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IA: This is March 20th, 1992, Lisa Fine, Shirley Bradley.

IB: It's the 19th.

IA: I thought it was the 20th.

Fuller: Oh well, one day, what the heck.

(laughter)

IA: This is just March 19, 1992, and we are at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fuller and we are going to be talking about Reo memories.

IB: Usually we just start with some background information to find out about the people and you know where they are from and ah, kind of set them into a context for us and mostly we just wanted to know where you were born and grew up in the Lansing area or Mulliken area.

Fuller: Well I was born in Eaton County in 1918.

Wife: '17.

Fuller: '17, (laughter) .....

IB: Okay, so you were born out on a farm there?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Okay.

Fuller: Sunfield.

IB: Sunfield, we were just talking about that. (can't hear) ..... Okay and um, how did you get to working at the Reo from growing up on a farm? Did you come into Lansing to live for a while?

Fuller: No, no I always lived on the farm, but ah, you know how it is when you are raising three kids, you can't make enough on 80 acres to make a go of it.

IB: Ah huh, was this your parent's farm that you are still on?

Fuller: No, no, no, no, I bought it.

IB: You and

Wife: Yeah we bought it.

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IB: And was that this farm that you bought originally?

Fuller: Yes.

Wife: Yup.

IB: Okay.

Wife: '46.

IB: In 1946?

Wife: Yup.

IB: Yeah, we saw the date on the barn. And did you start working right away at Reo in '46 or was it a little after that?

Fuller: Well I went there during the war. And I worked there probably '43 maybe, I don't remember. But I think it was 1943 probably when I went there. I worked there before.

Wife: That's right you worked

IB: Before you moved here.

Fuller: Oh yeah. ... during the war.

IB: What department did you work in? Did you start in?

Fuller: Well I started left the same one I started in in '26.

IB: Oh.

Fuller: Well I said '26 and '29 that ..... together, yeah. .. the repair end of it.

IB: The repair shop?

Fuller: No trucks.

IB: Like salvage kind of things?

Fuller: No actually come off the line, if they was something missing on them, I'd straighten it out and put it on or whatever.

IB: Like a finish repair.

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Fuller: Yeah. But I went there during the war. They was running 100 trucks every 12 hours and they were subcontracts of Studebaker. They called them Studebakers, but we built them down here. And then they shipped out 200 every 24 hours.

IB: My goodness.

Fuller: They went to Russia and I bet they are still setting over there and never got put together.

IB: They went to Russia.

Fuller: Yup.

IB: Oh my goodness.

Fuller: Then young women in there, they could swing a sledgehammer and knock them arms off them rear ends and tear them apart, you just couldn't believe it.

IB: The women in the shop, you mean?

Fuller: Oh yeah the women, they worked in export, they are the ones that tore them down.

IB: Oh, that's right, they had to be torn down before they could be shipped.

Fuller: Oh yeah, torn down and boxed up.

IB: You build them, tear them down

Fuller: Yeah, they had to be all complete and then they tore them down and boxed them and put them on flatcars and away they went.

IA: Hum.

IB: And these were women who were there because of the war? They needed the workers.

Fuller: Oh yeah, yeah. And they done a man's job.

IB: They must have built up their muscles.

Fuller: It is just unbelievable how them young women can do that too.

IB: Well they work out on farms, right, they do pretty heavy work out here, so

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Fuller: I don't know where they come from, but all over I guess.

IB: Yeah. Do you know what kind of pay they got? Did they get paid the same as the men?

Fuller: Oh yeah, I'm sure they did which wasn't much then, \$1.28 an hour I think that's what it was.

IB: That's what you were earning?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: ..... I don't suppose you had cost of living and that kind of thing then?

Fuller: Oh no, no. We just had .....

IB: Hospitalization, you had?

Fuller: Well not until later. And then it was only \$1.50 a month and the company paid another \$1.50, we shared \$3 a month, we got better Blue Cross then than you got now.

IB: It covered more?

Fuller: Oh it covered everything. You didn't have to pay nothing. All but your doctors bills.

IB: And there was a company doctor was there if you had a problem that they couldn't fix at first-aid, you

Fuller: No, no, it was just a nurse.

IA: Nurse in the clinic.

IB: Ah huh, but if you were hurt say, or seriously, they would send you, I suppose

Fuller: To the hospital.

.....

Fuller: Not from there, ... other place, where I worked later after Reo closed.

IB: Oh. Do you remember who you worked for, like your foreman?

Fuller: I sure do. Floyd Nebolski, he hired me.

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IB: Floyd

Fuller: Floyd Nebolski.

IB: Nebolski, like maybe N a b o l

Wife: N e b o l s k i

IB: N e b o l s k i. Nice Irish name.

Wife: Yeah, right.

IB: And he was your foreman?

Fuller: Yes.

(laughter)

IB: Oh.

Fuller: He hired, I worked for him for a good many years and there was different ones ... broke up the repair for, I worked for different ones there. And Wayne Foltz, Gus Layer

IB: Oh Gus Layer I've heard that

Fuller: Yeah he is a nice guy.

IB: I've heard his name before.

Fuller: He died a couple years ago, he was 90 some years old and Floyd Foltz is still living.

IB: Floyd?

Fuller: Foltz.

Wife: F o l t z?

IB: I say that because someone is going to type all this up from what they hear on the tape and

IA: And figure out how to spell it.

IB: Was there a union in your shop when you were there?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

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IB: There was?

Fuller: Yeah, yeah. A dollar a month union dues.

IB: Okay did they come right out your check?

Fuller: Oh yeah, yeah.

IB: Did you feel like you got good representation from your union? Did you have a lot of problems that had to be

Fuller: You know I never had any problems because I could straighten them out myself.

IB: Ah huh you just talked to your foreman.

Fuller: If I couldn't I went on up to superintendent. I never called a steward or a committeeman in my life.

IB: Oh is that right?

Fuller: No. Never.

IB: Were you in a kind of a management position in that department?

Fuller: No, no.

IB: I mean did you have people working under you?

Fuller: No, no. I just worked there.

IB: Ah huh, ah huh, I was just wondering because you said we've heard this before from other people, if they had a problem, they solved it in their own department and so that's why I wondered.

Fuller: No, I never I got in a little raucous one time before when I told him I said if you don't straighten up, I'm going to take you down to the superintendent's office. That was the end of that.

IB: I guess he thought you were right.

Fuller: I knew I was right or I wouldn't have said nothing.

IB: So after the war was over, ah, they still had some contracts for trucks and you continued to do

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Fuller: Well, no, it was all done then until '47. I think in '47 or '48 one of them years in there and then they got started getting contracts for ah, Army trucks, they called them Eager Beaver.

IB: Oh I think we've heard that before.

IA: Yeah.

Fuller: You could drive them underwater or

IB: That's right.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Did they make a

Fuller: Go over the top of the water if they .....

IB: Did they produce a lot of those?

Fuller: Oh yes, 50 a day there for years.

IB: That was before Korea or was it

Fuller: Well during Korea

IB: So some of them probably went there.

Fuller: Korean and ah, Vietnam War. They built em, well they finished up the last contract just before the thing went busted.

IB: Oh did they?

Fuller: Oh yeah. I worked on them things for years there.

IB: They must have been an interesting vehicle.

Fuller: Well,

IB: How were they different from, how were they made different from the regular truck?

Fuller: Well everything was waterproof you see. And your axles and your motor and you could put a snorkel on them to get the exhaust up, you could drive out there

IB: Like a submarine.

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Fuller: Yeah, clear over your head if you wanted to. They used to take them up to Houghton Lake to test them.

IB: Oh they did?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Put them right in the lake.

Fuller: Oh yeah. Yeah.

IB: They were all waterproofed with some kind of

Fuller: Well all your ah,

IB: something that was sprayed on or

Fuller: No it was just the way they build your harnesses and your generator and everything was sealed up. Your axles

IA: Watertight.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: And the water wouldn't come in around the door where the

Fuller: Oh yeah, yes the water would come in the door, you'd be sitting right there and driving it and you'd get your feet washed at the same time.

IB: As long as you keep your head out of water.

Fuller: Yeah, yeah.

IB: Isn't that interesting.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: I wonder if anybody produces anything like that anymore?

Fuller: Well I don't think so. Well I don't say I don't think so, they ah, ah, it seemed like, well I wouldn't say for sure either. They went down and ah, Nash Kelvinator, I think, got a contract after that and they built them down in South Bend, where the old Studebaker plant used to be.

IB: Oh yes, ah huh.

Fuller: I'm not sure about that, but I think that is what happened.



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IB: There is a museum in that plant now. I can't think, it is a car museum.

Fuller: Oh down in South Bend?

IB: In South Bend and I'm drawing a big blank, I can't think what it is called right now. Oh it is the Auburn Car Dusenber Museum.

Fuller: Oh yeah, I've always wanted to go down there and I never got there.

IA: Me too, me too, I'm still hoping to get there.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Why did you, I'm curious about why ah, you ended up at Reo in the first place, because there are other automobile factories in town?

Fuller: Well I couldn't never stand it to stay in one place and work. I couldn't work

IB: Oh to be like on a line.

Fuller: Yeah or punch press or something.

IB: Right.

Fuller: It was something different every day there. There wasn't the same thing wrong with all the trucks, you know, and there was always something different.

IA: Did you have your choice of what to do when you hired in? I mean what department to go in?

Fuller: No, I was hired in to go up on the third floor in the sheet metal and I knew Floyd Nebolski and I walked down through there and he said where are you going and I said I don't know. I had never been in the place before in my life. He says you want to work for me? Sure I don't care.

IA: How did you know him?

Fuller: Oh, through my sister and brother-in-law. I knew him for a good many years.

IB: You didn't have any family that had worked at Reo?

Fuller: Yeah, my brother-in-law worked there. He was superintendent there in the truck plant for years.

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IB: Oh and his name was?

Fuller: Archer, Leroy Archer.

IB: Leroy Archer.

Fuller: After they got this last contract there he called me up and says why don't you come down and get a job. They are going to run for a year. They got enough for a contract for a year and I went there and I was there until the thing closed. I spent 28 years and a half in there. It was interesting work, we had a nice bunch of fellows to work with.

IA: You thought Reo was a good employer for the most part?

Fuller: Oh yeah. .... some of them ... went in there when they were 16 and they were still there even when I was there. A lot of them worked there 40, 50 years. It was different back then. When you went in there, you worked with what you was doing. You knew what you were doing. Some of them old people was awful hard to work with because they were set in their ways. And ah, but ah, they knew what they were doing.

IB: Ah huh did they teach you, did some of the old guys teach you what to do or somebody else train you?

Fuller: I didn't want to know, they when a young guy went in there they was afraid that you was going to get their job, I guess. More or less, well ..... he told he he says you will have to learn it yourself, because I ain't got time to show you. The fact was, I never worked so hard in my life until after I found out what I was doing.

IA: That must have been a little kind of shaky and scary at first.

Fuller: Well it

IA: Not knowing exactly what you were expected to do and how to do it.

Fuller: No, .... you had to do a lot of figuring out yourself.

IA: Hum, and the old fellows probably just stood around.

Fuller: No, they didn't want to tell you.

IA: Snicker and thinking now this kid is going to fall on his face.

Fuller: You bet.

IA: Even during the war when they knew they needed help.

Fuller: Yeah, yeah.

IB: How long did it take you to figure things out?

Fuller: Oh after I had been there two or three months ..... Of course, been raised on a farm, you had to figure things out for yourself too.

IA: Yeah that's right.

IB: Had to learn to fix things and make do.

Fuller: Right. Right. Even if it was with a piece of baling wire. You got to do it.

IA: So you were working in a factory and then also at the farm at the same time?

Fuller: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I don't know how I ever done it, but I did.

IA: Wow. Two jobs.

Fuller: I spend a lot of nights out on the tractor, 12:00, 1:00 after I come home, put in eight, 10 hours in down there.

IA: Did you have a car to drive back and forth?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IA: You did, that's .....

IB: During the war you had an extra gas ration, didn't you that you were

Fuller: Oh yeah, yeah.

IB: that you were working in defense.

Fuller: Yeah, tires.

IA: Tires?

Fuller: Oh yeah, you got fit for tires.

IB: What about on the farm, was there any kind of gas amounts for tractors?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

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IB: There was.

Fuller: You had an A stamp and a B stamp and a C stamp. Yeah, I should have saved some of them, gas ration stamp.....

IA: You had to use them.

IB: I wish I had

Fuller: Yeah, they'd, they wouldn't give you any extra.

IB: No, no they didn't, it was three or four gallons a week or something

Fuller: Something like that.

IB: for the nonessentials

Fuller: Yup, yup.

IB: people like

Fuller: I don't remember how much, how much you got for a car. I always got enough for the tractor and I had no problem there.

IA: So after you finished what you did on the trucks and they went through your line, then they went to export directly from your department?

Fuller: Yup.

IA: They were all set to go.

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: I wonder how long it took to tear down a truck?

Fuller: Well if you tore down 100 of them in 12 hours it wouldn't take long.

IA: My goodness.

Fuller: They could knock them apart pretty fast.

IA: Of course every little part didn't come off.

Fuller: Oh no.

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IA: Well no I would hope not. I wonder if the Russians knew how to put them together or did we have Americans over there helping to show them?

Fuller: They told me they was putting them together over on an open line, but doubt that, I have my doubts they ever got them together.

IA: Oh and so you think maybe they are still there in crates sitting in boxes over there?

Fuller: I wouldn't be a bit surprised. I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

IB: Or .. to Pakistan.

Fuller: Yeah, my brother-in-law went over to Pakistan once, but he hadn't any more than landed there and he come back. It was too dirty for him over there.

IA: When was that?

Fuller: Probably during the war.

IA: Well why was he going to Pakistan?

Fuller: Oh they had some of our trucks over there and I don't know, they didn't know what to do with them or something, I just don't know what the deal was.

IA: Was he supposed to stay or just for a short time we are talking about?

Fuller: Well he was supposed to stay, but he didn't stay. He said you pick up a glass and you couldn't even see the water in it.

IA: So he went there for the Reo and to troubleshoot, but he

Fuller: Yeah, yeah, he didn't stay there. I was surprised when he got back so soon. He didn't any more than land, then I don't think, and he was back.

IA: Yeah.

IB: And so they then maybe sent somebody else over? Did he go over by himself, or did they send him?

Fuller: Yeah, yeah, he went by himself.

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IB: Gee and those war type planes, that'd take him forever to get there and forever to get home, wouldn't it?

Fuller: I don't know how long it took .....

IA: ..... that is all the way around the world.

IB: Yeah, it is a seven or eight hour trip or something now

IA: Now, right.

IB: with jet travel.

Fuller: Yeah. I have no idea how long it took him.

IB: Nobody asked you to go to the .....

Fuller: No. Yeah, we had trucks scattered all over the United States. There were at all these Army bases, we had trucks scattered all over. They always wanted somebody to go out and work on them things. Now I wouldn't never go.

IB: Oh they did?

Fuller: Oh yeah. Yeah, a lot of us fellows, I think they just went to get away from their wife, maybe, I'm not too sure, but (laughter)

IB: Well if they didn't have a farm, they could, you know, they could get away.

Fuller: But I couldn't get away.

IB: Call it an adventure, too, going somewhere new. I mean sometimes shop work gets a little monotonous that might be sounding like

Fuller: But they was all over, out in Nebraska, all through Nebraska ....

IB: Different .....

Fuller: Yeah, wherever an Army base, they had some of our trucks there.

IB: I see.

IA: What kinds of things did you need to fix on the trucks when you ... check them over?

Fuller: Well we didn't inspect them, an inspector wrote them up and whatever they wrote up, we fixed.

IA: You had it fixed.

IB: Oh so you were given a work order kind of, just needs this and this needs that.

Fuller: Yeah, and then after that they had to go through Army ordinance and they got into a hassle .....

IB: Really, why is that?

Fuller: Oh some of them guys didn't know what they was doing. They'd write stuff up and there was nothing wrong with it, they were just a pain.

IB: And then it came back to you and it didn't need fixing and then what would you do?

Fuller: I'd ..... and let her go. So I had a boss down, their boss, him and I was just like that, whatever I said was right, that was right.

IA: Who was your boss?

Fuller: Oh what was his name, Robert Thompson, he was from St. Johns. And we had a bunch of characters there.

IA: I was going to ask you, what were some of the interesting things that happened that you were personally involved with, but I think maybe ah,

IB: He's got a few.

IA: Has he, I'd like to hear em.

IB: About the Ex-lax.

Fuller: I couldn't, .... was working over there ..... on them Army trucks, and this Bill Gable I worked with, he was kind of a nut. I never come up ... one day and every new person hired in there he'd get em. He had that .... that black stuff you know, he'd dip them in sugar.

IA: Oh gums gums, candies?

Fuller: No, it was stuff they put on to the fenders to close up the cracks.

IA: And it was like sticky stuff or something?

Fuller: Oh yeah. He'd make them little gumdrops with this ... and he'd dip them in sugar.

IA: So they looked like a regular gumdrop?

Fuller: Oh yeah, a girl came up through there one day and well he pulled a chair over there, have some candy, she took it. She was eating them things, he had me go down to the office and take them away from her.

IA: She probably thought it was she thought it licorice.

Fuller: Yeah, yeah it was black.

IA: It looked like a black gumdrop.

Fuller: I never knew a person hired in there he'd have to feed them one of them to get them broke in.

IA: And then the rest of you waited to watch the person try to eat them.

Fuller: Stand back and laugh about it. (laughter)

IA: Did anybody ever pull any jokes on you when you were new in the ... department or

Fuller: Well back when I first hired in there, them old birds they didn't do none of that stuff.

IA: Oh they were serious.

Fuller: Oh yeah, yeah. Years went by then they got younger people in there.

Wife: .....

IA: Yes I want to hear about this too.

Fuller: A young guy, a fellow, he'd bring in two chocolate covered donuts every morning. When he'd go for break time, you know, and he'd go and get them they'd be gone. So he went home one night and he got a couple pain donuts and he melted up some Ex-lax and dropped them in there and ah, let them harden.

IA: So they were kind of like frosting?

Fuller: Oh you've seen these sugared, or not the

IA: Chocolate coated.

Fuller: Chocolate coated and that's what they looked like.

IB: .. donut.



Fuller: Oh yeah and when he went to get them at noon, or break time, they was gone.

IA: I bet he caught his thief.

Fuller: Yes. He sat over in the can all afternoon. (laughter) He .....

IA: Oh that's funny.

Fuller: We thought it was.

IB: What other funny things can you remember that ... people older.

Fuller: Oh we was sitting there eating dinner one day and ah this ... Gessiman, he says I can tell the difference between a boiled egg and one that isn't boiled, right away the works begin to go and I think..... so I took in an egg and said you ... down on the table and I said Dorin got his egg out and put mine in there.

IA: Then this is a raw egg you put in?

Fuller: A raw egg, it just happened that we got sent home at noon for some reason or another, I don't remember why. Well in the middle of the afternoon he thought he'd eat that egg, so he went out and dropped down his dinner pail and he backed up ... there and he dumped it on the back like that, he wasn't even looking and ..... When he did look it was on the floor.

IB: He never found out who did it probably?

Fuller: Oh yes, yeah, he said when he come in in the morning, he said Fuller damn you. (laughter)

IB: And you said ....

Fuller: Yeah, ... after that he could tell the difference, but he .....

IB: Things like that make the work go a little easier don't they? And relieve the monotony, I suppose, of course, your department you said wasn't too monotonous because there was something different to do on each vehicle.

Fuller: Yeah. We used to have a couple of pits they'd run them trucks over and buys down in the pit always had a can of grease like this with a brush in it. Somebody come up there and open the door and start ... then they'd get that can of grease ... toes of shoes.

IB: Ever do that to any of the say higher supervision?

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Fuller: Oh yes, if they come along there, they'd get it too, it didn't make any difference.

IB: Can't you see the manager of the plant ah, going along there with

Fuller: He would never had noticed it until he got gone and he wouldn't have known where it come from anyway.

IA: How many people worked in your you know, in the place you worked.  
Your ....

Fuller: Oh gosh we had ah, well when ... a lot of military trucks over there in 3A there were probably 30 of us in there.

IB: Ah huh, doing more or less the same kind of thing

Fuller: Oh yeah, well some of them was painting and some of them was fitting the hoods and the brush guards and ... seemed like I always got stuck on the ... line. (coughing every last operation ..... before they went out the door.

IB: Did the Army ever have personnel they sent to the factory to look at the trucks or

Fuller: Oh yeah, that ah, that's what them Army ordinance people was

IB: Oh, oh, they were the ones.

Fuller: Oh yeah, they had to take every one out and drive it and test drive it and bring back and run back through again.

IB: I remember seeing them around on the streets and ...

Fuller: Oh they was all over there for years.

IB: Sometimes they didn't have cabs on and they'd be sitting out in the open air. It was interesting to watch them .....

Fuller: Yeah, it was a all over Lansing.

IB: Did say the plant manager or the vice president or whatever, did they very often come down to your area?

Fuller: You might seem them walk through there once and a while. They never said nothing to us peons.

IB: Is that right?

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Fuller: No, they didn't say nothing.

IA: What about the Reo clubhouse, did you, since you worked there, did you take part in any of those activities over at the clubhouse?

Fuller: No, I never got

Wife: Well we had a fair one year.

Fuller: Oh yeah that's right, they did have a real fair one year.

Wife: Real fair just one year.

IA: Was that inside the building?

Fuller: It was out in the back and in the building too.

IB: In the clubhouse, was it?

Fuller: Yeah, yeah.

IA: Was it just

Fuller: Oh they took peoples, I took a couple of lambs down there that the kids had and different ones brought cattle in and

Wife: Oh people brought that stuff from the farms.

Fuller: Yeah, whatever they had.

IA: Like an old-fashioned country fair.

Fuller: Yeah.

Wife: Well and then he come home and he asked me if I wanted to make some cookies to take down, because they had a baked goods ..... So I made up 1,000(?) of made pinwheel cookies, where I made seven dozen.

IA: Oh I like that kind.

Wife: And that night when we went, we got home, we went back to the fair, I went to the booth, and the cookies were gone. I don't know if they sold them or they ate them or what. But ah, we came home that night and then the next day he came home and I had won first prize and he brought me a mixer, an electric mixer. I was tickled to death. I had bursitis in my right arm and oh so this helped me to mix things, it was wonderful. That was wonderful.

IB: Mixers were brand new on the market too, weren't they?

Fuller: That was a good many years ago.

Wife: And .....

IB: Was it in the '50's, you think? Late '40's?

IA: Late '40's maybe.

Fuller: Not after ..... It was after we lived here.

Wife: Oh well yeah.

Fuller: Sometime after '47, '48.

Wife: It probably was in the '50's.

Fuller: It might have been '50, I don't know. I should have kept it better  
..... I don't know.

Wife: ... anyway wasn't he?

Fuller: Yeah, I imagine .(can't year) .....

IA: We've heard so much about the clubhouse and about the memories that  
people have associated with it and when they come to the museum to  
visit, they almost all say to me the clubhouse is gone, they tore it  
down. And it is a real heart wrench too like someone tore down their  
childhood home.

Fuller: Yeah they should have saved that, because that was ..... nothing  
wrong with that.

IA: Did you ever take the family, were they still having entertainments,  
like movies and things while your kids were growing up?

Fuller: I went to them movies when I was a kid.

IA: Oh you did, how did you get in?

Fuller: Well my sister lived right over there on Garden Street, just the  
other side of Baker there and that was

Wife: She worked in the ah.....

Fuller: Yeah, she worked in the cafeteria there.

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IA: Oh in the Reo clubhouse.

IB: Oh she worked at the Reo in the cafeteria.

Fuller: Yeah. She used to take me over there and they'd feed, I don't know how old I was. They'd take me over and they'd feed me ice cream and all the goodies, you know. One night the old chef took me home to his place for supper and

IB: Gee, you must have either looked hungry or been awfully nice.  
(laughter)

Fuller: Gus, Gus, Gus, Gus, Gus Adler was his name.

IB: He was the chef at the

Fuller: Yeah, he was the chef.

IA: So you were at the clubhouse even before you started working there yourself.

Fuller: Oh yeah. Yeah. They used to have a radio station there too, you know.

IA: That's write, WREO.

IB: Did you ever listen to it or

Fuller: Oh yeah I listened to it. I was up in there, somebody took me up there when I was just a kid and I

IA: Oh to see the works and stuff. Oh.

Fuller: Yeah I seen it and the bowling alley that was in there.

IA: Gee that's exciting, now the radio station, was that in the clubhouse or was that across the street?

Fuller: No, it was in the, it was right there on the east side of Washington there.

IA: Okay.

Fuller: Well it could have been in that clubhouse too. I wouldn't say...

IA: Was it just one room where they had the radio station?

Fuller: WREO.

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IA: And did you get to watch somebody talking over the microphone?

Fuller: I don't remember none of that, I remember going

IB: Just remember being

IA: It wasn't on all the time.

IB: No I .... only 30 hours a day.

Fuller: ..... they had a nice bowling alley in there.

IA: But that was in the basement, right?

Fuller: I think so.

IA: The cafeteria was in the basement.

IB: Oh was it?

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: I think so.

Fuller: One of my sisters first went there to work, they had 5,500 people worked there.

IA: That's right in the late '20's.

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: That's right.

Fuller: Of course, they was building trucks, REO speedwagons and cars

IB: Cars then?

IA: Yes, right up until 1936.

IB: How long did she work there?

Fuller: Oh probably four or five years, I don't know.

IA: Oh I see, not like a long career like you did.

Fuller: No. See I think she went back there and worked during the war too, up in the office somewheres for a while. I'm sure

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IA: As a secretary?

Fuller: Yeah, something.

IA: What was her name?

Fuller: A Jenny Archer.

IB: Oh she was married to LeRoy?

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: Oh, okay. We recently had lunch with a bunch of gals that used to work in the offices.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: We all meet at the Goldengate every month.

Fuller: That must be Mrs. Pappen and

IB: Yes.

IA: I think, oh

.....  
IA: she was ... yeah, we went up... get to talk to her so we can get ... about the first aid, you know, that angle. Oh I see.

.....  
IA: It is very possible I don't remember all their names. I remember some of them.

IB: Mostly they were girls from the offices, you know.

Fuller: I never knew too many of ..... Fern .....

IB: ... she worked in the

IA: Right.

Fuller: I remember Fern Ardis, but I guess that's ... I ever did.

IB: I bet the ones that broke the trucks down.

Fuller: Yeah, well I can remember seeing them knock them down, but I don't know what any of their names was.

IA: Boy I'd like to talk to some of them. That would be interesting.

Fuller: I wouldn't know where you'd find any of them today.

IA: I suppose yeah.

IB: They left after the war, didn't they most of them?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: They left after the war. That was

Wife: I don't know if she'd know anybody or not..... (can't hear)

IA: Oh really?

Wife: .....

IA: Oh oh yeah, that would be interesting to ask.

IB: Yeah, maybe we could find her. ....

IA: In Grand Ledge?

Wife: Yeah, ..... (can't hear)

IA: Oh those apartment complexes, those nice new buildings?

Fuller: Yeah.

Wife: Yes..... address

IA: Mr. Nebolski has passed away?

Fuller: Yeah, two or three

Wife: Well she .....

IA: Oh okay.

Wife: ..... she could tell you exactly ..... but she has a .... whether she would know any of the women that ...

Fuller: Oh I think so.



Wife: She probably would. She's got 75... she's legally blind, she .....

IA: Oh my goodness.

Fuller: I can't hardly remember my own. (laughter)

IA: I can remember telephone numbers, but not names or sometimes.

Fuller: No mean neither. I knew a lot of people in the Reo, but I never knew what their name was. I knew them by their face, and spoke to them, that was my weakness, I couldn't remember names.

IA: And people out of your department that you didn't work with every day, I mean that you might have just seen in passing. Did any, were there any women that worked in the same department that you worked in?

Fuller: No.

IA: No.

Fuller: Well, when they was knocking them trucks down, the girls off to one side they'd catch them trucks when they'd come off the line and take them in there and tear them apart.

IB: Did any of the guys give them a hard time doing that kind of work?

Fuller: Not that I ever remember. No, no I don't.

IA: We just wondered if there was a barrier in the beginning when the women came into the shops.

Fuller: I don't think so.

IA: My mother worked at Reo and she had a, once she got in it was okay, but she had a fight getting into the Reo. I don't mean a fight, but I mean she had to sit for several days in the personnel office before the man would even give her an application. He said that ah, he didn't have any, didn't need any more secretaries and she said no I'm hear to work on the line, you know, I want to work down in the shop. I need to make money, I've got a family to support and he said, in essence, go home lady, the woman belongs in the kitchen kind of attitude, you know because at that time women did stay home, you know, in 1941.

Fuller: ..... yeah.

IB: The the war sort of made it okay.

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IA: Ah the men came back home and got their jobs back.

Fuller: But then they used them ..... used to work there... judas priest they could do it just as good as anybody. And there were a lot of them upstairs in the cab room

IA: Ah huh.

Fuller: that was lighter work up there and ... and stuff.

IB: And the women only from the beginning worked on the selling for the ...

IA: Yeah, yeah. And some of the electrical stuff too, I read.

Fuller: Yeah, they worked up there in the wire room

IA: That's right.

Fuller: but I couldn't tell you what any of their names was, but I have no idea.

IA: I would think that would be good because their hands maybe might be more delicate to handle the wires.

Fuller: Sure they could do it faster than a man. They made all their own wire harnesses up there.

IB: And women are used to sewing and just working with their hands or they used to be.

Fuller: Then they had a Navy department there during the war too, they made bomb fuses in there. And then I was through there a couple times, but I don't really know much about it. Them was all women in there.

IB: Oh is that right?

IA: Oh they were, oh.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Um, so you were there, you started in war and you went through 1975 when the plant closed?

Fuller: Oh ...

IB: 1974?

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Fuller: Well it didn't close there, it closed 15 years ago .....

IB: Yeah, and you were there in the same department, that same department the whole time?

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: Did you claim to, did you and the men you worked with sense that things were coming to an end, that the shop was going to be closed?

Fuller: Well I'll tell you a little story. All Reo stockholders were never sold out, but Reo would have been running today, but ah, they sold out and god only knows how many times that thing changed hands there in 10 years. .... had it and there was a guy down in Indiana or Illinois who made hearses he had it and ..... White Motors Company had it and

.....

Fuller: Yeah, I can't

IA: And then finally Cappaert had it.

Fuller: Yeah, he done it.

Wife: They thought he was wonderful though when he first came.

Fuller: Well they spent a lot of money on that place when they first started. They put new roof over the repair floor there and when they thought it was going to go all at once, he stoled it all and away he went.

IA: Do you think that he had intentions when he first took over to really, to run it into bankruptcy?

Fuller: Sure.

IA: Or to make it go?

Fuller: No, I think he had intentions of taking everything out of there he could and leave it.

IA: You did?

Fuller: I sure do.

IB: Ring it dry.

Fuller: Yeah, he did.

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IB: The fact that you mentioned about putting a roof on, I know those were very old buildings, ah, were they in disrepair in a lot of places?

Fuller: Well not really, they worked on them all the time and

IB: Oh they did?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: You know I've heard stories about the floors being weak in certain parts of the plants and things going through them and

Fuller: Oh once and a while you have fork truck would get somewhere to where he shouldn't be, running over them old wooden floors and the ground would go down.

IB: But you never felt like it was an unsafe place?

Fuller: No, never. Never gave it a thought.

IB: What kind of changes, did your work change while you were there?

Fuller: Done the same thing all the time.

IB: You did the same thing. How about the kind of people that you worked with?

Fuller: Oh yes.

IB: That changed a lot while you were there.

Fuller: Oh yeah. Younger ones kept coming in, the older would leave but there was a nice bunch of people, most of em. Well if you get one in there that wasn't any good, he wouldn't stay long, we'd make it so miserable for him, he'd have to leave.

IB: Oh I see. Your wife just handed me a little statue of a Boy Scout on the statue and it says Chief Okemos Council thanks Raymond Fuller, Diamond Reo, 1974. Tell me what this is about? How did you get this?

Fuller: Well ah, Barney Skills from Lansing got ahold of an old Eager Beaver truck, that's what they called them and brought it back there and they wanted it rebuilt.

Wife: To give to the Boy Scouts, wasn't it?

Fuller: Well they'd already had the truck, but they just wanted it rebuilt. But we brought it back there and set it over there in the building across Washington Avenue on the left side of the street there and somehow I got elected to rebuilt it. And I, I went at it and I tore all the axles out of it and changed all the tires and transmission, everything that was on it, all but the motor, the motor was alright. I must have worked on that thing for months, ... back and we painted it and they come down and got it. And I didn't know nothin about that thing for three or four weeks. Somebody, I don't know if I went to somebody who told me to go up in the office and get it or somebody brought it down, I don't remember anymore, but

IB: It is hard for .....

Fuller: They gave it to me anyway.

IB: Were they still doing the um, what was the newsletter called? .. Spirit. Were they still doing the Reo Spirit and were you still getting those newsletters right up close to the end?

Fuller: I don't think so.

IB: I could just picture him being in it. His picture in the paper holding the

Fuller: They didn't take no pictures.

IB: Were you .....

IB: Not in this group?

Wife: No oh no.

IB: I wonder what they did with the truck?

Fuller: Well ah,

IB: Going to use it for field trips or

Fuller: I suppose, yeah. Yeah.

Wife: Chief Okemos is right over here. I mean Okemos being a Boy Scout Camp.

IB: Do they still have that Boy Scout camp?

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Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Oh I see.

Wife: It is called Shimicon.

IB: Oh, I've been to Shimicon.

Wife: Chief Okemos is

IB: He is buried there. I've seen his grave.

Fuller: Yeah.

Wife: So that's in this um, district area. Whatever

Fuller: Yeah, I was pretty proud of that, I didn't know I was going to get it.

IB: That must have been kind of, you must have kind of enjoyed putting that truck back together.

Fuller: Oh I did.

IB: Do you like to work with your hands?

Fuller: Worked on it ..... quite a long time. It was just like new when I got done with it, but ..... all new tires and everything on it.

IB: And the Reo paid for

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: all the, everything and donated it?

Fuller: They donated it, everything.

IA: The Reo did a lot of things for the community..... people that they were involved in it community activities, not just a factory to produce things, but also to get involved in Lansing's development.

IB: After the war there were several strikes, I remember, and people were out of work for a while, were you out of work too?

Fuller: Yeah, but you know what I told the boss when I left there. I says if you want me when this strike is over, you call me, but I'm not going to walk the picket line. And I didn't?

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IB: You mean walk on the picket line or thru it?

Fuller: On it.

IB: On it, okay.

Fuller: We was making \$2.25 an hour when they went on strike working on piece work and when I went back we was getting \$1.65. I knew that is just what would happen. I said you guys are dumb enough to kick that piece work out, you walk the picket line, I ain't going to.

IB: Is that what one of the strikes was over?

Fuller: Oh yeah, that's what it was about, when you use that piece work.

IB: Oh, and the piece work now that's a little different than production, isn't it?

Fuller: Well, we worked on piece work on them trucks on the repair floor. You get well the .... change of transmission or transfer case, of course transfer case was Timkin and the transmission was from oh it could have been a Ford transmission or .. Warner, it could have been three or four different kinds. They give you a work order see, and so much to they paid so much for changing that transmission or whatever you had to do on them parts that were furnished. This Timkin was in Detroit there and they ah, they had a man up there most of the time. But ah, when you get done at night, if you change four transmissions, why, I think if I remember right, I made up time for a long time, I think we got \$12.50 for trying to change the transmission. You'd throw them into the group. Or exchange a transfer case, I forgot what that was. Whatever, and things like that you'd put in there, see, then ah, we got a 25 or 50 trucks out, they was around 50, 25 down each lane to get them out, why you can make \$2.25 an hour. But if you didn't, why if we got our trucks everyday, we wouldn't use none of them work orders we had, they called them, see. And we'd keep them. And some day when the production was down or something they missed three trucks why you add them in, so you always made your money.

IB: You always had something to do.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Um, I'm wondering if what the change was between working during the war and earning a certain amount and after the war and through the '50's, did, were there pay increases, things got better financially for the worker?

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Fuller: Well after the war, they got better. When they were working piece work, during the war, there wasn't piece work, it was all day rate. Of course, that was ah, that was cost plus you know.

IB: Cost plus?

Fuller: Yes, the government whatever, whatever they'd pay so much, then the government would kick in the rest of it, see

IB: Oh okay.

Fuller: If they paid a \$1 an hour, why they'd put in 10 percent, cost plus.

Wife: During the war they worked seven days a week.

Fuller: Yeah, 12 hours a day.

IB: You worked a 12 hour shift?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: And were there three shifts then?

Fuller: No there

IB: No there couldn't have been. (laughter)

Wife: No, there had to be two.

IB: Yeah, right.

Fuller: There was just two.

IB: But in your department, you worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Did you get overtime, like for Saturday and Sunday or holidays?

Fuller: I

IB: I was just wondering if overtime is something that came along later or

Fuller: I don't think we did, but we could have, I don't remember.

IB: I remember my mother was saying .....



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Wife: They worked holidays too. His sister and brother-in-law worked .... anyway they would come over, he would come over to his sister's for dinner, Christmas or Thanksgiving.

IB: And go right back to work.

Fuller: They'd give us an hour off for noon.

IB: Oh.

Fuller: Yeah. I worked ..... 36 hours or something down there once straight.

IA: Oh my goodness.

IB: During the war?

Fuller: Yeah. Boss told me, he says if you will stay and work, I'll give you a day off. So I stayed there ..... remember how many hours it was, but it was a long time.

IB: Day off, you probably slept all day, because you were tired.

Fuller: Finally got a day off and

IB: No I bet you came home and worked on the farm.

Fuller: Oh yeah. I was milking cows yet then, six, seven, eight cows twice a day.

IB: My gosh, you must have had to do an awful lot of extra things.

Wife: I worked out in the field a little bit, but I never did milk. I didn't work in the barn. Well I did one time too.

Fuller: Fed the cows at noon probably or something.

Wife: That was before, we just had one child.

Fuller: Now

Wife: ... I used to go out and ride on the tractor ..... pick up stones and ah, .....

IB: Oh my. So why did they want to change it from a piece ... what was the reason for that?

Fuller: I don't

IB: You don't know?

Fuller: I have no idea.

IB: Well maybe they just thought from how they'd make more that way or something?

Fuller: Yeah, I guess so. Well there was some in there that wasn't on piece work and I guess that's what was bothering some of them.

IB: Maybe they didn't make as much.

Fuller: They didn't. The one that was on piece work was making more money, but the ones that weren't in the group, they made the \$1.50 an hour and we was making \$2.25 .... that group. Piece work was a good thing.

IB: Was it?

Fuller: Yes, we'd get a guy in there, if he didn't want to work, we'd boot him out. Go to him and get him up .... now you either go to work or you are going over there and work day rates. You've got your choice. It was a good thing the boss didn't have to do anything, but the guys who working there, we wanted to make our money every day. If he didn't want to work, why he'd be over there working for \$1.50 an hour. A good thing.

IB: Did you have anything, like you had the pension plan, did you? You had, the workers down on the floor didn't have a pension plan?

Fuller: No, not until later they got that. Cappaert stoled that.

IA: Yeah, we heard about that.

IB: So when the shop closed, you were just plain out of work.

Fuller: I come home.

IB: Did you know, we talked to somebody that said that they had no idea and they went to work that morning and the place was padlocked. Did that happen to you?

Fuller: .....

Wife: ... the day before the door closed.

IB: Oh you did, you knew it was coming.

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Fuller: Oh yes I knew what was coming. I was on repair for it, I stayed until all the trucks was gone. Sure I knew exactly when I was going to leave. You know, I was 58 years old when that thing closed down, now where do you go to look for a job when you are 58 years old?

IB: You are too young to really

Fuller: I sat around here, I guess, we went to Florida I remember that winter and then I come back went ice fishing. Come along the first of March, I told my wife I got to find something to do, this is driving me crazy, I can't do that mess. I started out looking for a job and it wasn't long I had two jobs. I could have had. In fact, there ... starting out they were making trucks over there and I

IB: Oh Spartan Motors, yeah.

Fuller: and put my application in and in the meantime I went down to American Sunroof, yeah, we got a job here for you, \$3.50 an hour watchman, I says I'll take it. It is better than nothin. I went home and told her and she says you might better draw unemployment. I said shut up, I got my foot in the door anyway. Three months time I was out working in the tool crib making \$7.35 an hour.

IB: For American Sunroof?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: That's in Lansing on the south side?

Fuller: It was off from Pennsylvania.

IB: Yeah.

Fuller: Down in

Wife: What were you making at Diamond Reo when you quit?

Fuller: About \$5.35 I believe.

IB: So you went in the beginning from \$1.28 was it?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Through all those years until 1970's and

Fuller: Yeah, 30 years there pretty near.

Wife: He wasn't making much anyway, \$6 ....

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Fuller: Well if I made \$11,000, \$12,000 a year that was boy I thought I was rich. That was a lot of money.

IB: You could buy more with it then too.

Fuller: Oh yes.

IB: So that was enough to keep the family and the farm and everything going?

Fuller: Oh yeah. We got along good. We had a new car once and a while.

IB: And three children.

Wife: Three children.

Fuller: Took a trip once and a while.

IB: Plus you put the boys through college.

Fuller: Yes.

Wife: Twice and our daughter, she went to LCC. And here is our three little, sweet little granddaughters.

IB: They are precious, I've been looking at them.

Wife: They live right here in ....

IB: Oh so you get to see them often.

Wife: I get to see them, I get to baby-sit.

IB: And I see the one up on the TV there.

Wife: This one is our great-granddaughter.

IB: Oh my goodness. Since you started, wonderful. Oh they just grow up too fast.

Wife: One in Texas ..... And our daughter has three.

IB: Now she is the one, your daughter

Wife: ... married to a, her husband is .....

IB: Oh. The so the boys had no wish to go into say to Oldsmobile?

Fuller: I didn't want them to. I said the only thing I ever going to give you is an education. If you don't get it, too bad.

Wife: Well they had their foot in the door, they

Fuller: Oh they worked.

Wife: Jerry worked at Diamond Reo for just a ...

Fuller: Yeah, one summer there.

IB: Oh did he, just before they closed.

Wife: Just a very short time. He was still in college and .....

Fuller: He made up his mind right then that wasn't for him.

Wife: The didn't, neither one of them wanted to farm.

Fuller: I didn't want them to. I figured they could make a living easier than I did.

Wife: And our oldest son worked a couple summers in Portland at Holly Carburetor. That wasn't for him either.

IB: Well that's

Fuller: He didn't want to get his hands dirty.

Wife: ..... we ..... if they wanted to, you know.

IB: Well then they have a better life, more education would bring a better life.

Wife: ..... to work.....

IB: Oh I guess I wanted to ask you about labor relations and you said earlier if you had a problem you solved it yourself. Did you ever have, or were there any real problems between say management and labor.

Fuller: They thought they wanted it but they wanted them people to call the steward and the committee managers to get out of work. They wasn't kidding me any. They stand around there guard you for two hours.

IB: Just to get a break?

Fuller: Sure, they weren't fooling me any.

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IB: And the only strike or walkout or picket line thing was the one you talked about right after the war.

Fuller: Yeah, four weeks.

IA: Oh that was for four weeks?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Oh four weeks. And I remember that there was a, of course, this was nationwide coal strikes, steel strike

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: Reo ... strike and all that and didn't that affect you, were you out of work then?

Fuller: No. No.

Wife: You were out of work one time when we went to Florida. Cindy was a first year at LCC.

Fuller: Well that was after, when the Reo was down, it was closing up.

Wife: I know it was down, but ... down.

Fuller: Yeah, it was closing up.

IB: When was that?

Wife: ..... he went back to work when

Fuller: No I started drawing my unemployment and then I went fishing and ah, then I went and got a job over at American Sunroof.

IB: So the work was hard, but you feel like it was well spent.

Fuller: Sure. Yeah.

IB: Like it was good to be there at the Reo during those years.

Fuller: Sure, I enjoyed it.

IB: And you would have stayed on until retirement, until full retirement, had they not closed?

Fuller: Yeah. I didn't have long to go either.

IB: We've heard stories about how depressing it was for a lot of people that worked there. Some of them, you know, later in life couldn't get a job and some were so depressed they even committed suicide.

Fuller: Time was, there was three or four that, I think there was four that I knew of. At the time, I forgot now who they was, but ah, well you know, when I left there or before I left. I always told them guys, I says it ain't what you make, it counts as what you save. Then I also told them, I said we should have went to the Olds. I says they can go busted too. Oh no they can't. Well they are not busted, but they are badly bent right now.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Was it different at Olds, did you know people who worked over there?

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IA: Was it around the same kind of a thing or different...

Fuller: It was different. I worked ..... and finally stayed there and it killed me.

IB: Oh was that?

Fuller: Well they put me in the heat and then the hammer shop and I only weighed 145, 150 pounds, maybe 160 and heating them big old long billets(?) they called them and 75 mm shells and you get out here on a pair of tongs and I couldn't hardly stand up, let alone put them in the heater and they had six of them.

IB: This was during the war?

Fuller: Yeah, you loaded them ... up and by the time you got the sixth one loaded the first one was ready to take out and then you'd run over and get that and give it to the guy on the ..... load that and the next time the second one was ready

IB: And these were the 90 mm shells?

Fuller: Ah 75.

IB: Oh 75.

Fuller: And then they built the hundred oh what the heck was them bigger ones, 175 I believe. They were about yay long and about that big around.

IB: I was talking to somebody the other day and they said that those big shells were used on anti-tank or I mean anti-aircrafts and they even mounted some on planes toward the end of the war.

Fuller: I think so, yeah.

IB: That is a pretty big shell to mount on the wings of a plane.

Fuller: Yeah. Of course they got bigger ones than that now.

IB: Oh well they got bigger planes now too. I was really shocked when somebody said that oh yeah, those big 90 mm went ah, on a plane. They said I don't know how the plane ever took off with those things on there, but they did.

IA: So the work was different over there.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IA: On the thing you would have been doing.

Fuller: It was hot in there, smokey..... it wasn't fit for anybody to work in there.

IB: Plus, wasn't it a bigger, in those days it was still kind of a bigger plant than ....

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: a lot more people there. We've heard a lot about the family feel at Reo.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: and that people felt loyal and like they were part of a big family, the folks that worked there.

Wife: .....

IB: Pardon me?

Wife: I think they did feel that way when he worked.

Fuller: Yeah, we all worked together. It was a nice bunch of people. The boss always go up in the morning, he'd look at the time clock and see who was there. He said I always knew who was going to be there. And some people that drove in from the country, but the guys in town couldn't make it.



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IB: Oh like in the winter when the roads were bad.

Fuller: Yeah, when the roads was bad.

IB: Because you guy had the work ethnic maybe a little more and you were used to getting up, no matter what the weather was and going out.

Fuller: A very few days.

IB: Is that right.

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: That must have been quite a drive back before there was some big highways.

Fuller: Twenty-one miles.

IB: Oh 21 miles.

Fuller: Yeah. Yeah, I was driving this 43 over here before it was paved. It was rougher than a cob like it is down here.

IB: Is that right? Well I didn't think that, that's just a little spot but to go 21 miles like that.

Fuller: Ah of course, it was just between here and Grand Ledge.

IB: Yeah.

Fuller: And then you hit the pavement there, but yeah that was interesting. I guess if I had my life to live over again, I'd probably do the same thing.

IB: Were there a lot of people who had farms that worked at Reo? You know who tried to do both?

Fuller: Well not too many, no.

IB: Not that many.

Fuller: No.

Wife: His boss lived on a farm. ....

IB: Yeah.

Fuller: .....

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IB: I know when I was a kid, a lot of the people around Clarksville, I think a lot of them worked at Reo, they used to, they were farmers and they would car pool in to Lansing and I was always amazed, that seemed so far. But now they drive, of course, the roads are better and the cars, they drive down from Alma and St. Louis and who knows where, Saginaw.

Fuller: We had a couple guys there from Reo that lived in Carson City and drove it every day. Hardly ever missed a day.

IB: Is that right.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: From Carson City.

Fuller: Yeah, they hardly ever missed a day.

Wife: Well how old was Andy Smith when he worked there?

Fuller: I had an old neighbor up here. He went to work at the Olds when he was 70 years old.

IB: Went to work, hired in?

Fuller: He hired in when he was 70 years old. The old fellow he laughed about it, he says I went down there and they felt of my arm and I was warm and they hired me.

Wife: That's right, he never worked at the Reo.

Fuller: No he worked at

Wife: They rode together, I was thinking

Fuller: He couldn't drive, so he used to ride with me and then I'd drive his car, but ah, he worked there for 10 years.

IB: What did he do?

IA: Until he was 80?

IB: He what?

Fuller: Swept the floor and

IB: He swept floors.

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Fuller: Oh they had an awful time with that old guy. He couldn't stand to sit around and always worked hard all of his life.

IB: Sure.

Fuller: When he'd get his work done, he was doing everybody else's work, you know. That always tickled me to death, I'll never forget it as long as I live. Every time he'd get paid for a holiday, he didn't earn it, he went back to Grand Ledge and Fuller, you got to stop in here, he says I want to buy a drink. He'd go in and he'd get a fifth of whiskey, ah, a bottle of mix and whoever, let's see he bought six paper cups, we had to get off on the side road, and we had to have a drink on Andy, because he'd laugh he say, oh that tickled him, he got paid for nothing, you know.

IB: I think he would have been a nice man to know.

Fuller: Oh he was.

IB: It sounds like he is a bowl of fun.

Fuller: He was. Yeah.

IB: He had to share it with other people.

Fuller: Oh.

IB: Things like that make life more, they make the work go better, don't they?

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Like your jokes down on the line.

Wife: ... when they worked, they were next door with their tool and they'd stop ..... they could stop and... they never stopped at the bars or anything like that. They would stop .... Quality Dairy wasn't it?

Fuller: No, ah, they had a drugstore there in Grand Ledge used to make chocolate malts there on the corner, we'd always stop in there and get a malted.

Wife: Well anyway once and a while they'd get a malted.

Fuller: You can't go to the drugstore anymore and get one, because they don't make em.

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IB: When I was a little girl, I used to go to the drugstore and get ice cream sodas and things.

IA: Oh that was such fun.

IB: Yeah.

IA: We had a soda fountain.

Fuller: We had an ice cream parlor here in Mulliken. They started up during the Depression.

IB: Oh really?

Fuller: Oh yeah, he peddled milk and he started making ice cream, oh, they made the best ice cream up there. They sold it for \$1 a gallon. Yeah. Go up there and you get, I don't know they only had three or four flavors there, I forgot what they was.

IA: Probably Strawberry, vanilla

Fuller: Oh yeah, go in there and get a big old dish of ice cream for a dime. Yeah.

IA: I'm getting hungry.

IB: Was Mulliken a bigger town?

Fuller: Mulliken?

IB: In those days. Of course.....

Fuller: A good many years ago it was bigger.

IB: It was bigger.

IA: Was it?

Wife: Oh yeah there was more stores. More people.

Fuller: When I was a kid they used to to have three grocery stores there, a clothing stores and a hardware store and a theater and ah

IB: Oh there was a theater?

Fuller: Oh yeah, drugstore and

Wife: Two bars, was there?

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IB: Oh I bet there was, yeah. You have to have those.

Fuller: Before they ever got any bear, yeah, they Fred Wheeler run a card room there.

IB: Card room?

Fuller: Yeah.

Wife: Free shows in the summer.

IB: Oh I hate to see the little towns disintegrated.

IA: Oh a drive-in.

Wife: Yeah, drive-in ..... it was free.

Fuller: They put up a sheet on the side of the hall down there and show the pictures on it.

IA: Oh my.

IB: We did that in Holt when I was a little girl too. You could go to the free show every Saturday night.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: And that was in the '30's and boy that meant a lot to families. Nobody had any money.

Fuller: They had one here and they had one in Sunfield and .. else. Merchants would all kick in a few dollars and some ... from Lansing

IA: They probably made a lot of money on ice cream those nights, right? People coming down.

IB: Well the men that gave them in Holt owned a gas station and it was called Save a Dollar Hunters gas station. And so it was right on Cedar Street, so it was Save a Dollar Hunters free shows. And so I imagine that the men that had cars and had any money to buy gas would probably come there and buy their gas as a result. And during the intermission, if you would get up and sing or recite a poem you could get an ice cream cone.

Side 2

Fuller: ... in 1925.

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IB: .....

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: Oh they bought a Reo fire truck.

Fuller: Oh yeah. Yeah, they went around the banker went around and he got \$20 off an old farm machine ..... (can't hear) and bought that fire truck.

IA: I wonder how much that would have cost? When was this, did you say?

Fuller: Back in the '30's.

IA: In the '30's.

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: We've got an old Reo fire truck down at the museum. I think it is a 1940, I think it was one of the last ones made before the war. I wonder if the fire trucks, I wonder if they were the same chassis and everything that you used for the big trucks?

Fuller: Oh yeah. Yeah. They still got em..... fire trucks, you got one diesel and one gas truck yet I think.

IB: A reo?

IA: Are they in use at all?

Fuller: Oh yeah, sure, they got

IA: Really?

Fuller: sure they got a fire barn up there and four trucks in it and they keep them shined up.

IA: I'd love to see them.

Fuller: I got over there once and a while when I have to. Yeah, we got a real active fire department here in Mulliken, it is all volunteer but ah

IA: That's interesting.

IB: Are there Reo trucks on the road yet too? Ah, somebody that we interviewed a while back said that they still see Reo trucks.

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Fuller: They are still building them.

IB: Well yes, they are building them in Pennsylvania. What I was thinking about are the older ones that are still

Fuller: Oh yeah.

Wife: Like once and a while we'll see one, .... truck, but I don't know.

IB: The ones in Pennsylvania are almost handmade.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IB: And I didn't know that until a volunteer at the museum did, went there to visit the place and did an article on it that was published.

Fuller: Yeah. I was up here at the elevator one day and guy in there and I looked that truck over and ..... four years ago. .. Reo truck, so we started talking, I said where did you get that truck out there. Why he says I bought it over at Saginaw. They are still selling them over there. And he told me they were still building them down in Pennsylvania. Well I knew that they had sold six patents to that guy in Pennsylvania, but I guess that one big one is the one they only ever built.

IB: The giant is the one he's building. Yeah, I think he isn't doing anything with the others.

Fuller: No, I think .....

IB: I think he wants to keep things small, but running well. You know, as opposed to expanding out to the ...

Fuller: Look at this ... right over here at Charlotte, that a

IB: Spartan Motors.

Fuller: Oh, that thing is, them guys went over there and started in with nothing and that thing is just expanding, they got work the last I knew, they had orders ahead for nine months.

IB: And a lot of those people are former Reo people.

Fuller: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, I could have worked over there, but I already got that other job. I told the guy I didn't want to quit. Yeah, they are going great guns over there. They also built chassis for ah, motor homes over there too.

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IB: Oh they do? What else do they do there? I'm not

Fuller: Just build trucks.

IB: They build trucks.

Fuller: Yeah. And big trucks.

IB: Spartan Motor, are they called Spartan Motors?

Fuller: Yeah, yeah.

IB: The trucks I mean?

Fuller: Called Spartan, I guess.

IB: Oh.

Fuller: I'm not sure what they call them.

IB: Okay.

Fuller: I don't know .... people still working .....

IA: Oh really? We are going over there next week.

IB: Yeah.

IA: So we are looking forward to that.

Fuller: I was always going to go over, ... but I never did.

IB: Yeah, I'm very excited about seeing it.

IA: Me too.

Fuller: I think them over there more or less hand built.

IB: Yeah.

Fuller: I think, I could be wrong, but I think they are.

IB: We've also heard from a lot of other people about the kind of pride that people had in the trucks that were built. They were very you know they were around for a long time, they are good, well made things.

IA: It felt like you were making a good product.



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IB: Yeah. And that the company took a lot of care in keeping them up too.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: .....

Fuller: Well another thing that hurt the Reo down there, they hired in a lot of these college graduates and they didn't know any more about the development of truck ..... They had education, but they, they didn't know how to build trucks.

IB: In the supervisory positions or on the lines?

Fuller: Oh the supervisory.

IB: Supervisors.

Fuller: Yes up in the front office there. They didn't know what they were doing.

IB: So they'd come in with new ideas and things that weren't really practical.

Fuller: That didn't work.

IB: They want you to change the way you did things?

Fuller: They was always changing something down there. They'd build ... truck down there with ..... forget what they called it, they were going to sell it to farmers. I told one of the foremen there, I said a farmer is smarter than that. He ain't going to buy them trucks. Those stupid things had a cab on it, it wasn't any good.

IB: What else was wrong with them? Why else wouldn't the farmer buy one?

Fuller: Well it wasn't heavy enough to begin with. They had a Chevrolet motor in them. If a man was going to buy a Reo truck, he wants a Reo motor in it.

IB: This is later on though.

Fuller: Oh yeah. That is just .....

IA: I understand that the Reo built some good engines.

Fuller: Oh yes, that six they built there, well it would be for .... but that six they put that in all them Army trucks. You couldn't beat em.

IA: We were told too, I think, Louie Garcia, I don't know if you knew him.

Fuller: Yeah, I knew who he was. He worked up in the press room.

IB: That's right.

IA: Yeah. But we had talked to him and ah, besides being a lot of fun to talk to because he is very colorful

IB: And lively guy.

IA: was talking about the engine, the ah, that would run any kind of fuel, melted butter

Fuller: Now the ... fuel.

IA: The ... fuel and that was an eight cylinder I think.

Fuller: Yeah, I worked on a lot of them.

IA: Did you?

Fuller: That motor was made in Muskegon, it was Continental Motor.

IA: Oh.

Fuller: They said they'd run on anything, but they worked a heck a lot better on fuel oil. (laughter)

IA: I was thinking, gosh if the Germans had had access to that type of engine too, you know, the war might have gone on for a few more years, because they ran out of fuel and their army couldn't move. That was one of the big things that caused them to lose.

Fuller: Yeah, they

IA: Because they were having to run a alcohol or whatever they could get. Somebody said you could always tell a German vehicle coming, because you could smell it miles before, because of the stuff they were trying to run in the engines.

Fuller: Yeah, I had forgot about them molefumes(?).

IB: Yeah, we thought that was very interesting.

IA: I thought it was too. You see a soldier sitting there by the side of the road melting butter to

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IB: Or put in some other kind of liquid.

IA: Yeah a little alcohol, huh.

IB: Right, exactly. As long as you warmed it, I think, Louis said, whatever you put in you had to warm it.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: Then it would run.

Fuller: They have a heater on them that ah,

IB: Oh they did?

Fuller: Oh yeah. You'd press a button and heat that motor up .... a lot of these.. well maybe not so anymore, but they used to put one on ... glow plug on these diesels.

IB: A glow plug.

Fuller: Yeah. Press that button and then heat that thing up about five minutes and away you go.

IB: Oh.

Fuller: I don't know whether they whether they do them anymore and probably they got them fixed now so you don't have to. I don't know.

IA: ..... how did they know that they would run on anything. Did they try different things?

Fuller: Well they said they did, but I never seen it.

IA: Oh.

Fuller: So I don't know.

IB: It seems like they'd clog up the carburetor or something. Do they have a different kind of carburetor do you suppose?

Fuller: Ah,

IB: Or filters, different kind of filters.

Fuller: Oh yeah.

IA: And it cools them .....

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IB: Yeah, I mean of course like you said so, you push that button when you get back, but you'd have to wait to heat it up before you could go anywhere. You couldn't even jump in and take off.

Fuller: Yeah, .... yeah.

IA: You know that probably wouldn't be a very good thing.

Fuller: I ah, it is so wonder we didn't, we'd never ..... fuel oil, it is no wonder we didn't try it ... on something else, but we didn't.

IB: Well where was the, I suppose it was on the streets of Lansing, but the test track for the trucks?

Fuller: That was on the Lansing streets.

IB: Right on the street.

Fuller: Yeah.

Wife: .....

Fuller: Oh yeah...

IB: Oh did you? Were you suppose to check it out or something?

Fuller: Well I think I got stuck down there without a ride home. My boss said we'll let you drive a truck home if you will stay. So I stayed and I drove a truck home. I think that's what happened probably.

IB: Did you ever want to buy a Reo truck?

Fuller: Well if I had any use for one I wouldn't have been afraid of em. Not at all. They made pickups once too.

IB: They did?

Fuller: Yeah. If they'd of had a decent cab on it they'd have sold a lot of them too, but they

IA: What was the problem with the cab?

Fuller: Well they tried to put the same cab on that they did the trucks. It just looked out of place.

IA: Too big.

Fuller: Yeah, it looked out of place.

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IB: It makes me think of the old Reo Speedwagons, you know, the early pickups.

Fuller: Yeah.

IB: They have funny looking cabs too.

Fuller: Before my brother-in-law went to Reo to work, eh worked for the state. He used to go over to Ionia to get the prisons in the daytime and take them on out the road to work and I said to him I said ain't you afraid of them prisoners will get out of there. It is just a box on the back. No, he said I drive 60 miles an hour, they don't dare jump out. (laughter)

IB: Was it a Reo truck he was using?

Fuller: Yeah, a Speedwagon, one of them old Reo Speedwagons. No he said they go 60 miles an hour, they don't dare jump out. And he said I believe he did too.

IB: There used to be a big prisoner war camp at Lake Odessa.

Fuller: Yeah.

IA: Yeah, my grandpa lived in Clarksville and they had a store, but he also farmed outside of town and they would bring in the prisoners in the morning and the different farmers would come into town and take however many prisoners they needed to work in their fields that day. Ah huh, and then at night he'd bring them back in and the big trucks from the prison camp would come in and each farmer would bring back his five or six or however many and they'd go. But maybe the same thing because I always wondered why did, well once and a while one or two would try to escape, but that would be from the main campus, so ah, I don't know how in the world you'd think you could ever get back to Germany from the middle of Michigan. I mean, it wouldn't be like in Europe where all the European countries wouldn't help you anyway, because they were tired of being oppressed by the Germans. But here we were all happy with our government, I think. And ah, I can't imagine trying to make your way to New York and get on a ship and

Fuller: They had a bunch of them up here to Lake Odessa working on the .... as I remember.

IB: In the what factory?

Fuller: Cannon factory.

IA: Cannon.

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IB: Cannon.

Fuller: Yeah,

Wife: Canning factory.

IB: Oh canning.

Fuller: Canning factory.

IB: I'm sorry. I thought, I didn't know they made cannons over here.

Wife: Yeah, they used to, ..... they don't can, it is still there, but they freeze.

IA: Vegetables.

IB: I just have a couple of questions also about um, your background and your ... and stuff. Um, you said your folks had the farm in um, Eaton County, that's where you grew up.

Fuller: Yeah, yeah.

IB: And did they grow up here too in Michigan or

Fuller: My dad grew up in Holland, Michigan.

IB: Okay.

Fuller: My mother was born somewheres around Sunfield.

IB: Okay, so even from your parents this area is their home.

Fuller: Yeah. I'm within five miles ..... never got very far away.

IB: Ah huh.

Fuller: Well I did too, ..... come back.

IB: And your grandparents, did they also come from around here too? Around Michigan, or did they come from Europe or

Fuller: Granddad Fuller comes from New York, but I suppose he come, or his folks might have come from I have no idea.

IB: When you get that far back it is hard to know.

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Fuller: Yeah. I'm learning, I always looked ahead. I could care less about my genealogy.

IB: Oh. Okay, well that's all I need to know about that. Anything else Shirley for you?

IA: No I can't think of anything. Thank you very much for talking with us. We really appreciate your memories, sharing your memories.