

(OCTOBER 13, 2004 – SHIRLEY BRADLEY AT R. E. OLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM, AND SHE'S "TALKING WITH NOEL JOHNSON ABOUT HIS REO MOTOR CAR MEMORIES.")

NOEL JOHNSON

NOEL: I may not remember everything, but .....

SHIRLEY: Oh, don't worry about it. Just whatever...comes to your mind, and we don't have to stick to the questions. If something occurs to you, just, you know, shout it out.

NOEL: To start out, you know, I went to school at the Middleton-Perrington school which is in Fulton, and I used to live out in the country. I rode a bus into town for kindergarten through seventh grade, I think it was, and we left the farm. My dad was working for another guy, and so we left the farm. My brother bought a house in Middleton, and we moved into Middleton, and I finished out my school years in Fulton, and during that time, I met my wife. She was on the north end of town, and I was on the south end of town....

SHIRLEY: (LAUGHTER) So you must have wandered to the middle of town...(LAUGHTER)

NOEL: Yes, we did! They had what they called the Ground Observe Corp???? back in '55. Ground Observe Corp was something the volunteers would go up on a roof, they fixed up a roof up there for us to do that on. You'd watch for air planes coming over, and you would try to guess what kinds of plane it was, how high it was and the direction it was going and the time of day or night. Then, we would call Grand Rapids and notify them that there was a plane in that area, and that's what our job was to do.

SHIRLEY: Hmmm, it was the Cold War, then?

NOEL: Ya.

(BEEPING SOUND)

NOEL: That's how I met my wife.

**SHIRLEY:** She was an observer also.

**NOEL:** She was one of the observers, and her dad and another guy was the ones who got.....(messed up tape).....this one evening when we closed up, because during our school years, we had to close at a certain time, you know, and then also we'd go home. All three of us rode on my scooter, and I took her home, so then we kinda started things off, and that was in '55.

**SHIRLEY:** Oh, that's neat, that's a neat story.

**NOEL:** So after I finished school, in '57, I worked for the Shadynook Farm for little bit there which was poultry and eggs plant, and my girlfriend (messed up tape) was one of the ones working there, and I would ride out on egg routes with him, anyways, I got a little money in my pocket, but I had went to....I had done different jobs through my high school years. In fact, I just lost a good friend of mine who I worked with out on the farm in '55. So anyway, one day, my brother-in-law, Byron Campbell, was working at Diamond Reo, and he called me one day, and wanted to know if I wanted a job, and I said, "Yes!"....at the Reo. And he said they were hiring because they got a new military contract, and they were hiring more people. I said I'd be down there, so I'm not sure day it was I went down....probably on a Friday or a Saturday, or something, but I do remember the day I got hired in was September 2, 1958. And so that started my career with Reo.

**SHIRLEY:** And what did they have you do? What was your first job?

**NOEL:** My first job was running spot welders(???). They would be on the balance wheel, and we'd just put the parts together. It was on military trucks that I was working on, and I would help all the people assemble some of the parts, too, plus I had my own duties to do which was putting parts in the fixture, then spot welding them.

**SHIRLEY:** And this was part of the wheel?

**NOEL:** What?

**SHIRLEY:** You were spot welding...

**NOEL:** No, what these were was the cab – the open cab –

**SHIRLEY:** Oh, you were working in the cab....

**NOEL:** Yes,

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