was outside .....

Garcia: But I know the other ones were tested at Abilene which they still do 'cause that same truck now is manufactured in Williamston and ah, at Capital Tool and Die. It's the same truck (end side 1) lawnmower and then the engine which Glen, remember 'cause he was ..... the engine test room for the big engines and they run 'em for hours before they mounted 'em on a vehicle, the V8s, the diesels, the whole thing, you know. But we used to make the V8 block ..... what they call the *Comet*.. engine 6, which is still up to this day probably one of the best six cylinder motors made.

IB: Is that right?

Garcia: I think ..... we called the *Maed Comet*....

IA: In the real old days, they just used to drive the cars around town.

Garcia: Yeah.

IA: They didn't do anything real special with them. If they went around town then they were okay.

Garcia: Right, if they went around a circle...

IA: Right.

IB: It's interesting to think over time from the first way of delivering a car to the buyer and he had to pay for it before he got it and then delivering on a two-track road from here to Chicago or whatever...

IA: Like ..... told us his dad used to deliver. That's what he said his dad used to deliver the cars.

Garcia: Yeah?

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 32

IA: In the old days.

IB: ..... changes.

IA: To the dealers, that was his job, yeah.

Garcia: That'd been nice. I think I would ..... to the dealers.

IA: Yeah, he drove 'em.

IB: And we touched upon the fact that when you bought a car in the early days, to buy, it might not work when you got it. Maybe, if you had to reorder a part, it wouldn't fit perhaps and you'd have to fix it so it would fix your car. They sold two boxes with your car so that, you know, you might need ...

Garcia: And the parts, well, the cars were so much custom made, a lot of 'em special designed and sometimes it didn't fit so you got, have to end up doing it but ah, the REO truck was a custom made truck anyway.

IB: Was it?

Garcia: Yeah, most all of ....., I think we made more special trucks than anything else because ah, see ah, what's the name of that actor, the cowboy?

IB: Dale Robertson?

Garcia: Dale Robertson.

IA: How'd you know that?

IB: 'Cause I think I know what he's gonna say, the things for his horses?

Garcia: Yeah, he bought the big truck ..... especially, he lived there while we was makin' the cab for him.

IB: Oh, did he?

Garcia: Because he wanted instead of, I thing we was makin' 22 gauge or 20 gauge, he wanted 18 gauge material so he come and talk to me and he says, ah, Louie, he says, will your dies take 18 gauge? I says, yeah, I think it will take 16 if you have to, just open up certain sections *now*. material but I says, with 18 gauge, there'd be no problem.

IB: Now, that's heavier metal?

Garcia: Yeah, heavier, 'cause, you know, the lower the gauge the higher the, the thicker...



Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 33

IB: The thickness of the metal.

Garcia: And most of it's 20 gauge, for the cab he wanted, and then he had his, I forget how many trucks there was now, you follow 'em all through, he stayed right here and then he had the inside, I don't know whether it was gold plated or what but they had it all plated with gold, you know.

IB: Oh, is that right?

Garcia: Yeah, they beautiful trucks when they got done.

IB: They were to haul his horses weren't they?

Garcia: To haul his horses.

IB: He owns, owned a big ranch in Oklahoma.

Garcia: I understand some, I read somewhere not too long ago, maybe a year or so ago that he still got that fleet.

IB: Is that right?

IA: They still work, huh?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, well...

IB: Right, wouldn't that be interesting to...

Garcia: you see a lot of 'em on the road, the old, then at one time Pepsi Cola's men come in here and they changed 20. Now, they had, they had the old trucks, the bodies were all, you know, going but they wanted the same body so we had to reset all them all tools to run the same body to make the...

IA: Make the same ones, yeah.

Garcia: to make the same, to make the fleet look the same with the .... signs on the front and all that.

IB: On the front of the cab itself or the horses...

Garcia: The hood, hood.

IA: The hood.

IB: Oh, the hood, I'm sorry.

Garcia: ..... it's called and the cab was, they called it the R(?) cab, the R cab and then they had ..... raise it up, you know,

..... wanted the same design. I remember that 'cause I was one .....

IB: I wonder how much he paid for just one of those vehicles.

Garcia: I don't remember. It's pretty good money.

IB: I thought he was the cutest thing so I'm .....

Garcia: Oh, he was a nice guy.

IB: Was he nice to deal with?

Garcia: Oh, yes, a prince.

IB: I loved his accent.

IA: I know.

IB: I know. You ought to see some of his old movies.

Garcia: They say he, no he said it, not they, Corey, Sam Corey and those guys are cousins or distant cousins of, closed doors, that's where we drank whiskey at night with him, on the corner of Baker and Cedar.

IB: Oh, that little bar that was there?

Garcia: Yeah, well, it's still there but it's...

IB: Is it still there, Corey's is still there?

Garcia: Yeah, but it's under another name.

IB: Oh, yeah, okay, before that it was something else.

Garcia: Rinegold's.

IB: Yeah, that's it. Rinegold, yes.

Garcia: Yeah, that's before my time but ...

IB: Yes, okay, mine, too, I read it somewhere. No actually, my aunt lived around the corner in a tiny little house ..... Depression Days.

Garcia: Well, Rinegold, Elizabeth, Elizabeth, what was his name?

IA: Dale Robertson?

Garcia: No, the Elizabeth was the owner.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 35

IA: Oh, of Corey's?

Garcia: Rinegold and I can't think what his name was. I used to go there and I ..... younger days but then Corey's bought it and then I found out when Dale came in, I call him Dale like I know him...

IB: Well, really, you got to know him.

Garcia: Yeah, I got to know him. Yeah, he come in and...

IB: He's probably...

Garcia: he found out that was relation so he was staying, I think, it was *Paul*. lived out this way, up on Waverly, Waverly, yeah, right down.....

IB: Down by the river.

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: On this side, um, hum.

Garcia: Yeah, so then, so he said, Louie, we'll be over there, you know him? Oh, yeah, used to drink with a bunch in Corey's so he says, well, just knock at the door and ..... don't have to discuss ..... don't want people here ..... that's where he'd hide ...

IB: Yeah, he wouldn't a had any privacy.

Garcia: Yeah, then from there, I don't know how, 'cause he always dressed with his cowboy hat and...

IB: I've got a snapshot of him. I should bring it and show it to you.

Garcia: Yeah, I liked Dale.

IB: He's coming out of Archie Tarpoff's when that used to be the in place to go in downtown Lansing and he'd been there for a luncheon or dinner or something, maybe one of those public affairs he didn't like too well but he was coming out of there and I have a snapshot of him and he's got his hat on.

Garcia: Yeah, I'd like to see that.

IB: Okay.

Garcia: Yeah, I'd like to see that 'cause he, I never took, I could a took, he told me ..... I wish now I had a 'cause I got to talk to him quite a bit. He was pretty, you know, he's not just an actor. He's smart. He, and I never did ask him, I don't know, maybe he's

got mechanical engineering. He knew everything about those vehicles. I mean, he wasn't gonna, when you start talkin' ..... part of a, of anything, that means you know something about it. You know, it isn't just a, you know, let me see, let me see, you know, he was tellin' me what he wanted and how he wanted it.

IB: You kind a learned everything as you came up through the ranks, didn't you. I mean, you had the training in Seattle where you worked but basically...

Garcia: Yeah, had some in Seattle.

IB: you learned everything else on the job.

Garcia: Most of it is learning on the job.

IA: You mentioned there was some kind of journeymen's...

Garcia: Oh, yeah. .... journeyman, tool and diemaker and then REO sent us to, the ..... own school ..... and I think ..... management courses.

IA: Well, REO was the one that sponsored you to do that?

Garcia: Yeah, they brought professors from Northwestern and Michigan State and then I was sent to Michigan State for several short seminar courses, too, you know, 20 weeks.

IA: In engineering school?

Garcia: Yeah, blueprinting, ..... engineer, yeah, blueprint reading and whatever that I thought you need, you know, you think you need, you better ..... yourself or learn a little more because it helps, you know, get, get quicker visualization of what you want to do than to try to figure it out. Then you lose the time where if you got a little training it helps you visualize it.

IA: And, and REO the company helped you take those?

Garcia: Um, hum, it was only \$2 a...

IA: A credit.

Garcia: at that time, yes, something like that....

IB: Imagine...

IA: But it's hard to work and go to school.

Garcia: Oh, yeah, I used to have to sacrifice, say like between eight and ten or something in the evening which was no problem but I used to sacrifice, was a really, didn't bother me, I just stay home and argue with my wife and kids, see. Change of climate.

IB: What about the, the below supervision, the regular worker, were they ever offered any opportunities to take courses...

Garcia: Yeah, they had apprentice courses like electrical courses, electrician and then plumbing and tool and diemaker courses, actually was the thing, and you also had to train for machinist so those people got a chance, too, if they, they made a chance for them to go get into salary position because that's how you start and then they, but, you know, ..... and get good marks, they wasn't just gonna put you in this because you Joe Blow. No, you had a had a certain thing, qualifications to get in and then once you got in, you better stay with it. No, they had, they trained ..... Use, you could see a lot of 'em yet, alive, that are in their 60s plus that went through the journeyman schools.

IB: Where were those held, there on the...

Garcia: On the job and also a training session could fit in a small room or REO, we could also hold 'em in the clubhouse.

IB: But in the, on the REO grounds?

Garcia: On the premises, yes.

IB: REO campus.

Garcia: Then they, at that time LCC was still .... small but they'd send you maybe for a class or two down there and most of the time, they ..... and they <sup>management</sup> ..... courses and other courses like they bring some professor in, he probably lived here. I never checked whether he lived in town and stayed ..... basically came from Northwestern up here. Michigan State was no problem because they just come from down here.

IA: And they had a pretty big engineering even back then.

Garcia: Um, hum.

IA: Technical divisions.

Garcia: Yeah, right, and no, they, they to me, it was a good training place. I mean, I learned a lot. Of course, I always wanted to learn so I didn't care what it was. I don't care if it's finances or machine tooling or whatever. I, if they give me a chance I was there.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 38

IB: How did you see the plant atmosphere changing over, oh, from the time you started till the time you, like the working conditions say from the time you hired in till...

Garcia: How I see it?

IB: Um, hum, the change in working conditions.

Garcia: You saw it, you didn't see it too fast. Like when I first went in there, we had these people, the job security attitude. Well, this new regime like in my time came in and we weren't that way, you know. Most of 'em were veterans or out of college, the ones that couldn't go to Army for some reason or other and they had a different attitude, you know, so this, this gang started sticking together and trying to, ..... he says, just leave 'em alone and just learn from them and don't bother 'em because otherwise it's agitation and you ain't gonna do nothing. So it started changing and then from that era come in, then you got another era that come in there with more like crazy time people...

IB: The '60s?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: In the '60s?

Garcia: And they was smokin' marijuana and they started gettin' into LSD and that started ..... down ..... we had people in my age start doin' the same thing that these guys did or these women and I never got into any of it. They come over and I, get out of here with that junk. I have enough time with 85 proof let alone that stuff, I said, so then you see that change, then you come in and then after that then you got the Vietnam era. Every, every era it seemed like about, oh, 15 years a different group changing but you don't have to change with 'em but that's what comes in and that's what you got to work with.

IB: There was an attitude change.

Garcia: Um, hum. It's an attitude. It's a little bit of everything and if you a supervisor like I was, you saw this and you got to cope with this. Then you got the little butterfly people, you know, you don't know whether women or men. I mean, then they start comin' in. They swing both ways, you know, their wings, well, you come in there and you got that to put up. Now, it's pretty strong. I mean, you have to take 'em whether you want to or not. It used to be that you, ..... they come in there and I could tell right away, you know, that the guy was this way or that way so, where you'd work ..... where'd you work first, where'd you work ..... here. He says, I was work ..... Products. So I knew him so I called ..... products and I

went to another room. See that was, they'd interview for the personnel and then I'd interviews ..... what about this guy. What's he doin' down there? He wants a job. Well, Louie, if you want one of those, you can have him. .... that's what I thought so ..... he says a good worker but he says, maybe your people ..... see, that's why we let him go. ....

IA: Yeah, they wouldn't like to work with him.

Garcia: ..... right now, he says, 'cause .... eventually was gonna have to, he says, right now, if you don't think so don't. So I went in there and I explained to him, I said, God, you know, I just checked your position and it got filled about 12 hours ago. I got out of that one.

IA: But, you know, when I've done work on the early, early years, even before .... people still around, the ethnic background of the workers was very homogeneous. Everybody was from the same, white, Anglo, farm background, Protestants and then over time, you know, all different types of people began to come.

Garcia: Yup, well, see we got that, I think we got that more probably in the, '65, '70s. It was late, we got a lot of 'em and then besides gettin' Orientals. Some of them are hard to deal with, especially in the industrial work but I'm not talking about these new..... those first ones that come in, I used to call 'em boat people .....

IA: Oh, the .....for Laos?

Garcia: Yeah, .....

IB: Boat people, you were saying?

Garcia: Yeah, and they weren't quite adaptable to that work but you still had to take 'em because, you know, you were suppose to take so many .....

IA: But they were from more, different backgrounds .....

IB: But they'd never been near machines...

Garcia: Yeah, different background and they couldn't understand why you did it this way. They wanted do it their way and it was quite a challenge in that, too, and when the migratory workers come in, that was, that was a little tough, too, because they were not used to the industrial. Most of 'em were tomato pickers, what you want to call 'em. They were agriculturalists, what they were.

IA: Right.

Garcia: So to convert 'em to that, they have a fear because, they showed a fear 'cause they used to tell me, you think we can handle that, two, three guys there ..... I can, I said, but it's gonna take time because they can't adjust to this. That machine moves, that thing runs. .... he, all he sees is caterpillars and bedbugs, whatever, them things down there, he says, that's a different field for 'em so I'm gonna have to take the time if you want to keep 'em, which we had to, I mean, they, they just, just a plain pedestal grinder, if I put a person there to grind and all he ever done was farm fruits or you know, whatever, tomatoes, he was afraid of that wheel turnin' and him puttin' that thing against it.

IA: And when did they start to come in more?

Garcia: They, more, a lot of them start comin' in about the 60s, right after the, some of them were veterans and now they knew they could go out of the field, you know, but before that, say in the '40s, '50s, you never saw too many. Once in a while you saw one because they stayed in the fields, stayed wherever they was used to working but when they come back as veterans, then they knew they could go some place else and they'd go try it but they still had a fear. Now the air has changed because that generation has got kids and those kids go to school so they got a different deal. So you could see the change in any, in any, and me bein' from way back to here as supervisor, ..... you can see the change from, from say about 12 years spans, this change. I wouldn't say 10 but I think it's around 12.

IA: When you started though, there weren't very many Mexican-American people in the plants at all.

Garcia: No.

IA: That wasn't a problem?

Garcia: No, it wasn't at all. It was not. For who?

IA: For you?

Garcia: No, I didn't know anybody.

IA: No, but I mean, they didn't give you a hard time? It wasn't difficult being .....

Garcia: No. You always find somebody who say somethin' but that's...

IA: Their problem.

Garcia: That's their problem. Not only that, if you speak the language, they're not gonna bother you.



Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 41

IB: Right.

Garcia: And I, and I...

IA: 'Cause you're educated.

Garcia: And I would tell 'em all, especially if you guys know somethin', I'll cut you down, I says, and you read a subject and I'll read one and I'll interpret it quicker than you would.

IA: Right. I was gonna say, you're educated and you're smart.

Garcia: I says, I says, if you think you, if you just bein' smart, you know, I'm not gonna tell you what, but I says, you know what it is, I says, don't mess with me. I was born in Texas. Don't mess with me. I says, I want a person with education to mess with me. Naw, I didn't have any problem with 'em.

IA: Okay.

Garcia: I went through a lot but ah, some of 'em do but they carry a chip on their shoulder so that means they ain't gonna get along with anybody.

IA: Um, hum, and they'll just use that as an excuse.

Garcia: That's right. They'll use it as a crutch. ....  
No, I never did. Even in the service, in the service, I went all through the ranks and then I took officer training school and the only reason I didn't become an officer because they told me I had war and a year duration and I wasn't gonna stay there all that time.

IB: Oh, they wanted you to stay a year after the war finished.

Garcia: After the war.

IB: What branch of the service were you in?

Garcia: In the Army.

IB: In the Army.

Garcia: But see, I went in there but I went through all the ranks and I was one of the DI, those mean buggers you hear on T.V. I was a DI.

IB: Oh, you were a DI? I bet you were good!

Garcia: And you think those guys are mean, you should see me.

IB: Yeah, I've heard they are.

Garcia: So, I was one of those. I worked myself right through that and I didn't have no problem but there's a lot of 'em did. Oh, I was on the boat coming back and, to, we was goin', we didn't know where we was goin'..... and, I don't know, I was standing, off side, around the parts of the boat there, I heard one of those guys, boy, when they across, he says, that Garcia is the first one I'm gonna shoot.

IB: I think they all say that about a DI or their tough sergeant but when the chips are down...

Garcia: Yeah, or their tough sergeant, yeah, well, I sit there and I listen to him. Pretty soon the other guy said, I'll tell ya what, you can shoot him but don't shoot him till the war is over.

IB: See. That's wonderful.

Garcia: The other guys says, how come? He says, because if we're in trouble, he's the only one who's gonna get, you ain't gonna get me and I'm not gonna get myself. He said, that's the guy who's gonna get us so don't shoot him till after the war.

IB: That's funny.

Garcia: I never forgot that 'cause I heard, oh, I heard a lot of 'em behind my back.

IB: Did you?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, especially on the boat when there's nothing to do but talk.

IB: Yeah, and you're worried about where you're goin'.

Garcia: And they was just lookin', they was lookin', they was gonna get that captain, that lieutenant, that sergeant, you know.

IA: And there's a lot of ribbing that goes on. My dad, who was from New York ended up in a troop from, with boys from Alabama and they used to kill him, you know, they just drove him crazy, in a good natured sort of way but, no end. No end to the grief.

IB: And there's antagonism between college educated soldiers and those that maybe didn't finish junior high school and there was that antagonism.

IA: Yeah, and the Army's the one place where everybody gets thrown together.

Garcia: And see, I never told anybody what I was, what I did, what I couldn't do because the minute you tell 'em, you know, there some kids come in

there without a high school education ..... well, they just went holy horror on them guys because you had more of the other ones than you did them so, you know, ..... they say, well, where did you, never mind. It's my business.

IB: And that reflects an attitude, too, if you come in and say, I'm ROTC. In other words, you're expecting some kind of special treatment...

Garcia: Yeah, that's right.

IB: ..... didn't go in that way. That's probably true in the shop, too?

Garcia: Oh, yeah. It's the same in the shop. You get some guy, he was trained for management and now he thinks he's gonna be foreman right away but you got to work for that. .... you got to work for that. .... fix ..... just because you think you got ..... work, show, proven, hey, you get it. .... your work.

IA: Now, when you first started after the war, were you living in Lansing already or were you still out on the farm?

Garcia: I was still out on the farm. I move into Lansing ..... after .....

IA: Did you work 'em both, 'cause a lot of people that we talked to said that they worked in the factory and the farm both.

Garcia: Oh, yeah, I helped my dad. .... dad. .... not during the day 'cause I was working but if I had an hour or two and it was nice day, like long day, you know, sunshine and weekend actually, if they needed help I was there, too, because it was fun. It was different from what I was doin'.

IB: A change of pace.

Garcia: Change pace...

IA: Right, and with some of the older guys they said that, and I've read also that it helped when times were hard, you know, to be on the farm. There was always something to eat.

Garcia: Something to eat. We always had eggs..... had to come back after I start living at home ..... Lansing, I'd come back and my ma always ..... eggs and whatever, butter, whatever ..... I buy it over here.

IA: So when you moved into Lansing, were you still single or were you...

Garcia: Yeah.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 44

IA: You were single in Lansing.

Garcia: I stayed single until I was about 26 then the woman I got, not me. I didn't get married. She got married.

IA: She....

IB: Was she a REO employee, too?

Garcia: No.

IB: You didn't meet her on the job?

Garcia: She's an out-of-state woman. She's a foreigner.

IB: Oh, she's, had to have a passport from across the state line?

Garcia: Yeah, she comes, yeah, she had a passport. She's out of Rockford, Illinois.

IB: Oh, yes, I know Rockford.

IA: Sure, I do, too.

Garcia: She's ah, she's ah, talks the ..... worlds ..... she knows all the languages.

IB: The reason I asked is because I was talking to somebody on the phone this morning that we're going to be interviewing and she was saying, I'm trying to think who was it, she and her husband both worked there. He worked there 39 years and she worked there two and a half years. She said that they met in the factory and she said you'd be surprised how many people met and were married out of the factory. She said that for six Saturdays in a row, there were six different shop weddings.

Garcia: Oh, yeah. A lot of 'em got married. But see, no, I never, not that I couldn't. There was a lot of single women in there, too.

IA: There probably still were some women from the war work, too, when you got there, right?

IB: That's why...

Garcia: Oh, yeah, there's a lot of 'em. I dated some of 'em, you know, but I was already engaged to my wife but I just date 'em. Nothing wrong with that.

IB: My mother worked there, too, and I remember there being the big strikes at the end of the War, or you know, after the War and then

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 45

before production started again, there was a coal strike and a steel strike and a rail strike and the people were out of work and it seems like I remember, you couldn't draw unemployment or something, because there just wasn't any money coming in or very little so my mother went out and got a part, a second job being a waitress till she hopefully would get called back but that had to be kept a secret because apparently if they found out back at REO, they wouldn't...

IA: They wouldn't give her her old job back, right.

IB: they would fire you. She wouldn't get her job back.

Garcia: No, no, because they would wait, somebody was waiting for the job ..... That was true.

IB: But we had to eat and we had to pay our apartment rent so she was doing something nobody would find out.

Garcia: Yeah, you couldn't do that. If they thought you had another job, you'd, they'd sign you right off.

IB: The union wouldn't protect your job then?

Garcia: No, ..... have that much time.

IA: Plus after the War...

IB: Well, she'd been there since only '41 or '42, I mean, so she wouldn't of had that many years seniority, really.

Garcia: .....

IA: And after the War they wanted to give jobs to the returning vets, too.

IB: See that, I was just gonna ask you, what kind of, and you were a returning vet and I just wondered what kind of, a lot of the women wanted to stay then and some of them had to. By then, some of them were single support for their families as my mother was. I just wonder what kind of an attitude, what kind of problems there were between the vets returning and wanting their jobs back and the women who wanted to hold their jobs?

Garcia: I don't know, I didn't see too much. I bossed quite a few women.

IB: Did you? Why does that make us laugh?

Garcia: See, I ..... no problem. They had to work and, you know, I figured they had to work, too, and as long as they already had the seniority, doing good work, the only part I didn't like, like when ..... plant

where Glen or those other guy's from, the same job performed by a man, he got 15 cents more than the woman and I, I used to, that used to irk me because the woman used to produce more than, in eight hours in piece.

IB: Um, hum, that's what my mother used to talk about.

Garcia: And they go in there and I felt bad for 'em because, you know, so I didn't really dis, I disciplined one one day. I'll always remember, I think she's still around, Hazel Moss, and ah...

IB: Was she gonna shoot you, too?

Garcia: No, she was a nice lady. She's a hard worker and I don't know how she felt but that day she ran a few parts bad and she, ..... I went over there, maybe it's the tone of voice I used at her or somethin' but anyway...

IB: She probably already having a bad day to start with.

Garcia: Either that or something. I don't know. She never did tell me but anyway, I left thinking, you know, it's all settled. I just told her, you know, she should have been reprimanded but I wasn't gonna write her up or anything and that was craft, so I walked out and I don't think gone 15 minutes and another lady come up, she says, hey, Louie, you better go get a hold of Hazel. I says, what's the matter with Hazel. Aw, she's passing out over there. She just can't catch her breath. She's crying so hard and so I went down there and I says, I got a hold of her and hugged her. I say, Hazel, what's the matter 'cause I used to dance with her at the bars, you know, and have a good time with her. She was a nice, working hard lady and she couldn't tell me, she just cry and cry. So pretty soon she says, well, I'll take you up to the first aid. No, no, no. Just keep me here. She says, Louis, she says, I took that so hard what you told me. She says, I just never wanted to hurt you and I know you don't want to hurt me but I took it like you did and I can't get over it. I said, oh, you got to get over it. You screwed up those pieces. Hell, I told you you screwed 'em, wasn't gonna write you up, could a wrote you up. That'd been worse yet. That a been on your record and I wasn't about to write her up 'cause she never messed up. But she never did tell me what was bothering her 'cause she never made a mistake.

IA: Yeah, it must of been something from home or something else.

IB: Yeah, it might have been something personal and just couldn't pull it together.

Garcia: She was single. I mean, I don't know where she, she never told me.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 47

IA: Somebody, a relative could have been sick. It could have been a million things.

Garcia: Yes, ..... things but I felt so bad 'cause I never wanted to hurt anybody's feelings that didn't deserve it.

IB: That didn't deserve. What happens after you write a person up for something...

Garcia: Goes on their record and usually you can remove it in six months or a year if you want to or leave it there.

IB: The employee themselves can remove it, you mean?

Garcia: No, I can. I can call up or we could call up and I, usually if a good employee, I, because if, usually that ..... like maybe a traffic ticket, you know, you go out and get a ticket and then you got so many points so you're gonna be alert not to get another one ..... don't get points. This one keeps you alert maybe, maybe it'll straighten up where you can come, you can come over and confess why you messed up because like you said, it might a been a home problem and once you tell 'em that, you know, and I used to always, we always used to tell 'em, I don't think any supervisor really ever said, you know, if you got a problem, come in and tell us. So, and we'll keep it confidential and we just help you get, 'cause sometimes you talk to somebody, you know, you feel better and we used to tell 'em that so and this way, if they play a little hardnose, well then, write 'em up and see me in six months and maybe I'll take it off so they got to behave for six months. If you say, see you in a year, but you could take it off.

IB: If they got too many, got written up too many times ...

Garcia: Three times, I think it was, yeah.

IB: That's like documenting it then they could be then let go?

Garcia: Then let go, yeah, or review of it. Say for instance, a person has 15, 20 years, then you start, you know, why, why ...

IA: Maybe they should be in a different job...

Garcia: Yeah, either that or what's bothering you. What is it .....  
..... but .....REO wasn't that, <sup>back</sup> they really investigated. I don't think, they weren't like some other companies, dump 'em, forget 'em, you know.

IA: Yeah, yeah, that's what most people tell.

IB: I was just thinking that...

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 48

Garcia: That's where you say, we had a good family type relation.

IA: Did anybody else in your family work at REO, too, or was it just you? None of your brothers or sisters or anything.

Garcia: No, they were too old or over ...

IA: Other places.

Garcia: Either Fisher or Flint.

IA: 'Cause Glen was telling us all his brothers and his dad and his grandfather...

IB: His sister.

IA: Seems like it was a big thing for his family.

Garcia: Yeah, it was a big thing but ah, we wanted to go different .....

IA: Different places.

Garcia: Yeah. They could of went in there 'cause I was in, I was already there.

IA: Right, and you could of helped 'em out.

Garcia: Yeah, um, hum.

IA: But they chose to go...

Garcia: I knew the personnel manager. You get to know everybody because, you know, of working.

IB: What about safety in the factory from the time you hired in, safety for the employee?

Garcia: Oh, it was great. I mean,...

IA: Until you left?

Garcia: When, when I, when I was first there, it was very bad.

IA: Oh, when you first came in in the '40s?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: People got hurt on machines?



Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 49

Garcia: Oh, yeah. It was nothin' to see an arm off or fingers or hands or, and ah, especially in the press division, you had to be real careful because you, there was just one lever control. There were no buttons or anything like that.

IB: You had to put your hands in it?

Garcia: Put your hand in, push in the lever and just start puttin' the pieces out, in and out, so you know, there's no, no, by the time I went through all them years, I seen great changes. I seen ladies with hands cut off to here. I seen a guy with his arm, both arms off. I've seen arms ..... come off. One dead. Let's see, how many dead did I see? Two, I think. One went through, the fork, the fork thing went through his *Body*. I think both ..... and the other one went through the rollers, .... where you test the Army trucks, you know, the rollers for the wheels are running, he went right through there and the only thing that wasn't flat was from here up and he could still talk. This was nothing. It was just a pair of pants hanging out, so it squeezed him right out, see, and his wife was expecting. She was ..... that's the only thing he told me. I was right there talkin' to him and before Mrs *PAPIN*. and somebody else would come down with the medics .....

IB: Make me feel a little better.

Garcia: But, no, I've seen some awful things.

IB: What helped, as you got, the later years while you were there, you didn't see as much of that because by then the safety things were in place?

Garcia: Yeah, everybody started, they kept pushing safety. In other words, think, think. There were signs all over, think before you, because the machines haven't got the eyes. You got the eyes and stuff like that, you know, they kept preaching.

IB: And some of the machines could be changed, too, couldn't they?

Garcia: Yeah.

IB: Put guards on 'em and things?

Garcia: Guards and monitors on them and different things could be put on 'em, screen protectors. Now it's a lot better. .... back in them days, .....with what was comin' new, if they applied it .....

IA: Some of the books that I've read say that the, the big push during the war, that things needed to be produced so fast sometimes contributed to some of the accidents, too.

Garcia: Yup, see and that big push during the war continued after the war because they figured it wasn't war but now they want parts for commercial use now that the demand was out there so they pushed it so safety was put over there and then I start, I don't remember what year, maybe the rest of the guys can remember, they started thinking about having safety seminars within the departments, company. We have a group and ..... we start training ourselves to walk in the morning right away, tell everybody don't do this, don't do that. Watch ..... this ..... word by mouth ..... and then try to think, see what thing we could buy to make it more safety for the machine.

IA: So you became safety conscious?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, start training that because it was awful to see somebody lose a hand.

IB: Oh, God.

IA: I can't imagine.

Garcia: Or get killed.

IA: Did the supervisors take suggestions, not just about safety but all sorts of things from workers?

Garcia: Yeah.

IA: On how to change things to make it better or more productive?

Garcia: We had a, yeah, we got, we had what, we formed a committee which was, included the steward and the committeeman, the supervisor...

IA: So the union was involved, too.

Garcia: Yeah, we had to. The union suffered just as much as their, they're the bargaining party anyway so you, we had a safety committee and safety tours, a good housekeeping because that means a lot, too, because if you haven't got a clean department, you could trip and hurt yourself or kill, I've seen guys fall into a machine, knock themselves out.

IB: 'Cause the floor was slippery.

Garcia: There was something on the floor, a 2 X 4 they didn't pick up because he's too lazy or figure Joe will do it next, you know, and it's too late, pick now, you know. It's all the things we had to start teaching, preaching knowledge, oh man, just, yeah, I seen a lot of 'em.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 51

IB: Did the factory, the man who was killed, for instance, did they, was there a pension or was there some kind of benefits for his widow or...

Garcia: Just whatever insurance was back then .....

IB: And the workers had, didn't we talk about...

IA: That was from the early days they had a mutual benefit...

IB: Oh, but that...

IA: But I don't know how long that lasted.

Garcia: I don't think it lasted long. I don't think....

IA: No, that was more in the teens and the '20s.

IB: It would be as, like now, if somebody's hurt at BOC, they're almost always retired with a disability pension. Did REO do anything like that?

Garcia: Yeah, they had something like that but not...

IB: But not very well...

Garcia: No, it's not, it wouldn't compensate for a lifetime, no way.

IA: Yeah, or take care of the kid...

Garcia: No, or the family.

IA: that was yet to be born.

IB: Or put that worker, say he lost one hand, put him in another job, could he continue to work?

Garcia: Oh, yeah, they've done that.

IB: They would do that.

Garcia: That one, that one, if you lost an eye or hand or fingers, whatever, you still had a job some place 'cause ..... different job or they trained you for the other one, yeah. That was kind of like a gentleman's agreement. I don't know as I ever seen it in writing but it was there.

IA: But it was 'cause of things like that that people wanted to work at REO.

Louis Garcia  
1-28-92  
Page 52

Garcia: Yeah, yeah, we had, we had a lot of people that ..... to work.

IA: Well, I've seen even letters, people writing during the Depression, I think I told some of you at the lunch, you know, I was laid off. I'm back on the farm. When can you get me back. You know, when can I come back to work and any opportunity that they had to get back into that plant, that's where they wanted to work. They wanted it. It didn't matter. They said, I don't care what it is, just so long as I can be there.

Garcia: That's right, and a lot of 'em, see, they could use a elevator operator. Instead of having a man or a woman fully qualified with a physical body, they'd put one with a arm missing or...

IA: Yeah, doing something like that...

Garcia: Yeah, or maybe one eye lost, some fragment shot through, you know, the machines 'cause we had those, too, and so they put 'em on the elevators or whatever, on little classic cars that used to carry pieces, they could drive one of those .....

IB: I've seen those. I remember. I was a kid and grew up in that neighborhood.

Garcia: ..... I mean, there was a lot of things they've changed and the person that was doing it was ..... go.... place else because they knew that that person needed a job, needed work so there was no, not much, I never heard any of 'em squabble. They say, well, that's my job. I'm not gonna give it up. I never heard that. If I did, .....

IB: There again, that goes back to the family ....., doesn't it?

Garcia: Yes. I don't think any of the guys in supervision or even workers ever heard anybody complain like that. They always figured, in fact, everybody felt bad 'cause it was a loss, lost his life. What time is it?

IA: It's late.

IB: It's 4 o'clock....

IA: And I think we're all getting tired.

IB: I think we need to, this has been wonderful. I really appreciate all your input.

Garcia: Yeah, I hope it helps you