Eugene Bordinat Oral History v.2

Interview number: 91.1.1673.41

Reminiscences and Interview Recorded: 20 October 1986

Part of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center Oral History Project

Transcript digitized by staff of Benson Ford Research Center: 2023

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Note to Readers

The Automotive Design Oral History Project, Accession 91.1.1673, consists of over 120 interviews with designers and engineers conducted during the 1980s by David Crippen of The Henry Ford.

This copy was produced from a bound, hard copy final version of the interview.

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AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BORDINAT, EUGENE

1984 & 1986

VOL. II

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum &
Greenfield Village

Q This is Dave Crippen of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, and today, October 20, 1986, we are in lovely Pine Knob Manor talking with Mr. Eugene (Gene) Bordinat continuing our series of interviews we held a year or so ago. We're asking Mr. Bordinat to trace the history of design in Ford Motor Company and also to elaborate on some of his experiences at that establishment.

A Well, Dave, the first time that I saw the 1949 Ford, or the car that was to become the 1949 Ford, was when I joined Ford Motor Company in 1947. I went there, as you may recall, in charge of advanced design. George Snyder, who was the director of design at that time under Tom Hibbard, asked my opinion of it, and I must say that I was rather shocked, primarily, because it was the first time that the so-called slab-sided design had been implemented in three dimension. Sketches of it had been made while I was over at General Motors, but they were still staying pretty much with the individual front and rear fenders, and, so, it was rather startling to see this new concept in full-size clay. Naturally, from a designer's point of view, it was quite exciting. So then you began to ask yourself, how did it happen, who did it, and being a designer, naturally, I found fault with some things and was commissioned to make a few adjustments in the front end which I did, not losing the theme at all but just a little adjustment here and there. I don't think any designer can ever totally embrace another person's design. They always say, "Well, it's very nice, but not quite the way I would do it" and then hoping that somebody will say, "Well, show me how you would do

it." But the '49 Ford was a rather exciting machine, and I began to ask about the car, and, at that same time, I'd also seen what was to be the 1949 Mercury as well as the Cosmopolitan--a Lincoln. And the three cars, obviously, did not look like they had come from the same womb, and this piqued my curiosity because normally when cars in the company are done, why, the mark of the leader is usually on the car. In some form or fashion they all have a certain character that is unique to the leadership in the place. So even though the cars had been created in separate studios, they take on a certain character that goes from the Ford through Mercury up into Lincoln, as an example. Even as it did at General Motors going from Chevrolet up through Cadillac. A lot of this, I suppose, is not only the mark of the leadership, but it's also the fact that there is interchangeability and, consequently, pieces from one car are used on another, and this tends to breed a certain--not exactness--but similarity of character, at least, in these products. So I began to query people, and I was told that Harold Youngren--at that time, the vice president of Ford Motor Company who had come to Ford Motor Company from General Motors. I believe he'd been the chief engineer at Oldsmobile prior to coming over and was part of Breech's team of former General Motors' people, and when he first saw the Mercury, it was being proposed as and had been approved to be the Ford, and it was, in his judgment, too much car to go against Chevrolet.

Q Could this have been the Bob Gregorie design?

A Yeah, it would. I don't know exactly when Gregorie left. He'd, obviously, been in charge, but when I first got over there, Tom Hibbard was the fellow that had been put in charge, and whether this was done under his aegis or Gregorie's, I really don't know. I know that the individuals

who had worked on--had the responsibilities for the cars--were Bill Schmidt who was working on the Cosmopolitan and Johnny Najjar on the Mercury. And both of them were reasonable automobiles. They'd stretched out pretty far, and, as they should have done it seems to me, considering the fact that there had been a hiatus of some four or five years because of the war, and the public was looking for something a little more dramatic, and, I think, that that had been expressed in their response to the Studebaker which had come out in 1945-6 as an all-new car and quite a radical car. And although it probably would have had difficulty in meeting either Chevrolet's or Ford's volume criteria because it was radical--that radical--it certainly was well conceived for the limited production facilities that Studebaker had at the time. We, as designers, and certainly the corporation, resented the fact that they were able to bring that car out, I might add, parenthetically, because they had people working on it down in Mexico.

Q This is Studebaker?

A Studebaker. All the other corporations had closed down their then called styling facilities, and everybody was doing a 100% war effort.

Q Was this a Loewy [operation]?

A I presume that Loewy was the one that sort of set up business down there because he was the consultant to them, and he claims that these cars were his, and as a consultant, I'm sure he had a lot of influence on them. I tend to think that Bourke and--oh, the chap that went over to Chrysler.

Q Macadam?

A No, no, prior to Macadam. His name will come to me. I'll get back to it. But, isn't that awful. At any rate, they probably had more

hands-on responsibility for the cars than Loewy did. Consultants actually rarely create something.

Q Oh, Exner, you mean.

A Exner, Virgil Exner, yeah. His son worked for me, and, by the way....

Q Yes. He's still at the Ford design facility.

A Right, and he is a good designer. As a matter of fact, he also--he, the son--also established the design program at Notre Dame.

Q Did he?

A Yeah, which was his school, and, I believe, that he had his masters out of there before he joined his father as an independent. But, Virg, of course, was a bit of a wild man in the design world and claims--and can have claimed, and we all allow him to claim and are delighted that he claimed--the fin era in car design. Some of the Chrysler fins were....

Q Stratospheric?

A Yeah, rather exaggerated. One of the high points in car design history.

Q Or, as I think you characterized it elsewhere, one of the low points.

A Yeah. Actually it's a--we got carried away. It was fascinating. It has nothing to do with the Ford, but it has do with designers per se. Designers normally work under very tight constraints--financial, engineering, manufacturing--a plethora of constraints, plus a resentment of the fact that they're causing the company to spend money which, of course, doesn't make them popular, anyhow. But, after World War II, and in the

'Fifties, in particular, it became apparent that people--the public--was responding to the car that apparently looked the best, and, as a result, even though they hated to do it, corporations began to give the designers more and more leeway, and, as a result of this, the designer who had always reached for the moon hoping just to get half way there, because of these constraints, was now reaching for the moon, and they were saying, "Okay, go ahead and get the damn moon," and that's when their own immaturity and lack of practice in accepting responsibility showed up, and that led to some of the cartoons that were put into steel, and the public bought them, but they were hardly tasteful. Triple-tone paint jobs with anodized aluminum in gold and silver really are not the epitome of good taste.

Q There's a word for it, I think, the age of....

A Schlock is one.

Q Gorp was another.

A Gorp is another. But, at any rate, we overcame that. Almost too late, by the way. There were a lot of--there've always been a lot of purists, but people began to listen to purists, too, and they thought that we were just a tad excessive, and, of course, they were right. But, back to the '49 Ford. It was a fascinating looking car, and the public was ready for the car. There can be a lot of fascinating looking cars, but if the public isn't ready for it, then you've really blown it. But the public was, in fact, ready for it, and it was a highly successful automobile, of course. Well, it's like so many cars, or anything else, actually, a great idea has a lot of fathers, and poor idea is a bastard, so this particular great idea had a lot of fathers. I will tell you

right here and now, I was not one of them. Now, George Walker--I expect you can start with Harold Youngren, really, because it was he that recognized that the Mercury would have been too much car for car to compete against Chevrolet and Plymouth, and made happen the package--that is, all the exterior/interior dimensions--that led to the '49 Ford. Then it was a question of who is to do it? They were in very much of a hurry because they had already okayed the one car, and they had to just go on a forced draft in order to get this other car done. I think it was that, as much as anything else, that led the company to think in terms of getting a consultant at all. But there was another reason: George Walker, who ultimately ended up being the consultant, was a good friend of Ernie Breech, and Breech at that time was--I guess they called him the Executive Vice President of Ford Motor Company. They were fellow members of Bloomfield Hills Country Club, and George, if nothing else, was a great, glad-handing personality, and he worked diligently at going out of his way to be very, very friendly with people in high station, and Breech was one of those people.

Q I believe he had the Recess Club, earlier on, too.

A Yeah. In fact, George actually was the president of the Recess Club and had redesigned the whole thing, I might add, gratis, which, of course, made the people love him dearly. But he was very good at doing those kinds of things. He made a point of it. He would actually deprive himself and his family in order to belong to various associations and clubs and things of that nature that were meaningful to his making and maintaining contacts, and I don't fault him for this. He was in the industrial design business. The

industrial design business was a relatively new business. It was actually created, I guess you'd say, by Harley Earl over at General Motors. I shouldn't say it was created by him. He had an industrial design department, and they dealt with all of the things that General Motors manufactured such as diesel trains and earth movers and things of that nature that didn't fall into the category of automotive or truck. There were fellows like Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy and others who had been in the industrial design business.

Q Walter Dorwin Teague?

A Walter Dorwin Teague, Henry Dreyfuss and so forth, but they were--and they were very good, and they were making money, but that about represented the group that was out there, and they were all, not only talented people, but very good salesman, and, by the end of the war, George Walker was well known, internationally, as well as throughout the country, too. But the thing that really made industrial design happen was an expanding market for it, and Harley Earl having this, in his particular place, felt, well, hell, this is--if it's good enough for General Motors it must be good enough for me and, therefore, all people that manufactured product began to hire industrial designers because they couldn't afford to staff them--have a staff themselves. Only the largest companies could do that. So out of this came George Walker, and he was hired by Ford to do the Ford--the '49 Ford. Well, he was having great difficulty with the two key designers that he had at that time--Joe Oros and Elwood Engle because, although they had gone through the same school that I had, they --neither of them had stayed in the car end of the business. Elwood Engle had spun off and had gone to--had gone with George Walker which took him out of the car business and into the product business, and Joe

Oros had never been in the car part of the business at General Motors, anyhow. He'd been in the industrial design side of it, and so he spun off and went with George Walker, too. Both of them very fine talents, I might add. Both of them quite gifted. Joe, the smarter of the two. Elwood, not terribly smart, frankly. In fact, IQ wise, quite a low level, but gifted hands. He had great hands. He could sketch like crazy. At any rate, they were both exactly what George needed, but when it came to his having this account, he had only done one other car, he himself having left General Motors ages before to become an independent. He had only done one car before this commission and that was a Nash which was fairly successful but, obviously, a quite close copy of the last LaSalle. But, nonetheless, he had done that, so....

Q What year was that, by the way?

A Well, it was before the war so it would be '42/'41 something like that. Probably '41--'42 possibly.

Q The grille was very much like the LaSalle grille.

A Yeah, narrow and high. The LaSalle that never hit the market is the one that I did. I was very pleased. I thought I was on a hell of a roll because I had only been in this sanctum sanctorum for a relatively short period of time, and Harley Earl was smiling on what I had developed, and they had taken it to the point where I had done all the preliminary drawings to put into full-size clay. And then I was called to one side by Julio Agramonte, and Julio said, "I hate to tell you this, Gene, but the corporation has decided that they're going to discontinue the LaSalle automobile." Well, that was sort of like a punch in the stomach to me, I was too young to accept this very graciously. I wanted to hit somebody

but I didn't know who to hit, and the disappointment was, obviously, in my face, and so Julio said, "Gene, I want to tell you something. This is only the first of many disappointments you're going to have in this business, and you're measured in this business by how quickly you can recover from these blue funks. If you want to wallow around in despair, why, you go ahead and do it, but every day that you're wallowing, you're not contributing a damned thing, and so you'd better get your act in gear. Put this behind you and have at something else." And, I thought that that was good advice. That was great advice. But, at any rate, here was George. He had a contract, and he got the contract because of friendship, because of a good reputation and because he, and his two associates, had, at one time, been with General Motors. I mean, that sounds like pretty good specs. But they were having one hell of a time developing a car, and so onstream comes Dick Calleal. Dick Calleal, as best I can determine, was not even a designer but a draftsman in the design function at Studebaker/ Packard -- well, it was Studebaker at the time. I don't know whether your part of this story has been duly recorded. You want me to go ahead and say it?

Q Please.

A But I was advised that Dick had appeared on the scene at George Walker's studios. He was in need of a job having been recently released from Studebaker/Packard and was advised by George that he would be happy to see some of his samples; namely, in three dimension--namely, of a car of a specific size. Dick went home and solicited the help of Bob Bourke, who is the older brother of Bill Bourke, who ultimately ended up by being executive vice-president of Ford North America, and Bob Koto--Holden Koto,

actually--who, I guess, noodled this out on Calleal's kitchen table.

Q In Mishawaka?

A In Mishawaka. I think that, obviously, Bob Bourke takes the credit for certain portions of it, as he should. It was sort of, in effect, done under his aegis. Holden Koto, in my judgment, would have been the fellow that offered most of the innovative design technique and did the modeling because he was a modeler--a designer, but also a modeler. At any rate, it was that model, that Dick really had very little to do with that he put under his arm and took to George Walker, and George Walker smiled on it because it was better than anything that had been being done in his shop at that time, and with the appropriate supporting illustrations and the model cleaned up, in more professional fashion, was offered to Ford Motor Company, and George, if nothing else, was a persuasive salesman, and that was the one that was determined to turn into full-size clay, and it was approved, after it was seen in full-size clay. When a person is accused of being a salesman--George used this himself as a--if he wanted to demean a fellow as being a good designer, he would always tell somebody like Henry Ford, "Well, he's a hell of a salesman." He used to say that about me, and, of course, that's his way of saying, and, consequently, he was a piss-poor designer, you see, but George was the consummate salesman, and was, in fact, a piss-poor designer! But, nonetheless, he did make happen, the car, and that's what it's all about. Nobody paid him to draw lines. They paid him to come up with a car, and he came up with a car. He insisted that that was the car that the corporation should have, and it's the car that went out and did great work.

Q Excuse me, would you say that Engle and Oros took this model and ran with it, so to speak?

A They did. They took the model, and they were the ones that converted it into full size using modelers at Ford Motor Company. George had neither the room nor the--you see, the ideal situation would be for him to have a large studio that would support a full-size model. On the 12th or 13th floor of the New Center Building, you just do not have that kind of space, and so they used Ford's then limited facilities and clay modeling talent in order to transform it, but it was done at the direction of both Elwood and Joe, and....

Q Elwood having some expertise in clay modeling, right?

A Yeah, well, almost every designer knows how to model, but....

Q He had special talent for it? He's not talented, he loved to do it.

A Who?

Q Engle.

A Engle. He--not, necessarily. He could push mud around about the same as anybody, but he liked clay. His idea of good fun was making warm clay balls and throwing them at great velocity at the ceiling of the studio and making them stick. He was not a very smart guy. I can only define his intelligence level by saying that when he was drafted into the service, his general classification scores were sufficiently low as to qualify him for little other than the MP's, which is sort of at the low end of the spectrum. Oros, on the other hand, was academically smart--reasonably politically smart, but he was smart enough so that at the Cleveland School of Art, for example, he graduated at the top of his class--at least high enough so that he was the fellow that received the

fellowship to travel abroad and so forth, so he, obviously, had something going for him in that regard. Besides, he was an indefatigable worker. He just would work very, very hard. I think most of us were, at that time, because we were all Depression kids, and so our attitude toward work was quite different than a lot of the fellows that followed us.

Q Known today as the work ethic.

A Yeah, exactly. We all worked awfully hard, and it was either go 110% or lose your job because there were a hell of a lot of guys that were right behind you. This had nothing to do with upward mobility, this was just clinging to the job. I remember I used to, when I was at General Motors, I would work all day then go home and work until one o'clock in the morning in trying to improve and had stuff I could take into work the following day. Which reminds me, by the way, of the first time I met George Walker, I was a sophomore in high school. My parents lived in Pleasant Ridge, as I did, and so did George Walker. George was really just beginning to get off the grid as a professional industrial designer, but, even then, he had the things that--he lived in a very modest home, but he had a Marmon convertible, four-door sedan which was a plumb elegant car in those days, and he had more hand picking on his suits than I have seen on many a body, and he had a big body that had a lot of hand picking. Because these are the things that people would see. This was very important. I say this in thinking about George, in retrospect, but that's the kind of person he was. However, he used to stop and pick me up on the way to school. I went to school with both his daughter and his son, and in the back seat he would have illustrations of things that--like scales for weighing yourself, and stoves and refrigerators--things that he'd

done on his kitchen table. In fact, I guess, that's the first time I ever really realized that anybody did that sort of thing for a living, and my parents knew him quite well because Pleasant Ridge was a very contained little society unto itself. They had their own little clubs and quite a social gathering which was almost incestuous. But, it was a delightful place, and everybody got to know one another. George was not the most popular guy in that particular area because he was quite a name dropper, and people really didn't think they needed that kind of thing, but there wasn't any question as to where he was going.

Now, interestingly enough, he also became a partner with a guy by the name of Bozell, and they--in fact, George owned one-third and Bozell two-thirds of a company called Trim Trends. Trim Trends was an outfit that manufactured bright work for automobiles, and, at one time, George, probably as a result of his being a consultant to the project of the '49 Ford, had all of the bright work on the exterior of that automobile [done] in Trim Trends. In fact, he had the whole front end ensemble, all of the side moldings, all of the trim around the back end of the car and so forth--everything that was stamped. I suppose today that would be considered a terrible conflict of interest. But, even after George became vice president of the corporation in 1956, he--with full disclosure--advised that this was a conditional acceptance on his being able to retain his holdings in Trim Trends. I don't think that would ever be allowed to happen today because the pressure on the designers, for example, to not do things in diecasting or plastic but to do them in

stamping, was very, very tough because George wanted as much stamped on the car as possible, so that he could feed it to Trim Trends, obviously. Well, George made a fantastic amount of money out of that particular piece of the operation so when people just sort of look at his income as being based on what he did in the design world, they have to add to the fact that he was the head salesman for this Trim Trends operation and owned a third of it. George--you know, some guys are lucky. Always go with a guy that's lucky. Some guys have talent, some guys are very bright, but are they lucky? And George was lucky. George, for example, as a side bar sort of thing, but it's typical of his character and typical of Breech's character, and, of course, they were both actors in this stage. Breech bought a couple of lots on the ocean down in Florida, and these were pretty expensive lots, and Breech was planning on building a house on them. Breech is also an inveterate golfer, and, on one vacation, he was down playing golf at one of the more exclusive clubs in the neighborhood of where his lots were. And after the golf match and after the 18th--well into the 19th hole, the conversation around the buck dice table turned to politics, and Breech, of course, was pontificating on this matter. A fellow that was right with him there--was the president of the club who had views 180° in the opposite direction--they took to quarreling, and this annoyed the president of the club, and so when Breech's application for membership came up, Breech was <u>blackballed</u>. And so, that made him feel that sand and surf was not worth a poop--that the dry climes of Arizona and Camelback and things of that nature were much more to his liking, and he divorced himself <u>completely</u> from Florida, never to return again. But that left him with two lots, so George was put upon

to take those lots off Breech's hands, and he did. He bought both the lots from Breech for the magnanimous sum of $50,000. Well, when George sold those lots out with a place probably not too different from the one that you saw in Arizona, it's the one that people would--when they would take these cruises would point to and say, "That's George Walker's place." He, obviously, got in excess of a million for it, and so he was sort of pushed in, you see, to making that kind of money, but it was sort of amusing, I thought. Another thing that George did which I found very dispiriting. He was a 32nd degree Mason. I have absolutely no quarrel with this at all. My family is filled with Masons. But I was not about to become a Mason because the Knights of Columbus contingent in the place was really provoked.

Q Was that on the design staff?

A On the design staff. And there were two camps, and the vice president was the leader of one of the camps, and it seemed to me that was a totally inappropriate thing to do. George asked me--he invited me to invite him to join the Masons. They cannot invite to join, you see--you must ask. But all the signals were there, and I turned it down which did not endear George to me, but I figured that I needed the--that the worse thing that had happened under George's reign as a vice-president there, was this great division--this terrible morale problem that we were facing because of the Knights of Columbus on one side and the Masons on the other. And George would join these organizations with the express purpose of using them. He had no qualms about it at all. Maybe that's what they're for, but, at any rate, he didn't hesitate to do it. So he had this ethical--right on the edge of being dishonest, almost, and I

never appreciated that, and, of course, he knew I didn't. And this, in spite of the fact that I knew George for many years, I was not really ever on his team, and he needed, in his mind, to establish either Joe or Elwood as his successor for obvious reasons. He would have been out of the industrial design business, still be an owner of the Trim Trends business, and your opportunities go up when you have stuff designed into a car that you can bid on for manufacturing, and it was very important to him to have the door open into the design center after he left.

Q This was after the success of the '49 Ford?

A Oh, after the success of the '49 Ford. After he had been released from his contract, was brought back as a consultant, and I can't remember the time frame, but he was brought back between, say, 1947 and 1956 when he became permanent party. In there he was a consultant again.

Q Somewhere in the early 'Fifties?*

A Yeah. And, of course....

Q He'd left Oros and Engle in place there, had he not?

A He had put them in place, yeah. And, put them in--no, I beg your pardon. He did not. They stayed with him even though they would work, at times, in the facility, when he was a consultant, but they were not part of the staff at all. They joined Ford Motor Company when he joined Ford Motor Company. In fact, I know that both Bob McGuire and I were terribly disappointed. Not the fact that they had joined the company,

*Editor's Note: George W. Walker was an outside consultant to Ford Motor Company from 1945 to 1955. He was appointed Vice President for Design in 1956 and remained in that capacity until 1961 when he was succeeded by Eugene Bordinat.

but the fact that the first bonus year--and they'd only had about a half year in--they took all of the bonus pie, and Bob and I got crumbs, and that didn't....

Q This was Walker's doing?

A This was Walker's doing, and I cannot, for the life of me, understand why they allowed him to do it because, subsequently, any massive swings in bonuses were challenged, and, you know, you really had to go to the mat to justify them, but nobody, apparently, challenged this too much and just went ahead and did it, you know.

Q You can attribute this, apparently, to his patronage with Ernie Breech.

A I expect. Yeah. It was a very uncomfortable time when George was there. He had all kinds of things that he could do, all kinds of threats that he could make. He was very wise in that he always worked for the head of the company, and designers almost have to do that. You never work for--if you're going to be working for American Motors, for example, you don't work for anybody but Romney. at the time that he was there. If you do, they walk all over you. You have no clout, and then you're destined to fail. [Harley] Earl worked for [Alfred P.] Sloan. I always worked for the head of the company, either the president or the chairman--it would alternate depending on what the politics were. Well, for Bill Ford, but it depended on who he worked for, and Bill was there, rarely, I mean, in later days, so I was really working directly for them. But the '49 Ford really saved the Ford Motor Company, and George deserves a lot of credit for his contribution in that regard. Obviously, the world doesn't know about the business of Dick Calleal. George always made sure

that--he was a great "you scratch my back, I'll scratch your's" guy--and he insured that Dick was well placed at Ford. He ended up working for me, and it became my unpleasant duty to have to let him go because he really didn't know anything. By the way, you mentioned the fact that his daughter was interested in kind of cleaning up his name. It's going to be a very difficult thing to do at Ford Motor Company because she won't find anybody around that can say good things about him other than to be nice to her. It wasn't that he was an unpleasant man at all. As a matter of fact, he was lot of fun to be with, but he had absolutely no talent for the business and, consequently--and yet something happened, because when he went to Chrysler, and George was instrumental in getting him into Chrysler. George being a good friend of Tex Colbert at the time, he gets Dick over there, and he was a dear friend of Tex Colbert's. I mean, Larry Fisher and Tex Colbert and George Walker go up to Fisher's place in Minnesota, you see, for hunting and boozing and what have you. George knew them all. But Tex took him [Calleal] on, and he ended up in charge of trucks [design], and did a workmanlike job on Dodge trucks and stuff like that. Now that is, if you get the right support, if you got the right designers working for you, why, of course, you can pull that stuff off. And I think that Dick's bent was more mechanical anyhow, and that's a good place for you, for trucks. That's why Johnny Najjar was good at trucks by the way. But, anyhow, Dick ended up in my lap.

George went through, you know, the business of being a consultant when everytime he was a consultant, why, naturally, you could just sort of see the people begin to gravitate toward him because he had more clout than any of the organized people--that is, people of the staff, in the organization of the staff, had, and he would smile, but he would rule by--

there was one hell of a mail fist in this velvet glove. He had absolutely no compunction at all about emasculating someone.

Q Often publicly.

A Yeah, yeah. He was a tough hombre. Very unfair hombre. Anybody that wasn't totally for him--it was very black and white--either you were for him or you were against him. If you're against him, you're an enemy to be disposed of. Now, I presume, that that's--well, that's a way of being. He had the morals of a goat, of course. Even in his Time magazine--oh, the interviews that led up to his face being on the cover of Time. It's kind of fascinating because in those days--today they would write about it--in those days, they were a little hesitant, and they thought that they had one great editorial joke when they called him the "Cellini of Chrome." Sort of a headline on one of the cars. Well, Cellini, as everybody knows, Cellini was a great artisan, but in addition to that he was one of the great cocksmen of the day. As a matter of fact, he was quite a remarkable man. If I can believe what I read, he was one of few fellows to have ever of had syphilis and gotten rid of it--I'm talking about Cellini, not Walker, you understand--and gotten rid of it because he contracted Scarlet Fever, and the fever went sufficiently high to kill the spirochetes or whatever they are, and so he was cured. But it was a great line, and, of course, the editors of Time were giggling over it, because George was quite candid in telling them about having, you know, bedded his high school English teacher and a few things like that, and, of course, George had a fantastic sexual capacity. Or, at least, he had to keep proving to himself that he did because it became

quite dangerous for the girls in the design center. It was quite unpleasant for many of them. When youngsters are 18, 19 and 20, they're not used to dealing with, I guess you'd call it sexual harassment today. And George--no woman was ever hired by Ford in the design center--or, at that time, styling operation--that didn't have the personal okay of George, and his evaluation was dimensional as well as, can I knock this personality off--can I intimidate this personality? And he would do it with models. Ardis [Keaneley],* as an example, can tell stories about George wanting to hire her to come with them. What the hell would she do, you know, maybe be a receptionist or something like that. Well, [with] George, you know, that's very difficult for girls. I had a secretary by the name of Ann Nebozenko who was rather an attractive girl at the time. I remember George was putting the arm on her, and she said, "Well, that's fine Mr. Walker. I'd love to go to dinner with you this evening. I'll call Norm," her husband's name, "and where would you like to meet us?" He immediately began to crab crawl, of course, and got out of it, but not too many people know how to handle things like that, and some of these young girls were quite intimidated. George also had black mouton carpets in his office, and they were very soft and very comfortable not only for the feet but other parts of the anatomy, and Ed Roberts, who was the furrier, is the furrier, would be called upon to cut pieces out on occasion and replace them because they had been badly stained. But this was George. I was talking with Will Scott just the other day.

*Editor's Note: A top-flight model for automobile shows and, later, a well-known radio and television performer in Detroit.

Q Just retired?

A Yup, and Will said that he'd been down in Tucson and had seen George, and that he looks remarkable for a fellow his age, and he didn't really realize how old he was. George is 90. He was 65 when he left Ford Motor Company, and he did a terrible thing when he left by the way, and that was 1961. He--Henry Ford had granted him some options that were very good, and for him to be able to realize them, he had to stay on the [salary] rolls beyond his 65th birthday, and Henry Ford arranged for him to be an advisor, and I was elected a vice president, but George was still there, which was a little uncomfortable, but--and Bill Ford had taken over the whole design responsibility, and this was before the Detroit Lions became an active part of his life, and Bill was working very hard at things there. And he could see what happening that I was being damned with faint praise by George, and that things weren't going to work as long as George was here, but they still wanted him to be able to put in his time so he could realize the benefits of these stock options. Well....

Q Are these Ford stock options?

A Ford stock options. So they arranged for George to take a three month, around-the-world trip--all expenses paid--with his wife to all--and visit, just to make it technically okay, each of our [Ford] places around the world. Well, this was sort of a bonanza, going-way present, but it came back to Henry Ford very quickly that George was bad mouthing the family in the worst kind of way, mostly for the decision that they'd made relative to me and that they just didn't know what kind of a problem that they were going to have. And, in fact, it's difficult for Americans

to understand the feeling that the heads of the various operations like Jimmy VanLupin who was the head of the Brussels operation, for example. Jimmy has, subsequently, became a baron, by the way, but he was a loyal and dedicated servant of the Ford Motor Company, and the Ford family was practically deified in his view. And to have George Walker as Jimmy's guest, by the way, because Ford said, "Hey, entertain him," begin to vilify the Ford family was just more than Jimmy could stand, and it was he, really, who began to pass the word back, and then, of course, one person begins to talk--Sir Patrick began to talk about it and all that sort of....

Q Hennessey [Chairman, Ford of England].

A Hennessey, yeah, and it was just awful. Now here was a guy that was being treated so far beyond the call of duty by the Ford family. They set it up so that he could take another $750,000, net, you see, out of the Company and through the stock options, and he was out there bad-mouthing the hell out of them while he was making this absolutely wonderful trip, and I just can't understand that kind of mentality. In addition, he was trying to sell the people that were still working with me--Oros and Engle--to other people, and Engle went to Chrsyler, as you recall, as a vice president in charge of design [to succeed the departed Exner].

Q How did he get that job?

A He got it because--well, first of all, Tex Colbert [President], but in the meantime [George] Love had moved in as chairman of the board, and he was a friend of George's, and George just gave him a hard sell. In fact, it came to the surface when at some Economic Club meeting where

Love and Henry Ford were together, and Henry knew the kind of a person that Engle was as far as--I mean, a gifted designer, but to run a place, you know, it was beyond him. And so Henry asked Love, "Why did you take Engle?" You know, "Of all the folks there are in the business, why Engle?" He said, "Because your own man, George Walker, was selling him to me." So, it right after that that Henry came back and said, "You don't really see any reason why we should keep George around do you, Gene?" I said, "Not I, Mr. Ford," so the next day he was gone.

I was just talking to Dave Crippen about the development of an instrument panel and of the way Benson Ford would conduct business under these circumstances. He and Stan Ostrander, who was his second in command [at Lincoln] would come over, and I would hear relatively little out of Benson Ford other than an aye or a nay or little sidebar comments but nothing really quite specific. Ostrander was the one that was carrying on most of the decision making, and he would look to Ben Ford to get his nod, whenever there was a decision to be made. This one particular instrument panel had sort of an aircraft theme with aircraft-type controls, toggles and things of that nature on it, and a binnacle that you could read between the spokes of the steering column, and Ben Ford and Stan Ostrander had approved this. Well, Ernie Breech came over, and, of course, he was the supreme commander, under Henry Ford, but, nonetheless, had assumed supreme command at the time, and he look at it and he said, "I don't like that instrument panel," he said, "I think we ought to try again," and Benson Ford then, to the surprise of all of us who were near him, said, "That's my instrument panel, Ernie. I think I want to go with it," and then I had the delightful experience of watching a supreme

ego crab crawl and back off and agree that, well, maybe, it was a pretty nice looking instrument panel. But I thought it was a great expression of how Benson, who rarely used his power, obviously did in that point. I think that this probably, by the way, Dave, was the sort of thing that began to bug Breech. That he knew where the power was, and it didn't make any difference how old these kids were, they had the power. They had more time with Henry Ford's ear than he, Breech, did. Most of it out of the office, and you have to be very, very careful about that, and this had to really bother him, but I think that Ben has been maligned. He was put in a position where--and about his drinking, I don't know. He would drink when we would go to Chicago together, but he--I never saw him drunk--never, ever.

Q This was part of territory, too, wasn't it?

A Oh yeah. I mean everybody was doing their share of serious drinking. Now, whether that became aggravated over time, I don't know. I do know that, in Bill's case, it became quite serious. In fact, it was kind of fascinating because I was put in a position that I thought was quite frightening. You know, you never get over being afraid when you're in a company, regardless of where you are. I got a call from Henry Ford, and, of course, I had been going out every evening with Bill and Dick Morris, who was, at that time, his executive assistant, I guess they called him, but, in effect, his PR man, and we would go over after the close of business and have a pop or two at the Dearborn Inn. A couple of things always impressed me: Bill was always in a hurry because he always had to get home, but that didn't--he had four, double martinis before he would leave the table. The fact that he was in a hurry didn't keep him

from having four. So he would just quaff 'em down faster, and, naturally, inasmuch as the Inn came under his aegis, I believe, at that time, we never had a problem with getting a seat or any service, you see, and, of course, our habits became known to the better waiters over there and stuff would appear on the table, you see. Except that Bill would always have to leave right after four, and it never occurred to me until I got a call from Henry, that the four drinks were probably just settling into the bloodstream by the time Bill hit downtown Detroit, and then, of course, if you're doing a lot of drinking, sometimes you can drink forever, it seems. I have some experience in this, and you are completely sober. Now, maybe you just think you're completely sober, but, really, I do think that you can be completely sober. Other times, you can have two drinks and be tipped over, and I remember, with that as a format, one other little fillip, I--Bill always got out before the bill came. I was running a big charge at....

Q This was a personal charge, wasn't it?

A It was a personal charge, oh, yes, at the Dearborn Inn, and if anybody ever just plain old looked at that charge, they would really think that I was in the sauce. But I figured that was, you know, part of the territory. But Bill never, ever picked up a bill. At one time I thought, well, you know, if you've got that much money, you just don't think about those things. He thinks about those things! When it came to big stuff, man, he was generous. And that little piddling stuff, you know, "I'm paying these guys enough, let them pick it up." But it was kind of amusing. Well then, time went by, and one morning, my secretary said, "Mr. Bordinat, Mr. Ford is on the phone." Well, you know, you

always have to go through a qualifier--"Which Mr. Ford?" "Henry Ford II." Well, you kind of wonder what the hell's happened, you know, and he said, "Gene," and I said, "Yes sir, Mr. Ford." He said, "I want you to take my brother Bill's car keys away from him." Well, we had car keys, of course, for all of his cars.

Q Right, which one?

A Yeah, which ones, and he said, "All of them." Well, I said, "Mr. Ford, I will do this because you asked me to do it, but I sure as hell would like to know why I'm doing it because I might be asked, you know." And so then he treated me with five minutes of candor, and I always felt quite flattered. Frequently, quite frightened because there are some times when, you know, when you can know too much, but flattered that he would know that I would sort of preserve a confidence. But he called me and asked me to pick up his brother's keys, and then he told me that Bill had had an accident--not a real accident--he'd sideswiped a half a dozen cars on the way out Jefferson to his home, and then he said, "Well, that wasn't so bad, but he did it again last night," and he said, "Of course, we know the police and all that." But he said, "He's been drinking a little bit," and, he said, "we've got to get on top of this, and I don't want him to have any keys." He said, "He can have somebody drive him from Central Office or something." I said, "Okay." And so brave as I am, I called Ed Polley who was running our garage and said, "Ed, I want you to pick up all of Mr. William Clay Ford's keys."

Q What did Ed say?

A Ed said--pause, long pause. But Ed's been around for a long time. Do you know Ed Polley.

Q No. I've heard of him, yes.

A Ed was a driver--first of all, he was one of the most delightful men I ever knew. Six feet, two inches of bear, and he was a B-17 pilot during World War II. He'd been a driver for the Company before the war. He had made two tours over Europe and was decorated all over the place, and he'd had many of his crews shot up and killed and so forth and wounded, and when he got out of the service, he did what I consider the most remarkable thing. At his own expense, he went and visited the parents of all of his crew members that had either been killed or wounded, and he said it crushed him because some of them would say, "You're the son of a bitch that killed my son," you know, and this came as quite a shock to him. But he was a very fine man--is a very fine man--and he had driven for Earle MacPherson, for example, and Mac treated him like a second son, you know, it was a very close relationship. In fact, he was the guy that Mac called on his deathbed, and said, "I have a quarter of a million dollars in cash in a safety deposit box. Here is a key, and here is my authority. I'm going to die. I probably won't make until tomorrow. I want you to pick up Lucille, take her down there and get that money out before I expire--before they seal this up." And Ed did. He said, it was the first time in his life he'd ever seen a quarter of a million dollars in cash. Put it in a case--a couple briefcases and walked out.

Q Just in time, huh?

A Yeah, because he was worried that Lucille would have no operating expense money and all that sort of stuff. While they seal things up, although I think Mac's estate was pretty well organized. I don't think

that this was a function of trying to beat taxes or anything. It was a function of trying to keep something liquid in her hands while probate and other things took place.

So that was the kind of a guy he was, and he knew the family because those drivers get to know the family, and there was a long pause when I asked him to pick up the keys, but, of course, he knew of my habits with Bill, so he was, obviously--he said, "Okay, I'll do it." Well, Bill made it very nice for all of us. He never showed up. He and Martha had decided that he'd better do something about himself, and that's when he went up into Canada to Toronto to Don Wood, and I admire Bill, you know. He could have gone through the John Doe detail. He is--his face is not that well known, wasn't then. And I admire Martha for going along with him. They both just signed in, "Mr. & Mrs. William Clay Ford," and he took the treatment, and it stuck. I don't know whether you know it or not, but Bill, to this day, has a rescue kit in his trunk and has been called, on a number of occasions, when he will hie himself out of the sheets and go down and attend some wayward soul that slipped off the wagon. He's quite a guy.

Q He certainly is.

A So I'm very, very fond of the family. In fact, I saw Bill and Martha, in fact, Teresa and I were down to one of our favorite watering spots--the Van Dyke Place--and we'd finished eating and gone upstairs, and our waiter--it's filled with gays, you know.

Q Oh, is it now?

A Yeah. Well, I mean, not customers. The place is--waiters and so forth, and they do superb work, by the way. They're very prideful of what

they do, and they do it well. But, one of them came over and said, "Mr. William Clay Ford is here." I said, "Oh, that's very nice. I didn't know that he came here." So, the way they have it--are you familiar with the place at all, Dave?

Q No.

A Well, it's on Van Dyke just off of Jefferson--just almost opposite the UAW headquarters there.

Q Which was the old Edsel Ford place.

A Yeah, it's the old--I think it's the Fink home--of coveralls and things of that nature which surprised me. He was not Jewish. I don't know what Fink is.

Q German?

A Yeah. And this home is just precious. It's been beautifully restored, and there's an intimacy about it. Rococo as hell--but just delightful--and they have a great kitchen, and good service, and fine wine, great cellar. And it's expensive, but we....

Q It's not private?

A No, no, but if you want to go, call early. I mean, several days, because they're booked, and bring checkbook. But, at any rate, they have a way of conducting business. You have your dinner, and then you go around their dessert table, and if you're going to have dessert, coffee, after-dinner drinks or something like that, you go upstairs to a sitting room, you see, and eat up there. So, as is our wont, as they say, Teresa and I went upstairs, and we're having our dessert, and Bill and Martha and Sheila and her husband, whom you should [know]...Steve Hamp, were there.

Q It was an anniversary of some kind, was it not?

A Yes, it was Martha's birthday, and it was the first time they'd ever been in the place, and this was Sheila and Steve taking them out, and they'd had a good time, and it was <u>really good</u> to see them again.

Q They were pleased to see you, I understand.

A Oh, is that right? Well, that's kind of nice. It's an interesting family. I had to make a decision years ago. Do I want to pull a Johnny Reinhart, for example, and become a part of their social set, and my late wife, Edelgard, and I decided if they're interested in having us for certain things, fine, and we will reciprocate, fine, but let's not crowd this. They've got their friends and so forth. Well, it turns out that many of their friends are my friends, anyhow, but I just didn't want to get that as a part of the issue. I wanted Bill to be able to feel free to tell me what he thought about me in the business world without being--having it hampered, and I wanted to be able to tell him the same thing. And the beautiful part of our relationship is that he always invited me to tell him. I always appreciated that, because I would be candid as hell. You know, it was interesting, it was the same way with Lee Iacocca, you could--I think I've probably told you this: Write it on a legal pad, but write it. Don't ever dictate it to a secretary. The minute you do that, regardless of how closed-mouthed your secretary is, you're the only one that knows that, and the rest of the world thinks that they all blabber like hell, and it's no longer confidential; but if you write it and send it longhand--and, fortunately, I'm not too scribbly--you can say all kinds of things that they would otherwise damn you for. And I've always appreciated the fact that they were interested. I fully believe

that I saved the Ford Motor Company one of the greatest aggravations in the world when I advised Bill not to stage a palace revolt.

Q Over the Mark II?

A No, no, no. This was the promotion of Phil Caldwell.

Q Oh, later on.

A Yeah, much later on. I think Bill was mad. I have never, ever known him to be this mad about a business matter, particularly, when it involved Henry. I mean, he got awfully mad at George. You know, I was a fortuitous beneficiary of the old--"not that he loves Caesar less but loves Rome more." He hated George Walker, and George, you know--typical of him--George used to put a glass against their wall. You know, our offices were juxtapositioned, and George used to eavesdrop. Why the hell he would eavesdrop, I don't know, because all he could have heard was bad things that Bill might have been saying about him. Bill did not appreciate George. George represented a kind of animal person that was....

Q Predatory?

A Yeah, and Bill is genteel--hell of a competitor, but genteel. The ground rules were totally different, and he just does not like--did not like George.

Q That leads us into my main question for the afternoon is that what happened in the five-year period that when George was finally brought back and why he was brought back as vice-president for design or styling?

A Well, as a matter of fact, it wasn't a bad run. He had a number of good cars coming out. I think the most impressive one, and the one I got a kick out of--you might recall that Bob McNamara was a leading character in this thing. Well, he didn't understand George at all.

George was so much the antithesis of the McNarama type that he thought there must be something kind of great about the guy. That there was something sort of magic. That he was a real prick, but he was a genius, you see. And it shows you that even McNamara could be fooled. But the interesting thing--I remember the development of the 1958 first, four-place Thunderbird. That was done--obviously, all this was done under George. But that was personally directed [by]--and if he took credit for it, and he deserved to--Joe Oros. But this was a sort of a dichotomy. Here was Joe Oros who was hero number one, and here was hero number one-A--Elwood Engle. But George chose to join with Elwood Engle on the design of another candidate for the Thunderbird, and they came up with two cars. And I was not a part of this at all. One of them was the one that Joe did--which was quite boraxy. If you really analyze the 1958 Thunderbird, it had enough design on its side, back and front, for five automobiles.

Q What do you mean by boraxy?

A Well, hokey. It had a lot--schlocky--but it had a very formal roof on it. Well, this is typical of the way the uninitiated view a car. McNamara would say, "Well, that looks pretty formal." Formal, your ass, it looked just--I mean--it looked commercial, but it had a spear on the side and a hook coming down onto the spear and double headlights on it and a great, big bumper grille and not three but six taillights coming out the back end. I mean, you know, it was really an adventure--but with a formal roof. And, it's interesting, it had more to look at. The other candidate was a very severe, svelte, nifty-looking automobile. It was rejected, and the one that Oros did was accepted. Now, George had to be

kind of fast on his feet, because he was spending every evening with Engle doing this svelte--now, this svelte one was absolutely non-Engle.

Q Is your word svelte?

A Svelte, yes. George was sitting there coaching, because Elwood is a schlock artist. So, here are these two machines. They buy the one that Joe did for the Thunderbird, and the other one's an awfully nice automobile. What are they going to do with it? It became the 1961 Lincoln Continental--or Lincoln, I should say. You know, with its very clean sides and sort of a bumper-in-grille kind of thing--very nice automobile. That was George's car, and he, obviously, he could and should take credit for everything that was developed under his aegis. I might have told you this before, but I asked Ken Kopock who, many years ago, was leading the Chevrolet studio under Harley Earl, and I worked for him, and I once said to him, I said, "You know, I see Mr. Earl coming around, all 6'5" of him, 250 pounds, looking like bandbox and pointing and directing and stuff like that." I said, "Is he any kind of a designer? Does he ever design anything?" And Ken said, "Gene, he designs everything that comes out of this place and don't ever forget it!" And, I think, that's probably true, you know. It's very difficult to--if it's done under your aegis, you're the one that directed it, and you are the one that lives or dies by the sword, by the way. Not your subalterns, they're the ones that can crab crawl and say, "He made me do it." "The devil made me do it." But it's a--that is the one piece that I recall, specifically, that George really did. I mean, he knew that this was a turnpoint kind of a thing, as a car. This was getting away from the two-place Thunderbird which had been modestly successful--more successful

than the Corvette--and going to a four-place job, and, if it took off, to be--you know, everybody wants to hang on to the successful cars, you see. Hang on to the tail.

Well, as a matter of fact, it's one of the few things where McNamara was right. The wrong part was he should have done it without abandoning the two-places. But, regardless, we went from 18,000 pieces over the total of three years for the 1955-'56-'57 two-placer to 60,000 pieces a year with the four-placer. So....

Q The upward, mobile family wanted the kids in the back.

A Yeah, exactly. At least the pet. So....

Q Well, that, as you're probably about to tell me--I don't want to anticipate you, but that '61 Lincoln design had quite a history in terms of Walker and Elwood's later development, did it not?

A Well, it became--first of all, it became the Lincoln, and it was a very successful car in a design sense. It was an unsuccessful car in a package sense. In fact, it was I that asked George--asked? I said, "George, you can't bring this car out and have it exactly the same size as the Thunderbird." I said, "You know, this is taking the--look at the Cadillac. I mean, that's the competition." Analogous, really, is the Mark VII, vis-a-vis the Mark VI, for package, and I think the Mark VII was a mistake, in that regard. You are abandoning a big, wallowing machine that--the '56, which was a handsome machine, by the way--and [then] comes the '61. The '57 got a little hokey with its fins, but the '56 was--and Bill Schmidt and I were the ones that really did that--and it was a winner, a design winner. In fact, we always hated Ben Mills as a result of that. One thousand more pieces. If he had ordered them, Lincoln would have made money for the first time in its history.

Q At that point, what was Ben Mills?

A Well, he was in charge of Lincoln.

Q Why didn't he order the thousand pieces?

A Abject cowardice, I guess. Which is rather strange, because you can always get rid of 1,000 pieces! I really don't understand why. But Ben was just a hyper-conservative. He was playing it safe. All of his career, he was nimble--dance out of the way of trouble. I am somewhat ambivalent about Ben--gregarious, great voice, wonderful piano player, smart enough to be a Whiz Kid, poor boy, afraid he might get poor again, so he played it very cool and didn't really do for the company what his brain power could have allowed him to do. It's too bad. Very nice fellow. I always feel guilty, really, when I say these kinds of things about him because he was one of the few fellows on my side on the business of becoming an officer. In fact, I remember how dear it was of Helen to come over and spend time with my late wife, Edelgard, telling her how she appreciated what, she, Edelgard, was going through, sweating this thing out with me. It's nice. Just a delightful couple, but he could have been so much better for Ford Motor Company. And so he got into purchasing, which is sort of a....

Q Cul-de-sac?

A Yeah. Staff, actually, and he was writing policies. I remember even at that I had a little problem with him. I had developed an industrial design function for our operation. We were doing space planning stuff for Philco at the time and all that sort of thing. And I was always running against this damned problem of--you know, we had to get paid for this kind of work, particularly in space planning--and, all of a

sudden, Wally Ford would end up with the goddamned business. I've known Wally Ford for years, and he's a competent pro. As a matter of fact, he took his lessons--he was at General Motors the same time I was, you know.

Q Harley Earl hired him?

A That's right. The only Ford in that damn parking lot!

Q Well, no, another Ford--another Ford.

A But he, nonetheless, well, yes and no. By the way, Josie looks bad, I think. But, regardless....

Q He was--well, yeah, he was married very early in the War. I think about [1941].

A Sort of the amalgam of two great fortunes. In fact, the older of the two moneys is Wally's.

Q I wonder if that has any pecking order....?

A I don't know, but I don't think he has to take any of her crap.

Q Incidentally, you were about to say, earlier on, that Harley Earl and his industrial design operation was, I think, one of Wally Ford's earliest opportunities to....

A Yes, it was.

Q Get into the industrial design business.

A Yeah. And, not only that, they became closer friends, over time.

Q That's right.

A Because remember it ended up being Ford and Earl.

Q I noticed that.

A That was back when you could establish an outside business, and as long as you didn't take any accounts that were in conflict with the

mother lode, why, you were allowed to, and Earl actually became a partner of Wally Ford's before Earl left General Motors.

Q I understand it was initially set up for his son. Was that true?

A Well, perhaps, but Bill Ford, his brother, played an active part in it for a long time. I don't know what his son, if anything, has done.

Q I'm thinking of Earl's son.

A Yes, I know. I know that they just inducted Harley into the Automotive Hall of Fame, and Teresa and I went down to the--I was shocked to see 1,000 or 1,200 or 1,300 folks down there, and the MC was J. P. McCarthy, but the fellow that was the guy meting out the award and all the good stuff was Don Petersen. He did a nice a job, too. And, of course, Roger Smith was the recipient of "The Industrialist of the Year" or something as esoteric as that. Which was sort of funny on the heels of all of the bad-mouthing he's been getting, but he had his cheering section down there. It was really quite interesting, but, Earl, when he was inducted, the award was accepted by his grandson, and so, I guess, I just assumed that his dad--grandson's dad was dead. Maybe he just couldn't get there.

Q I understand that he is still out in Arizona and not feeling too well.

A Is that right?

Q And Wally pretty much runs the firm.

A Yes. As a matter of fact, I don't think that Earl is even in the name any more.

Q Oh, yes.

A Is it?

Q Yeah, still there. Ford & Earl Associates.

A But I know Wally was quite a competitor of mine.

Q Was he?

A Yeah, and what I found out in talking to Ben was that Ford & Earl had an open purchase order for anything in the industrial design world that needed to be done at Ford Motor Company.

Q He did some interior stuff at the World Headquarters and other places.

A Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, he did all the executive offices the last time around, and he's a competent pro, but I, of course, was pleading Chinese dollars, you know, why not pay me, I'm here. But, at any rate, Ben had written a policy letter saying that, you know, there will be three bids, and there will be this, and there will be that, and defining exactly what the policy was, so I called him up, and I said, "Hey, Ben, my informants tell me that there is an open purchase order for industrial design work in the files of purchasing." I said, "I have an industrial design function here. I want my purchase order to go right next to Wally Ford's." I said, "I don't want any preference, or anything, but," I said, "I want consideration, because what happens is people will look in that file, they see that it's an open purchase order, they see the name Ford, they think that this is an edict from Henry, and," I said, "my boys don't have a chance." A lot of crab crawling on the other end, but eventually, by God, we got it. It was interesting.

Q That's another story I want to hear about later, but tell me, basically, what was--how did Walker hold on for five years? It seems to me rather....

A Well, it's not too tough. You hire a guy for five years. That's not too long. Secondly, all of us that were in contention for his job--contenders for his job--were about the same age which, in industrialese, was too young. And, of all of them, I was the youngest. And, I think that they felt that they had to tread a little water. Not only that, at that time, and it varied, depending on Henry's mood, frankly, he didn't think it would look good to hire a guy, make him a vice president, give him a lot of press, he's in Time magazine, I mean, the music goes on. So, there is very little point in letting him go. Besides, he was an enigma. You know, he was--he didn't look bad, he was well dressed, well known, nationally and internationally. Yeah, he played the game of, because I'm screwy in this world of industry, that's a mark of my genius, and he tried to sell that with Elwood Engel. He said, "Yeah, he just doesn't understand the stuff because he's a genius." Well, that's the biggest crock of shit I've ever heard in my life. He didn't understand it, because he didn't understand it! Now, a genius might be awfully lop-sided but usually he's got an IQ so he really understands other pieces of the action. Engel couldn't be elected vice president at Ford because he was a crook! He felt that it was all right to wear tennis shoes back into the studio because it ruins your regular shoes, you see. So, okay, then we would find that he had charged the shoes to Ford Motor Company. Well, all right. Well, that wasn't so bad, but he was playing as loose as he could with expense accounts, and, of course, George doesn't know how to read, and he would just sign his name to 'em, and....

Q Elwood could probably do no wrong?

A Well, that's true, but, you know, George really was, in his own

way, a genius, but very stupid in others. He was playing fast and loose with the government, for example. He was examined every year by the auditors because he was brought in for tax fraud, and they tried to indict him. And the grand jury--it's funny when he tells about it, you know--he said, "I look at the grand jury, I think there's some broads out there that I might be able sort of smile at, you know." And, he said, "I look at them," and he says, "Christ, they're all a hell of lot older than I am," and he said, "They look mean." He'd gotten some terrible advice, you see, from these tax attorneys. They said, "Look, you know, go ahead. You're a designer, you've got to have a good front, charge your tailor off. You've got to have a house that looks great. Charge your landscape gardener off," and they said, "then if they do call you in, what the hell. You settle, see." Well, they figured that he just overtrained on this. He'd had Marge, his daughter, working for him for $500 a week for a hell of a long a time. She never showed up down there, see, so little stuff like that, and she had never paid taxes on the $500! I mean, he was in really deep trouble for awhile. Well, his attorney--obviously, a different attorney than his tax attorney--said, "George, you're not going to like this at all," he said, "but I'm going to have to take--what I'm going to say, I don't want you to hit me. You're bigger than I am, you're stronger than I am, I know all the stories about your playing in the same backfield with Jim Thorpe and the whole shot." He said, "Just don't hit me, but I'm going to have to plead that you're dumb--that you just don't understand this thing. You're a goddamned design genius, and that's where your mind is, way out in this creative heaven, but when it comes to this sort of thing, you just are dumb!" Well, they

pulled it off. They pulled it off, and George had to sit and squirm while they called him "dumb." And so the grand jury figures, well, maybe the guy is dumb, maybe he was inadvertent. But George is the biggest crook in the world, I mean, if he could have gotten away with it, he sure as hell would have. But a little bonus that went along with avoiding the indictment, was the fact that he was audited every year. But, typical of his intellectual approach to these things, the guys that were sent out to do the initial audit, before they brought him into court, before the grand jury, was your typical--"I don't make very much money. I am not a terribly sophisticated guy, but I do pretty fair arithmetic"--kind of government employee, and he went up to George's office, and, of course, the lobby and things of that nature of George's office are designed to sort of throw you on your butt, you know, they're way out. And here comes this guy, and George invites him back into his office which, once again, you see, is a magnificent sort of thing. And he says, "You know, I resent the fact that you're in here trying to tell me." He said, "Look at the tie you've got on, for example, that tie does not go with that suit," and he begins to tear this guy apart, you see. He said, "You have any idea how much I make, how little you make," and, well, of course, these little guys that don't make very much can kill you, and so the guy proceeded to do that. Well, they became pretty fair friends over time. George took to giving the guy ties, for example! He'll straighten him up on ties, if nothing else, but that was funny as hell. George would tell about this stuff, you see. Well, now that's just not good, common sense. He also was a good friend of Harry Bennett. You see, Harry Bennett liked the sports type, and Harry Bennett, at that time, was a hell of an

influential person. George wanted that. You've got to be careful about your bedmates. It's interesting. But George was--is a remarkable guy.

Q His impression--forgive me--I just recently saw "Das Rheingold" out on the West Coast and was impressed by the fact that George seemed to be sort of an Alberich who has these gnomes, these dwarfs, these Nibelungs that are working for him in the salt mines while he's out hustling the [gold].

A Well, that's true. George was the salesman, and it's a thing that happens in industrial design, that is, you're selling a personality, and you must talk to the hierarchy, and, frequently, you will bring one of your gnomes, as you call them, on to show the world that you do have gnomes working for you, and, hopefully, that they will keep their mouths shut and just be well-dressed and be there. And that always happens. It was one of the great difficulties George had in selling his business when he went to Ford Motor Company. That business had a lot of accounts, but it turned out that the only things that George could sell was (a) his goodwill and (b) the assets of his office. And that kind of a business has damn few assets: a few drafting tables, some draperies and that sort of stuff. And yet the business that he had--the accounts that he had--were worth one hell of a lot of money, but they can't be sold, and this is some sort of a fluke in the tax law, because the accounts were with him. They have to be renegotiated to go with somebody else, and he sold out to Larry Wilson, and Larry bought the whole kit and caboodle for about $300,000 which was--I mean he had, perhaps, five times that coming in, in the course of the year, from the accounts. So it was a great deal for him. Now $300,000 when you're working for George is hard to kind of

accumulate, but what they did was form a little corporation, and George gave them a little time to buy him out, and all the fellows who were working for George--ex Elwood and Joe [Oros]--got together and mortgaged their houses, took second mortgages on their houses and got a business. But it was very rough sledding for them, because Larry is a competent designer and a very attractive man or was--wherever he is now--but he wasn't George, and he had met all of these people, but he wasn't George. When Sundberg and Ferar died within a month of each other, they had a hell of a time. When Bill Schmidt wanted to retire, he said, he went down, and he figured that he had $60,000 coming out of the business and then other things from investments that was enough to keep him, you know, down in the Keys in good shape, and he turned it over to Stan Thorwaldson. Well, Stan used to work for me, and Stan is not a very pretty man. He's a nice guy and a brilliant designer but not a very pretty man, and all of Bill's accounts wanted Bill, so Bill is now the happy commuter, you see, spending about half of his time up here trying to keep his accounts glued together. So, it's very much a personality-oriented kind of business, and that makes it tough. Well, George played his cards right out there. He knew the world. He's got some interesting stories to tell, but you could be sure that he would badmouth anybody, at a stroke of a pen. In fact, I gather from what you said that he was really taking off on the world at large when you were talking with him down there.

Q He's still very bitter.

A Why would he be bitter? They made him--they threw another million into the kitty for him.

Q It didn't matter. The fact that they let him go.

A He was 65! I know, but isn't it--that was a rule. Let him go, shit, why did they hire him, you know!

Q Well, you can't expect him to take that attitude.

A Yeah, no.

Q Interesting to me would be what were you doing during these five years? How did you manage to survive?

A Well, I was running Lincoln-Mercury efforts, then the--I don't know whether the Edsel started at that time or not.

Jack Reith had Mercury, so for awhile it was spread out, and Jack had selected me for Mercury, but when that was over, Lincoln came back into my umbrella, and I did the preliminary work on Edsel for about a month or two--long enough to put Roy Brown in charge of it and to endorse Roy Brown's approach which was a very good one, by the way. It would have been a unique car, and it would have not--I mean, it was quite simple and direct in its approach. Then they became a little more formalized in the business of the special products operation, and Krafve, Emmett Judge and others were spun off along with Roy Brown, and they took it from there. Well, Roy, of course, thought he'd died and gone to heaven. This was the greatest thing that had ever happened to him to be party to this birth of a new automobile and to have the total responsibility for its appearance and so forth, was very heady stuff. Besides, Krafve and company were good at building esprit, and they had that group --even though Dick hated the idea....

Q In fact, had opposed it, as you said earlier.

A Opposed it, but, nonetheless, okay, that's my commission. I will

do it, and he had those guys whipped into a lather. Well, Emmett can be very persuasive--highly intellectual--and....*

Q Very interesting fellow.

A Very interesting guy. Ran into him--Teresa and I ran into him just a few months ago up North. He and Kita came into the--I can't think of the big dining place South of Harbor Springs near Petoskey. At any rate, they walked in--as did Bob Conn, by the way, who at one time headed up Ford of Europe. In fact, Bob Conn was one of the fellows that was in the Navy with Henry Ford. In fact, he stood a Christmas watch for Henry Ford. As a matter of fact, when Bob got out, he came to see to see me, he said, "Hey, you know, I've never had a job in my life. How do you get a job?" And, at that time, Floyd Rice [Ford dealer] was good friend of mine, and I said, "Let's go talk to Floyd. He'd know more than I." Well, Floyd was a pragmatic son of a gun. He said, "Who do you know?" Conn said, "Well, I know Henry Ford."

Q From the Navy?

A Yeah, from the Navy. He said, "Look, I'll tell you what to do," and Floyd actually set up the appointment for him. But Henry was hungry for people back then, and so Bob came in, and Bob spoke Spanish in addition to other things, and so he sent him down in charge of--after he went through the little training thing that they had--he sent him in charge of sales for the Caribbean area on trucks and tractors, and then, eventually, he became cars and everything else for the whole Caribbean. We took a couple of vacations down there were really quite nice because of the contacts that Bob had down there. You see, his younger brother--

*Editor's Note: Richard Krafve and Emmett Judge were named vice-president and director of marketing, respectively, for the new Edsel Division.

younger by a year--was my roommate at the University of Michigan, and so we were fairly close.

Q Leo Beebe was another that came out of that Great Lakes matrix.

A Yes. He was Henry's PT instructor, as I recall.

Q Handed out basketballs.

A Leo gave his family and his life for Ford Motor Company. I am an admirer of Leo's, and we would get into the sauce every once in awhile when we'd be abroad together, and he would begin to wonder whether he had done quite right. Of course, there was no way he could live with his [legislator] wife. She was just too politically oriented and totally bad news for him as far as going to Europe. I mean, shoot, he got over in Europe because the commander said, "Hey, go to Europe," and then she'd go over and spend about a week with him and then bug off to come back and keep her political irons in the fire.

But Leo--in fact, John Bugas had a theory about that. He said, "If you're going to leave them over there for more than a month, you'd better send the bride, or else they'll go native." That's about as long as a guy can stand not going to the Kit Kat Club or something like that, and he said, "There aren't any secrets in the goddamned world, and the word will get back, and the trouble sets in and Ford is the loser."

Q Bugas was head of Ford International for some time.

A That's right, and he was responsible for establishing a number of policies that were a little more humane. It should have been. He carried the battle to the IRS on a lot of this stuff saying "Hey, you just can't--we're not doing anybody a favor. This is a business expense. We want to pay it. We want that guy to be able to keep zeroed in on his

job and not be fighting a domestic battle." He said, "If we don't provide for this, why, the domestic battle is going to loom, sure as hell--real or imagined." Because the gals--you know, some gals can't swing it over there. Fascinating! I wish Henry'd been just a little more patient with John. He hurt his feelings by one year, and that was too bad.

Q Seems to be a pattern--that one year?

A Yeah, that one year. Ditto Breech. Well, it seemed rather unnecessary. There are things--although the thing that you don't know, at least I never found out, and I was pretty close to John--I did a lot of traveling with him--is what Henry really said. He might have said, "John, I want to--look, you're 64. I want to work somebody else into this job, and I don't want to wait until the last damned minute. I want your input," and, I mean, he could have put it that way, and John said, "Look, it's my job, goddamn it, and," you know, "my nose is out of joint, if you want to do this," and so he quits. Obviously, they had enough money to do it, so we don't know that. Or it could have been, he said, "John, you've outlived your usefulness, get your ass out of here. I've got somebody else I want to put in." We don't know that. The second is probably more close to it, but we really shouldn't prejudge.

Q Well, Walker seemed to lead a charmed life there for awhile.

A Five years isn't too long to lead a charmed life, and there was good stuff coming in. After all, the minute you're there, whether you had anything to do with how it got there, is of small moment.

Q Who were the people in that era who really produced?

A Well, there were a number of them in the lower echelons, but I don't say that Joe and Elwood were not producing.

Q Let's hear a little bit about that.

Q Elwood was put into Advanced--in charge of it, and it was a good place for him because he did not know how nor did he ever in his whole life put a car to bed, you know, where you take it and actually get it ready for production. He didn't know how, but he had a lot of creative genes, and he would knock stuff out. Had terrible taste because the fact that it came off his fingertips made him think that it was great, but nobody keeps knocking out home runs all the time, you know, and he would think that a single looked like a home run quite frequently, but he was a creative guy, and so he ran Advanced. Joe Oros was given really the plum of it all, and when you really think about it, George was not so dumb, you see. Don't give something that calls for this kind of day-to-day infighting with the various personalities that had to make the approvals and so forth to somebody like Elwood--he'll blow it! Give it to somebody that has a modicum of intelligence--a little political savvy, known as Joe Oros, and he did, and under Joe, a lot of good things happened, and Joe--things happened under his aegis that were very good, including--George tried to sell him to Romney, you know, but he turned it down. He came in, and he and I had quite a little chat because I knew that Joe was smarting because George had already told him he had the job --my job. And then he had to backpedal, and, of course, it was a very difficult thing for him to do, I imagine, it's always tough. But George was so vindictive that he tried and did get Elwood out over to Chrysler, and he tried and failed to get Joe out of Ford over at American Motors.

Q That's because Oros didn't take it.

A No. Lord, he didn't want it. Further, Romney did not have anything to

offer. Well, he did, but he wouldn't, and then he tried for McGuire. Now, McGuire was the third party, you see. McGuire had all of interiors and some other sidebar stuff under him. McGuire was the oldest of us. He was 12 years my senior and a very capable designer. Interestingly enough, he thought of himself as one of the world's great administrators. He'd been a major in the Air Force in an administrative capacity, and he thought that, you know, he was really great at it. He was a very poor administrator, but he was a very fine designer, and, [with] design, he had very little confidence in himself. It was very funny how these things work, Dave. But he was a great, great asset to Ford Motor Company. His demise came when a fellow by the name of George Johnson who was in charge of personnel for us, who thought that he was wired in pretty well with [William] Bill Gossett.

Q Yes, legal head. [vice-president and general counsel of Ford Motor Company]

A Yeah, because they'd both gone to Columbia not realizing that there can be a world of--there can be a hell of a spread between people in Columbia. I mean, George was not married to George Evans Hughes' daughter, for example.

Q Charles Evans Hughes.

A Charles Evans Hughes, that right. Nor did he have a portrait of him in his foyer. In fact, Bill was always very candid about that, he said, "If you want to get ahead in the law business, marry the boss' daughter." But, remind me to tell you, by the way, about my experience with Gossett in New York the eve of his retirement from Ford Motor Company. But, at any rate, the personalities, to review the bidding, in Advanced was Elwood

Engel; Ford Division was Joe Oros; all interiors was McGuire; and I had Lincoln-Mercury. And, obviously, the battle to succeed George was between the four of us. McGuire eliminated himself because he got himself in the hands of George Johnson, who was a kingmaker, and he began to--he reasoned that Bob, who looked a little like Anthony Eden, had the look, had the age, had enough talent, you know--I mean, how much talent does anybody have to have, really, with this millions of dollars of talent that we hired?--that he would be, that he could make him George's successor. Well, the word got around, and certain actions took place that were rather overt and not too covert, and so, George gets this--well, he knows how to shoot a guy down in nothing flat, and McGuire ends up worrying about whether he's going to have a job.

Q What happened to the kingmaker?

A The kingmaker was released, forthwith, ultimately to hang himself. But Lowell Krieg picked him up to help sell stuff when he was with Olin-Mathieson in charge of the Remington Division, but it was downhill for George. He ended up working, and from that to in charge of labor relations for Cudahay--the meatpackers. Comes on board just while they're in the process of negotiating a contract, gives the store away, so they're not happy with him, they can him, and he hangs himself. And George was not very good anyhow, frankly. Engle made the mistake of taking his wife to England, spending four weeks touring England, posting all the bills back on an expense account to Sir Patrick Hennessey. Hennessey okays it, bucks it over to the United States. You know, there's a little difference in what they consider perks in England than they do over here. Well, the stuff comes back over here, and would you believe--probably by

a very careful arrangement of a couple of the financial minions--he submits another expense account over here which George signs.

Q Identical?

A Identical. Lundy's desk is in receipt of two things, both of which are in excess of $4000.

Q Carelessness or deliberate?

A Deliberate. He thought he could play it at both ends, not knowing that all that they do over in Europe is bill it back to mother, you know. Lundy goes in, talks to Henry: "We have here something that I suppose could be called grand larceny." And, although they didn't want to raise a stink about it, etc., etc., they had a hell of a talk with Elwood, but it, obviously, just foreclosed on any chance he would have to take George's place, and that was the guy that George wanted because he knew he could really work in, you see.

Q He'd have a plant there?

A Have a plant--a mole. So, he....

Q That left you and Oros?

A That is right, and, unfortunately, he had moved a little too late. You see, this all happened a little too close to decision time, and he didn't have the time really required to do a hell of a buildup on Joe. He tried to spread the word that he'd already told him, you know, and everything, but Bill Ford, of course, wasn't having any of it.

Q Then heading up design operations?

A That is right, and George's boss. Bill resented, and I don't blame him for being referred to, in much too loud a voice, by George, as "the fucking kid," and, you know, you don't do that. George was a real

dichotomy, I mean, he could be so clever on one side and so dumb on the other. So, Bill took him on as a cause celebre, and I was going with Chalmers Goyert and Dick [Morris]--At that time, by the way, I happened to receive an offer to become the president of a middle-sized organization that was a supplier to Ford Motor Company--one of considerable worth, I might add. It was not a fly-by-night thing, and this was a hell of a deal. We had reached the place where all we were debating about was shares and fringes and things of that nature. I was serious about it. And we were having a little difficulty, and the headhunter of Sturgis or Strudgers or Struggles, or whatever the hell it is out of Chicago, and something, which is a big one, was the one that was putting this together. And I had met all the criteria, and I didn't know what to do. I'd always resented the fact that people would come in and try to lever you, you know, and when they would do it to me, so I talked with my wife, and she said, "Talk with Bill. Just go in and chat with him. Don't ask for any guarantees, just ask him if you're still in the running and explain what the situation is, that you've got to make a decision here." Well, that was good advice. I don't think I would have done it, if she hadn't nudged me. Gals can be useful at times. So I went in and had a long chat with Bill, and I made it perfectly clear that I wanted no guarantees but that I had to make a move here, that this job would be open until after George retired, and I did want him to know that this wasn't a threat but my age, which was 41, that if I didn't get it, I was going to leave the Company because I would see no future there because all of the other fellows were contemporaries of mine--only one or two years older with the exception of McGuire who was twelve--but I mean Elwood and Joe were just a couple of years

older. So, I had these sidebar luncheon meetings that were held at Bill's request, obviously. Bill was asking his buddies to come over and find out if I were for real about the business of leaving the company, and....

Q You'd had a good relationship with him over the years?

A Oh yes, and he was--the fact that I would leave, made sense to him, and it made sense to me. I could not see myself in grade for a protracted period of time--20 or so odd years. I felt that I needed more security. Those are very dicey jobs. At least, if you're the officer, you can point the finger at other folks or at least try to, but if you're on the firing line year after year after year, I don't think anybody's good enough to sustain it for that length of time. You make enemies, you can't help it. You make a lot of friends, but the enemies are the ones that go after you, and I just thought that it was too dicey, that I would need a change of venue in order to do something. In fact, I could have made quite a bit more money by leaving. So, it wasn't a function of money, it was more a function of just feeling that I would have been blocked short of somebody being in a car accident or something like that for the next quarter of a century.

Q At this point, did you regard Joe Oros as a serious contender?

A I didn't think he should have been, but I think he was. He certainly had George's ear. George would have been quite disappointed in Joe, had Joe made it. He's not as malleable as Elwood. Elwood's a whore. I mean, you know, he had no principles at all. Joe is a very principled guy. I always liked Joe, but he's a cornpone, and he's really strange in that regard, but, nonetheless, I always admired him. Hard working, lot

of talent, horribly naive, didn't have a good feel for what was in back of a lot of the thinking that was going on in the company that would have a direct bearing on what he trying to do, and he would always look wide-eyed when I'd tell him these things which are so important when you're trying to develop something. You know, the public is fine, but you got to get it by our own mentors before the public will ever see it, and this he couldn't quite handle. But, regardless, he was a fine designer, and, as I said, highly ethical. He was the antithesis of Engle. You could leave hundred dollar bills on the table and not even worry about counting them, if Joe were sitting there. Not true with Elwood. He's just a very nice fellow, and he was terribly bent out of shape, as I can sure understand why he would be, having been told he had the job only to find out that he didn't.

Q Do you think he gave up the American Motors job in anticipation of Walker's promise?

A Well, it could have been except that anybody that took the job [AMC] would have been foolish, anyhow, just from a dollars and cents point of view. I know that I had a rather strange thing happen to me. Maybe I told you about it. I was invited by Mike Radock. Do you remember him?

Q Oh, yes.

A Well, Mike left Ford Motor Company public relations to go up and be Harlan Hatcher's PR guy [at the University of Michigan], and Mike and I our paths have crossed on a number of occasions, we sort of liked each other. And Mike was the guy in charge of sending out invitations to appropriate personalities to come to the football games and spend them [in the] press box having brunch with Harlan Hatcher and other dignitaries of the university.

Q Ernie Breech had a permanent seat there.

A Is that right?

Q Yeah. I know, because I sat in it once. One day he couldn't come. Radock said, "What the hell is Crippen doing in Breech's seat?" His functionary said, "Well, Ernie can't come today."

A Well, anyhow, I was invited up there by Mike, and it happened to be the same day that they invited George Romney. Romney had been pecking away at my folks for a few months there, and he was there with his wife and his son, and this was before he was governor. He was still heading up American Motors, but it was obvious that he was going to be running for governor, and obvious to a lot of people that was he was going to be a shoo-in for it, and so the university personalities were beginning to lobby with him, even at that time. In fact, it amused the hell out of me because they had, in addition to Harlan Hatcher himself, the head of the medical school at Michigan, the dean of it, apparently, who was trying to convince Romney that when he got into office, he, obviously, should ignore Michigan State's plea for a medical school because it was going to divide up the moneys too thinly and so forth. So, I found this kind of interesting. I'd never witnessed this kind of play before, but then it occurred to me that that's what the president of a university is, he's their chief salesman and....

Q And fund-raiser?

A Yeah, fund-raiser. So, I was having brunch with George, and I said, "Well, it's kind of nice to know you, but I think I know a lot about you, anyhow. Not so much for what I read in the paper, but what my fellows bring back to me, George, after they've been talking to you." He looked

a little embarrassed, and I said, "Don't feel badly about it, I mean, [if] any of them are willing to go, they can go." And he said, "You know, you pay them too much." I said, "No, George, you offer them too little." So we sparred a little bit like that. It was kind of academic. I always felt that Romney pulled one of his smartest acts--any guy--first, in being able to sell the public, at that particular time, on small cars because he was stuck with them. That's what he had, and during that period the stock went like crazy, and he was kind of a romantic guy as far as the public was concerned. They looked upon him as kind of heroic type, you might recall. But he got rid of some stock options stocks, and the newspapers came out and beat on him for it saying, "Here's the president the company. He's selling his stock." Well, the following day, why, Romney explains all--another headline where he says, "You know you got to sell a little to buy some more." and they accepted that. But it must have told him at that time, there isn't any way I can divest myself of this damned stock without doing harm to me as a personality, like I'm abandoning ship or doing harm to the other stockholders because they might drive the stock down. So, how can you divest yourself of stock without causing this to happen? Run for office! Then, of course, you are not going to be bound by any of these pressures from industry, etc., etc. You can almost hear the speech, and so he divests himself, you see. Well, the market happened to be damned high, and George made himself a few million bucks, but I found that quite interesting and quite a ploy, and I am absolutely confident that it wasn't that he was as interested in being governor of the state, although that was sort of a nice piece of fallout, as he was to solidify his gains at American Motors and get out

of a crumbling operation because he couldn't sustain it at that level, and he knew it. So, I thought that was sort of interesting, and am I not clever to have thought of all that?

Q So, he'd been after, not only Oros, but other key people on your staff?

A Oh yeah, he was after McGuire then. He took 'em in order.

Q McGuire would have been pretty attractive, at that point.

A Yeah. Bob actually gave it a lot of serious thought. Oros was--well, he knew where he wanted to be. Bob gave it a lot of thought, and I said, "Well, Bob, do me a favor." I mean, he was candid with me. He came and chatted with me. I said, "Before you make up your mind, let me send you over to talk with Ed O'Leary. All I want him to do is to tote up your worth for you.

I mean, [not] whatever else you have outside of Ford Motor Company, but your Ford Motor Company worth. "I just want you to know what you're dealing from," and Bob came back and he said, "Well, hell," he said, "I'll go back and talk to George," but he says, "It's no contest." People don't realize what they've accumulated. They don't realize what they have in retirement. I mean, that's up for a loss, if they move. And Bob, of course, had been around since about a month after I came into the company he came in, so he had a lot of years there, and he'd been making good money for a long time, and when it was all added up, plus his options and a few other things like that, Romney had nothing to offer. I mean, salary and a title, but the salary was well below what Bob's base was, and their fringes, of course, couldn't come close to ours. So, Bob, who is an arch conservative, anyhow, when it comes to his

own personal career. You know, I thought he was going into a apoplectic coma when he moved from General Motors because there's always a hiatus between the time you saw off at one company until the time you sign the contract, so to speak, at the other, and during that period I thought I was going to lose Bob. I knew him, you know, from over at General Motors, and he was dying because he was unemployed, you know. This is really scaring the hell out of him. So, he had that kind of a mental makeup, anyhow. Bob needed his security. It's interesting, fellows of that particular genre--"poor boy." His father--not poor--but his father was in education and never had a lot of money. Bob, I think, would have been happier in the world of academe, but he was a great designer. Had fine taste. I know he did--at one time I had him handling advanced things, too, and he came up with a car that became the European Capri. This was when Stan Gillan was heading up the Ford of Europe operation. Stan was funny. He went native over there, like no one I've ever seen. Fellows, you know, can kind of adjust so that they don't stand out like a Yankee sort of thumb over there. Others never do. Their Yankeeism becomes more intense. They're going to prove to the world who they are. But old Stan with rolled bumbershoot, the Chesterfield coats, the derby, waxed mustachios. He looked great!

Q He should work in the Bank of England, not Ford.

A Yeah, exactly. It's just a damn shame that he wasn't English because he became quite an Anglophile, and, you know, the guys that head up Ford of Britain, if they're native, are knighted, because they are the greatest exporters of all England.

Q Almost all of the chairmen got knighted.

A Almost all the chairmen were knighted. There was only one, and he was offered a knighthood, and he was going through a divorce at the time, and so they--it was okay with the Queen, but other wiser minds said, "You know, it just wouldn't be the thing to do under these circumstances." But, at any rate, they--that's the only guy that didn't make it.

Q But Bob was involved with Stan Gillan at one point, did you say?

A Yeah, he was in Europe for awhile.

Q How did he do?

A Good. He was a top-shot guy, and he wasn't there too long. We didn't want him there too long. But the fellows that went over there, fortunately, their wives took to it. That makes so much difference. I'm trying to recall the name of the fellow who was second in command in Cologne. Second in command of manufacturing. There was a German chap who was the head of manufacturing [Grandi]. He was part of the Vorstand [Corporate Executive Committee]. Pat something or another--an Irish name--[Massey] heavy set, wore glasses, but he was really the American that was over there, and he had brought all the American expertise to the Germans which sounds funny because the Germans were awfully good at that sort of thing, but there is also a Ford way within that theater, and he was bringing the Ford technique there. And I was traveling with [John] Bugas, and he said that he was going to have to--not be with me that night because he was going out to Pat's house. He had to chat with his wife. It turned out that Pat and his wife had a daughter. The daughter was getting married, and they had invited the Vorstand to come to the wedding and not one showed up. Well, Pat's wife had been a little annoyed, anyhow--didn't like it over there--didn't take to the language

barrier--I mean, just was not....

Q Hard to assimilate.

A Yeah, some people just can't do it. Well, yeah, because of the language barrier, essentially, and if you're not built to go out and, you know, fight your way through it for awhile, you become so introverted that you just don't move. You just keep waiting for your husband who's busy all day. He has no problem.

So, John went over, and, of course, John Bugas could be one persuasive son of a gun. He talked them into staying. Morrissey comes to mind.

Q Chase Morsey?

A Not Chase, no. This is John Morrissey or something like that. Well, Chase was an interesting guy. He's a real prick! Smart. A lot of people thought he was one of the Whiz Kids, but then, of course, things get all confused. They thought I was one of the Whiz Kids too, so, you know....

Q We'll have to hear about Chase sometime, but at the moment, if I may, this is now 1960. One by one your rivals have been eliminated. What happened then?

A Yeah. Well, Joe stayed, McGuire retired, but....

Q Voluntarily?

A Yeah. He just decided that--you see--when would that have been? He was 12 years older than I. I was 41, that would have made him 53, and he retired at 62, as I recall. So, he worked for me during that period. We were very close friends. We just liked each other. He was a strange guy in the minds of many. Give him a couple of drinks, and he was the

most gregarious man in the world, but short of that, he was a very stern looking man. He'd walk down a hall, he wouldn't say hello to anybody. So people got so they wouldn't say hello to him. But, it was a form of shyness. He had difficulty bringing himself to saying, "Hello." But, at any rate, you're right. One after another they left, and Joe, of course, took early retirement, too.

Q But a few years later?

A But a few years later, yeah. I think he was 57 when he retired, and that, again, was his own desire. He just sort of had the urge to--I think he was burning out, frankly. I think, perhaps, his wife was encouraging him to leave. Joe was always a very penurious guy, so he didn't ever have to worry about money, and he wanted to go to the West Coast, and his wife is--Joe would kill me if he heard me say it, but she had more talent in her little finger than he had in his whole body. She was very, very good.

Q Interesting sidebar there. I found out, when I was out there, that she had worked for Frank Spring back before the War.

A Yeah, back in Hudson's.

Q Back with Hudson [Motorcar Company]. He had hired her as an interior designer. We figured out that she probably was the first female designer in the industry.

A I wouldn't be surprised. She was very, very talented.

Q But she always subordinated herself to Joe's personality.

A Had to. I mean, he was sort of Middle Europe, and that hadn't quite gotten out of his system, and he was very sensitive about it. He's Rumanian, and Oros is not his real name--something else with a few more

syllables on it.

Q She was Betty Thatcher. She had graduated--they'd known each other at the Cleveland School of Art. She's a graduate [of that school].

A But she was awfully good even then, and I've seen things that she'd done, subsequently, and she got a little arts and craftsy after awhile because it's a thing to do, but she's really a very talented gal and a very pretty, younger woman. I don't know what she looks like now. Sort of dark and swarthy. She was terribly puritanical and tended, like so many people that are looking down their nose at other people, their mouths take on a little bit of a frown, and it gets so that it's the way their face is in repose, but when she would smile, the moon came out, the sun was there. I always sort of liked her.

Q Did Joe take his being passed over with a certain amount of grace?

A Yes. I expect there was much beating of the chest and wailing when it happened. In fact, I called him in, and I said, "Look, Joe, I think I have a feel for the way you feel because this could have gone either way," and I said, "I would have felt like hell," and I said, "I sense that you probably do, and for that, I'm sorry, but the die is cast, and I hope we can continue to work together."

Q And you did for a number of years. He took it well?

A Well, yeah, it just crushed him, I know. It's one thing to sort of be running for the flag and be beaten. It's another thing to have somebody tell you you've got it. Send him out to have his picture taken again and stuff like that. Yeah, that was part of George's ploy. You see, it's funny. If you set up the duck with most of the people in the corporation like that, they'll say, "Aw, hell, he already knows," and, you know, they

don't feel strongly one way or the other, frankly, unless some guy has really upbraided the chairman, in the case of Ford. Joe hadn't. Joe was a nice guy, and Joe had been in the Ford Division, which was the muscular arm of the organization, and, really, all I had--the meeting that was held, that I found [out] about, subsequently, I, obviously, wasn't privy to it--Bill Ford, Ben Mills, Jim Wright, Bob McNamara, I think that was all--got together to discuss this.

Q All Ford Division stalwarts?

A Most of them. Well, Ben had been on the Lincoln-Mercury side, and Bill and Ben did not like George well. Whatever you say about Ben, he was a gentleman.

Q You say Ben Mills?

A Ben Mills. No, Benson was not a party to this. These were guys that were really on the firing line, and Bill heard them all out. Well, McNamara, and, oh, Iacocca was there. Ben Mills thought I should get it. Everybody else didn't know me, really. Certainly, Iacocca didn't. He was a new boy on the block, and most of the work that Bob McNamara had done had been done with--after all, Bob wasn't president very long, and so up to that time, why, you know, well, I did a little business with him, but very little, really. Mostly, Joe had done it. Well, these guys don't know what a good designer is and what a good designer isn't. I mean, Joe could be much better than I, but, nonetheless, they don't know, so they go on who they know. And, you can't blame them, they've got to have some measuring stick. Well, then Bill held forth. He made a speech. People do not know that Bill makes speeches. And he sort of said, "And as far as I'm concerned, he is the only fellow for the job." End of meeting!

Q Looking back on it, he was right. There wasn't any other candidate, was there?

A No. He was right. I did a far better job than Joe could have done, and this hasn't anything to do with the design aspect of the business at all.

Q Administrative?

A Yeah. It had to do with just the running of it and the building of it and the manipulating--the thing grew under me.

Q And liberating?

A Yeah, and liberating. And Joe would have always been suspect, by the way. Even though it was--he would be the last guy in the world that should be suspect because he was so contrary to George. In fact, that's why George was a little nervous about him. "Yeah, I'd like to have one of my boys in there, but better Engle, you know. I can handle Engle." I mean, it's sort of like, you know, having a....

Q I think you characterized it earlier--a mole, really.

A Yeah. But, at any rate, that's the way it worked out, and....

Q Obviously, Bill won the other men over?

A Oh, sure. It's amazing how flexible they can be when it gets down to a member of the Ford family. Really, it was that. Bill was working at his job, remember. And then, Bill did something--I mean, people don't understand this about Bill: When he really wants something, he knows how to fight for it. That's how he got the Lions. There are a number of things that you can see where he's done this, and I happened to be one of them. And Henry had mononucleosis, you might recall.

Q About that time?

A In '61. Because I know he was still in the hospital because Bill--or was in the hospital for some reason because Bill had to go down and get his proxy from him, and he got his proxy from him, and, of course, I had had the good fortune of having a fine relationship with Ben[son Ford] for all the years, you see, that he was running Lincoln-Mercury. Then, he went over to--John Dykstra was the president. When the hell was that? He was only president for two years. You're the guy with the numbers!

Q '61 to '63--something like that.

A Yeah, and Dykstra was an old bull of the woods, you know. He was a beautiful looking man, but he was one tough hombre, and....

Q What was that anecdote you told about him, earlier on? He said, "Gene....

A "I ain't never fired nobody. Of course, there are a lot people [who aren't] around....

Q Dykstra was sort of a--I get the impression that [his appointment] was sort of fitting in with Henry's attitude of not being too involved [yet]?

A Yeah, and it gave Henry the opportunity of not having to make up his mind right then.

Q For a couple of years.

A Yeah, he bought a couple years, and with a fellow that [who], sure as hell looked like he ought to be president of something. And his white, wavy hair--good-looking man. And John was--I was fond of John, but John was funny. At any rate, Bill knew that--see, Walker was a good friend of Dykstra's, and so Bill, at the last moment, called Dykstra and said, "John, I'm going to put Gene up for [vice] president tomorrow, and I have

talked with Henry." He didn't give him much choice--"I've talked to Henry and Ben," and, you know, "all the guys." And, he said, "And I worry about George. I think he's going to get on your back. I'm afraid he'll call you and try to upset things." He says, "Don't worry, Billy, if he calls me up, I'll knock him on his ass." And, sure enough, George called him. He said, "George, my recommendation to you is, take this in good grace." Well, that evening--Bill's timing--I mean, he'd been working for weeks on this--but his timing was such that it all came down to the night before the meeting. So, I went home the evening of the meeting--oh, by the way, when I'd had this little conversation with Bill, he also asked if I would do him a favor which, you know, one doesn't have to ask. He said, "Will you tell McGuire that he doesn't have anything to worry about as far, as his job is concerned?" He said, "I know what's been going on," and he said, "I know he's worried to death. Just tell him that, will you?" Well, it was fine. I told Bob, and he was delighted to hear it, but what he was really telling Bob was he was out of contention, too. So he waited until just the very last minute to set this all up, and the next day--oh, but that evening I was home and, of course, obviously wondering what the hell was going to happen, and, I guess, around 8 o'clock that evening, I got a call from Dick Morris.

Q This was?

A Dick was assistant to Bill.

Q Personal assistant?

A Yeah, right....

Q High level gopher?

A Yeah, exactly--bag carrier.

Q A what?

A A bag carrier?

Q Right, yes.

A And he said--Dick was very funny, you know, he's a Southern boy, and he got very serious about things. You see, he'd never been serious about anything in his life as far as the two of us were concerned. He said, "Mr. Bordinat, are you going to be there for a moment? Mr. William Clay Ford will be calling in about four minutes." I said, "Well, Mr. Morris, I'll be here," so we hung up. [In] about four or five minutes, why, Bill gets on the phone or calls up again--why this preliminary, when I don't know, unless it was just to determine that I was home. And, Bill said, "Gene, I just wanted you to know that tomorrow I am putting your name up to become the director of styling and the vice-president of the corporation. I hope you will accept this." And I said, "Bill, I sure as hell will." And he said, "I don't anticipate any difficulty at all."

Q He had completely prepared the way.?

A Well, he did. He had all his ducks in a row. Now, people don't know this about him. They think he's just a, I--in fact, he told me the other day--not when I saw him last but not too long ago. He said, "I'm getting sick of being called 'the kid brother'." He said, "How long are you a kid in this world?" He's five years younger. He's 61 or something like that. When do you get over it, you know? Well, he's had a very good feel for whether he could--don't ever kid yourself about his feelings about the Company. He feels very strongly about it, and he just felt, literally, that he would do more harm than good by being there all the time. And Henry's a ham, he didn't need another brother clouding the

issue. That was the way Bill would do it. But Bill has a lot of energy and a lot of brainpower that he's got to put to use. He loves football, but I think that's why he took on the Lions.

Q He's back in full measure, as you know.

A At the Company.

Q Yeah, as vice chairman. He takes it seriously and is head of [corporate] design. [He succeeded HF II--1987--as chairman of the finance committee].

A Well, I told him he should. I mean, I hate to put it that way, but I did. It was when he was having--you know, you can't just say, "Hey, don't do this." I said, "Bill, you have a mistaken idea of how much clout you have. You told me that when you went to New York, the deal was set for the Ford family to have 25% of the voting power, and you didn't like it. You thought that 40% was a requirement. That stuck in my mind. You told me this, think 40%. I have looked at the amount of stock that you control. You control about 40% of 40%. That's about 12%." I said, "Unless you can get the rest of the family to rally around, you ain't got enough." And I said, "Frankly, there is a tendency for older brothers to get the confidence in the family, and, not only that, every member of that board is there as a friend of the finance staff or as a friend of Henry Ford II," and I said, "I don't think you stand a chance. But [what] I recommend that you do, is begin to pay attention to business. If you're serious about it, spend the time here--not at the Lions' office--and get as high on the pecking order as you can, and if it's vice-chairman, take it," and he did. Phil Caldwell was vice chairman and, actually, was Henry Ford's deputy, I think is the word they used. "Acts for the chief executive officer in his absence" which made him in charge

of Lee Iacocca as chief operating officer. So, Bill took that over. Now, whether he's a deputy or whether he isn't, is a moot question, as far as I'm concerned. But as far as the world is concerned, he's putting in his time as vice-chairman. And I said, "I think that you can do more for your boy, there--for young Billy--and I think you will do better for the Company there. If something happens to one of the chairmans of the board, well, then make your play."

Q He's apparently taken it to heart as he's very much in the thick of it.

A Well, I'm delighted to see it and hear it, and I think that if he wants to do anything good for young Billy, and I know he does, he can do it from that position better than he can from the Lions' office. This is all a function of power and position, and has absolutely nothing to do with money. Billy Ford could get along very nicely just on what he makes as the secretary/treasurer of the Detroit Lions.

Q Irresistibly, it comes to mind, what was George Walker's reaction when this decision was made known to him?

A I asked Bill--not that same moment. I mean, I sound like a god-damned sadist. I wanted to ask him, I must say. But, when I did ask him, which was the following afternoon, he said, "I thought he was going to die from apoplexy." He said, "I went into his office and told him," and he said, "He slumped back in his chair and I thought that he might buy it. He just--all, for a brief moment, all the air went out of him." Now, the very next morning, I came to work--pretty well scrubbed up, I might add--and George met me in the hall and congratulated me and was very, very nice. He was obviously working behind my back even then, but, still

is. He's tenacious. He never gets over [anything] easy. He reminds me of a godfather. It's just that he just will never get over it.

Q I have a couple of photographs which have stuck in my mind. You know them well. One which appears to have been taken about, oh, the late 'Fifties. It appeared in a company publication called The Ford Book of Styling or something like that. It's a color photograph, and, obviously, the placement has been done with some care. Bill [Ford] is standing looking at the camera, characteristically, with his arms folded, feet crossed, he's standing, leaning against the desk. Rather insouciantly. And he's looking at the camera, and he's got a big grin on his face. Next to him, a little bit further down, is George Walker, who has a somewhat lesser grin, but still grinning. The spectral figure of Elwood Engle is in the [center]--still placed back but looking rather....

A Good word--good word, spectral. The Ichabod Crane of eternity.

Q Yes, looking rather gaunt and, perhaps, not knowing what to make of all this. But, you're sitting--it looks like the catbird seat, in retrospect. You're sitting looking rather pleased, and then the rest of the group is--here's Johnny Najjar, and here's Bob MacGuire, and here's two or three others all recognizable from that period in staggered ranks. I've often wondered, what was the occasion? Do you remember that at all?

A I haven't any idea. I haven't any idea. I do know that George Haviland, when he took over from Dick Morris, got one edict from George. You know George--do you know Haviland at all?

Q Oh, yes.

A And, he said, "Now, Mr. Walker, there are going to be occasions

when the press is going to want to talk to you and when someone will probably want to take your picture. I sure would appreciate it, if you would allow me to make these arrangements on these rare occasions." George says, "Let's have an understanding here, George, if there is a camera in this place, you come and grab me and you just get them to point it right at me, okay? Pull me out of meetings, anything!"

Q That's typical. The second photograph was taken about two years later. Apparently pulled together rather hastily to award the staff when the '61 Lincoln got an award of some kind--and here is this strange photograph which, apparently, was taken about the time George got the--had just received the word that he was out, and you were in. So, here's George, in the forefront, for the last time, looking rather--with his public relations smile. You're sitting next to him sort of peering around his formidable superstructure there, and you look like you're quite satisfied, and then the rest of them--all those who were on the Lincoln--Johnny Najjar and the rest--who are hastily assembled to receive the plaudit from the [design] organization. The difference between those two photographs--a couple years apart--yet mirrored the fact that you and William Clay had a sort of a--shared a secret that this windbag [Walker] was eventually....

A Well, I don't think it was much of a secret. But, yeah, I know what you mean. I think you're really reading too much into a photograph. I think usually when they say, "Hey, smile," you just smile. But, and where you are in the position of things, really has a hell of lot to where the photographer wants to tuck you. But, it was always kind of interesting. George loved publicity. It was--you see, when you're an

independent, industrial designer, you develop these habits because you can't afford to advertise yourself, and you can't buy space in a book or a magagine, and so you count on all the editorial space you can get and do everything and anything to get it--short of knifing somebody to unfavorable publicity, of course. And, George had this great smile. No question, and all his own teeth, and he was--that Indian was very pleased, see, and he loved to smile, and he knew exactly how to hold himself to minimize his girth, to put his foot up on a bumper or something like that and hold a pencil, I can do the poses for you. Well-rehearsed, all set to show him off to great advantage. In fact, it was from one of those kinds of portrait pictures that Artzybasheff, I think it was, did the painting for the Time magazine [cover].

Q The radiant smile?

A Yes, in fact, to such a point that a couple of letters to the editor indicated that, you know, why is the guy with a denture like that showing off so? The Time italicized note under the thing was charitable enough to credit George with all his own teeth, but, gosh, that was funny, that "Cellini of Chrome" thing. That's a great line.

Q I think you're the first one who has, really, pointed out to me that was an inside joke. That was the only way that the editors could live with it.

A Exactly. Yeah, they had to say it, but they couldn't. You know, in those days you couldn't say he's been screwing his teacher or something like that, but it's a great line. They thought it was great, and I think it's great. It's kind of appropriate.

Q You'll be pleased to hear that George never caught on. He still

thinks that's one of the high points in his career.

A Well, it is. There was another one. I remember George had a white cowboy outfit with a white ten gallon hat and a white 1958, four-place, drop head coupe Thunderbird and a black Great Dane, and he would get into that car--no place to go--put the Great Dane next to him and just cruise.

Q Around the compound?

A Just around the compound, into Birmingham, around. Obviously, people looked at him and wondered who's that, who's that? He says, "That's living!"

Q The adulation.

A Well, he was very clever. You take that office of his--mouton carpet, black; everything else was white; his desk was black.

Q Where was that, by the way?

A Where was it?

Q The Design Center?

A Yeah. It was the office that I took over and redid.

Q And, whose office is it now?

A It's now--it's just the other side of dividing doors in the hall along the administrative part of the....

Q That would be Telnack's office?

A No. Telnack's is on the other side of the hall. It's Kopka's office. So, it's a--but the guy was clever. Now, that's dramatic, you see. Black and white, and besides that, you could be color-blind and do it, and you could be color blind and appreciate it, and if somebody--if you put a splash of red in, I mean, you could do a hell of a job with

that office. But you see, somebody might not like that, and so that's the way he lived his life. You saw his place down in Tucson. I've never seen it, but I'll bet you I could almost sketch it out for you. I can still sketch his monogram. It's a great one, too. He did it himself. Big loop on the top of a G like that which came down into this kind of a W. Those, I have been told, are on the posts to the entrance to his house down there. Now, he had those on lamps that were on either side of this couch that was in his office. When the office was being broken up, every bit of that furniture somehow or another fell to Engle--in Engle's home. I presume he paid for it. But, see, Elwood bought--he was trying so hard to emulate George, and he was having great difficulty because he--George had a cunning and a sixth sense for how to sell, how to get to people, how to ravage women, I mean, the whole schmier, and Elwood didn't. All Elwood had was the urge, so Elwood would try to emulate George, and he was constantly fouling up. He tried to get immoral with women. Now this was really sort of funny, you know, he'd--George had a great deal of sex appeal because George knew how to talk to women. Elwood didn't know how to talk. "Let's screw," you know, I mean....

Q A tough kid from New Jersey.

A Yeah. It was really funny to watch him try to do it. As a result, he fell into some rather interesting deals. He managed to buy the place on Franklin Road that he had. It used to be the old Chalmers estate, and they split it up, and it was going to be torn down and all subdivided. In order to keep that relatively small lake, Chalmers Lake, from being overrun, they sort of--three people around the lake got together and bought the whole thing up for 80,000 bucks and divided it into two pieces.

The garage, for example, was an eleven car garage with servant quarters above it, and they turned that into one piece of property with swimming pool [which] went with that. The other piece of property had the baronial manse on it, and that was priced at $40,000. Can you imagine that? I mean, it had brass pipes, I mean, it was just a fabulous place, see. And, they got it for giveaway. Well, the $40,000 plus the $40,000 for the garage--which sounds very strange, but it was a hell of a deal--constituted the amount of money that the three people around the lake had in it, and so they took the remaining property and got six or seven acre lots out of it and sold those off at premium prices and made a little money. Elwood, on the other hand, ended up with the house. And, it was a nice house--beautifully built--just a wreck of arrears and needed a lot of work to be done. Well, George Walker had a Great Dane, so Elwood had a Great Dane. The only difference is George wouldn't let that damned Dane close to his, you know, white carpet. Elwood would allow this Dane to poop all over the floor, and, you know, you go over see him--I lived right around the corner from him on Chalmers Lake, you see--so you'd go out in the evening, walk down and say, "Hi," go in and have a drink, that sort of stuff, and you had to be very careful where you walked. And, so he had all these urges, and he fell in love with his secretary or something like that, and rather than being cute about it the way George did--George carried on affairs all of his life, even had a gal that he kept, and, damned if I know whether Mrs. Walker ever knew about it, but a lovely girl, by the way. And he had all this love life going for him--other than using it as his own bragging rights, which is a little stupid--he carried it out with a certain elan, you know. But, Elwood, you know,

he bangs his secretary, and the next thing you know, he's in divorce court, and his reason for trying to get rid of his wife, you see, is--she's extravagant. Well, let me tell you how extravagant, it cost him about a million bucks to bail out, so, that's extravagant.

Q There's something I meant to ask you. How did Walker sell Engle to Love and Lynn Townsend?

A Well, because, they just--particularly, [in] our kind of business, you have to take the guy on who recommends him and his face value. How are you going to, I mean, academic credentials mean nothing. I mean, you have them and it's fine, but it isn't the measure of whether the guy has anything or not.

Q Of course, there had been the '61 Lincoln.

A That is right, and, well, George could make him sound awfully good. All he has to do is say it. I mean, it could be true or untrue, but he's talking to guys that were his friends. I used to go to a lot of these $100 a night charitable dinners and things like that, you know, fund-raisers, and you're doing your corporate duty, so to speak, and I'd run into Lynn Townsend who would, in those days, was always in the company of Bob Anderson. Bob Anderson quit Chrysler and is chairman of the board of North American Rockwell or Rockwell International or whatever it is now, and has done a remarkable job for them, by the way. But, he--when it became apparent that Lynn Townsend was going to favor other financial personalities as opposed to--what do you call them--product types, and Bob was an engineer, he--Bob Anderson--quit or allowed himself to be wooed away. But, I would meet them at these things, and, of course, Lynn would always have a few pops, he enjoyed drinking, and when

he'd have a couple, he'd come over and say, "How the hell did you control Engle?" I said, "Well, fortunately, I never really had to worry about it too long." And he said, "Well, he's a madman, you know, how do you handle...?" I said, "Look, caveat emptor." "You bought him, you handle him."

Q But, George must have been the world's greatest salesman?

A He was awfully good--awfully good. And, you know, you don't--he had a reputation--he had a lot of accounts, as an independent--and the accounts that he had, their stuff looked good, and they made money, so, you know, he was an authority.

Q That had been a decade before. How he maintained his...?

A Well, you know, he was only out of the business as an active, independent designer for five years--you can count them--five. From '60 to '65. I mean, that's his age, not the years when he...and he, obviously, never lost a stroke when he went to Ford. He was in front of [the] camera all the time. So, why wasn't that a good reputation to add to his--you never saw anything about George where it didn't say "internationally famous."

Q I don't suppose Townsend was any great shakes as a [product man]

A Townsend was nothing of a product man. I remember Lynn--I'd run into him periodically, and I said, "How are things going?" He said, "Great. All the public wants to see is sports." So, he was driving his stock all the time and did a hell of a job--ruined it for the industry, by the way. In fact, Henry Ford, unbeknownst to many, but he personally told me this. You might recall when Townsend and every one of his executives--his key vice presidents and so forth--dumped their Chrysler stock, and Townsend made $4,000,000 in one minute. And, you know, it's okay

to mete it out a little at a time and so forth, but they all did it, collectively, because it looked like it was ripe, and, obviously, somebody had said, "Hey, it looks like it's about time," and they all dumped it. This was just when the Congress of the United States was debating the issue as to whether or not stock options were appropriate, and there had been many, many violations of them, because there was no real control on how they should be set up. I mean, you could go in, [and] in one day, if you want to pay to short-term tax, you could grab a batch and turn it over and make a ton. Well, Ford had always had a very, very conservative approach. You had to have the stock, you had to have it for two years, you could only get rid of it if--it took you ten years to divest yourself of the whole thing. During the period, if you needed the money, you needed 25% in order to take down this stuff, the Company would lend it to you, with practically zero interest. Well, Lynn Townsend and company dumped the stock, [and] the guys in Congress are ready to really hammer us. Henry goes to the Senate Committee meeting, as an uninvited guy, to testify, and, of course, they're interested in listening. He said, "You know, I had a good time. I got in there. I defined our stock situation right to the word from the beginning to the end." He said, "The only thing that I recommended is that the person--the employee--has to go to the bank as opposed to getting the money loaned to him from the Company," and he laughed like hell. He said, "Of course, we got our own bank," and it's true. I went over and borrowed $1,200,000 in three minutes. They had a guy over there, Clarence Pembroke, who has since died.

Q He was the Ford man?

A He was the guy that was assigned to the Ford officers. You walked

in, and you spent 10 to 15 minutes with him but mostly because he was trying to get an update on what the hell was going on over at Ford Motor Company. In the meantime, he was having something typed out by his secretary, put two pieces of paper in front of you, and you sign them like that, she took them, went out and typed a check, and you walk out. Ed Polley had driven me over because I didn't know what to do with my car, at this one time, and I showed him the check, and I said, "Can you believe this?" Of course, it just stuck to my hand long enough to go over and give it to Ford Motor Company, and then I got the stock, you see, for which I owed my soul! But I asked Russ Pembroke once, I said, "How--if I were a businessman--a small businessman--maybe, had a business with $10,000,000 or something like that, and my credit was great, and I had a contract but I needed money to buy some machines, I needed a $1,000,000, how long would it take me to get it?" He said, "A minimum of three weeks." "It has to go to the committee, to this, to that...." Three minutes! Of course, once I went over and got some money like that, and the market dropped down and then you find out that they are still very friendly. But, they're sure on your back, and, fortunately, after six months of paying exorbitant amounts of interest, it seemed, I mean, it doesn't change, but your attitude towards it changes. For a period of about six or eight months the market responded, and I was able to make a little money, but, I'll tell you, that scares you to death.

Q Like buying futures?

A Exactly. Except that it's a wonderful thing that the Company does. You know, you don't have to accept it, you'd be a fool not to, but, they're not pushing it on you. I'm talked out!

Q I think we've pushed you to your limit today, Mr. Bordinat. I'd like to talk to you next time (and I hope that there'll be several next times) about your first few years tenure as design chief, the sort of changes you wrought and the liberating influence you brought.

A It'll be a great study in--calm and collected on the outside and quivering like hell on the inside.

Q Well, whatever it was, it brought results. Thank you very much.

A Okay, you're entirely welcome, Dave.

Editor's Note: Eugene Bordinat died in August, 1987, of a heart attack. Among the many laudatory comments from his former associates in his Automotive News obituary, was the following:

> "Friends and associates say Mr. Bordinat's most valuable contribution to Ford was bringing the design department into its own by wresting design leadership away from engineers and outside consultants."

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