

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 1

IA: This is Shirley Bradley, Lisa Fine and this is March

IB: 1993 and we are at the home of Herbert Heinz and what is your
address Mr. Heinz?

Heinz: 1944 Dexter Trail

IA: And that is Dansville

Heinz: Dansville

IA: Michigan. And we are going to be interviewing him on on Reo history.

IB: Okay, we always start by just getting a little background information
about you. Um, where you are from and ah, where you went to school
and those kinds of things just so that we have some background. Did
you grow up around here, Dansville area?

Heinz: ... I've been in this area, within a 10 miles radius anyway all my
life. I went to Dansville school.

IB: Okay.

Heinz: I got too smart for the teachers and quit in the 10th grade.
(laughter)

IB: Okay.

Heinz: And ah,

IA: Were your parents farmers out here?

Heinz: Dad and mother were farmers, I was a farmer but not at heart, I was a
mechanic more or less all my life.

IA: Like ransom.

IB: Right.

Heinz: And ah,

IB: So you are interested in mechanical things, even from the beginning.
Yeah.

Heinz: Yeah, I ah, was finally, I finally a guy come up to me and they go to
Reo. Well I tried to get into Reo in 1941, they wouldn't even give
you the paper, an application. I was 17, draft age, 4F
classification and ah, so I went back in '51 and I walked in and put

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 2

in an application, I put my name on it and ah, my address and that's work here and I looked for things to put the application, I stuck it in a slot and before I got out of there, Jerry Byrd is the first middle manager called me back in and hired me. And there was 50 people standing in there waiting for a job. And I worked there until the last, I'm one of the last 14 men that worked there.

IA: Ah huh, starting in 1951?

Heinz: ... November 6, 1951 and the last day I worked, I worked for the Reo and I worked for the bankrupt company that took over. The last day I worked I think was October 19, 1974, one of the last 14 men to come out of there.

IA: What did you get hired on to do?

Heinz: I was electrician.

IA: Did you get, did you have training from the war?

Heinz: I had no training.

IA: You had no training.

Heinz: No training. I couldn't even keep my taillight lit on my car actually. They hired me, Floyd Mcbulski hired me. And I went to Sears Roebuck that night and bought a, an electrical book. Paid 35 cents for it and brought it home and read it and the light struck and I knew what I knew electricity and I just wired trucks. Some of them are more complicated than houses to wire.

IA: Oh is that right?

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: I made wire harnesses for some of the first models. The engineering garage never even made them. And ah,

IA: This is for the trucks.

Heinz: This is for trucks. I made the first wire harness for fire trucks with full light flasher lights like they have today. I made that wire harness and engineering says make an extra one so that they'd have one in case the truck burns up or needs a harness. And I never got a bit of credit for any engineering that I had done there. And anything in engineering didn't want to do or couldn't do, they sent it to me. And when I did had electrical work to do, I done anything, I helped anybody and if I didn't have nothin to do, as I said I vanished. Well I knew that shop inch by inch. For everything people come to me and ask me for parts. And it was running short on

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 3

the line one day a gas tank brackets a guy come to me and say ... any gas tank brackets and I told him go down on dock 4 on the north dock on the east end, there are probably 500 of them laying there. That's how much I knew about the Reo.

IA: When you got started on, were you the young, the young. When you got started out in the early '50's, were you one of the young ones in your group?

Heinz: I was the lowest seniority of my department.

IA: So there is some old-timers there who and were like what you ended up being. People who knew their way around.

Heinz: I was an old-timer when I left.

IA: Right, that's what I mean.

Heinz: I went in there in 19, I went in there in '51 and I could have went to the motor plant for \$1.90 an hour. I went in the repair floor for \$1.40 an hour and the boss says in 30 days time if you prove out, we'll give you a nickel raise. The next 30 days got a nickel and the next you got three raises. I worked there I think five weeks and on a Friday the boss come to me with the supervisor and handed me my check and he says don't show this check to nobody. He says we are giving you your three 5 cent raises, plus a 10 cents merit. And that put me in a bracket that I was making 10 cents an hour more than the guy that was there for 25 years.

IA: Oh my.

Heinz: And I had worked there a little over 30 days. I didn't go in there, I didn't go in there to goof off, I went in there to work. On the farm like that, you went to work, you went to work. You had to work to make a dollar. And that was my theory of work regardless. I had the union on me for doing things that the boss told me to do, but the union didn't like what I was doing.

IA: Who was your supervisor the one that got you these raises right from the start?

Heinz: Floyd Nebloski the man that hired me and Floyd Swartz.

IA: I'm sorry, how did you spell Nebloski? Would that be

Heinz: N e l s e e, N e b l o s k i.

IA: Okay, you know, somebody has mentioned his name before.

IB: Nebloski. Yeah.

Herbert Heinz

3-16-93

Page 4

Heinz: He was everybody, everybody tell I was his pet. Everybody didn't have ... like me there.

IA: He's passed away now.

Heinz: Yeah, he's been gone now. But he give me this he told me one time he said, if I could get three more men like you, I'd lay off them other 12 over here. And ah, I done more work I found out after I worked there, I done more work the first day and not knowing what I was doing actually, I done more work in the first day than the guy that they laid off or fired did in three days, the first day I worked there.

IA: And you didn't really know what you were doing when you went in there?

Heinz: No, I couldn't even keep my taillight early.

IA: You could figure it out.

Heinz: And ah a guy by the name of Elton Nicely just a little bit of a guy about he is about about 5 foot, he was a little bit a midget ... and he was the guy that broke me in on the wiring job.

IA: Who was that?

Heinz: Alton Night. Shorty Night. Shorty Melton

IB: Yeah, Elton Nicely, we have his name on our list and

IA: Oh I thought we interviewed him.

IB: I don't think so.

Heinz: He lives on ... Street just east of McDonalds.

IB: Yeah, we haven't seen him yet, but he is on our list.

Heinz: Well you better get to see him, because last time I heard he

IB: In the hospital, yeah I remember that.

IA: Oh that's why we haven't because he's been ill.

IB: Right, right.

Heinz: But ah, yeah I can still remember him today. I got a flatbed truck like this one setting up here with a neighbor up here, where the bed was down.... and I had to put turn signals on the rear end of it and then there was no harnesses made like that and bowl of water came

with the turn signals and he says this is how you do it. He took that wire and he hunched up some how, water creeper and he ... between the axles and stuff and strung that wire and come up by the front wheel. He says that's how you do it. And that was my breakin. That was my breakin. That's how you do it and walked away.

IA: Oh my goodness.

IB: You had to connect everything up.

IA: You stood there wondering.

Heinz: By the time I got it, I went and got Walter Peterson's creeper which is the next bay over, I got that, by the time I got that laid down, he come out of their front wheel and he says that's how we do it. And that was the only time, that was my breakin for that first day. But I done more work that day than another guy did in three days.

IA: Now a creeper is a little flatbed thing that you lay on your back.

IB: Lay on.

IA: And slide under a truck with wheels on.

Heinz: Yeah. You take me and a little guy about this tall

IA: Yeah, right we are thinking about that.

Heinz: And he crawled through underneath that truck, he never got on the floor. underneath that thing but a .. tire, he says that's the way you do it.

IA: Oh my goodness.

Heinz: I still remember little ... doing that.

IA: What is a harness? I kind of basically know but for the record, what is a harness? You talked about wiring a harness for these trucks.

Heinz: Well making harnesses that would make a turn signal harness

IA: The lights.

Heinz: The lights or the engine harness and ah,

IA: It is a series of wires put together in a certain way.

Heinz: A series of wires put in a bundle and hook to this point and that point to make the generator work and the lights work and the motor work ah, two gauges and all that.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 6

IA: Okay.

Heinz: I would make a, I would string the wire from this point to that point, and then I'd tip it in the gutter and just leave the ends sticking out at certain points

IA: So they could be connected

Heinz: So they connected to it.

IA: Okay.

Heinz: I could, I changed so many wire harnesses in trucks in the old Reo trucks that I could stand on my back and take a springer wrench in my left hand and go under a dash and unhook the whole wire harness off the dash if it would burn out, take another wire harness stand here and put the whole wire harness in, hook it up and stand there and talk to you just like that and everything working ... I've done it so many times.

IB: Like in your sleep, huh.

Heinz: I pretty near went crazy one time, I woke up at night sometimes and I would wire ... around my neck. (laughter)

IB: Oh my.

IA: So you were in the truck department,

Heinz: Truck repair department.

IA: Truck repair, okay.

Heinz: Yeah, most of elec, automotive electrician.

IB: Now where was that located? That part of the plant?

Heinz: Well,

IB: Was it on Washington or Baker or was it

Heinz: It was off of Baker Street on ah, what it be west of the motor plant. The motor plant was like this and the railroad track, and then there was another building and then there was Platt Street running down through here.

IB: Ah huh, okay.

Heinz: It used to be Platt Street, it was on the east side of that.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 7

IB: But you were right off Baker.

Heinz: Yes.

IB: You'd go into, you'd walk in on the Baker Street side.

Heinz: Yeah, whenever I walked down the ramp right there on Baker Street, there was a ramp built, we drove the trucks out of there. We used to go in there and then Platt Street, Platt Street runs

IB: North and south.

Heinz: north and south. It used to go clear, clear across the railroad tracks I guess, but anyway it got blocked off, but they used that as a Platt Street used to bring in the trucks to go into the dock down to the receiving dock. And then years later, they changed that over Avenue, but

IB: I see. Okay. Did you work on any military?

Heinz: No, I worked on very little military.

IB: Because they were doing a lot of military that whole time.

Heinz: They built militaries there, but I ah, long towards the last one time, a guy they took and made one guy, Lester Williams, he was my foreman, he got mad at me and put me on militaries.

IB: So that was punishment to be on the military? That was a bad thing.

Heinz: And ah, well I told people, a lot of them never liked me down there. They always call me Denny Dansville because so many Herbs in there, Herbie Sills, Herbie Sills named me Danny Dansville. And they called me Danny. But that's why nobody knows, hardly knows who I am because Danny Dansville was altogether different but they Herb ah, I don't know who he is now, but started the Pennway Coffee Shop out there on Boston Avenue.

IB: On Pennsylvania Avenue.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: And Herb Ritz.

Heinz: Herb Ritz was one of them. I don't know. So,

IB: So you are alias Danny Dansville.

Heinz: I'm alias Danny Dansville.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 8

IB: This is the first alias we've interviewed, yeah.

Heinz: That was ah, that was

IB: So you were on the military just for a little bit? Just

Heinz: I was on there when Lester Williams they got mad at me they put me on on over on military and I basically they weren't nothing to them as far as wiring, but I asked him what I had to do and he says adjust the headlights on the militaries. We was running eight jobs a day. And that's all they told me to do. So I done just as he told me. I adjusted eight sets of headlights. One job an hour, it would take you about 5 minutes to adjust the headlights and I goofed up because it made me mad but also by doing just what he told me to do, it made it easier for me. I had nothing to do which drove me crazy anyway because there was nothin to do. And Terrill came down there and wanted me to go to engineering garage and I told him that was about the time that engineering garage was, I could see it myself and the place was going, see. And I says I've been trying to get in there every since I've been here, but you would never let me, but now for some reason he wanted me to go over to engineering garage. Well I guess they wanted to get me off of this department.

IB: Why would they want to do that?

Heinz: I don't know, but maybe people just didn't care for me. 'Cause I was too, I don't know. I was, I'm an oddball or something. Anyway, I told him, I says ah, Bill, that is Bill the personnel manager, I says why should I go over there. I'm working for Baldy Wintz, they called him Baldy, his name was Buster, but they called him Baldy. And ah, I said why should I go over there, I got the best job ... here and I says so and so got mad at me he gave me this job, and says all I got to do is adjust eight sets of headlights a day. I says that's my day's work, eight sets, it would take me about 5 minutes, but I probably work 40 minutes all day long. And you know, old Bill Terrill looked at me, with that funny look, and he went back to the office and about 20 minutes I was off of that job. So that's when I worked on military.

IB: Well you told him it didn't take you long to do it.

Heinz: But, I don't care, I don't care what job they put me on, I was always told I was the only one that ever done nothing in there. I never done nothin in there. At one time when we built, when we started building UPS trucks, these big trucks, these big jobs we built a big order for UPS trucks.

IB: Oh I didn't know that.

Heinz: And ah, there was the model something like that.

Herbert Heinz

3-16-93

Page 9

IB: Oh we are talking big, like a semi cab.

Heinz: And ah, they wouldn't, UPS wouldn't buy them unless I checked it out, and when they first come out, they would draw up a blueprint which for the to wire and the panels to put in there on the gauges and every truck would come down there, I'd have to take all the gauges out and replace them. And I couldn't figure it out and they kept me busy wanting them trucks and I was busier than a duck with changes these gauges getting these trucks running. So I went up to wire room orVerdi, I don't know what her last name was, Verdi something but she was wiring these panels, I more or less worked with her on new stuff, on new motors. And I went over and I looked at the print and I figured out, they draw the print up for King Seeley gauges and they were using AC gauges.

IA: Oh.

IB: Oh.

Heinz: They wired just backwards. I was up there, I went up there and I was alone, nobody I just go on my own up there and I got Gerti to get her print out, I said I want to see your print. wire and ah, she got it out and I looked at it and looked at it and I looked and looked and I said something don't look right. And I look up in the corner here and it says King Seeley gauges.

IB: King Seeley.

Heinz: Yeah, that was the gauge company that made gauges for Ford and make them for I says this is what's wrong and she felt guilty about it, I said these gauges are all wired wrong. And about that time Miltson come up there and he was the boss, the supervisor up there in the ... room and he started chewing me out for I was doing up there and looking on his help up there and I just told him, I didn't care what I talked to him about, I didn't care how I talked to him either. And ah, (shuffling papers) ah, I said I'm trying to get this straightened out so we can get the trucks And ah, I says don't you give this little girl hell for screwing up on them wires, I says she ain't to blame. I says you make a, they made a printout for one gauge and you ah, buy different gauges. So that night she got to with a bunch the rest of them. And every truck from where she was at in the whole system had to have the wires, the gauges, the wiring changed on it. But that's what they wouldn't let me on the department for that sort of a reason because I the whole initiative and done things that that ain't my job, I've heard that so many times and it ain't' my job, it ain't my job. The union is protecting the union is protecting all these people well it ain't my job. And when I, I could see this ah, as the years went by it put three young

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 10

guys to do what one man was doing before, 10 years before. But they would sit up there and they would work pretty good until they get in the union, then the union protected them. They sit down and they had to get someone else in to help them.

IB: Do you think Reo was different because it let people like you do their own work and take more initiative than some of the other auto plants?

Heinz: I would no, I was, I was interested for my own benefit

IB: Right.

Heinz: for job see.

IA: Because you wanted the job

Heinz: I had her two kids to raise. I built this house by my own hands.

IB: You did.

Heinz: And about 99 percent of it. Anyway, I wanted the job regardless, I paid union dues for 25 years, I'm like a free union ... I think.

IA: In 25 years?

Heinz: Yeah.

IA: Did they ever talk to you about not coming to the meetings more often?

Heinz: No, all they want was them union dues. And ah,

IB: Were the union dues very expensive? Did they take a lot out of your check?

Heinz: Well they went I don't know what they did do. They went from

IB: Oh you've got a

Heinz: They took them out so much, I don't know, I guess it was \$5 a month at least.

IA: I just was curious.

IB: You know they always take a big chunk out at Christmastime.

IA: Ah huh. They didn't have a lot of strikes and stuff when you were there.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 11

Heinz: After Cappaert come in there, we went on strike one day.

IB: In '74?

Heinz: Oh '73 or something like that.

IB: '73.

IA: Why did you go on strike?

Heinz: I don't know, I can't remember now, but anyway things weren't going right and ah, they came in there one time when they was going to go bankrupt, I think it was and then the did put locks on the gates and wouldn't let nobody in or let nobody out. And ah,

IB: Those that were there had to stay.

Heinz: Hum?

IB: Those that were inside had to stay inside.

Heinz: Well we didn't have to I guess we got out or but the next day they went on strike I think it was and ah, Cappaert come down, and we's all down at the union hall, down around Cannon Street, that was ... now, but ah, we was all down there and Cappaert come down. He didn't come on the union property, but he got on the backside of the fence and wanted us guys to come back to work. And we went back to work, but Bishop the guy that bought that place, used to work at Druken Trailer Park, the trailer house company in Williamston. He was born and raised around Williamston. And ah, there was a guy by the name of Bishop that worked there. He used to work with him at trailer factory and he told Bishop, Bishop told us this, he said you come to me, he says you will make some money. And he went into trailer house, they tell, this is hearsay, he went in to every trailer house, trailer manufacturer ... in the United States and I don't know how he got in, back into Reo, but the man paid \$16 million you see for the building, for the property and here I don't know how many millions of dollars, he would have this shipped bill to Reo and ship it back to warehouses, he said, but they were building, I think they were still building Diamond Reo trucks in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

IA: That's right.

IB: Yeah, they are building the Reo Giant in Harrisburg.

Heinz: And ah,

IB: You were talking about Cappaert.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 12

Heinz: Yeah, that's

IB: You were saying that's what he used to do.

Heinz: Yes, the old Cappaert, he is the one that bankrupt the company. Besides a lot of the foremans, ... the foremans pickup truck in there load up staff. I seen them take ah, one of the guys take military engines that was suppose to be for government, painted them gold colored for the gold ... engine and hauled them out for stationary engines.

IB: Took them for their own use you are saying?

Heinz: Cappaert used to send these trucks in there. He had a bunch of old beat-up trucks and they used to come in from Vicksburg, Pennsylvania, ah, Vicksburg, Mississippi. And he come in there and ... people... and he come in there with a whole bunch of tires on it and these had whole brand new sets of tires put up, put on them semis and them trailers. He tore up the railroad tracks that was a spur line down in there, he tore them all up and I talked with a driver and he said he was taking them up to ah, I think around Houghton Lake, he's got a big farm up there. He took them railroad tracks right up. I don't think they even belong to him, but he took em.

IB: The tracks themselves?

Heinz: Railroad tracks, the iron railroad tracks.

IA: For for goodness sake. I wonder what he was going to do with them up there.

IB: He just bled it dry, didn't he? He just bled it dry. Yeah.

IA: Took out everything that he thought he could use or sell or whatever.

IB: He'd get money on it, yeah. Yeah. We've heard this from other people too.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Yeah. What was your opinion of him other than what you could see what he was doing. I mean when he came to talk to the men, how did he appear to you?

Heinz: Oh he was just as sweet and he was going to do this. In fact, in fact, after he got there he went at it and oh we are going to go into big business. This is what this is what this is a new model truck that produced about

IB: The Royal Two.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 13

Heinz: in about a year.

IB: This was produced for about a year?

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: This Royale Two.

Heinz: Yeah, yeah and that one there the Raider.

IB: Was the Raider.

Heinz: That Raider.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Oh it is a beautiful, beautiful cab, isn't it?

IA: I remember when they was wanting a name, a name for that truck there.

IB: Oh really, they were looking for a name, how did they come up with it?

Heinz: Somebody in the front office came up with the name.

IA: Yeah, we gave in one or two names for it.

Heinz: Us workers never got nothin from it.

IA: But didn't use our name.

Heinz: ... that's my old girlfriend, how did she get in there?

IB: Oh I got to see her. Is that you?

Wife: That's a girl he used to know.

IB: Oh he was serious, I thought he meant you and that he was teasing.

Heinz: She was graduation day that girl there. She

Wife: I can't remember her name now.

Heinz: She pulled hair and everything else trying to get me to marry her and I

Wife: What was her name?

Heinz: Ah, ...

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 14

IB: Boy this Raider

Wife: He can't remember her name.

IB: Diamond Reo truck is gorgeous.

IA: So you say these trucks were produced for about a year, these Raiders and these um,

IB: Ah huh before the company went

IA: Royales too.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: My gosh and you wired these.

Heinz: Yeah, I made, that's where I worked on there, I worked on all the wire harness, I'm the one that had to reroute and they've burn up, they've had the wires burn out in the dashes of them trucks.

IB: Oh really?

Heinz: And ah, this is another picture of a Reo. I've had, I've set up in here and this dash harness would burn out across here and then I sat up here and redone the whole harness. They wouldn't give me a harness to put in, I had to splice, I spliced wiring in here and a wire over here.

IB: So you had to come up with your own invention.

Heinz: .. the wire like that in there, air-condition, everything on them, they was just loaded with that stuff.

IB: Um, these trucks that you worked on, were they trucks that had been purchased and then they had a problem and they came back and you fixed it or they were coming off the line that way.

Heinz: No. Off the assembly line.

IB: They were coming off the assembly line.

Heinz: Off the assembly line problems. I remember ... trucks

IA: Going down some of these trucks have big computers in them too.

Heinz: I don't ever ...

IB: Do you ever see any of these on the road?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 15

Heinz: Yeah, you see some today on the road yeah. Yeah.

IA: Gosh they are gorgeous. I've heard people, I've had people tell me that the trucks were good, the engines were great, they could have continued with proper management.

IB: Yeah, there was demand for them.

IA: They could have continued to produce trucks, because the demand was so great. They were a good truck that lasted.

Heinz: I talked to the man that came in there one time that was on a project in Canada. It was a Canadian product and building a damn up in Vancouver or somewhere, British Columbia, ... a big damn and ah, he ordered, he come in there to pick these trucks up and they weren't quite ready yet. And he, I talked with him, I talked with anybody and this and that and ah, he come to pick them trucks up to drive them home and I says well, what would a license cost from up in Canada like that, he says these trucks will never be licensed. He said we will drive them into Canada on this project and since they will last probably year, a year and a half, two years. I said why bother with the expensive trucks when ah, you can buy a sugar layer Ford that ain't going to last you longer than that. He said we could go up there with a Ford or a Chevrolet in six months time he said we'd junk it. And these will last a year and a half to two years. So we will junk a Ford or a Chevrolet on the off terrain and twisting so their frames will break in two and

IB: What kind of a job was this going to be used on?

Heinz: Ah damn construction.

IB: Oh I see so they are going into rough areas where there aren't nice smooth roads.

Heinz: Oh all the time.

IB: They are hauling loads and

Heinz: Across fields and across the valleys and twist and turning.

IB: And the Reo truck was so good that it would hold up longest.

Heinz: It would hold up for about two years where it sugar ... Ford six months to nine months.

IB: Because they weren't put together right I suppose. Yeah.

Heinz: Well they weren't built like it and these was built, a Diamond Reo truck was built I guess you might call it computerized, it was built

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 16

for a job, it was you could buy one of them, you could buy one that would be for off the road or on a highway. Now we built the ... Cuba I remember building some trucks for Cuba, for Shell Oil Company.

IB: Oh that's interesting.

IA: Hum.

IB: In the late '50's before Castro came in.

Heinz: Yeah, yeah. These trucks had ah, a Beauta, we put a Beauta diesel engine, big Beauta diesel engine in them for Shell Oil Company. The road tester took one of them out on the road and he come back and said maybe you should road test them on a road. And he brought it back and he said there is something wrong with this truck he says it won't any 25 miles an hour wide open. And ah, they had me look at it and they had everybody look at it. And that truck wouldn't do only 25. We went back to the guy that drew up the order and he says that truck ain't suppose to go only 25 mile an hour.

IB: Oh, that's what they wanted.

Heinz: We built them for Shell Oil Company down in Cuba in the mountains, to haul over the mountains he says 25 miles an hour is all them trucks is suppose to do and they had a 13, 14 feet transmission and gears you know. He says they just want them to move, they don't want them to go up to speed. And ah,

IB: So they are made-to-order for the circumstances.

IA: Right.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: I worked ah, overtime one night a bunch of us guys, we built, I guess, maybe it was 25 trucks that they shipped over to, was at that time to build the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

IB: Oh really?

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: Who did you build those for?

Heinz: Hum?

IB: Who did you build them for, do you know?

Heinz: French Indochina government.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 17

IB: Oh for the government.

IA: For the Chinese government.

Heinz: Yeah, French Indochina.

IA: French Indochina.

Heinz: Yes.

IB: Vietnam.

Heinz: Korea and Cambodia and Pakistan, three different countries.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: But the Ho Chi Minh Trail we built Reos and sent them over there to Ho Chi Minh Trail. We sent Reo military to Israel, not Israel, but Tran

IB: Iran. Iran.

Heinz: Reo Electric went over there to show them how to build it and then they turned around Iraq with them or something when this conflict started over there and Roy Archer said I sneaked out one night, got me on an airplane and I got back to Switzerland and home, he said I let them have it.

IA: That was in Iran you say? Tehran.

Heinz: Tehran I guess it was.

IB: It is Iran. Yeah.

IA: Yeah, um, I wonder if later in Vietnam and during the war if any of our military people came across a Reo truck somewhere? If they were on the Ho Chi Minh Trail at one point.

IB: They must have sold...

Heinz: I imagine the Reo trucks some are in Vietnam.

IB: Wouldn't that be something to come around the bend and see an American truck.

Heinz: They were built right-hand drives, it was built right-hand drives.

IB: Right-hand drives for the roads. Because they drive on the right-hand side over there.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 18

Heinz: That was something else. We built right-hand drive trucks out there and the right-hand fender would get wrecked about three times during

IB: Oh really.

Heinz: ... they shouldn't drive em. They were Russians and there were poles every 20 feet in that thing and they would hit them posts. They turn keep right on going.

IB: This is the test drivers.

Heinz: No just anybody.

IB: Anybody

Heinz: The mechanics (mass talking) move on ahead or something.

IB: Oh in the shops. Isn't that funny. So salvage had a lot of fenders to fix.

Heinz: We put three fenders on one truck getting it, it was down the line. Everybody trim it their own way because it was .. inside you know.

IB: Oh that's neat, that's interesting. Boy I bet I'd have problems.

Wife: I'm curious, was this Lorraine?

Heinz: That's Muriel, Muriel..... I have a to think, ... (several talking)

IB: Now where is your

Heinz: She has been hidden there for a long time. I didn't know she was even in there.

IA: This is a riot.

IB: Did she work at Reo?

Wife: No.

Heinz: Yeah, she worked at Reo one time and not when I worked there.

IA: .. a diesel engine.

IB: Wow.

IA: We've got a volunteer at the museum, his name is Jack Down and he worked at Reo at one point and he has been to the Harrisburg plant,

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 19

they gave him a tour. He went because he loves the trucks and he was interested, so he went right to the office and they said sure, we'll give you a tour. So he has been in the plant there and has seen the trucks that they build.

Wife: And we've been down to Spartan Motors in Charlotte and had a tour down there to see the fire engines that they make.

IA: Ah huh.

IB: I bet it was interesting.

Heinz: And there is two different letterheads.

IB: Oh yeah.

Heinz: Two different letterheads.

IB: Oh my goodness.

IA: Did the production change a lot when you were there for safety reasons at all? Because I've been reading a little bit about that on my

Heinz: Safety, we didn't have any safety reason.

IB: No there wasn't, Shirley is interested in safety too actually.

IA: Yeah, I've been wondering what the conditions, working conditions were ah,

Heinz: .. bad, they were bad. I used to go in there. I used to ah, go in their Monday morning in the summertime and I'd have to stick my head in the door and walk in about 10 feet and take a few whiffs of air and then go back out.

IB: Go back out.

Heinz: And to get stuffed up. And by the weekend I'd be spitting up big old gobs of black diesel smoke and stuff.

IB: Because the air was full of diesel fuel and no exhaust.

Heinz: Well they had... but they had no exhaust. We got OSHA in there one time and they put this was no kidding, they put these little machines in there to like breathing, you know, they put them on different ... in the shop.

IB: You were suppose to use that on your own self?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 20

Heinz: No, they was to take, they took the quality of the air

IB: Oh.

IA: Oh.

Heinz: And Donny Alberts took a truck, well there was one of them setting right here on the bench, about the height of the exhaust and Donny Alberts good for nothing more or less, he got one of them trucks and set it in front of this analyzer and let it run for about 10 minutes blowing exhaust right into the thing. That was a most perfect and this was gas exhaust.

IB: So those weren't very good gauges.

Heinz: And most of bottom.

IB: So nothing really changed, you still had to work with all the fumes in your department. Did that ever make anybody sick? Or cause them respiratory problems do you think?

Heinz: Well, I don't know, I I was I was ah, spit up this stuff all the time, and one night when Vance Disbro, he was a supervisor

IB: Disbro

Heinz: Yeah, he was a hell in the shop and on the street he was the best man you ever talked to. But, I was in there one night working, I worked 14 hours that day, I guess, trying to get some trucks out and ah, what he system was is a big round pipe and a little air down, why there was a pipe over here and a pipe come in out of this big tube and I guy on this bay here had a truck, diesel truck with a stack that stuck up almost into this heating tube and Vance went in to run that truck in there long enough to make the heat gauge to work as air shutters. And I was over here in the big and I got so nauseated that I went over and shut the truck off. The guy started it back up and I went back over and shut it off again. And he started it back up and they wanted this truck that I was working on getting the wiring done on that, I finished up something, so I goes back over and shut the thing off and pulled the keys out. Well this guy runs to Vance Disbro and then chewed me out about shutting down he said that stuff won't hurt you that's diesel smoke. And I says Vance I says I got my eight hours in, so I'm trying to help you get some trucks out of here. But I got my hours in along time ago. I said you know what I can do, I can go home. I picked up my lunch bucket and I went home. And I was sick for about two days of that stuff. This was on a Friday night, well this was Saturday morning almost. And ah, I said I can go home and that made him mad. I went home, I couldn't take no more of it. But I knew from myself that he could have ran that truck in there all

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 21

night long and it wouldn't do, but you take it out on the road and work it two miles, the heat gauge would go up.

IB: So they could have done all that out on the road.

IA: Yeah, they didn't have to do it

IB: And not taken a chance with someone's health.

Heinz: Yeah, told them to take it out on the road, I told them to take it out on the street, you know.

IB: Why wouldn't they do that?

Heinz: They are just stubborn.

IB: Stubborn.

Heinz: He was the supervisor.

IB: Oh and he is not going to have someone else telling him

Heinz: I was just a little peon, he is the supervisor see.

IB: You mentioned that you cut your finger in the Reo, was that in your department, was that because of safety things?

Heinz: Yeah, that was that was in the time when we started, that was before they had these fail-safe safety brakes when they engineered up an outfit like a hand brake, like an emergency brake and it run off of bell cranks and cables and on their back ... duster they welded an arm on it and they put a little strip clevis on it where you could get ahold of that slack was in there weight shoes and ah, they put me on that and had two trucks and they put me on that and ah, I got one and got it working. But they put another guy on the old and ah, the boss came over to check it out. So I stuck my hand down there to get ahold of this back slack I had done for the to see how much slack there was in there, because you didn't get too much on your hand lever. And ah, Buck Billin, I guess his name is Roland, Roland or they called him Buck Billin, he had worked on it and would get in there and I reached down like this, Buck hit them air brakes and I just happened I just lost the tip of my finger like that. I reached down there and I got by that slot and it was I cut my finger on it. I just lost just the tip of it. But they cut it off three times after that. And that was ah, that was the day when I shouldn't have been there. That was the day I was suppose to go on vacation

IB: Oh gosh.

Herbert Heinz

3-16-93

Page 22

Heinz: and they talked me into coming in that Saturday to ah, get out some work.

IB: Did the Reo, the company, pay for that when you had to go to the hospital?

Heinz: I got Workman's Comp.

IB: Workman's Comp.

Heinz: I got Workman's Comp. out of it, I got \$1900 for it. I give them back that to have my finger back.

IB: No right.

Wife: They didn't pad the end of it like they should and they had to cut it off. It just the leaders was standing out there you know, and every time you touch a thing he just about

IB: Oh my.

Heinz: Dr. DeVries is the one that done it.

Wife: So they had to cut it off a little bit more to bad it.

Heinz: Dr. DeVries done it and that day he was drunk that he couldn't stand up hardly the first time.

IB: Oh really?

Heinz: He was a golfer, he was the shop doctor. He is that's when they hired me.

IB: He did the physicals?

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: And did he have an office downtown in Lansing or at the shop?

Heinz: Yeah, he had an office, he had, Erma Papin was his nurse at the shop. She done ah, sugar tests and all this down there, but you had to go down there, he is on the corner of ah, Capitol, I think it is Capitol and Kalamazoo or somewhere down there.

IB: Ah huh.

Heinz: Down in there where his office was at that time. He is the one that used to give all the Capital City Airport pilots their examination too.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 23

IB: And he was not ah,

Heinz: He was a

IB: trustworthy a word I'm looking here for.

IA: Reliable.

IB: Reliable, thank you.

Heinz: He was a doctor, he was a doctor.

IB: He was a doctor, but he wasn't apparently very good.

Heinz: But ah, if you wanted to get in, I went down to Reo for examination, they send me down there to him and I walked in there and he checked me for hernia and I was breathing and he says you are hired.

IB: That was your physical to get hired into the Reo in 1951. So it wasn't very thorough.

Heinz: I've had a broken back and he never checked it. My back has been broke and I worked there all these years with a broken back, it is still broke. I got a vertebrae that's looks like that.

IB: And he, and you had that when you went for your physical and he never even checked.

Heinz: If I'd have been smart, I'd and a couple of other guys that hurt their back. One guy, Walt Rena, he got \$60,000 out of Reo for work, a bad back.

IB: Because it was an injury related to the job?

Heinz: Yeah, well they found out that after anyway he had ...

IB: Before he left so

Heinz: And the other guy got \$30,000 for the same reason. And this that cut my finger off, he twisted his ankle. I just found out here a few years ago that he got, I guess, \$25,000 for hurting his ankle. And I never even remember him hurting his ankle, but it is just that you got to be greedy, I mean it is greed, greed.

IB: How did they decide that your finger was worth \$1900, was that just to pay your doctor bills on it or

Heinz: No that's what Workman's Comp. they paid all the bills.

IB: I see. You didn't receive anything in cash for your pain or

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 24

Heinz: No, I got a check every week for Workman's Comp., I never missed a days work and the guys get mad at me because the boss would give me two checks, one for my finger and one for

IA: Oh you kept working while it was healing.

Heinz: I never missed a day for it.

IB: How did you keep grease and things out of that injury?

Heinz: Oh I don't know, Mrs. Backon up there she lifted charged everything she wrote down, he would go over top of me I'd go up there three times a day and get it changed.

IB: Up to first aid.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: You mentioned you were on your way for a um, vacation when this happened. How much vacation did the company give you when you were working there?

Heinz: Well I get you didn't get paid, I don't think at that time.

IB: Unpaid vacation.

Heinz: You'd get a couple weeks off. But talking about vacations, here is a statement that I was suppose to get \$640 the last year I worked there as a vacation bonus.

IB: Right.

Heinz: Okay, if they paid me, they paid me something and left a balance of \$490.89. Well about six weeks ago I got a check from Diamond Reo.

IB: A few weeks ago.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: This is what like 17 years later or something.

Heinz: Yeah I got a check, I got a check and I got 18% of that, which was about round figures maybe a dollar?????. Federal government took out 27, 20 something \$17, state income took out so much, FIC took out so much and then they took out so much for um, social security or something which I never paid before in my life and when I got this \$490, what I got left of it was \$60.

IB: Right and this is \$490 in 1974 which is a lot more than now.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 25

IA: That's what I was thinking, but they taxed you at today's rate. Even though this was income earned 17 years ago when the tax rate was lower, that doesn't seem right.

IB: No, it sure doesn't.

Heinz: But now to get this money back, I got to go next year and file that old term federal and state and I can get that money back but they said

IB: Oh you can declare it as a loss?

Heinz: Oh you can get that back but I haven't got enough income. See, I can get all that back except the FIC and the social security or something.

IB: Oh I see.

Heinz: I can get the income taxes back.

IB: Yeah.

IA: This is interesting.

Heinz: But I got to wait another year to get that. See.

IB: That's interesting, I've never seen anything like this before. That was from the bankruptcy hearings. Um, do you want to show

Heinz: Well .. .I don't know, this is this is everything that I guess.

IB: Gerald Ford.

Heinz: Well I had to send in my marriage license, that's what that was for to get, here is the letter that this is what Ford got for us. He got this guaranteed pension benefit guarantee and until we got our pension. I didn't get, I lost two years, I lost out two years on that, but (shuffling papers) I get \$135 a month now on that. And then I got it fixed so if I pass on, why she can get the fullness, I could have got more, by taking just for me.

IA: Right, we've heard about that. That's right. You made a special deal of something.

Heinz: Yeah.

IA: We know of some people who've done that.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 26

Heinz: But I had to send in our marriage license and all that stuff to make sure that

IA: Everything was, all the records were true.

IB: Yes.

IA: Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation Washington, D.C. Somebody we interviewed recently had just gotten a letter it must be maybe about the time you got something remember he had said that the letter said that he would be getting a small amount, \$70 or something.

Heinz: This was one of my more or less my last paychecks. Well you see how many for 40 hour check how many hours how much I made for 40 hours.

IA: People makes now days in one day.

IB: Isn't that incredible.

IA:

Heinz: Well I put three down at the credit union, but this is what I brought, I got I brought home \$182 and I had put in credit union.

IB: Will this be running out at some point, this pension benefit guarantee? Ah, are they going to come to a certain point where they've got everything settled and they are going to dissolve or I wonder

Heinz: No this is a government agency, Olds and all of em has pay into that. That is a government operated.

IB: Oh that's right so it will continue.

Heinz: When Cappaert took off, when he went bankrupt in that place, he took \$6 million of our pension fund.

IB: Right.

Heinz: And ah, I hear they finally caught up with him and he they made him pay that \$6 million into this pension fund.

IB: Yeah, I see and that's where this money is coming from.

Heinz: Yeah, this is our pension

IB: Him having to pay it back.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 27

Heinz: But I had 25, I had lacking from October to November the 6, of having exactly 25 years in there. And Cappaert never paid no ah, pension ... for four years from when he was there. So they cut they went at it and cut me back to 20 years pension. So that's why I don't get as much pension as I should of get. But they ah, I heard something about ah, this year, making them take up for it ... I don't know or not but

IB: I guess that was my question when this corporation, this Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, when they feel that they have given out all the money fairly to all the people who lost, then will they close the case on Reo or I guess that's what I'm wondering.

Heinz: I guess any company, anybody gets it, it is a government, it is the same as

IB: So it won't be closed.

Heinz: Something like Social Security.

IB: For other places, but

Heinz: .. all get it, you'll get it as long as you live.

IB: I see.

Heinz: And other than that, I guess you didn't as long as you are available, but ah,

IB: Um, I have a couple of other, they are a little off the topic for questions. First we've heard from a lot of workers in the plant um, that the company had to shut down because of hunting season.

Heinz: No.

IB: No.

Heinz: No.

IB: Or let me put it another way. They had to let people go for hunting season.

Heinz: They let people go for hunting season.

IB: Okay right.

Heinz: The

IB: They couldn't hold it against them because so many people in the plant went, you know, whether they wanted to or not.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 28

Heinz: Most of em, most of em took their vacation,

IB: During hunting season.

Heinz: their regular vacation at that time.

IB: Right.

Heinz: And it did make it kind of rough at times when you take

IB: So many of them take off

Heinz: but they never shut the plant down for hunting, I know because I I don't hunt, I never missed a day of work on hunting season. Maybe the first day of pheasant season there wouldn't be too many people there on the line, they wouldn't make production that day but

IB: We've heard that from people that used to go hunting and the supervisors, the foremen would say we don't want you to go, we need you on the line. But it didn't make any difference, because they would go anyway, they knew they wouldn't get fired. Because there was so many people that used to do that. They couldn't fire everybody who did it.

Heinz: Well they used to stick me once and a while on the assembly line. Well I can't work assembly line. But assembly line I'd stand still, I stand here to go to work on something ah, the building moved. The building moved. The put me in, the last time I worked on the line they put me and a guy by the name Walker from St. Johns on a line doing one man's job that wasn't on, maybe it was a hunting season day, I don't know. They put two of us on the line putting on middle ... fenders and there was three bolts in the front and four in the back and a wire that runs through it. And two of us couldn't keep up that, they run two militaries and one commercial. Two of us couldn't do that one man's job. He was doing both sides. We couldn't do one side and ah, that night, that night ah, I went back to order and turned in my time and I walked to my boss and he says I says to him I just walked up to him, I says you ever put me on that line again that will be the last day I'll work I'll turn around and punch out. And the supervisor stood right there, so I said if I had wanted to hired in on the line, I'd have wanted the motor plant line, on the motor line. So I can't work on lines. And if you ever put me there again, I will never, you will never have me worry about me working there.

IB: What was his response?

Heinz: Huh?

IB: What did he say to you?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 29

Heinz: He looked at me kind of screwy and I says that is no kidding. I told him that I'm not, I said I mean it and I says there will be no more of that for me. And I never worked on the line from that day on.

IB: It sounds like you were valuable in the wiring, what you were doing, they really wanted you there, so they weren't going to ...round and

Heinz: I was not only valuable in wiring, I was valuable in any job that they put me on. But I used to

Wife: If it took him all day he did it right.

Heinz: The ah,

Wife: The job was right done.

Heinz: I done it right, I done it right and I made every move count. I had ah

Wife: You are still that way.

Heinz: They had ah, they had time study on the guy that ... went in there and put on flood turn signals. He had to put a handle, a switch handle on the handle and wire it down to and drill holes in the fender, make your little harness and run your lights up and make them work. It was time studied out so if you put on one front and one front and rear, I remember it time studied out to be about seven .. to the day, about seven hours and maybe 30 minutes, 7 hours and a half. And my boss used to make my time slips all over and he put down he'd put that down as day rate. That's what I was doing.

IB: Ah huh so one a day.

Heinz: So I was trying maybe six and seven jobs a day and he was making my time over and giving me one front, one front and rear and half hour, I was making all \$14 a day. And ah, they ah, they screwed up one day somehow. The timekeeper come to me and says if I can ... slip, he says they got you down you got charged enough for \$19. And you got too much work on there. I said let me see them time slips and I flipped them over like that and every one of them was in the same handwriting. And they was Rowan Bellum, another guy had the same identical time slips as I had. Because I turned in six jobs a day and I ... turned in two, but I was going to tell you. This ... job of putting these front turn signals on I put a good many of them on in 30 minutes, 30 minutes flat. And this other guy that was done it before me was getting 3 and half, four hours.

IB: So I bet you probably wished you were on piece rate instead, huh.

Heinz: They wouldn't give me piece rate.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 30

IA: Did anybody work on piece rate, any

Heinz: They ... they did, they did on the assembly line for a while, but I never worked on piece work.

IB: On hourly.

Heinz: Hourly all the time.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: And I got up, I think it was \$5 and a nickel an hour the last day I worked there.

IB: Oh that's what you were making, I was going to ask you if you remembered what you were making on your

Heinz: I just showed her that check stub here for, .. the last, ... see it or not, I have the check here.

IA: It is right here.

Heinz: That is a 40 hour paycheck.

IB: So don't make very much.

Heinz: The June the 15th.

IB: Oh this is your net pay for the week?

Heinz: Well they took \$30 out for the credit union.

Wife: That's what he draw, what he brought home.

IB: Oh after they'd taken out the deductions in your credit union.

Heinz: Yeah. Then I got \$183 I think.

IB: Yeah, \$230, \$280. But you could buy more with \$153 take home pay in 1974.

Wife: Back then you could. Now you can't.

Heinz: three piece \$10 bill I couldn't carry them out and

IB: And this I noticed is

IA: Even I remember that.

Heinz: one paper sack and that's when they had

Herbert Heinz

3-16-93

Page 31

IB: I notice here on your pay statement it says absent call number 4852249, in other words, if you were ill and you couldn't get to work, you had to call in this number. But they print it right on your pay stub.

Heinz: ... call that in or they would make the devil with you.

IB: Yeah, but it is right on your pay stub, so you don't forget. See that's interesting. You mentioned, um, before we started taping, you were talking about something about heat treat and fabrication and I jotted that down I thought I'd ask you later what you were, what you meant by that.

Heinz: Well I can't tell you the names of these foremen, but some of these foremen that are stolen from Diamond T or Diamond Reo, White or some other come in from other companies. And they had to all set up, I don't know why they done it, but they talked somebody in to taking it out of the shop, they took the old ... right out of the shop and put it somewhere else and they run it and then they charged the company back and they still worked over there on supervision or in the front office and ah, I can almost think of the guy's name that took this fabrication out to Grand Ledge, the Willan Shop made these gas tank brackets and stuff, fabricated gas tank brackets. But then ah, I can't think of who started truck and trailer but he come in there one day and I showed him

IB: D K. was it D K Truck

Heinz: D & K Truck was one of our dealers.

IB: Oh that's right, yeah, I'm getting confused here.

Heinz: But ah, truck and trailer was the guy that worked in the shop there he was one of the guys from Diamond T or someplace, so he took this they broke up special equipment..... took it out and when the turntables got abandoned to where they put them out on the line but ah, I engineered all that stuff like that when I was first come out. But, this truck and trailer guy went out on his own and tried to sell them, he took a truck out of here and take it over to his place and put a fifth wheel on and bring it back and our inspector wouldn't because they went at it and ... the holes out and this and that so the guy come back from and had me show him how to put a fifth wheel on. I told him I'd show him how. Well, that's the last one I had to show. That truck and trailer took that off, but that spin off ah, ..chrome, I think chrome plating, some chrome plating company in Lansing used to chrome plate the exhaust pipes and ah, chrome and door handles and grab panels and all that. That was taken out of there. They used the chrome it all right there in the Reo.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 32

IB: Oh I see. So these all were spin offs that started new companies.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: Where someone from within the company would take this out, start their own business somewhere.

Heinz: Start their own business out there and still work

IB: Isn't that a little illegal?

Heinz: And turn it around they turned around and sold it back to Reo.

IB: Wow.

Heinz: They sold this all back to Reo.

IB: This was all in say the latter days, say the last two or three years of the

Heinz: That was all in say from I don't know that would be '60, it might be maybe '68, '69, '70.

IB: Within the last four or five years to speak.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: Okay.

Heinz: That was all spun off. That was, we didn't do no more, see. Heat treat, oh I think the Lansing Heat Treat and carpet trailer and I can't think of the fabricator company in Grand Ledge, ah, Chrome Plating, Chrome Plating, that went out and I've seen them, I've been over there as I say I knew the whole

IB: Operation, yeah.

Heinz: I knew who the shooting gallery was up there, they had a shooting gallery up there We'd just go up there and shoot rifles.

IB: Oh really? Where was that?

Heinz: Right up on the third floor, above the offices.

IB: Oh in the Administration Building?

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: There was a shooting gallery.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 33

Heinz: Yeah, back behind there, there was a shooting gallery there.

IB: For everybody? For everybody who wanted to?

Heinz: Supervision more or less.

IA: Certain ones probably.

Heinz: They had a big thick concrete wall up there and it was just ...

IA: I would hope so.

Heinz: They had a shooting gallery in it. I used to have I used to have all kind of things, the clubhouse should never been tore down. That was a good building and that was not actually was not Reo, that belonged to the Reo employees. The Reo clubhouse they used to have that back years ago, they had ah, you worked there they had movies, they had dances, stuff like this for the working people's kids.

Side B

Heinz: Now that was spotless.

IB: It was spotless.

Heinz: Yup. Old Jim.... Webberville.

IB: Yes, we talked to him a couple of weeks ago and we are going to go back this spring. He has a lot of things to show us that are in his garage that he said come back in the spring.

Heinz: I would have got more, I got a banner I don't know if she's got it somewhere, I got a big banner that she bought at a garage sale a big old Diamond Reo banner.

IB: Oh really. From him?

Heinz: Beautiful garage sale....

IA: Oh some other garage sale.

IB: Did you use to go to the clubhouse a lot yourself with your family?

Heinz: Not too much. We used to have our meetings there and I used to belong to this we had a little stores in the shop that was ah Reo Benefit Association. I rolled up there I rolled up there when Benny Wilky was the president and I wound up as vice president. And ah,

IB: You were the vice president of the Benefit Association?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 34

Heinz: Yeah, Benny Wilkins he was the one that Reo one that ah, divided up the money and stuff when they went down.

IB: That was already in the Benefit Association to the employees who had contributed to it.

Heinz: Yeah. Just like this thing here up here, see check and ah,

Wife: He had a lot of them, I can't remember he sell them a dollar a piece or something like that.

Heinz: It went to Reo Benefit. Well he had these stores in there they was suppose to be making money but they were guys in there (mass talking) and cigars and cigarettes.

IB: Oh so they were like canteens.

Heinz: Like canteens.

IB: Where they would sell things and the profits would go to the Benefit Association.

Heinz: Yeah, yeah. It was suppose to go into Benefit, but a lot of people

IB: They pocketed it.

Heinz: They pocketed the first 20 bucks and that's why, somebody talked me into getting into it. Well ah, we used to have, I don't know, I think they had \$60,000 in there at one time. And they got down when I went in there, I think it was down to \$10,000. This money vanished. We he was off work, he was sick or something like that, they would pay us, if he was off a week or two weeks, the Reo Benefit would give you the family \$75. That was for once a year and give you \$75. And ah, but this Reo taken out money every week out of your pay, and this went from I don't now how much it was, it was an enormous amount of money, it went down to nothing. And I got in there, when I got in there I was their vice president for about a year and a half before it went down and I think we got it back to pretty near \$20,000. By me being there, this old boy didn't eat dinner with the rest of them, I ate dinner with all of them. I was here, I was there and I worked in the store and I knew what was going on. I could tell, I could tell the pot of money over here that had \$50 in it, when the guy checked it out, he put down \$30, see. That was done about every store had, we had four stores and about \$40 bucks a day that was But I was

IB: So you had the meetings for this benefit association over at the clubhouse?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 35

Heinz: Yeah, we had it at the clubhouse. We had an office in the bottom of the clubhouse one time.

IA: Oh you did.

IB: Did you go down to the clubhouse?

Wife: I was in there one time.

IB: Once for a dance or a Christmas party or something?

Wife: No just

Heinz: We went down there for our meeting.....

Wife: He'd go to the meetings they had.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: Why they wanted me in there for vice president. They wanted me to be president. If I had been president of it I .. cut that much at first, I was going to be vice president see get my foot in the door, then I would have been president but the place went down, but if they'd had been, if I had got in there 10 years earlier, we probably would have had \$100,000 in there, but that went down to practically nothing. Because people, here is a little antique that is Reo .. credit union which I belong to.

IB: Oh where was that located the credit union too.

IA: Huh, I didn't know that where was that located?

Heinz: That was right in the Reo itself.

IA: In the building itself.

Heinz: It ... when they started it, then

IA: Oh and this shows the family and even the dog I think under an umbrella of the Reo umbrella, interesting. Never seen one of those.

Heinz: They went from that to ah, those are nail clippers that's what they are. And then they went form

Wife: They had something else too that day, didn't they?

Heinz: I don't know what it was, but they turned .. Reo and they took that over, they got .. Then they incorporated with a co-op over on Logan and south down in that Logan.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 36

IB: What was that?

Heinz: Co-op credit union... to co-op credit union. And then now we are in Autobody. Now the co-op went in to autobody.

IB: So now you are in Autobody Credit Union.

Heinz: Reo Autobody Credit Union now, but had a little thing, .. on the package.

IB: Yeah, so that really, and some day that will be worth something. Um, I wanted to go back a few years and um, did anybody in your family ever work for Reo or uncles or brothers

Heinz: My brother was working at Reo when I got a job there, but ah, he worked at Fisher Body was it two years or five years and then he worked at Reo for a couple years and a little while after I got to work there, he got mad and ah, quit and went back to Fisher. But he worked upstairs for .. Nelson Lumber building military hoods. He built military hoods and took them up for the trucks, that's all he done up there.

IA: Why did he get mad?

IB: Yeah, I was going to ask that too.

Heinz: He didn't like the Reo.

IA: He didn't like Reo.

IB: Didn't like the way things were run or

Heinz: Didn't like the way it was run, I guess, and they didn't like the boss. And he worked piece work and ah, he'd bunch them up and he'd get some worked ahead and then service them stockpiled and

IB: Oh so he wouldn't make as much then.

Heinz: He didn't get paid for them, see, so

IB: And no one would change that system.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: It kept, so that made him angry.

IA: Did you originally apply there because your brother was there?

Heinz: No, no, a guy by the name of Guy Blanchard and I talked to Guy Blanchard about having this meeting with you people and he says I

don't want them over there, he says I was going to bring them over there and tell them where you live and I said I won't tell them a damn thing. But he worked down the line. He used to live right down the road here and I've known him since I was about knee high and he went to work here in February, and I guess they asked him if he knew anybody that needed a job that was reliable and all this and that and he used to stop here about once every week or two. Go up to Reo and put in an application and get a job up there and go to work. I was out here jumping cars which I've done most of my life and repairing cars and hauling junk and all that. The day I hired in to Reo, I had an old '37 Ford and I still got the trailer around here and I had them put some old greasy Ford motors, I had to .. I guess for a week and a half, I hadn't changed my clothes I guess in a week and a half. And my hand was as black as your sweater and my face was pretty near as black. I went to Berkhandlers Freeland's or somewhere in Lansing and dumped these motors and on the way back, I says just for the hell of it, I'm going to stop at Reo and put in an application. And I was actually ashamed of myself. That's when I walked in there and put my name and address on this and ah, oh I said hell I don't want work in this greasy old place and here I was wishing everybody was there and 50 people in this Baker Street lobby and old Jerry Burns before I got from this corner over to this corner like this, four other people, Jerry Burns called my name and called me ... oh my god, look at me and

IB: That's probably why they picked you. They probably figured you knew something about

Heinz: When I come out of that room..... interview with him, about because I said god, I didn't know that I had any clean clothes to home or not until I, he said you get back here at 1:00 for an interview or examination. So I stopped at the store and bought me a clean pair of shirt and pants and come home and shaved, washed my hands and I went back up there.

Wife: We was doing our laundry by the washtubs then.

Heinz: God, and and I

Wife: That's when we first got married.

IB: Ah huh, and were you in this house then or were you in a different

Wife: We were building this.

IB: You were building it and you had to wash your laundry in the old washtub

Heinz: We lived in this house four years without any electricity. We didn't even put electricity in

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 38

Wife: He helped wire it. We had

Heinz: I did all the wiring and all the and all the layout and

IB: Wow and that was you were married what in the late '40's?

Wife: '42, '46 we got married.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: So from '46 to the early '50's, there wasn't any electricity here?

Heinz: Well there was, there was a line down through here.

IB: But not to the houses.

Heinz: But after the war there wasn't enough transformers or wire or something.

IA: Oh yeah.

Heinz: And they had a line down through here, but ah, they put the line through here in the fall of '40 and in the '40's I think.

IA: Before the war started?

Heinz: But ah, just before the war, but then they didn't have any, any other it was ... through here and then a guy come down from Lansing and Mason and Consumers Power I think it was, some appliance, electric stove and a refrigerator and all this and that and .. stand there and tell me all this stuff, you know, and I said boy you had a good product here but I says I don't know how I'm going to make juice down from that line over here ... installed he looked at me and

IA: Well it gave him practice with his lingo. (laughter)

IB: Pitch.

IA: His pitch, yeah.

Heinz: We had an old potbellied stove in the front room.

Wife: We built the house

Heinz: A wood and coal cookstove.

IB: You did a good job.

Wife: Added on to it.

Heinz: Two or three

IB: ... money do a little more.

Wife: Ah huh.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Kerosene lamps, you had to clean lamps and everything. Oh my gosh.

Wife: I got pictures of it when we had just, when we first had it, it was

Heinz: Was old cement block.

Wife: Cement block, you couldn't get the cinder, we wanted the cinder block, we couldn't get cinder block back then. We got the ah, cement block. It was a block house. We still got some of the wall in here.

Heinz: I built, I built this one out here

Wife: We .. as we could, you know. Took the block out and

Heinz: washroom and this was the third kitchen I've built in this house. I built this ... for a washroom, then I had to build a garage out here and then I had to build a breezeway from the garage. ... it's been, been rough, been a rough life, but we made it this far and I've had open-heart

Wife: Raised four kids here.

Heinz: I had open-heart surgery, just had carotid operation here about six weeks ago,

IB: Oh I see that.

Heinz: hemorrhoids, and gallbladder.

Wife: Two girls and two boys.

IB: You were able to, I mean it was hard going but you were able to support them and raise them and everything working all the time at the Reo.

Heinz: She's never worked.

Wife: Our ah,

Heinz: After our first kid well she had never worked.

Wife: I worked for a year before we had our first child at Fisher Body.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 40

IB: Oh you did?

IA: Oh you did, what did you do there?

Wife: On the line. He said he couldn't work the line, I worked a moving line.

Heinz: worked at Fisher Body six weeks and I couldn't take it, that darn line ... be able to keep moving

IB: I think I'd be like that too.

IA: What did you do at Fisher Body? What were you making?

Wife: I ah, put on, we worked on the convertibles. And we had to put the cylinders in, cylinders that raised up the top.

IB: Oh ah huh.

Wife: And we had to put rubber, rubbers underneath the windows. We had to cut them, rubber strips this wide. There is two girls one one one side and one on the other side. I did one side and she did one side. And I put the cylinders in for one side and she put them in on one side.

Heinz: At that time they used hydraulic

Wife: But the line was moving all that time. And you had to put those rubber things in there, push them in there, they had to be cut so long and then I had to put the strips on the doors.

Heinz: Door seals.

Wife: That door seal.

IA: Keep the moisture out.

Wife: Ah huh. You punch a hole in there and put a screw on top of that.

IB: And you did it while the thing is going on.

Wife: And it was moving.

IB: You don't dare let one go by without

Wife: Un huh.

IB: When was that, that was in the '40's?

Wife: In '46, '47. After the war.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 41

IB: After the war already?

Wife: '47.

IB: '47, so.....

Heinz: So it was after the war.

IB: When did you folks get married?

Wife: '46.

IB: But then after that you didn't have to go back into the shop at all.

Wife: No he says no. Your job is at home now, so

IB: You had a lot to do with four kids.

Wife: I didn't work after that. I stayed home.

Heinz: ... why don't we had two right along the first and then we had six years between one and seven years between the other.

Wife: One and seven between the next one.

Heinz: Our youngest one is out there in the garage, he is 29 years old.

IB: And he likes mechanics.

Wife: So I said we could wait another eight years for the next one if we space them out like that I'll be too old.

(laughter)

Wife: Not have any more.

IB: Has either one of your two boys ever worked in the shops were they, because of your experience in shop?

Heinz: No, my boys, I couldn't, I tried to get my oldest boy in at the Reo and they wouldn't put him in because just before, just before that ah, they had a CPA, MPC or whatever they want to call it, the National Colored Peoples Association

IB: Oh NAACP.

Heinz: We didn't have a, we didn't have enough colored people in the Reo, so NPC made em made em hire some. Well, I don't know why, but they bused 50 colored people out of Jackson on a bus come in here every morning 50 black ones come in every Monday, every day from Jackson.

Within a six weeks time, I don't think there was only two of them left. Every one of them that come in there worked a day or two and he hurt his back. Every one of them went out on Workmen's Compensation. And after that, if you had the slightest back trouble, you didn't get into Reo. Well my boy has got a bad back and he couldn't get in to Reo. I couldn't get him in there no way. Even Dr. DeVries wouldn't even put him in there.

IB: Do you remember when that happened with the NAACP? What year around when that was?

Heinz: Ah, I don't know, it must have been in the '60's sometime.

IB: Okay.

Heinz: But back in ah, I bought a new '53 Chevy car in January of '53 and that was a bad thing to do. I bought it

Wife: It was a lemon.

Heinz: It was a lemon besides and I got laid off along in November some, I got laid off seven times in two years. I would, they was that was before, I think Henn, Hennie Ambulance Company bought us out. But I would work two weeks and they laid me off for about two weeks. Well when I'd go back there they'd have a bunch of trucks sold ... nobody else worked on and couldn't work on or didn't want to work on them, they like special equipment stuff. I'd work my butt off and get them trucks all done and then they'd lay me off for a couple more weeks. And I was old Harry McDowell he is dead and gone now, but he says, every time I look up, he was a painter, he says every time I look up he says I either see you going that way or this way.

IA: Interrupted

IB: They weren't pacing the work very smart, were they?

Heinz: I stuck with them.

IB: Could you see that the end was coming the last couple years?

Heinz: Yeah, I could see it was coming, we never got, we never got Cappaert bringing or truckers bringing stuff in and loading it from this truck on that truck and that truck going back out the door and we were running ... engines I see that one day. We was running engines off the or trucks off the line but no engines. We used to put in engines engines over there on I'd seen the engines come in on this truck and go on that one running empty. Like I seen him pick up this .. truck pick up this axle one day. That went, had to go to the war house for stock for something.

IB: That's what the reason was given?

Heinz: That's what he said. I stood there talking, I stood in front of Cappaert and I wasn't one bit afraid of him than I was the devil. I was standing there one day and he come up aside of me and he said what are you doing? I says I'm standing here. What are you standing there for? I says the boss told me to. I says he told me to wait for that truck to get off the line and I was taking tractor deal..... chain to them and pull them off the line because they didn't have no motors in them. We'd pull them off and I was doing ... for a while. They put me on the line pulling trucks off the line with no motors in em.

IB: What happens to the trucks with no motors in. Where do they go after you pull them off.

Heinz: Just took them out in the lot.

IB: Out on the lot.

Heinz: Just took them on the lot and they stay out there for three months and when we get a motor for them. But, I got another, I got a bankrupt.... bankrupt court and I it is hard to read. But here is what Lloyd Kemp, trustee got, got from that bankrupt company.

IA: Lloyd Kemp, trustee got \$181,000.

Heinz: The company sold for \$16 million. Cappaert bought it for \$16 million.

IB: That's what he paid for it, \$16 million.

Heinz: That's what he paid for it.

IB: Okay.

Heinz: But now, there was even foremen's names in there where they got back pay on it. And then after, they was supposed to burnt the papers according to the

Wife: There were reports on it.

Heinz: .. the papers.

IB: Did all the employees get one of these?

Heinz: No, I think

IB: Okay, I was just curious.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 44

Heinz: But you look in there one place as a I don't know, I can read some of them, look at em. (shuffling papers) That's a Kemp, he is the guy that signed that check that I got. Kemp, he signed that check.

IA: United States Court for the Western District.

Heinz: I didn't even get my paper, . (several talking)

IB: Bankrupt case number notice of filing of final count.

Heinz:

IB: Final account of the trustee on this case has been filed.

Heinz: Yeah, it ain't that hard to push in I guess. But,

.....

IB: Well this is interesting. The accounts of the trustee show total receipts of \$56,130, or no that's not even right. \$56,139,296,000,

Wife: That's for the whole, including all the companies, they have a whole big list of companies for the pension.

IB: on hand is

Wife:

IB: Following is a summary of fee applications which have been filed along with interim payments made to professionals and other outstanding administrative claims. So this is everybody that had a claim or had

Heinz: Everybody that has had a claim on there is on there.

IB: Oh look at all the attorneys.

Heinz: That is fine print, I can hardly read it, but now you take the Detroit Diesel and some there is more or less alphabetically and you can see where they got \$6 million worth of bills they put in there.... But the lawyers got it all.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: We also had to pay ah, ah, some chemical company, used to come in and get the paint sludge and stuff and took it down to Utica, down on about 23 Mile Road, where my boy used to live and put it in a dump and they turned around and charged the bankrupt company, I think it

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 45

was \$126 million to help clean up that dump. And when they put this paint factory in up here, this ah,

IB: O'Leary Paints.

Heinz: O'Leary Paint.

IB: On the Reo ground.

Heinz: They charged I think charges us \$60,000 to clean that up with in there.

IB: This is the workers money, but it should have been the company who was paying for it.

Heinz:

IB: ... policy that did that.

Heinz: They hauled all this stuff down to Detroit and pack in the salt mine down there.

IB: Yeah.

Heinz: But every truck had a guy had to stay there all covered up in a suit and everything and wash the tires off when they come out of the ... Why couldn't they have done it a lot different. I could do a lot different thing than they could have done it. But look at me, I worked there 25 years in that stuff, it didn't kill me. It probably didn't do me any good. But here a guy standing out there beside the road with a halter hose washing his trucks off, all dressed up in a monkey suit when he couldn't get nothing on him. If that girl had

IB: I notice that grass and wildflowers and things continued to grow on the old Reo lot right where the motor company or motor department was and all the rest of it.

Heinz: I can tell you something else about where that motor plant was, where them railroad tracks is, my mother used to ice skate on that in the wintertime in that area.

IB: Oh where the tracks went through between the buildings?

Heinz: Yeah, between the two buildings.

IB: Oh is that right?

Heinz: Yeah. My mother used to chum around with Ransom Olds' daughter?

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 46

IB: Which one, Gladys or Bernice?

Heinz: Gladys, I think it was.

IB: Is that right?

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: They went to school together?

Heinz: Yeah, I guess. When they built that Reo factory, when they built the Reo factory out there, they had to cross that river, Grand River whatever it is.

IB: The Grand, it is the Red Cedar.

Heinz: They had to build a bridge out there.

IB: Yeah, the Red Cedar.

Heinz: They had to built a bridge out there. My mother said they had to build a bridge out there, so they could get out there to go to work. But why did he build it out so far out of Lansing? Why did he build so far out of town?

IB: Oh isn't that funny.

Heinz: Yeah.

IB: It is that time that was far out of town.

Heinz: Yeah, they had to build a bridge even to get to it.

IB: Oh and that was country out there beyond the river. Isn't that amazing. Did your mother ever mention meeting R. E. Olds or what she thought of Gladys?

Heinz: that's all I can remember her ever saying.

IB: She never mentioned about going to their house or

Heinz: No.

IB: Okay.

Heinz: They tore their house down.

IB: Yes they sure did.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 47

Heinz: Courtney Smith, he was a foreman, ... for \$2,400 and he got \$400 out of it. Ah, yeah, she ah, she used to ice skate down around that ...

IB: There was a little pond there someplace where, on the grounds where the Reo was later built.

Heinz: Yeah, well the water would sit in there where they put that motor plant. See that Reo was built in sections, just like you build a little building here and we had departments 26, department..... different buildings.

IA: Different buildings,

Heinz: was a big parking lot and ah, behind engineering garage but it was built in sections more or less. When they got a little bit bigger they used to build cars there and there was to be a tramway over Cedar Street, over in the John Bean Building.

IA: Oh that's right.

Heinz: Well I worked in John Bean Building for a while and they had this tramway shut off.

IA: What went across the tramway, what was it used for?

Heinz: Well that was, they built the they built the bodies I think, they built the bodies I'm not positive. They built the bodies I think and they just had a tramway through there and they pushed the bodies over there and put them on the frames over here and then they come down around and they had a ramp from the third floor that put them down on the street. One way or the other, I don't know which way.

IA: They were started on one side and run across over the highway on this overpass tramline and down to the site and finished and then run off into a parking lot.

Heinz: Yeah.

IA: Oh okay.

Heinz: ... used to be that way.

IA: I remember when they tore that down.

Heinz: Well the first time I ever Reo, my dad went to town, I went to town with my dad one time, and we took some potatoes and into ah a friend of his that had a market down Cedar Street and it was out by Saginaw, somewhere up in there. And had an old '28 Chevrolet car and the brakes we had about 25 bushels of potatoes on it. My dad says turn off here and walk the side streets instead of going up

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 48

Cedar Street, because he ain't got no brakes. First thing you know, we come to the back gate of Reo and a cop said what are doing down here. back out of there.

IB: He said I'm here to deliver your potatoes.

Heinz: When I first knew we were going to Lansing, Greenlawn was the city limits.

IA: Oh yeah. That's where Ingham Medical is.

Heinz: That was back in '29 about '29 or something like that. Dansville School, it had TB going around there. We had to go to

IA: Oh really?

Heinz: We had to go clear up to Ingham Medical, call that TB Sanitarium then. We had to

IA: Yes they did.

Heinz: go up there and they put us on an old Model T bus and we had more Model T Ford buses down there Dansville, we had to go clear up there. It took us all day to go up there, gravel road, but Cedar Street was gravel.

IA: Oh it was.

Heinz: We went up to ah, I mean just this side of Jolly Road and it was pavement. But it took us all day to go up there and they put about 15 kids on this bus, this little old Ford bus, we sat there with our knees in our lap together same way facing each other, but we go up there and give us TB tests. I was only about, I was six years old. So I am a young duffer yet, I'm only 70 years old.

IB: Usually we wait until people tell us, we don't ask.

Heinz: Yeah, well I had a lot of people tell me you don't look that old.

IA: No you don't.

IB: You really don't, you really don't. We talked to somebody who was 84 the other day and I could have sworn she was 64.

IA: Oh I know it was amazing.

IB: Sixty-four it was amazing.

Wife: People are living longer now days.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 49

IB: Yeah, yeah, they are.

Heinz: They've got companies in here that put in for claims that I never heard of.

IB: Oh really?

Heinz: Yeah, I never heard of.

IB: Anybody that thought they had a claim in any way, shape or form, with Reo applied.

Heinz: Yeah, they got a company, they

Wife: Get what they could out of it.

IB: ... after they went bankrupt.

Heinz: Some California bank, engine company, engine company to engine company, one man \$430,824.46. That's one man. That they put in for.

IB: It makes you wonder what they based that on.

Wife: Yeah.

IB: What did they do that

Heinz: ... company's engine that he brought in the trip back out. We never had any.

Wife: Didn't get paid for.

Heinz: He stripped enough of these other companies. When he got them in to these little warehouses, somebody stoled them..... somebody stoled them from Reo or didn't get ... or something. There was a lot of there was a lot of double billing. You take, they was guys in the shop, Herzog was a guy by the name of Herzog was one of them. They would take a PO, a purchase order and some guy in California would order a truck and they would build this truck. Well they take the same PO and they would change the name and address and somebody in maybe New York City, New York and they would run this truck through again the way way, double bill em. They got caught up with that after a while, because somebody wrecked a truck and he wanted some parts for this truck and they had missed something that sold it, the guy from the other got it and come to find out that somebody in the shop was double billing these trucks. They were billing them twice. This inner circle inside of the front office was here and pocketing the money and this guy out here that was legitimate over here see, that went into the company. Where Clare Loudenslager, he is dead and gone,

Herbert Heinz

3-16-93

Page 50

IB: Is he?

Heinz: he used to get on CATA. He is the one that put CATA bus in service. Well Clare Loudenslager when I went to work here had one secretary and in about a year's time he had seven secretaries. Clare Loudenslager stoled more out of Reo that it was worth probably, he built I think seven cottages at Houghton Lake with Reo carpenters.

IA: We've heard this from somebody else.

Heinz: Reo electricians.

IA: Yeah.

IB: They would go up there and work on it?

Heinz: They'd punch in on a Saturday morning and he'd haul them up there and they'd work all weekend and they were post in and out and they were getting time and a half or double time on weekends building these houses in Houghton Lake and or cottages whatever they was. The lumber was coming in

IB: Packing cases lumber or something.

Heinz: The lumber was loaded on Reo trucks and hauled there and billed to Reo. He also had this pallet factory over on over by the Paul Revere Bar or someplace back in there.

IA: Oh sure.

Heinz: He was having lumber come in there to billed to Reo and load on the trucks and take it over to this company and pallets made and he was charged the company was buying pallets made by Loudenslager back into the shop.

IB: Unbelievable.

Heinz: But Clare Loudenslager as crooked as he was, when he was there that company made money. And when Diamond T come in there, I think it was or one company come in there, they fired him and they and we went down, we went way down. They had to hire the guy back. They hired Clare back. .. back up, but he still was stealing just as much as he was making.

IB: That's incredible. What a movie that would make.

Heinz: He went at it. He had a steel he had an Eaton Stamping Company just in Eaton Rapids or Diamonddale or something like that, he was a company, he had over there in Eaton Rapids.

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 51

IA: It is Eaton Rapids. Yeah.

Heinz: Stamping Company. But ah, then after they fired him the second time, he went down to CATA Bus Company and when Reo went down, half of Reo I could have gone in, I could have gone in to Clare's circle, what I call his circle. But I wasn't, I'm not that greedy. I'm not that, I'm no damn crook. He even asked me to come in with him to take the spoke and the wheel, I guess.

IB: To work for him at CATA.

Heinz: No to work for him at Reo.

IB: Oh.

Heinz: See.

IB: So you'd be wiring something he'd be stealing.

Heinz: I'd probably be loading lumber or guiding truck or going here or there or

IB: He had his own ... in his cottages or something.

Heinz:

IA: Isn't that incredible.

Heinz: I wouldn't work for Clare Loudenslager. He ah, he ah, I knew too much, I knew too much for my own good actually, but I didn't want to go, one of my reasons, one of my reasons is being straight more or less is this, when I quit school, Sherman Briggs down there told me he says, I'll give you a year and you will be in jail. Well I've never had a pair of handcuffs on me or been in a jail any more than I had to work in to see somebody. But that's been 50, 60 years pretty near that I have

IA: You didn't want to, so you didn't want to compromise yourself.

Heinz: I never been arrested and I never had nothing but two speeding tickets in my life. And that is one of the reason why, as long as Shirl Braze is alive, he is still alive, (laughter)

IA: You got to shoe him, right?

IB: It is kind of a good thing he said that.

Heinz: Dansville School, he is down there yet. What tickled me one day my boy was down there getting his hair cut and he sitting there in the barbershop waiting to get his hair cut my boy was talking to the

woman, she was a niece by marriage, and Shirl spoke up and he says say, you talk just like a guy that used to go to school. I used to have my class in school. He says his name wouldn't be Heinz was it. And he says yeah, he says that's my dad. And he says to my boy, he says, you know, he says he is one of the smartest damn figurers, he could figure out he was smarter than the teachers I had in school in figures. I could figure out anything, pretty near as fast as you could on the computer at that time. I can't do it now, I can't even do on a computer. At that time, you could rattle off something like that the answer. And he said I was the smartest one in school. In fact, when I quit school he talked to me for two hours

IB: Try to keep you in.

IA: Try to keep you in school, but you were bored with it it sounds like.

Heinz: I went to school two years with my sister when I was three years old. I had enough schooling. He tried to talk me in, he tried to talk me in to

Wife: I think him going so young discouraged him to go on, you know, those 12 years.

Heinz: Well I learned, I learned, I learned that you could be surprised a three year old could learn.

Wife: He had to go with his sister.

IB: No, I'm not surprised.

Wife: She had to walk to school by herself, her mother wouldn't let her go by herself.

Heinz: But we

Wife: And would make him go with her.

Heinz: We walked a mile and a half or two miles one way. We was there at 9:00 and stayed until 4:00, but ah, what was I going to say now. But anyway, ah, when I quit school, Shirl Briggs talked to me for about two hours and he says to get, a one teacher, I couldn't get along with this one teacher, I couldn't stand her, she was single and she was, she wouldn't even pay attention to me. I couldn't get her to help me. I wouldn't absorb it. So I said I can't have here. I says she is in the 10th grade and 11th grade, says you drop out of the 10th grade today and go into the 12 grade. You go into 12th grade, take 12th grade subjects and next year come back and take 11th grade. I says yeah, I guarantee you she wouldn't be here when you come back from the 10th grade. He wanted me to drop from the 10th go to the

Herbert Heinz
3-16-93
Page 53

12th grade and back down, backwards. I said no that don't sound good to me. But, I wished if I was inclined that I'd graduated. Because I would have a better life. I couldn't get in to

Wife: Well they do have it now for young people do it, you know, to get their diploma that way.

IB: Yeah.

IA: You could still do it, but you think things would have been different had you gotten your diploma, you would have worked all the way up.

IB: Gone up professionally, yeah.

Heinz: I went there, during the war I was 17 years old, draft age, 17, 18 years old, they took me for one examination down to Detroit to Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne is in Detroit, Fort Wayne is in Detroit, whether you think it is or not.

IA: Yeah, I know it is, I've been there.

Heinz: Ah, they run me through there one time and they give me a 4F classification. A 4f. Unfit for military service. I come back, well I get a job at Reo now, that's back in '41 and they wouldn't even give me an application paper. So, what did I do. I couldn't get in the shop, they was only making a buck some a buck and a quarter an hour something like that. I worked here on the farm for my folks for nothing job day rate 50 cents an hour, 10 cents an, I worked for a dime an hour lots of time, a dollar a day down here just to have something to do. And that's what if I had had an education, I would have got a job in a shop where I could sit and push pencil or something like that. But, I've had to do manual, physical labor all my life just about or with these two hands to make a living for what I got which ain't too much, but we haven't missed any meals.

IA: And you may have done,

Wife: Amen.

IA: You may have been

Wife: I'm going to see if he's got to go to work