Robert E. Bourke Oral History

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Note to Readers

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DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BOURKE, ROBERT E.

1986

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum &
Greenfield Village

This is Dave Crippen of the Edsel Ford Design History Center at the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, and this is October 23, 1986. This is another one of our design oral history interviews. Today we are speaking with Mr. Robert E. Bourke of Loewy/Studebaker fame and other industrial design areas. We've asked Mr. Bourke to tell us his career narrative in his own way and at his own pace. Please start at the beginning and tell us where you were born, where you grew up, what your influences were -- a favorite relative, or a friend, or a school mentor.

A I was born in Chicago on June 15, 1916. I'm seventy-one and still going strong most days. [I lived] on the Southwest side of Chicago -- an area called Beverly Hills. I lived in the house where I was born until I moved out of Chicago to South Bend, Indiana, to go work for Studebaker. I went to Morgan Park High School in the neighborhood. It was about a mile and a half from my house at 111th Street and a couple of blocks West of Vincennes Avenue. During the time I was a young kid, I was very interested in airplanes. I built a lot of model airplanes. At the time, when I was eleven or twelve years old, I used to endeavor to design automobiles. I was gifted with the ability to draw and sketch, and, if I had an idea, I could put in three-dimensional form with lead pencil and any kind of paper available.

My interest in aircraft.... As a young fellow, I would get on my bicycle and ride it about six and a half miles, starting out when it was still almost dark in the morning and go out 95th Street to Cicero Avenue and turn right on Cicero Avenue and go about a mile and half North on Cicero, and there was an airport called Ashburn Field. It happened to be

the original site of a wartime factory. I don't know whether it was owned by Ford, G.M., [or Chrysler]. During the war they manufactured armaments there. It was a large factory. Eventually, Preston Tucker took it over. It's the same place that Preston Tucker endeavored to start up his automobile company.

Q That was the Dodge engine plant.

A That's what it was. That's absolutely right, the Dodge Aircraft Engine Plant.

Q In Cicero?

A In Cicero. What I would do is I'd go to the airport there, and there was a chap by the name of E.M. Laird -- Matty Laird -- and Matty had his factory at the East end of the airport. There was one cinder [-packed] landing strip, and in that factory he built the Laird Solution and Laird Super Solution, which held the world land speed record. Old Matty had lost one leg in an airplane accident. I was a young kid, and he'd see me out there on weekends. He finally got to know me and figured I was, maybe, a lost son, so he took the time to tell me about his airplanes. He showed me his factory and showed me how they constructed these things.

Then I got to know his chief test pilot by the name of Speed Holmam. He was a big, tall, Swedish fellow -- lanky. He seemed to be about six foot six to me as a young kid, but I would imagine he'd be more like six foot three. Extremely thin. Had very little to say. I'll never forget the days when Speed would take the Solution up. It was primarily the Solution that I saw. That's the first one that held the [speed] record. For instance, early in the morning when I'd arrive,

Speed would be standing around with his helmet on, and Matty would be talking to him, and there'd be a mechanic or two tinkering with the engine. They had to take part of the fuselage off so that Speed could get in. It was a very narrow fuselage. It was a biplane with clipped wings.

It would be time for Speed to assemble himself in the cockpit, and Matty would tell him, "Now, Speed, no fancy stuff. Just take the aircraft down. Take off at a nice, level run. No fancy stuff. When you get to the end and do your climb, do a roll-over and come back on down, and we're timing you through the traps. I want you to make three, four, or five runs if everything is going good, as far as the engine performance is concerned, and don't forget, nothing fancy." "Okay, Mr. Laird." That's about all he'd say, "Okay, don't worry, Mr. Laird, I'll bring the plane back in one piece." And he'd get in, and it would take about ten or fifteen minutes to fasten the side of the fuselage on. I don't know how in the world he'd ever get out. Of course, he wouldn't. He wouldn't be able to bail out. The funny part of it is, he had a special way in which he could kick himself out.

Q His method of ejection?

A Yeah, probably tear the fuselage apart. Anyhow, Speed would get in, and it had a large Wright Cyclone engine on it. I think it was a single row, not a twin row. Then it went to one of the early twin row, Pratt and Whitney Wasp. That was the Super Solution.

And off he'd go. Way down at the end of the runway he'd warm the thing up, and then he throw the throttle on it, go down the runway, and the cinders would start to fly. He'd hold the thing right on the runway

until he got up fairly good speed -- I don't know how fast --but then the runway was quite a long one. He'd do a barrel roll. He would never take the thing off safely. He would do a barrel roll, and he'd get it up just high enough so that the wings looked like they were about six inches off the [ground], and he'd roll it straight down the runway. Matty Laird would shut his eyes, and he'd just hold his head and go back and forth, and then he'd look. Speed would make, maybe, three complete barrel rolls right down the runway and then put the thing up in a complete climb and go straight up in the air and do a roll-over, come back, go down through the traps. The rest of the [flight] he would fly it just the way he should. He'd go through the traps, and he'd make three, four, five runs and come back on down. Then Matty would just shake his head and really give him hell.

Q That cemented your interest?

A My interest in speed and my interest in aircraft. From there, I went to the Chicago Art Institute. Things were getting tough, as far as my father was concerned. He had lost quite a bit of money in the Crash of '29 and in the early 'Thirties. As a matter of fact, he was dead broke. But I went to the Chicago Art Institute and paid for my tuition there by.... I got up extremely early. It would be completely black out, and I'd get to the Institute at 7 o'clock in the morning. I had to ride the Rock Island Railroad train into the Chicago Loop, then I'd walk from LaSalle and Dearborn Street over to Adams and Michigan, and it would be dead black, and it would be about 14 below zero. I used to just freeze, but I'd walk, generally, down VanBuren Street, and there was an elevated track right above the street. In the alleys between each

block, you'd see these bums sitting up against the building eating Sterno with a spoon. Oh my Lord, I used to see them every day, and I couldn't believe it, and it would be sub-zero weather.

Q Anti-freeze?

A No, for the wood alcohol content which blinded or killed them. I imagine there were quite a few of 'em frozen to death. But, in any case, then I went to the Art Institute and I'd clean the floors until about 10 o'clock in the morning and wash out the latrines. That took care of a good amount of my tuition.

I took fine arts, primarily oil painting, a certain amount of design. The only design that they had, for instance, is the study of flat patterns through the ages. Then writing reports on that. It was interesting, and it was a very good place to get a good foundation of what art was all about.

In the summers, I would work for my dad in his architectural office. In that regard, he could see that I was interested in mechanical things and in architecture. At one point, I thought I'd proceed as an architect, only he was having such a struggle at the time that he advised me to think about something else. But I took some architectural courses at The Armour Institute. They had a subsidiary of it across the street, and they also had a branch of Chicago University across the street. So I had some time at Armour Institute, which I enjoyed very much, and it was mechanical engineering there. At the Chicago University, I took some regular, straight college courses in relation to writing.

Q This was in the depths of the Depression?

A Yes, it was the depths of the Depression. There was very little money. I remember I used to bus dishes and food at the Entre Cafeteria

on East Adams Street between Michigan Avenue and Wabash Avenue, and I got my lunch that way. I'd work there about an hour and a half, and they'd give you plate of beans and some hot dogs, and that would be it.

That's the early beginnings.

Q You had good groundings?

A It was interesting, yeah. It kept me going, and I was pretty much a lively guy, interested in lots of stuff, and I was pretty strong. Although, when I was a young kid, I was sick as hell for years with an appendix they didn't know that I had. It was lodged in the left [part] of my back, and I was sick for four or five years. They finally operated on me and found out that it was too late, and it had burst. I have many adhesions to my bowel, and they had tubes in me as a kid. They didn't have any antibiotics then, but I pulled out of that one. I'm still here. After I passed twelve years, I got strong.

I needed a job after a couple years of that, and I went into Sears, Roebuck and Company, and they gave me a job. I had made up some samples of things that I thought I could do for them. I was hired at Sears and worked for a man by the name of Clarence Karstadt. Clarence was a man about forty-four. I worked for Clarence for about a year and a half, and, at one point, they had a layoff -- cutback -- and I was laid off for three months. Then they called me up and put me back to work again.

Q Did they have their own industrial design department?

A Yes. It was on Holman and Arthington Streets in the Sears Tower building, and we were up in the top of the Tower -- the top two or three floors. It was on the West side. The industrial design department was headed by a man by the name of A.J. Snow -- Doctor Snow. He was a hard-

bitten little guy, spoke with an accent, and he was a doctor of philosophy. He got his doctorship at one of the Eastern colleges, but he convinced the management of Sears Roebuck they should have a merchandise development division, which they called it in those days.

In that regard, they worked on everything from refrigerators to farm equipment and home shop tools. Just about anything -- radios, luggage, furniture.

Q They did their in-house design in those days?

A Yes, most of it. And it was interesting because when Clarence Karstadt was my boss, there was Larry Hasse, Wally Nesson, myself, a young girl by the name of Eleanor Litsey. That comprised the bullpen. I started out cutting mats and doing many other things, and, finally, they found out I could draw pretty well, and they put me to work. One of the first things I did was a Graham Bradley 75 manure spreader. It consisted of a buckboard, and on the back of it was a wheel that spun around. You'd put the manure in the front and pitchfork it into the wheel as the horses pull the wagon along. The other nickname for it was the farm's shit slingers. It would, literally, sling the stuff out.

All I did with the darned thing was the paint scheme which was red and black and the graphics which stated "Graham Beadley 75." Red and black is what they painted their farm equipment at that time, the wagons in particular. They put a big 75 on the side of it, and that was a great thing.

Q Who did their farm implements in those days?

A Oliver Farm and Equipment Company did some of them. I think that Oliver made those, and, at that time, Oliver was in South Bend. I don't

know if John Deere was in business. But I do know Oliver was in business, and I know Oliver did some things for them, so it might have been Oliver. On the other hand, they might have bought the buckboard from somebody else -- an old wagon manufacturer like Studebaker.

Q That was your first real design job?

A Yes. It was a period of learning and a period of rubbing shoulders with the fellows. It developed from my first working with Clarence Karstadt. He had a great sketching ability. He was fast as hell on it. He was a burning German fellow that just didn't have time for any foolishness at all. The speed with which he would draw -- he'd see me fumbling and wanting to put some construction lines to get perspective right. He'd say, "Bob, can you draw without those lines? Can you see the vanishing points in your head?" I said, "Yeah, I can see them." He said, "Let's see you draw without any vanishing points at all. Don't use any straight edges. Don't do anything. Let me see you draw freehand." That was one of the good things that he helped me with.

Then, after awhile, Jack Morgan came from General Motors. Jack Morgan had a nickname at General Motors. Gordon Buehrig mentioned this to me, because Gordon was at G.M. when Jack was there. His nickname was Juan Ricardo, and he had a very thin, little mustache, and Juan Ricardo was a real dandy. He dressed to the teeth. He was neat, and he drew designs -- tiny, little sketches. He would do a space heater. It would be about an inch and a half high. This is not exaggerating. He had a long lead pencil, and he kept it extremely sharp, and the detail on this thing was unbelievable. He would take one piece of paper and put twelve different designs on it, each one measuring about an inch/inch and a

half. I'd watch that man. I couldn't believe the way this fellow drew, and he was a real expert. As a matter of fact, he is the man -- remember the old LaSalle that had the portholes on the side of the long narrow hood? He had the most to do with that particular car.

In any case, he took a shine to me. He could see that I could draw fairly well, and he said, "How would you like to help me out?" I said, "I sure would, Mr. Morgan." He said, "Well, come on up. We'll put a board right over here. You can work right behind me, and you can see how I'm doing things, and you can help me out on some of this stuff." I said, "Boy, that would be just great." So I moved up to Jack Morgan's office. There was Jack Morgan and myself, and he used to talk automobiles. He could talk automobiles and draw equipment for Sears Roebuck all at the same time. I watched him, and I learned a tremendous amount from Jack Morgan.

While we were there, a man showed up. I know he was from Germany, and he had just managed to get out of Germany in time before Hitler shut the door. His name was Doc Schneider. He actually was a Bauhaus type of designer, and he was well into his fifties. He was a tall dark man, a gentle guy, hell of a nice man. I watched Doc Schneider. He did furniture way beyond the ability for Sears to understand or appreciate what this man was doing, but, boy, could he draw. A real expert. So those three men were really outstanding.

Then a young fellow came along by the name of Clare Hodgman. At this time, we moved the development center from the Tower Building over to the building across the street and took the whole top floor. We had a shop, and the whole merchandise development division increased in size.

There were contact men there and everything else. In other words, we would design objects that, in turn, would be built by a company, and the contact men would take the information from Sears and our drawings and work with the corporation wherever it was -- in the South or the North. We had a great number of fellows there -- contact men and designers. At this point, Clare Hodgman showed up on the scene. And Clare Hodgman came from Raymond Loewy. Clare, by the way, had worked at General Motors for awhile. Then he had done some early Studebakers before he came to Sears, Roebuck -- the early Champions and the '40 line of Studebakers that were pretty darned nice. Clare had a big hand in that. The '40 Studebaker had a sharp nose and the catwalk grill. It was a tough car. That was a very sturdy car with an X frame.

So Clare showed on the scene, and he was a single fellow and a few years older than I, and, boy, he could draw like gangbusters. I had the opportunity to see some of the best people in the business. Clare and I became quite good friends. We were both single guys, and I looked up to him, and, boy, could he drink booze. I was never able to do it. I never could really handle much booze, fortunately.

Anyhow, Clare and I became pretty close friends, and while Clare was at Sears -- about a year and a half -- during that period he got married to his girlfriend back East, Alice. They're still married to this day, and Clare lives in Daytona Beach. Clare knew Virgil Exner, and he had met Exner when Virg was [working] at G.M. So they were fairly close friends.

Q Exner was, even then, fairly well known?

A Oh, yes. He was at Studebaker and working for Loewy. Clare worked for Loewy before he came to Sears, and the reason that Sears grabbed

Clare was the fact that Loewy had done the Coldspot refrigerator, which was a famous industrial design job. It was the first time they put the compressor out of sight. It put Sears Roebuck on the map. In total sales of refrigerators, they were ahead of everybody. Clare was hired by Sears because they needed an in-house designer, and they felt they could probably get the designs for quite a bit less money by hiring the man that did the job. It was Clare that did the job on the refrigerators.

Q Did the Loewy design?

A Yes, right. So Clare, primarily, did refrigerators while I was there at Sears Roebuck.

Q That was a famous design?

A Oh, yes. The Coldspot had the dished-in area right behind the spot which, in turn, had a vertical handle. Clare did that one.

Concurrently, or later on, he did quite a bit of work for Frigidaire, which the fellows at G.M. didn't know about. He flew back and forth from Dayton. In any case, Ex and Clare would talk once in awhile on the phone or get together, occasionally, because they were old friends. Ex mentioned he sure would like to have a designer to help him. And Clare said, "There's a fellow I know here at Sears who draws cars whenever he can get the chance, and maybe you'd like to see his stuff and see what you think." So Ex said, "Sure, send him down." So I heard about that and got all my sketches together, made a few new ones and went down to see Virg Exner [in South Bend].

Q What was your impression when you first met him?

A I thought he was a grand guy, and I was excited as hell. So the first thing I had to do was to see a fellow by the name of Perry

Sullivan, who was head of the body engineering division. They had a building on Sample Street, and it was divided. The chassis division was on one side, and there was a court in the middle, and the body division was on the other side, although there were walkways in between. Perry Sullivan interviewed me, and I showed him my things, and then he called Ex in. Ex came forward, and I met Ex for the first time. Perry said, "Excuse me," and he left me with Virg. Virgil looked at my stuff, and he said, "Well, how would you like to work here?" I said, "I would be very much interested." He said, "Do you think seventy-five bucks a week would do it for you?" At the time, I'd been raised from twenty-five bucks a week to forty dollars a week at Sears, and I said, "It's more money than I've ever heard of before." And I said, "Fine. When do you want me to start, now? I'll have to, at least, give them a couple of weeks notice." So we set a date, and that's how I ended up at Studebaker.

Q Easy entree?

A It was very simple in those days. When I arrived, Ex introduced me to the fellows in the body division.

Q What year was this?

A It was either the latter part of '40 or the early part of '41.

I first started by doing some work for Ex. All I was asked to do was just sit down and draw and give him idea sketches one after the other. The way I worked at that time was primarily on 9 x 11 sheets of white paper -- bond tablet paper. I made many, many sketches, one right after the other. I'd crank the darned things out. I never had so much fun in my life. It was really terrific, and some of the sketches and ideas were worse than others. There were some nice ones.

Working with Ex and myself was a young fellow by the name of Frank Alhroth. I do not know where Frank is now. I saw him once about twelve years ago. He dropped into our office in New York City just to say hello, and it was grand to see him. He had lost his wife, and he had two or three children, and they were grown up at the time. He was a very talented, terrific guy as far as modeling was concerned. He didn't consider himself a designer. He couldn't draw, but he could sure as hell model. He could look at a drawing and put it up in three dimensions.

Ex would model, and I would model. On occasion, we would really get into the clay. With Frank, there was three of us. Clay in your shoes, and hands, and fingernails, and every piece of silver change in your pocket turned black with the sulfur. We worked in an area on Sample Street. It was a fairly large room with aluminum drafts dividing the room in half. There were anywhere from three to four body draftsmen in there. They didn't necessarily work with us. They, in turn, were given assignments to do component parts for trucks and doing a lot of 4x4 work for the Army, because they were getting into truck production. And then there were specialized vehicles which were being designed at all times. Some of them were built, some of them weren't, some of them went into production, but there was always a tremendous amount of work for these fellows to do.

Things got hot and heavy with the war going on, and they needed more hands doing drafting work. I had originally learned that sort of thing working for my father. I worked in two areas of architecture, and he was, primarily, an architect for the large buildings in Chicago. Some of them still stand, by the way. As a matter of fact, his office was

originally called Jenney and Mundie, and my dad worked there at the time as a young fellow. Mr. Jenney was a structural engineer. In the history books, you can find out that the first skyscraper steel construction building was built in Chicago at 39 South LaSalle Street. It's since been torn down. They put this building up -- it was twelve to fourteen floors high -- by building the steel structure, as we've seen large buildings go up, to publicize the fact that this was a new way of doing things. They started to lay bricks at the fifth floor, and they filled the walls in and completed the building from the fifth floor to the top and nothing but steel structure below holding it. That was the first time that they dug caissons, which are large, round, diametric, deep pits. Chicago is built on a swamp, and they had to go down to bedrock. They put some of these caissons down and then set the big steel beams. I remember seeing some pictures that they took of this building going up in the office, and they had a lot of them on the walls. Old man Jenney was at the fifth floor -- and he had a beard. I was so impressed with that, and, of course, that was a very famous building. To this day, they credit Jenney and Mundie in some of the articles you read for the development of the first all-steel skyscraper construction. They give the credit to -- I don't think it was Louis Sullivan -- but I can't remember the name. And it's been clarified in a number of letters to people that have written magazine articles. I also had a background of working for a structural engineer by the name Grimison. He was a German with a heavy accent. Grimison showed me quite a bit about structural engineering and how to lay things out, and, as a kid, he would give me a specific job to do. I'd work on these big drawings and slide across on my stomach. We

didn't work standing up like they do in the automobile companies. We did it on flat drafting tables. Being young and flexible, I could reach the certain lines that this great big German had a hard time putting his stomach on. So they used me on that, and I did learn how to do some particular types of layout drawings.

Then with a certain amount of mechanical engineering ability at Studebaker, they ran into trouble, and they needed [extra] hands, and they couldn't get 'em. So they swung me into the chassis division at Studebaker, which, in turn, had been cordoned off, and that became part of the U.S. Air Corps contract to develop a new internal combustion engine for the Air Corps. This was a very interesting thing to me, getting back to aircraft, and it was just a delight to see how these fellows went about it. A man by the name of Tilley was in charge of this, and he was a very well-known internal combustion aircraft designer. There was quite a group, and Frank Alhroth was swung in from doing clay modeling automobiles to do clay modeling for internal combustions chambers.

To make a long story short, the idea was to develop a large engine -- intercooled -- which, in turn, would be situated in the center of a large bomber fuselage with the powertrains going out to the wings and driving four propellers. An eight to nine inch bore was about as big as we got with a single cylinder, and we developed, with twin turbo chargers, close to 300 horsepower with one eight-inch bore single cylinder. Then we went from a single to doubles, and it might have been twin cylinders that developed the 300 horsepower. It probably was. But they were huge, and they had to be run in on dynomometer tests in special

rooms where, in turn, the components were so darned big that the coefficient of expansion in the aluminum with the crank and a piston were such that it was very difficult to keep the engine together at high rpm's. But they finally got that whipped. But they were in cages, so that when they did break loose, it didn't blow the room out. They had half-inch steel bar meshes on one inch centers that air was coming in. Then they had a secondary mesh in case something got through, it would be stopped. They'd build these engines one after the other with modifications and changes. Money was no object, but, boy, they needed manpower. Then we'd set them up, and then we'd run them in. Then we'd have bets on how long this engine would last and run 'em 'till they broke. Literally blew them all up. Some of them would [only] fracture, and we'd take them down, save the components, and make a change, or have a change ready for it.

This was a period that I enjoyed very much, and, as the war began to cool down, I went back with Virg Exner. Frank Alhroth stayed with them a bit longer, and then, all of a sudden, jet engines began to come through. The new Chippewa war plant on the South end of the Studebaker group built 4x4's -- army trucks. They cordoned off a division of that, and they began to test jet engines in there.

Jet engines were beginning to come through, and they had jet engine cages. They'd take the engine, and they'd put it in a vertical position, and then they'd take the jet exhaust, and they'd blow it right up the top of large, tall smokestacks, and they'd run anywhere from six to eight of those at a time. When it was obvious that the jet engine was going to replace the internal combustion engine, that slowed down the Tilley project.

Then we went back to designing automobiles, and Ex and I were there. Then Frank [Alhroth] eventually swung back into the car work. He started in a bit later than I did. There was a period of time that Ex never seemed to get along very well with Loewy. Loewy would show up out there from time to time, and Ex would mumble under his breath. Ex could get mad at somebody and stay mad forever. He didn't like the way Loewy took the credit for everything. He's that type of a guy. One thing he didn't understand is the fact that about everything in this world has to be promoted or sold in some way or another, and it's not the guy that really does the thing. It's awfully important to have somebody who gives that guy the opportunity to design something. It takes a whole group of things to happen to allow somebody to have the opportunity to design cars, aside from the engineering.

Frank is back on the job, and we're beginning to put together some automobiles. At that time....

Q About '44?

A Yes. It was the preliminary work for the early postwar '47's. The facelifts that came out directly after automobile production started up after the war....

Q It was about mid-'45?

A Yes, right. Ex didn't get involved with those. I did those. Just the grilles, and we put a new front grille on the Champion and the Commander series, and it was, primarily, just horizontal stainless steel bars because they could buy them in great quantities -- pre-made -- and then they'd outline them and put a trim around the outside. How can we can get a facelift on this thing real fast? The idea was to do it overnight. So Ex said, "You go ahead and do that." I said, "Okay. What do

you think of this?" He said, "It looks okay to me. Go ahead." So I made the necessary prototype drawings, took them to Paul Auman in the shop, and, in short order, had the facelift finished and showed it to management just about that fast. Gosh, they looked at it, and they thought it was just great, like anything would be great. They really didn't give a damn, except it did look pretty good.

Q It was a sellers' market?

A Oh, my gosh. So, they hit the market, and that was, literally, my first example of something that I contributed to the automobile business that got into production.

Q Exciting to see it?

A Oh, gosh, yes. You bet your life. And, to this day, I've got some of the things I designed at Sears, Roebuck, like a flashlight that's been knocking around the house for years and some power tools I still have. I still operate them.

Q You're starting to work on the '47. This was a big push?

A It sure was, right. We had done work on a symbolic '47 and, in turn, had a grille on the back end of it. I had a lot of sketches where the glass curved around in the back. So we built a wood model of this early pre-'47 prototype, which had some of the characteristics of the production car, albeit they were somewhat different. It didn't have a fender, as such, on the rear end. It had detail around the back, and it had a grille across the back, and the car, actually, was being considered for a rear engine automobile.

Q Whose idea was that?

A It wasn't necessarily just ours. We thought it would be a good idea, and we talked to chassis. At that time, Roy Cole was vice-

president in charge of engineering, and he thought it would be a good idea. He was familiar with Porsche's attempts, and, at one point, they did contact Porsche, and Porsche built a rear-engine car for them. It was a rather ugly looking machine, but, mechanically, it was a pretty good car. They built two cars. One being a rear-engine, rear-wheel drive car, and the other one was a front-engine, rear-wheel drive car.

Then Loewy and Ex began to squabble pretty heavy, to the degree that you could see it just wasn't going to work. We moved from the Sample Street building over to the 48 building across from the administration building and took a whole top floor, on which Loewy began to build a design department. At that time, Ex and Frank were working on the '47 in Ex's basement. They had some dimensions, and they were working like hell and wanted to beat Loewy out of the thing.

Q Did this clandestine affair have the concurrence of any top brass?

A Roy Cole.

Q He was the evil genius behind this?

A I don't know whether he told any of the other top brass about it or not. Vance might have known about it. Who knows? I don't.

Q Paul Hoffman was still around in those days?

A Oh, sure.

Q He'd come back after the war?

A Very much. He was around. He was a helluva nice guy. [It was] Mr. Hoffman. Actually, there is a lot of the things that Frank, Ex and I worked on that showed up on that car. We worked a lot of the details out. The only thing that really wasn't done by myself or Frank or Ex was the front-end detail of that car. That is the grille, which is one of

the outstanding things on the Champion, especially. The grille was done by Vince Gardner.

Q Was he with the Loewy group?

A He was with the Loewy group. At one point, the car body was chosen, but management wasn't happy with the front end that Ex and Frank had put on it. Gordon Buehrig was hired by Loewy to run the organization in conjunction with Virg Exner. These are two titled guys, and one week Gordon would be in charge, and the next week Ex would be, depending on the mood Loewy, who was running the place, was in. But the minute Loewy left, the two guys got along together. Ex and Gordon always got along real fine. It went along just like it ever did. It made no difference at all. Buehrig hired the majority of the new people.

Q Who were they?

A There was Johnny Reinhart and Vince Gardner. Let's get back to the front end. In any case, that's the reason. That's how Vince got on the job because the management contacted Loewy that they wanted a little different front end on this car -- that is, in detail. Vince did that front end in a hurry. Vince had the ability to -- there were some of the details on the thing that showed up on some of the sketches that we pinned on the walls, but Vince put the thing together, really. He did a helluva job in a hurry, and management thought it was great and so did the public.

Getting back to Gordon. We had this split-up situation, and Gordon hired Johnny Reinhart -- a great personal friend of mine who passed on recently. I didn't know him prior to that time. Jake Aldrich was there, and Jake came from G.M. Everybody in the business knew Jake. Jake was a chain smoker.

Q Jake or Jack?

A His name was John.

Q His nickname was...?

A Jake. Jack Morgan used to tell me about Jake Aldrich when I worked in his office. He'd tell me about all these characters: John Tjaarda, and Jack Aldrich, old man Lutz -- the first clay modeler at G.M. Legendary guy. Johnny Lutz [his son] died recently. He'd be older than I am. So old man Lutz' son worked at Studebaker. John drank a lot of booze and chased an awful lot of girls in his life. Of course, like a lot of the designers -- like what's new?

It was Gordon Buehrig or Exner who hired Audrey Moore [Hodges]. She was single at the time.

Q She lives near here in Whitmore Lake.

[Editor's Note: Mrs. Hodges says that it was Virgil Exner who hired her. She was the first woman hired in the design section at Studebaker.]

A I remember she had great big, round eyes. A nice little girl.

Q How about Bob Koto? Where did he come in?

A Bob Koto came in at that time, also. That's another one that Gordon hired. I think it was primarily Gordon that did the hiring on this. I remember coming up to the Book Cadillac with A. Baker Barnhart to hire some people, and we interviewed....

Q Barney Barnhart?

A Yes, Barney Barnhart -- A.B. Barnhart. Barney was Loewy's right-hand man, and Barney matured through G.M., and from there he went to work directly for Loewy in New York City and was with him all those years. He

died just about three years ago. He was a real zimmer, that guy. He was really something. He was just really wild. He picked up all of the rough stuff that Loewy had to dish out. He took most of it right on his back. It was tough. It really was. And I liked Barney very much. He was not a designer. He didn't profess to be one, but he'd come in and endeavor to contribute something from time to time, and sometimes he did.

Q You'd come up to the Book Cadillac to interview someone?

A Yes. I came with Barney, and he and I sat in there, and I forget who it was we interviewed. It might have been that Gordon lined the guys up. I know Gordon knew John Reinhart prior to this time. Barney and I talked to some of them that we didn't know or that Loewy didn't know. Or wanted Barney and I to review a bit with these guys. I think it was John Reinhart, and I think it was Jack Aldrich that we talked to. And old Jake, he was fantastic. He was a chain smoker all of his life and weighed about four pounds. He was a very slight little guy. He walked around constantly. He'd hold the cigarette, and he had a cupped hand which he caught the ashes in at all times. He'd talk to you, then he'd take a puff, and then he'd look and see if there were any ashes that dropped in his hand. If there was, he'd look for a wastebasket and drop them.

Q Fastidious?

A Yes. I think his wife taught him. Dropping ashes all over the house. But Jack was funny. He was a great guy, and he was a terrific watercolor artist. I still have some of the watercolor sketches that he gave me. He'd sit down and knock out a little watercolor. It might

measure six by twelve -- very small. Sometimes they were [real] miniatures. There'd always be a small European car in the picture with the old buildings and the tabac shop across the street and the girls walking. It was so fast and so beautiful. He could do them in no time flat. Just unbelievable.

A funny thing in Westport [Connecticut] at the Hunt Club they have a fantastic antique show, and my wife is interested in going to those things, and I go with her a lot of the time. There are certain areas where some of the exhibitors sell paintings, and I was walking through there. As a matter of fact, my wife spotted it, and she said, "Look what's on the wall over there." And I looked, and she said, "That certainly looks like Jack Aldrich's watercolor work." And I walked over there, and sure enough, it was signed on the bottom. I tried to buy it, and it had just been sold. Can you imagine that? Gosh. And the price was reasonable. I'd have paid a considerable amount [for it].

In any case, there are a lot of grand guys in the industry.

Q So it was Buehrig who bridges the gap between the Loewy and the Exner factions at the time?

A Yes.

Q They worked well together?

A Absolutely. They worked really well. Gordon and Loewy, there was always something amiss there, and I could see problems. Gordon got along with Loewy, but Loewy always looked awry at Gordon. Didn't ever really warm up to Gordon, and Gordon is the most friendly guy in the world. Just a tremendous guy. I was back on the board pushing pencils or clay modeling and keeping my nose out of all this because I was just

interested in working and making a salary at the time.

The next thing that came up....

Q The '47, however, was more than a facelift?

A Oh, yes. It was an all-new car -- complete.

Q Who was responsible for the rest of the body?

A Virg Exner, I'd say. I was there, and I also did preliminary sketches, some of which would indicate some of the looks of the '47, and they were done way prior to production. You can see forerunners of a lot of stuff that came along later on. All of these things rub off from one -- you know, what the hell.

Q Bits and pieces?

A Yes, sure. Ex, basically, did the body. The only thing that you can say that it was Vince Gardner that did the front-end grille on that '47, and that was a helluva nice grille. Ex did the Commander grille, which was a nice grille, also.

Q You were ahead of everybody by at least a year?

A Yes. And the reason is that G.M. and Ford were not in a position to do it that fast. [Studebaker] was a small company. It could move because of its size. That's about the extent of it. When they get to be big, things get to be pretty tough. There's just too many chiefs. It can happen, and it does happen, but they're smarter now than they were back in those days.

So that covers the '47. About that time, there was interest in trucks. We had the old M Series Studebaker truck line, and that was designed at Briggs. I have heard, and I never knew for sure, that Vince Gardner worked on that particular truck in the old M Series. Gordon

Buehrig might throw light on that. Not that that's too important at this point, but, in any case, they wanted a new truck. Ex didn't give a hoot about trucks. He just didn't care about trucks at all. I did. I liked trucks. And he said, "Bob, go ahead and do a truck." I think Ex, at that time, was in charge that week, and Gordon wasn't. In any case, I was given the job, and Gordon concurred. It was all right with Gordon. Gordon wasn't much of a truck man, either. It didn't excite him, anyway. But I was excited as hell to do a new pickup truck.

So I designed the R Series -- the 2R5. It was a quarter-ton pickup, and it was a good-looking truck. It was the first truck to have inboard running boards. It didn't have exposed running boards. The pickup body was a smooth body. In other words, prior to that time, the pickup bodies had an inner shell which, in turn, were turned out and rolled over. The outside structure had a raw-looking body with hat sections spot welded to the sheet metal. I wanted to do it the other way around and clean up the side of it, so the pickup body was a smooth-sided body on the outside. [It was] the first one that was ever made, and that's the way they build them today.

I did the cab, the doors, the hood, worked it out in full size. I even did the lettering on the back of the pickup body that said STUDEBAKER, and I did that at Murray Body Company up here in Detroit.

Q That was a first, too?

A Yes. Of course, everybody put their name on the back end after that. I was pretty proud of the Studebaker name stamped in capital letters in relief.

Another thing I'm proud of, strangely enough, is the numerals that

showed up on the '53 instrument panels -- the numerals on the speedometer, and odometer, ammeter, and gas gauge -- the style of the numerals. I laid all that out and had it reduced and had the instrument faces done just the way I wanted them. I designed the numerals. You can't find that in a book anywhere, and they're still a helluva beautiful numeral.

Q Do you have sketches of them?

A No, not at all. I've got some panels. They're really handsome things.

Q What characteristics did the numerals have?

A They were relatively tall and relatively thin. I don't know if you've got a Studebaker here, but take a look at them if you've got a '53. They're interesting. I was always interested in graphics, too. When Clare Hodgeman and I went into [our own] business, we did quite a lot of graphic work.

Q You've said that Loewy was a great graphic designer?

A He was good. He was very good. He could swing a script right in front of your eyes. He couldn't draw automobiles -- not at all. He was just ridiculous as far as cars were concerned, and he knew it.

Q But he was a good editor?

A Oh, yes, he was. He'd always ask my opinion. I can remember when we'd have a meeting he would say, "When they come in, and if they ask you, you listen to everything, every question, that they might address me with. It's difficult for me with my French to tell them the way I want to tell them." He actually was saying to me that, "It's tough because I don't know what the answer is."

He said, "Now, Bob, if I look down at the floor like this," and he would show me -- he'd drop his chin on his chest and look at the floor -- "and there's a pause, you pick up for me." I said, "All right, Mr. Loewy." It happened many many times when management was there, and never once did I say the wrong thing. I was always afraid that I would give the answer the wrong way or say something that he didn't intend, but it always came off very nice.

Q The relationship is building at this point into [your becoming] a confidant? He trusted you, and he respected your abilities?

A Yes. Of course, that happened after Gordon had left. I was in charge. When Gordon was there, we had some management shows, but all the time Gordon was there, we didn't get up into full-size clay at all. It was all small stuff with the exception of the truck. Now when the truck was done, Loewy was interested in the truck. We did that one in the 48 building -- the full-size clay truck.

That's when we had moved from Sample Street, and Gordon was in charge part of the time, and Ex was in charge part of the time. But Ex was gone then. Ex was working directly for Roy Cole, and Gordon was still there. Gordon and Loewy didn't see eye to eye on something, and so Gordon took off and went to Ford.

The '47 is the one Gordon got into a bind with Loewy on and left just about the time there was this fuss about the fact that Loewy thought, because [Buehrig], he and Ex were close friends, that Gordon knew that Ex was doing a job in his basement. That was the whole idea of the thing, and he got mad at Gordon because Gordon didn't tell him that Exner was doing a job in the basement for the new Champion line.

Also Cole had not given us the right dimensions on some of this stuff. We were really in bad shape. Then shortly after I had done the truck, and the box components were done up at Murray [Body] -- that's the back end -- the truck, itself, went from a quarter-scale clay model right into wood. They didn't even paint the wood. It was shown in just mahogany form. They put the blocks together, and everybody looked at it and said, "Go." Got the tools, and the truck was a smashing success. They sold more trucks back then than they ever thought they could. And it was a good, sturdy truck. They built them all the way from quarter ton up to two tons.

Q [The truck] was a success, but you still have this incredible internecine warfare. It got out of hand?

A Oh, yeah, it did. Because then when Ex was still there working for Roy Cole, Roy Cole threw the brakes into the Loewy group. This is really sad, in a way.

Q How could Roy do that?

A He was a powerful guy. He was a tough guy.

Q He must have had Hoffman's okay?

A He must have. But in any case, it was a ridiculous thing. They threw us out of the '48 building after they had it all set up and moved us over to a dealership -- Sherman, Shaus and Freeman -- two or three blocks away. Close by, but it was an automobile dealer. They took the second floor of this building and sectioned off about one-third of the second floor, and we were put in there. We had to walk through all the cars and the grease and everything else to get to the area. Johnny Reinhart and Jack -- the majority of these guys -- we all got shoved into

this place. This time, George Matthews was hired as a contact man between our group and the engineering building on Sample Street. And George was a friend of Roy Cole's, but a helluva nice man. Just a gentleman and a very talented guy and a chassis man, actually. He and Gene Hardig, who was in charge of chassis engineering, worked together for years on an equal basis in chassis engineering. And then George went with the Army during the war, and Gene stayed on at Studebaker during the war. Gene was crippled with arthritis all of his life. It's unbelievable what that man went through. It's absolutely fantastic. Gene Hardig just recently died down in Florida, but he stayed at Studebaker all of his life and did all the chassis work. He could draw like crazy, but he had this whole chassis department. Did the trucks. Did everything. And then after Studebaker folded up, he went with Nate Altman and Newman as an engineer, as an old guy, and did all of the day-to-day engineering requirements for Avanti by himself. This guy was a real burner.

In any case, now we're sitting at Sherman, Shaus and Freeman.

Q Feeling a bit miffed by the whole thing?

A It didn't bother me too damned much. It's a funny thing. And at this point is when Tucker Madawick came to work one day after we were there knocking ourselves out. For instance, we'd do a full-size clay model, then -- if you can imagine this -- we'd get at the last minute the fact that the car had to be 2½ inches narrower. Okay, and somewhat shorter by 2 inches or 3 inches, "And you can't show it unless it's in the right dimensions," Roy Cole would say to me. "Yes, sir, Mr. Cole." "You'd better figure out what you're going to do, because the car's too big." Then he'd stomp out of the place, and I'd say, "Yes, sir, Mr.

Cole," and scratch my head. I was young and powerful and stupid. I said, "Well, we'll get that guy!"

So we'd take and we'd cut the plaster model. We had gone through the clay, and it was real nice, and it was just ready to be painted. You'd look at it and go around the thing. We'd take the plaster model and just take whatever we had to take out of it -- two inches, three or four inches -- and cut it, and then we'd put it together like this and then finish it off in the middle and redo the whole thing. And we'd do it in a matter of about three or four days just working night and day. Just unbelievable. Just crazy stuff.

So Johnny Reinhart, Jack Aldrich and Bob Koto -- majority of the guys -- we barely had enough room to have boards for all of them to sit at. Like Koto, for instance, he would be on the board part of the time. Most of the time, we just did clay modeling. Then Roy Cole decided that we should cut our numbers down. Things were getting tough. They had spent a lot of money on tooling and stuff, and they hadn't had a lot of income. In any case, we had to cut the whole situation down by letting people go. Boy, that was tough. It was tough for me, in particular. Loewy takes a powder, and Barney takes a powder, "And, Bob, you're going to have to let these fellows go. That's it." So you give 'em a couple weeks notice, and that was it!

Q Who did you have to cut?

A Johnny Reinhart went back to Ford, Jack Aldrich did -- those two fellows, in particular. Dick Calleal was one. Dick Calleal was just a fantastic Syrian fellow.

Q What were his skills in those days?

A Dick's? At that time, he primarily was a go-between handling some of the stuff that George Matthews did as a contact man between engineering and our group. Dick was not really what you'd call a proficient designer at that time. So he, in turn, did an awful lot of running between the two buildings and ironing out a problem here or finding out about this, that or the other thing. Or trying to locate this, that -- a very important guy as far as helping the situation out. Then he could just about do anything as far as if we needed extra hands here to do this, that and the other thing, he was there, and he could do a certain amount of drafting and layout work. He was proficient and worth every nickel he made, so I had to let Dick go, too. There were things I wanted to be able to let Dick do, and he wasn't there long enough for me to develop it for him.

Q Was this the incident out of which the famous model of the '49 Ford grew?

A Yes, just about in there.

Q Could you elaborate on that?

A Sure.

Q You were one of the principal actors in the whole thing?

A I had quite a bit to do with it.

Q So, what happened?

A What happened is that Johnny and Jack and the other fellows located jobs, but Dick wasn't very well known. They knew Johnny at Ford, already, and Jack, of course, at G.M. or Ford. I think, Jack went to Ford, too. I'm pretty sure he didn't -- not G.M. In any case, Dick didn't know what to do. His wife, Adelaide, was a nurse at the hospital

in Mishawaka, and Dick married her while he was there, and they rented this little house in Mishawaka. It was a small frame house.

Q Mishewaka was the industrial suburb of South Bend?

A That's right. Directly East of South Bend, and it was like a twin city. They had a helluva of a grand nightclub there with gambling in the back. That was interesting. It was called the L & H Inn. I'll never forget that. And you could go in there, and they, literally, fed you for nothing. Like for a dollar or something, they would put the full course meal on, and then you went into the back and you shot craps or something like that.

Q You lost it all?

A You lost it all, right. You paid for the dinner, but you didn't know it.

Q Did Dick have a daughter at this time?

A Yes. He had a baby daughter -- very small. Gosh, almost a few minutes old.

Q Was that Mary Geo?

A Yes. It's Mary Geo.* And I haven't seen Mary Geo. I've talked to her on the phone a number of times. She was very excited about the fact that the story came out in my book. It was one of the things that actually happened. I think her dad probably might have blown it out of sight to the degree that he did the whole darned thing. It's just a normal type of thing that probably happens. The way she sounded, it was like Dick -- so she tried to put me in the corner like who designed the

*Editor's Note: Mary Geo. was named after George Walker who was Calleal's benefactor at Ford a few weeks later.

thing. All I could do was tell her, "Well, it took a lot of people to get this [clay model] off the ground and up to Detroit. Your dad, he worked his butt off on it." I didn't say exactly that, but he did. Everybody pitched in on it.

Q Can you give us some detail on that?

A All right. So Dick came to me one day, and he said, "Bob, I called up George Walker, and I told George Walker who I was and where I was and that I was looking for work and did he have any work that, maybe, I could do for him." He might have gone up and talked to him direct.

Q Didn't you originally recommend that he go there?

A I told him just try anybody and everybody, and I don't know if he had gone to Ford and tried there and G.M., also, and also George Walker [independent designer].

Q Had you heard that [Walker's group] were working on the '49 Ford?

A No. I had heard nothing. We were completely out of sync with what was going on in Detroit at all times, and they didn't give a damn about us, anyway. So Dick came back this one day, and he was excited as heck, and he said, "Well, Bob, George Walker said this. He said, 'Look, Dick, I'll give you some dimensions of an automobile. If you can make a quarter-scale model in a week's time or two weeks at the most and bring it up here and show it to me and if I like what you've done in that length of time, I'll give you a job.'" Dick is jumping up and down. He's a very excitable guy.

Q At this time, George is design consultant to Ford?

A Oh, yes. Dick is jumping up and down. He's all excited as hell. I look at Dick, and Dick is just a tremendous guy. I used to get the

biggest kick out of him. He was so funny back in those days and such a bouncer. I said, "Now, Dick, just be calm." He said, "Gee, do you think that I could get a buck or some clay or what could you do to help me, Bob?" I said, "Now, just be calm. We'll get something together for you. You've got to get a job. Your wife has a new baby, and you're a good man, and George Walker should have you. So, we'll get something put together, Dick." "Great, great. What can I do?" I said, "Now, just relax. We'll get a buck, and we've got some wheels turned already." And we had some small bucks. "Let's see what the dimensions are."

So he showed me the dimensions of the Ford. It was overall length, overall width, overall height, [bumper] clearance to the ground, and size of wheels and tires. Also the seating position. It showed the position of where the steering column was, and the steering wheel, and the front seat, and the rear seat. And there was a dimension back in here -- a critical dimension -- in relation to head room for the rear seat. They didn't have a call-off on tumblehome on the car, but you knew you had to get the glass down in the doors, and the glass was flat glass.

I got hold of Larry Brom. Larry Brom is a woodworker. Larry's brother, Stan Brom, eventually came to work for me. Stan worked at Ford after we closed down. Stan is still alive in good health. Larry passed on, finally. He was the older brother of the two. Real nice guys. I told Larry, "Go up on the rack here and let's see what we've got in buck form that'll suffice for this." And we had one that would work, and we put the wheels on and correct treads -- front and rear -- and the wheelbase. And Dick says, "Where can I work it." I said, "Well, you can't work it here. You just can't do that. You're going to have to

take it home." "Well, what have you got?" I said, "I don't know. What have you got? Wasn't I in your kitchen talking to you and Adelaide one night over a cup of coffee, and you had a table in the kitchen?" "Yeah. We've got a table in the middle of the kitchen." I said, "With a Formica top? Does it look like it's pretty flat to you, Dick?" He said, "Yeah. As a matter of fact, it's got a nice top on it, and it's strong." I said, "Okay, why don't you set the thing up on that table and check it out with a big straight-edge -- borrow this big steel we've got and see how good it is."

Come to find out, that table was as good as our modeling tables. It was amazing. It was quite square, and flush, and level. Gosh, he took this buck and grabbed hold of it, and we finally got the thing installed in his kitchen overnight. The next morning he had to get some clay. He got some boxes of clay. "I'll get this all back to you, Bob. I'll give you the money for this." I said, "Don't worry about it, Dick, I think we can afford it." And he said, "No, I'll get it back to you. I'll pay you for this." I said, "No, that's all right." He said, "I'll weigh it. I know how much it costs." It's Chevant clay, and it's so much a pound, because he had ordered some for me. He probably did pay me back. I could just bet you he did, but I can't remember for sure. In any case, I didn't press that at all.

So he took it home and then put the clay in his wife's oven carefully, and it stunk the house up good just heating it.

Q The sulfur?

A Yes, right. We didn't have any electric boxes. The other thing you do is you take a cardboard box, for instance, and turn it upside down

and put a light bulb in there, and that will do a pretty good job over a period of time. So to get the thing clayed up, we heated it in her oven, and I don't think she was too thrilled with that, but she's a very pleasant lady.

Q Who else was involved? Who did you recruit for the job?

A Joe Thompson was another fellow that Gordon had brought in. Anyhow, so the guys that worked on it are Johnny Lutz. Joe Thompson, who was one of the first modelers hired by John Lutz' father at General Motors, and John Lutz' father taught Joe Thompson. Joe Thompson, literally, taught young Johnny, because the old man had passed on when young John Lutz was beginning to get into the modeling business. Young John Lutz ended up at Ford, and he was one of the best damned modelers. He worked on the Continental Mark II with Johnny Reinhart -- from what I've heard.

John Bird, who was the chief modeler at General Motors for quite a number of years, came up from zero. It's funny. I was talking to Gordon Buehrig the other night. Gordon said, "You know, I hired John Bird." I said, "You did?" He said, "Yeah." I had to stop and think, because I was always of the impression I had hired John Bird. So I didn't say anything to Gordon. In any case, Gordon and I had nothing to say for or against John Bird, and I just listened to Gordon.

John Bird came in right off of the farm. He had never had any experience on anything like this. And when he came in, he was skinny as a rail. Just a young chap. Not married or anything. And he had one desperately crippled hand. It was a claw hand, and it was obviously the result of an accident. And he came in, and I put my hand out, and he

puts his hand right out. It was his right hand. I shook his hand, and he sat down. He didn't say anything. I looked at him, and he said, "I'd like to work for you." And it might have been Gordon, but I was sitting there when he hired him. But I do remember what John Bird said. If Gordon hired him, in the final analysis, I was at the point when John was first interviewed. Maybe Gordon did hire him. But, in any case, I said, "Well, fine. Can you do anything in wood?" "Yes," he said, "I'm pretty good at working wood. I do carpentry work." And I could see that the kid was smart. His answers were quick and crisp. I said, "Did you ever hear of clay? We make automobile forms with clay here." No, he didn't know anything about that, but he was sure he could handle it. Then he said, "You probably wonder, with my bad hand, whether I could work or not. I can work with this hand. I can hold tools, I can do anything with it. It looks bad." I said, "If you can work with it, and you feel comfortable with it, there's no problem with us at all, John. How in the world did you have your accident?" He said, "It's really a stupid thing. When I was real young down on the farm -- I came from a poor family -- we had to go out and shoot rabbits sometimes to get something to eat on the table. I had a shotgun, and my father, who was killed in an accident, had warned me as a little kid about certain things I should never do, and this day I did what I was not supposed to do. I crawled under a barb wire fence and left my shotgun on the other side of the fence. As I crawled through, the thing was cocked, and I pulled the shotgun through with my right hand, and the shotgun went off." It, literally, blew his arm apart and cut all the tendons. They didn't have good doctors, and they couldn't get him to the farm. It was just a case of wrapping

everything up, stopping the blood, and hoping that the kid made it. It was terrible.

Q So John came in? Who else was on the team?

A Now we're back in Dick Calleal's kitchen. Bob Koto was there. And, of course, Dick. Bob was modeling and also contributing to the shape of the body around the windows and things like that. It was the normal state of affairs.

I had made some sketches for the car. The front end of the car -- you can see in the 1940 models and after, I was putting spinners on stuff because of the aircraft. I was a spinner freak.

Q So you decided to resurrect that? You'd used a variation of it?

A Yes, to a degree. I thought what are we going to do here? I know this front end will work, because I'd been drawing it for years. So I said, "What the heck. Let's get Dick a job." I didn't figure the thing would be anything that wouldn't be put on the shelf, and he'd go to work. That's crazy. So, that's how [the scale model was done].

Q Basically, you had set the...?

A The theme of the car.

Q And done the original sketches?

A Yes.

Q Are any of those sketches left?

A No, not really. The car had vertical taillights, instead of the horizontals. They had the faring strip and the horizontals as the way it was built. There was a detail difference as far as the blade that comes off of the spinner detail in the front. The spinner detail was pretty close on, and the framing on the top of the spinner -- not around. I

had shown F-O-R-D fielded on the sheet metal rather than being part of the chrome, which is a dumb thing because, although it showed FORD a lot stronger. It was costly to do. They had to put the letters on separately, rather than stamped into the header framing. The horizontal blade went out and wrapped over the frame, rather than terminating inboard in the frame like it did on the Ford. [This is a photo] that's a resurrection. Let's see what that looks like. The details are all there of the way it was put together. There's the Ford. There's Dick. Yes, they took it out over, and the one I did was inboard here.

You'll notice another thing, this car is basically rounder and fuller looking than what we showed them in a model form. The difference actually shows up, but it's basically the same car. I don't know where the picture of the sketch is in here. You can see that this is a flatter-sided, straighter car, and it ended up rounder, which made it look stronger, you might say, and that was done at Ford.

Q It was done by their stylists?

A I would say so, yes. But, basically, that's the way it was.

Q It came out pretty close to your original sketch?

A Oh, yes. The hood, the details, the front end look, the way the windows look. It's not too far off, really. So we finally got the thing done. Joe Thompson did a lot of surfacing work on it, and he's not mentioned in my book, unfortunately. Joe is dead now, but a helluva guy.

Q Koto worked on the slab sides?

A Yes. You mean flush sides? Bob worked on the sides, and he worked on the roof, and he worked on the windshield, the window details, and the front, back and side. I kept an eye on everything. I'd go over at night

and take a look see how things were going and make suggestions and sometimes get in on it. Did a little clay work myself, and the front-end detail was primarily me. The hood was primarily me. Dick worked all the way around. Dick did a lot of finishing work on the car, all the way around on all sides of the car. I'd say that he contributed as much of that thing as anybody, if not more. And if it wasn't for Dick, it would never have been done in the first place. It was a real shock to me when that car showed up on the road. It was really a shocker.

Q But for you and your guys, it was just helping out a friend?

A That's all it was, and it wasn't a terrible amount of work. It was a few nights of heavy going trying to get it finished in time.

Q It was all done in the kitchen, and you never went down the basement?

A Never in the basement. I don't think the house had a basement in it. It was on piles, and then they had this lattice work underneath.

Q Was that done in clay only?

A This thing went up to [Detroit] in clay, sitting on the rear seat of Dick's car.

Q What was the scale?

A It was quarter-scale. We transported quarter-scale clay models on occasion. We did an English car. It was a Sunbeam Talbot two-door speedster roadster with louvers on the hood, and we did that whole car in clay in South Bend. We had some extracurricular stuff going on when time was available. We put that in the back seat of my car, and I drove the thing to New York with Kurt Boehm. I'll never forget that. Brought it up to Loewy's office. So that sort of thing was common. Standard procedure. Usually when we delivered it, like for instance in this particular

case, you wash it down with turpentine and slick it a little bit after you get it there to take any of the dents and nicks out of it. But it'll hold up quite good if it has a good buck underneath the clay.

Q Dick went off with this in the back seat of his car and...?

A And delivered it to Walker.

Q Did he ever report back to you what happened?

A Oh, sure. Boy, he was excited. He came back the same day or the next day, and he said, "I got the job, Bob." He called me up on the phone. I said, "Great." I was just pleased as punch. He was, too. I don't know how many years he was with Walker. Just a few, I think. Then he went to Chrysler. Once in awhile I'd touch base with him or hear from him. Did he ever work at Ford?

Q Yes, eventually. He was unhappy at Chrysler, and George made good on his promise, because of your model he had brought him. Dick represented his part a little stronger than what it may have been.

A Yes, I'm sure. In any case, that was only normal. What the heck. As I understand it, we heard that George Walker --and I don't how true this is -- showed Ford two clay models, and George Walker told Ford the fact that this is the car they should build because two completely different design groups made these two models, and they both looked the same. Two quarter-scale models that both looked the same -- had the same front ends and details and everything else, and this is the way Ford should go. And it's impossible that two completely-separated people could come up with the same quarter-scale model.

Q What would be your educated guess as to what did happen?

A What did happen is that George Walker sold that particular design to Ford. It's like Loewy sold certain [designs] to Studebaker.

Q But it was your group's design?

A I would say so, without a doubt.

Q You'd indicated earlier there was some rounding out?

A Well, yes. That's the only thing I can say is that the body is just rounded out a bit more than the way our model looked. Our model was a little stiffer. Bob Koto, if he saw it, he'd say, "No. Ours was just as round as that," and I know it wasn't. That's the way it goes. So I'd say that, certainly, again, in relation to George Walker and in relation to Raymond Loewy, if it wasn't for a George Walker and if it wasn't for a Raymond Loewy, there were a lot of things that would have never seen the light of day. But the fact that the '49 Ford design originated in South Bend and one man got a job out of it is enough for me.

Q You had a certain amount of satisfaction seeing your design?

A Oh, yes. Absolutely. I have memories all the way back to E.M. Laird.

Q The '50 [Studebaker] coupe was something of a compromise, or was that a completely-new vehicle?

A The '50 sedan was a compromise in that originally we had modified the cowl and put this fillet up to the windshield, lowering the top of the hood and coming through with a much more graceful hood and a much more graceful front end in which to put this crazy spinner. Roy Cole let us work ourselves to death with this filleted lowered cowl. At the last minute, he said, "That's out. You can't do that. You've got to change that. Put that cowl right up where it was originally." And I said, "Mr. Cole, something must have happened because we got an okay to do it at one time." "Yes, I know that, Bob, but you have to change it. We can't

afford that. I just found out we can't afford to do it." And it's very possible it did happen. So we did. We cut the darned thing. Or we had cut it down, and we put the cowl back up exactly the way it was and then took the hood off of that, and everything got more bulbous, and it didn't work out too good with the design. I was pretty happy with it originally.

That particular car was shown in conjunction with a job that Ex did. They chose our design over the one Ex did. In all honesty, I will say that the one that Ex did was a highly-salable machine and would have been on an equal basis with the one that they accepted that we did, as far as Studebaker sales went in 1950, which was an up year. The 1950 car that we did, they built and sold more Studebakers that year with the spinner nose than any other year previous or after that. That was the highest production year for Studebaker. The '50 was the highest selling car. It sold 500 and some odd thousand. Towards the end, they were selling like 27,000 cars a year. And then there were a lot of trucks on top of that, and they were still doing Army work -- 4x4's and stuff like that.

Q It was an exciting design.

A It's outstanding from the standpoint it didn't look like anything else.

Q You had a clear field.

A Right. But as far as pure aesthetic quality is concerned, it was a far cry from anything quite like that.

Q Has Ex departed by this time -- '50 -- or is he still in the basement?

A No. He's working right over on Sample Street. The only thing he did in his own basement was the '47, and then he's back on the surface of things over in the Sample Street engineering building. We're still at Sherman, Shaus & Freeman.

Q But Loewy is working his way back in the good graces of management?

A Well, yes. That car -- the '50 that they chose over Ex's job -- gave Ex the clue, and, God bless him, it was a good clue that Roy Cole wasn't strong enough to swing him over Loewy. He just wasn't. And it wasn't Ex's fault at all, because Ex is a very capable, hard-working guy. He was a hard-drinking guy, too. Holy smokes. Gosh, he was something else. As a young fellow, he was wild. But he was there on the job every morning bright and early, and he didn't ever walk, he ran from one place to another. He was just a real banger. Terrific guy. A nice guy, and a hard-working guy. I had a lot of respect for Ex. And certainly in a different way in which I had respect for Loewy, but I had respect for both of the men. And Gordon -- terrific.

At this point, that is the one that convinced Ex he ought to go elsewhere. He got this terrific job with Chrysler and had one helluva time with Chrysler. He did a lot of good work for them.

Q Brought them in the 20th century?

A That's right. And then he had all these Italian cars -- special automobiles. And, boy, to me, it seemed like he was in a spot there that was like heaven. He must have really enjoyed himself. And he worked for this -- who was the president of Chrysler at that time? A fellow that got into some kind of trouble or one of his purchasing agents did or some dumb thing.

Q Bill Newberg. He was taking rakeoffs from his suppliers.

A That's another story.

Q Ex is gone then. You've got a clear field?

A Right. And just about that time, we had outgrown the Sherman, Shaus, Freeman office. That was a real hole. It was bad. It had bad [winter] heating, and it was hotter than hell in the summertime. It was an oven in the summer and a frigid spot in the wintertime, and it was nasty. So then they moved us out to the Chippewa Street plant, and we had a nice section right in the very front of the building and a big layout area.

Q How far from the main plant was it?

A The Sample Street engineering building -- that's the one I used to spend most of my time at -- was about a half a mile from the administration building, and the production buildings -- between four and five story old brick buildings where they used to build the cars. Behind the Sample Street building was a foundry, and Studebaker had one of the most up-to-date, modern foundries in the world, at one point. The Chippewa plant was three and a half miles South of the Sample Street building and right in almost a dead line with it. That was a big plant that was built for the war effort -- trucks, and, eventually, they tested jet engines in there. I think certain Weasel components were made there, although the Weasel never saw the light of day, as far as getting into the war, but that was quite an interesting vehicle. The one vehicle that Harold E. Churchill was very proud of was the Weasel.

Q Was it an all-terrain vehicle?

A It was an all-terrain vehicle in that it was terrain and water, both with tracks on it, and it was actually a people carrier. It wasn't

a fortified vehicle. It was built light to the degree that they could put it in transport carriers and they could parachute -- drop it -- and it was a helluva vehicle. It had a Champion engine in it -- a flat-head -- a little underpowered. I think they got it up to about 186 cubic inches -- increased the cubic inches. It's the first time they adapted overhead valves to the old Siamese cast cylinder Champion engine. By the way, the original Champion engine developed more horsepower for its cubic inch displacement than any other internal combustion engine. Barney Roos developed that engine way back with Roy Cole and Gene Hardig many years ago.

Q At this point, do you have a mandate for completely-new model that you're going to come up with?

A We moved out to the Chippewa plant -- it's '50 -- and then we starting doing facelifts, and we did the '51, which was a terrible looking spinner job. It had a transparent, plastic spinner inside, and, God, they were terrible looking cars.

Q Who talked you into that one?

A That particular item was just one of many, and I really can't say who it was. But we had directives from time to time. I remember how that transparent spinner started out. Somebody thought it would be neat to have a light behind it, and I talked them out of that, and we painted it with opaque silver, because they were ready for production. It would have been really crazy. I think that was brought about by the fact that somebody was impressed with the Tucker or a Cyclops eye -- a single headlight on a locomotive.

That was '51/'52. So we facelifted them through, and about that time -- 1950/'51 -- was the first time that Studebaker had a V-8

engine, and it was a catastrophe. They had a terrible time. They kept eating up camshafts and millions of dollars. Studebaker never ever gave any of the customers any problem. If they had made a mistake, they'd carry it to the ground and replace it forever. So, I think, it cost them, at the time, about 4 million dollars to get it straightened out, and they repaired the cars all over the country. There's a couple of big, long stories about it, and I have a complete one, and that's another story completely: what was wrong with it and how they corrected it, and that they had a hell of a time straightening the thing out.

One of the problems was that they could not get the particular metal that they wanted to grind the camshafts. They treat the metal after they've ground them. It was a hairline fine thing of a different grind, a different type of heat treating and also the spring tensions on the valves. Anyway, they finally got it ironed out, and it turned out to be a real good engine, but it cost them an awful lot of money.

That's 1950/'51 we were talking about. Then '52 came along and some more facelifting. We needed new cars pretty bad. So the pressure was to come up with an all-new sedan, and we worked on these, and there were some pretty horrible examples of all-new sedans that we did and up into full-size and quarter-scale, and everybody was pushing clay and quarter-scale. I was running around from one guy's modeling table to the next trying to keep things in line. We were building the full-size clay model cars there, which were big bucks, and then we put the surface plates around just like they do today.

We used clay ovens that we had constructed over in the metal shop.

Q Electric ovens?

A They were electric, yes. Then we made the clay extruder.

Q That must have been helpful?

A Yes. With the clay extruder we had all kinds of dies for moldings and things of that nature, and we packed this thing just like packing an old musket with these lumps of clay, turn the heat on, let it heat up real good, and it had this big worm, and push this stuff out, boy. We had long boards, and some fellow would feed this stuff out on the boards, and then we'd take the whole board and apply it apply....

Q You had all the size moldings you needed?

A Oh, yes. There were days of moldings and frames for windows and stuff. We started to build cars.

Q But you had your own pre-cast molds that were standard sizes and standard shapes?

A Die shapes. They were, literally, hand filed out of quarter-inch plate. Then they were all held in with a great big frame type of thing with nuts and bolts on it and T handles. And, oh boy, we had some great stuff.

We were endeavoring to come up with a new body style -- basic four-door and two-door sedans.

Q Somebody decided you needed a fresh design?

A That's right. And, in that regard, what we were doing, I wasn't too happy with it. The proportions of the car were not all that great originally, and the other thing that they wanted to do, they wanted to start to promote a bit. General Motors and Ford and Chrysler, generally, had show cars when the showtime came around for the big automobile international shows. I was always trying to get Loewy to ask management to

put some money out. This was a very difficult time, as they just lost four million on bad engines. And management agreed to put the money out to develop a show car. So that's when the '53 hardtop series started up.

There were four guys: Bob Koto, myself, Don Bruce and Vince Gardner. I set them aside to have within about a week and a half to two weeks to finish quarter-scale models -- just let 'em have a free hand. I'd walk around and watch what they were doing and try to keep an eye on it. So we made these quarter-scale models, and they were all of them, I'd say, at this point. There were certain aspects of them on my model that looked somewhat like the one that went into production, but not all of it -- it was different. The quarter-scale had a kickup for the rear fender in the back rather than a straight-through line like it ended up in the full size. That car actually got up to full size on my half of the car. Bob Koto, Loewy and Barney and I looked at all the models and decided what looked best.

Bob Koto was a damned good modeler, and he had a pretty good eye on certain things. What Vince had done and what Don Bruce had done didn't come off to their thinking. And what Koto had done and what I had done, they liked. They thought that that's what we should get up in full size as fast as we could. So we started out. Bob Koto worked his butt off, and I worked my butt off. He was a bit older than I was, and he couldn't go quite as hard as I [could]. I could go three days in a row with no sleep. I was that crazy.

So aside from watching the other guys with the regular stuff going, there were changes on trucks. They were trying to come up with regular

sedans, which were the bread and butter of the thing. I spent most of my time at night or when I could working on this so-called show car. It went through one phase, and when I stood back and looked at that thing after working my butt off on the thing, I said, "This is just not the way it's going to be, ever." It was a decent-looking car, but not the way I wanted it to go.

Loewy was gone a good part of the time. He didn't even see it. I think he saw the first do on the thing that I didn't like too much. I talked to him on the phone one day, and I told him, "I want to change it and change it completely, because I have thought it's not the way we should go." And all he said was, "Okay, Bob, go ahead, go ahead. Do you think you can get it done in time?" I said, "I'm bound to. It has to be done." "Go ahead, Bob." And with that, he went to Europe, and he was gone for quite a number of weeks, and when he came back, the car was done. It was in full size. The side was all done.

I'd gone through a couple of stages with it, too, as I had to modify it as a show car. I was still on the pretext that it was going to be a show car, so I had made some rather extreme things for a production car, in that the taillights were to be made of bumper stock. Cadillac actually did that later on. The back end of the car, the bumper was shaped in relation to the decklid that came down, and the bumper was a projection out here and then went in underneath the car, and the taillights -- the back angle on them -- in turn, were bumper guards. So the car was protected, but it would cost like a fortune with Studebaker's money. If it was a Cadillac, it could be done, but not with Studebaker's bucks.

So I went through phases like that. The other thing is that the door -- like the Camaro [and] Firebird -- had a one-piece glass for its full length. There was no quarter window in the back, so it was a door of a given size with one piece of glass that went down forward and no quarter window on the original car. It was a huge door, and that door at that time was about the size of a Camaro door today, but they wouldn't buy that either. The reason I changed it immediately was the fact that I got a tip from Vance. He'd come over at night sometimes -- he smelled of a very high quality of Scotch -- and he liked to walk around very quietly and absorb it. He was a helluva nice man and a very intelligent guy. And he'd say very little to me. He'd just look at it. Once in awhile he'd ask a question, and never a difficult one, and never got me excited. Then this one night he said to me, "Well, Bob." and he was a big tall guy. He said, "I want you to do something for me." I looked up, and I said, "What's that, Mr. Vance?" "I want you to watch the costs on this thing -- the detailed costs." I knew what he meant. The difficulty of stamping the fenders and the depth of draw -- "Let's watch it." I said, "All right, Mr. Vance, I will." And from that time on, I thought to myself, God, that guy has something on his mind. It's more than a show car, if he's really concerned about that because it wouldn't make any difference as a show car. Then I really began to sweat. I wanted that car to be as good as ever. I was excited.

Q At this point, was there a friendly competition between you and Bob Koto?

A Oh, yeah.

Q There was only one side?

A Bob Koto had this other side going, and Bob wouldn't spend much time at night. He had -- oh, gosh, I forget what the combination was -- which fellows worked on Bob Koto's. I know Bush was one of them, and, I think Fred Horning worked on Bob Koto's side. The guys that could work at night -- if Johnny Lutz had a little booze in him, he'd be fine. Johnny Bird and Johnny Lutz and myself, primarily, and then there was some help from, say, Victor Clark and Larry Brahm's brother, Stan Brahm. Once in awhile, the guys that could come in -- spend a little time at night -- and they didn't get paid a nickel. They didn't get any overtime at all. I never got paid overtime for anything, and I used to work always Saturdays, and sometimes on Sundays I'd go in for two/three hours, and practically every night, I'd go home for dinner, get up from the table and go back to work at 10 o'clock at night.

Q Incredible. [How did your wife react?]

A Well, she really went out of her mind a few times, I must say. You know how women get? They get very excited. She was Italian and German. She would get excited. There's no doubt about it.

Q So you've got these two sides?

A Bob Koto's side, it was coming along, and I'd go around and try to help him a bit here and there, and I didn't want to tell him what to do, because he was my assistant and an older man than I was. I let him fly and do the best he could. He did come up with some pretty nice ideas here and there. He worked on his side specifically 100 percent. On my side, at one point, it had a sloped-back opening -- a regular grille opening -- in the front of this hood, and out of that sloped-back opening was a spinner. And then it went into the split grill. That's the pitch that Pontiac has used for years -- they split the grill.

Q They swiped it?

A I don't know if they swiped it or not. I might have swiped it from somebody, but who, I don't know.

Q It turned out beautifully. Did you have a final judging?

A Yes. At one point, there were the two sides of the car, and, here again, it was left up to Loewy, and he was the boss, you know? He walked around the thing.

Q Loewy and Vance?

A No, just Loewy and Barney Barnhart. They looked around it, and walked around it, and I didn't say a word. I just kept on working on one thing and another. I didn't even offer to say anything. I wanted to see what they were going to say. They came up with a conclusion. So Loewy called me off to one side, and he said, "Bob, there's no comparison between the two sides. The side you've got here is the side we want to go with." I said, "Well, I thought, maybe, that's what you'd end up with." Of course, Koto was disappointed, but he could see it coming early. Because even though he might not have admitted it to himself, he could see that the one side was a hell of a lot better looking or fresher looking.

That was it, and then off and running like crazy. And, boy, then we really got into it and finished it up and made modifications in it for production. I told Loewy, at the time, that Mr. Vance drops over here at night. "He did? Has he seen this, Bob?" I said, "Yes, he's seen both sides." "Well, what does he like, Bob?" I said, "He's never said anything, whether he liked this side or that side. All he said to me was, 'Bob, watch the costs.'" "He said that?" I said, "Yes." Then he

said, "Barney, you hear that?" He'd shake his head. And Barney said, "Yeah, yeah." Barney was all excited, too.

So the next thing we knew, we had the car ready to show management. Management consisted of Vance, Hoffman, and, primarily, the money lenders from New York, and there were about four or five of them. They were the big banks in New York that kept the place afloat.

So the day arrived. At this time, we had also a four-door sedan and a two-door sedan out in the front area -- the main area that we did the cars in. And then in this back area -- we called it "the showroom" that we did more work in -- back there was where the hardtop series for the '53. I can recall that the powers that be walked around the sedan cars, and they were just clay color, and the blacked-out windows and everything that was chrome had foil on it. They looked quite presentable. They walked around there, and, at one point, Vance turned to me, and he said, "Bob, is the show car in the back? Is it presentable? Can we look at that?" I said, "Yes, Mr. Vance, we've got it cleaned up pretty well." He said, "Well, fine. Let's go in there." So I walked to the back and opened a pair of doors, and they all walked in there. I stood off to one side, and Loewy stood off to one side, and I sort of stood with Loewy and Barney. Vance and Hoffman walked around. And all these guys, they got in little groups and they talked, and they were there a long time.

Then Vance turned to Loewy and Hoffman, and he said, "Well, Raymond, we have to go back now. Thank you very much," and that's all that was said, and they trailed out of the place. Loewy looked at me, and I looked at him. Nothing had been said. He said, "Do you think they

liked it?" I said, "Well, at least they did not state that they didn't like it." Barney seemed to think, "Gosh, I think they were impressed. I really do." Loewy said, "I'm not so sure, Barney. I'm not so sure. These guys are very funny with money." It was a big investment.

Loewy, that night, had to go back, and Barney went with him to New York City. So he said, "Well now, Bob, we've got to go back to the City." He was having a big thing going on in New York, and he said, "I'll talk to Mr. Vance on the phone. But if you hear anything before I do, you call me up immediately and let me know what's going on, because they'll let us know one way or the other." And, son of a gun, the next morning, I went to work early in the morning. I got a phone call, and it was Mr. Vance's secretary, Rachel Pellisier. She was a very distinguished-looking, well-spoken lady.

There's a funny anecdote on that. Thinking about Rachel for just a half a minute, she was a very handsome, nice, excellent secretary. Long afterwards when Churchill was president of Studebaker during the period of the Lark, I went to see Churchill one day. I had some thoughts for him, and I was in South Bend. I called him up, and he said, "Come up, Bob." And, so, I did. I went up to see Church, and I sat out there in his reception area in Vance's old office, and Rachel was at the desk -- Vance's secretary --and I said hello to her. I sat down in a chair, and Church came up behind me, and Church was an outspoken, very manly type of guy. He came up to me, and he took his hand and he rubbed my bald head, and he said, "Hi, baldy." Rachel just went "E'mmm." Absolutely, this kind of thing just killed that woman. She couldn't stand that, because Vance was such a gentleman and a quiet-spoken guy. Church was a banger,

and he was such a nice guy. Very few people know that Churchill and his wife raised six orphaned children. They had no children of their own, and they raised these kids, and they all turned out just fine.

Q Long before it was trendy to do so?

A Oh, yeah. Long before. They put their whole life into it. He's an amazing guy.

Okay, getting back to this issue. So she was on the phone early in the morning and said, "Mr. Vance would like to talk with you, Bob." I said, "Yes, ma'am." And Vance got on the phone, and he said, "Good morning, Bob, how are you?" And I said, "I'm just fine, Mr. Vance." He said, "Well, I wanted to call you up and just tell you that we have decided to put that car in production." Just thinking about it, I get emotional. So I called up Loewy, and he was overjoyed. That was more or less the story. Then it was a rat race to get that car engineered. It was really tough.

Q Was Roy Cole gone by this time?

A Roy Cole had retired, and Stan Sparrow was the vice-president in charge.

Q Good man?

A Excellent guy. He was well-known in the industry. He was a quiet Bostonian type of guy or from the East -- Rhode Island or someplace like that and spoke with a slight Eastern accent. A slight man with a long, thin face. Not very big, but a very genteel, nice guy. One thing he'd say to me, "Now, Bob, you work too hard." I said, "What do you mean, Mr. Sparrow?" He said, "I know you're here night and day, and I don't want you to do that any more." I said, "I feel good, Mr. Sparrow." He said,

"Well, now just watch it. Do a certain amount, but not night and day any more. You've had enough, you know?" I said, "Okay, Mr. Sparrow," and I went right on working just about as hard as ever because my boss was Loewy. It was a little different story there. But I told him, "Now, look, if I get tired, and I start feeling bad, I'll go home, and I will stop. I won't push myself too bad." "Okay, Bob. Fine. I like to hear you say that." A nice guy. An intelligent man, an excellent engineer.

He was the fellow that corrected the camshaft that went all to hell. It was the camshaft, literally, that killed him. He was so abstracted in thinking about what the hell he could do to correct this very costly thing that he drove his car and cut in front of a big truck coming down Studebaker hill near the proving grounds. The truck caught the rear end of the car and flipped it, and he was killed. He went off the highway, and that was the end of Stan right there, boom. It was all over. He's the case of where he probably didn't sleep for days and weeks and months trying to figure it out. Like my brother almost died here at Ford. I don't know if you know about that. Did you ever hear that?

Q No, I didn't.

A When he was first hired, he was hired by....

Q This is Bill Bourke?

A Bill Bourke, yes. When he first came to Ford, he was hired by -- what's the banker's name? He went from there to the [World] Bank. He's the guy that started up the Whiz Kids [at Ford].

Q Robert McNamara?

A McNamara. This is very funny. Bill, when he saw Studebaker folding up, and I had already taken off, he asked me, "Where do you think

I should go to look for a job, Bob?" I said, "Well, hell, Bill, in the short time you've been at Studebaker...." By the seat of his pants and his own ability, he had become assistant to the vice-president in charge of sales, and it was just going down hell. It was a guy that [Jim] Nance had imported -- a personal buddy friend of Nance's. I forget what the man's name was, but Bill said, "I've got to leave because I can't work and do a job for Studebaker anymore because my boss is drunk in the morning when he comes to work, and then he drinks all day long, and he's just out of it completely. We can't get anything done. I can't make any moves, and I've got to leave." I said, "Bill, that certainly sounds like you should, and I think the plant's in bad shape, anyway." They had blown some twenty odd million dollars of Studebaker's money -- not Packard's money -- trying to come up with something, and they had nothing to show for it.

So, he called G.M., and he called Ford. The first appointment he got was with Ford, and in the afternoon he was to go see General Motors the same day. So he came over to Ford, and he went in and was interviewed first thing. Then they had him fill out a written type of questionnaire. They interviewed him verbally, and then they had him fill out the questionnaire. When he was done with it, he went up to the desk. The guy looked at him strangely. Bill said, "Here it is. It's all done, I think." The man said, "Well, fine. That's good. We'll call you, Mr. Bourke." So Bill said, "Thank you." He shook his hand and started to walk out to go over to General Motors right after lunch. He got as far as the front door, and there was a speaker system that came on and said, "Mr. Bourke, if you're still on the premises, stay where you

are. Somebody will come and meet you." So, Bill said, "Boy, I put the brakes on immediately. I wondered what in the heck is going on." And he stopped right at the door, and, presently, somebody came down in an elevator, and a guy came running across and said, "Are you Mr. Bourke?" And he said, "Yes." He said, "Come with me." Bill turned around and got in the elevator with him and started up. I guess it was at the Glass House [Ford corporate headquarters].

The elevator went up to the top floor where the executives were at the time. Bill was of the opinion that that's probably where all the brass.... So Bill looked at the guy in the elevator, and he said, "Where are you taking me? Who wants to talk to me?" So this young fellow said, "I'm taking you to Mr. McNamara's office." Bill said, "What's going on?" He was all shook up. So the young fellow ushered him into Mr. McNamara's secretary's office. The secretary got up, and she said, "Follow me, Mr. Bourke, through this door. Mr. McNamara would like to talk to you." Bill said he got all shook up. He didn't know what was going on. Bill is over six feet tall -- a pretty good guy that could handle himself, even at a very young age. He was a tough nut, too. He's not quite as emotional as I am.

So he walked in, and McNamara stood up and put his hand out. Bill shook it and was looking at him popeyed, and McNamara said, "Sit down, Bill. Your name is Bill Bourke, right?" He said, "That's correct." "Bill, I suppose you wonder what you're doing in my office." Bill said, "That's absolutely right, Mr. McNamara." And McNamara said, "I'll get right to the point. You were interviewed today, and you finished the test faster than anybody we have ever interviewed, and you hit all of the

answers 100 percent. I had left word down there that if they ever came across anybody that came in and was able to do that, I wanted them to hold him immediately and not let him get out of here until I had a chance to talk with the man. That's why you're here." And Bill said, "Gee, I guess I was lucky, Mr. McNamara." He said, "Lucky or not, you're here, and now I've got a question for you. I've got a heavy schedule, and I'm going to get right to the point. And the point is this: I'm sure you know about the Edsel." Bill said, "Yes." "Well, we have X thousands of them that we want to get sold. I want all of them sold before the beginning of next year. And my question is this, Bill, do you think you could do that for me?" Bill said, "And it didn't take me one second, and I said, 'Well, Mr. McNamara, if anybody can do it, I can do it.'" He put his hand out, and he said, "That's all I want to know. You're hired." And that was the start of that. And he got 'em sold.

Getting back to why I'm telling you all of this is the fact that they found Bill at four o'clock Christmas morning on the floor in his office bleeding from all ends -- his mouth and everything else. He had completely hemorrhaged, and he was almost dead. They took him to the Ford Hospital. He was a young fellow, and they didn't want to operate on him. So they fed him with tubes and stuff like that, and he was there for a couple of months healing. Then he worked a half a day for the best part of a year only, and I guess they really thought the world of the guy. The guy is a burner, you know? Not enough sense to know when to stop is the hell of it.

That was the start of Bill Bourke, and the reason he left is because Henry Ford II, like he had done many times with a lot of people,

had promised Bill the presidency of Ford. When he told him that [Phil] Caldwell had been picked, Bill stood up, and he said, "I put my hand out and said, 'Mr. Ford, it's been a pleasure knowing you, but now I have to leave,'" and he walked out. He did! Then you probably read in Automotive News that they paid him 25,000 bucks a month for a period of I don't know how many years -- three, four, or five years -- not to go with any other automobile company. So he went down to near Richmond, Virginia, and bought what I call a plantation, and filled it up with cattle. He's a dirt farmer at heart. It's surprising. He just enjoyed himself for a number of years.

Then, all of sudden, Reynolds Aluminum, which is headquartered down there, contacted him and talked to him, and the next thing you know, they hired him. They wanted him to run Reynolds. Now he's President and C.E.O. of Reynolds -- the first non-Reynolds to run the place. I guess his salary is up in the six figures or better. Of course, he needed it. Anybody asks me how Bill is, I say, "He should be pretty good. I just sent him his check. I send him a check every month to make sure he has enough." They think I'm nuts, which I am.

Q Interesting guy.

A Yeah, Bill is something else, again.

Q It would have been interesting to see if he could have done something that Caldwell couldn't do.

A Yes. Bill didn't think Caldwell was the man for the job. He never said much about that. He did tell me some funny stories about Henry Ford, himself. He had a lot of respect for Henry Ford II when he was in Australia running Ford of Australia. He went from Ford of Canada to

Australia, and took his family over there, and he pulled Australia out of the hole over there. He did a pretty good job. But, in any case, there would be occasions where Henry Ford would have to come over and address the Japanese people or some [group] over in the [Ford] Asia-Pacific area. He said he was an amazing man in that he would do absolutely no preparation for what he was going to talk about, basically. He said, "And we'd get into a limousine to go from here to where the banquet was being held, and I'd sit in the back with Mr. Ford, and he'd say, 'All right, Bill, read what I'm supposed to say.'" Bill said it would be a fairly long talk. And here's Ford, and the night before he'd been pretty busy doing some arm bending, and God knows what and, obviously, not in too good a shape. He'd sit there, and with his eyes closed, and Bill said, "I didn't know if he was asleep or not, and I'd read this. And I'd stop and look at him, and he'd immediately say, 'Go ahead, I'm listening. Go ahead.'" And so Bill said, "I'd read the whole thing just once. And there were figures in there, and there were percentages in there. 'Now, Mr. Ford, I've taken some of these things and abbreviated them just in case you drop a figure or a point and you want to refer to it.'" And he showed him these cards in highly legible letters, and they were numbered. He looked at them, and he said, "Well, I'll use them now, and then I want you to keep them for me, Bill." He'd listen to him read it, and then he'd go through the cards, close them up, hand them to him, "Okay, Bill, that's it." And he'd go. He said it was absolutely uncanny. He'd sit in the audience just all shook up thinking he was going to mess up. He said the guy could repeat almost verbatim what Bill had read to him. Very few people know that. He had tremendous recall.

Q He was impressed with [the job your brother was doing] at Ford of Australia?

A Yes. He turned them around from a deficit to a profit in no time flat.

Q Then he went over to Ford of Europe, and Henry Ford II was impressed with his abilities there?

A Yeah. He created the Fiesta, I know. Then he built the plant in Spain to build Fiestas. He did a few things over there that were pretty nice.

Q You and Loewy had a good match with that '53?

A Yes. We had a lot of fun. I enjoyed working for him. I worked hard. I didn't get paid a hell of a lot , but I got paid good enough.

Q You were paid by the Loewy group?

A Oh, yes. But I started out working at Studebaker, and I was paid by Studebaker. Then Loewy kept an eye on me and noticed who the heck I was. He found out I was on Studebaker's payroll, and he found out I was a designer, not just a draftsman. Then he asked me one day, "Bob, how would you like to work for me, Bob?" I said, "Actually, Mr. Loewy, that's what I thought I was doing." He said, "Well, yes, Bob, you have been doing a nice job, and I like your work. How would you like to go on my payroll is what I meant?" And I said, "It really wouldn't make any difference to me, Mr. Loewy, because I always considered I worked directly for you and Mr. Exner."

Q But he didn't pay enormous salaries?

A No. Actually, when I look back on it, the most I ever got paid at Loewy's -- I sometimes got what I thought was a fairly decent bonus -- a

thousand bucks or two thousand bucks if things were going along pretty good. I had forty some odd people under me, and I worked my butt off keeping the thing together. And I did an awful lot of patching up with some of the fusses that would transpire between engineering and -- they were always throwing cutting remarks about Loewy, especially when Roy Cole was there. It was terrible. But the most money I ever made at Loewy's was about twenty-seven/twenty-eight thousand bucks a year. You go back, in retrospect, and you exchange that money for today's, it wasn't really all that bad. So you'd take it in the early '50's to '80 and times it by at least four. That's pretty close to a hundred grand in today's bucks, which was pretty good. And, golly, I saved money. You couldn't spend a lot in South Bend, and I didn't drink that much, and I was working all the time.

Q You had high hopes for the '53 Studebaker. It had great critical acclaim. Did it sell?

A No, not very well.

Q What happened?

A Ken Elliott was vice-president in charge of sales then, and he was a hard-working guy, and then there was Dick Hutchinson, who was "Mr. Studebaker" of Europe. He was all export. A helluva a grand guy, Dick.

What happened is a number of things. Unfortunately, the car was on a 120½ wheelbase, and we took our Land Cruiser frame. It's the biggest frame Studebaker had in their archives. That frame was a typical hat section frame. It flanges out, and it welded to a plate on the bottom. It was called a hat section, not a closed box or a welded box like they do now. When you supported the frame ends -- the very tips -- like the

rear and frame horns in the rear and front. The frame, by its weight, would deflect 5/8 of an inch right in dead center. It was, basically, a pretty weak piece of stuff. It could be termed a ladder frame without any rungs in it. There are very few cross-members, and in '53, especially. That was one point. That frame, however, went butt into a fresh, all-steel, non-rusted body with strong bolt-downs to the body, and they didn't suspend the body over the frame. They, in turn, utilized tire stock shims that went between the underside of the sheet metal of the floor of the body and the top of the frame. The body would be directly bolted to the frame with tire section spacer shims in between body and frame. There were holes in the tire sidewall shims to accept the bolt that would result in a direct tie-in of the body to the frame with little insulation, but, literally, none, because of the bolt -- very little. They used the tire shims to, literally, make up the difference between a body warp of something that might be higher than it should be, and they'd have to bring it up to date with shims, utilizing the tire pieces as shims.

Then when things began to go, and the car was a pretty good ruster, especially in the front fenders and at the A post at the floor, and there was a body hold-down bolt right in there. This had nothing to do with the initial sales, except that the car was slightly flexible due to the frame and the body. It wasn't all that stiff. So if you went over a railroad track that you hit on an angle, you'd put the body into a twist, and the doors would talk back to you. You could hear a few things.

The other thing is that W.W. Smith took Perry Sullivan's job and was in charge of the body division engineering department. I'm sure that

nobody would really be upset about this. W.W. Smith took the job. He was a colonel in the Army. In what part of it, I don't know, but he did not know what the ten-inch lines on a body draft were. He didn't know what they were, and he was in charge of the entire situation, and everything was done on large body drafts in those days when he took the job. Also, he got himself involved with suppliers, and, at one point, being an outsider like that, I had to keep peace in the family regardless of what the hell went on, but a couple of times my Irish got up, and I really went to bat to try to save the day.

In this case, they had taken a door latch and bought it through a different supplier and saved 15 cents per latch. I got an example of this latch, and in the body shop I saw they were testing the latch out. The guys that were assembling the latch and slamming the door and doing this didn't have any severe test, but they pointed to me, and they said, "Bob, did you suggest that we use this latch?" I said, "No, I had nothing to do with it." They said, "Take a look at this," and they showed it to me. I said, "Well, hell, that thing will never work. It will never hold a door shut," because we'd take the frame and twist it just a little bit, like we knew the car did, and everything would release, like BOOM! So I went to W.W. Smith, and I said, "Waites, we can't use that latch. They either have to improve it...."

Q What did you call him?

A Waites. That was his first name. I said, "We can't afford to put this in production." He said, "Well, Bob, it's 15 cents less." I said, "It's not going to hold a door shut, and we're going to have real problems." "No, they've guaranteed me they had can fix that on the ones

they're going to supply to us." I said, "Well, I don't know how they're going to fix it, unless they change the whole concept of the lock." To make the long story short, the thing went into production, and they had to....

Q You couldn't stop it?

A I couldn't stop it. Later on I found out from A. Baker Barnhart that he found out that W.W. Smith had a kickback from this latch manufacturer. It's terrible. They lost I don't how many of the initial sales, almost fifty percent of them. They had to shut down the production. That was part of it. Another thing was some pretty bad fits here, there and elsewhere in relation to fenders, the cowl to the front edge of the front door. It was bad news.

See, prior to the thing, we had an exposed cowl section. The front door terminated here, and the windshield was here, and here's the front door, and the hinges are here. We had an exposed cowl here with a fender joint here. And on this car we took the fender all the way up to the door like you do today. That was one of the problems getting that thing lined up. Also the fact that we still had a few of the engines that acted up. The camshaft. There were some of those around. I don't know what happened. There was a group of them in the back end of one of the buildings that production thought had had the cams corrected, and they were the original cams, and they got into the '53's, and so they knocked out a few cams, and then the word got out that the car's got a bad engine again. It was just crazy bad things that were just out of sync with any....

Q It's too bad because it was gorgeous.

A Yes, it was a pretty car, but it left a lot to be desired, unfortunately. It took off at one point a bit later on. In '54, the car had been corrected, and that was a pretty decent car. Put an extra cross member in it, but not enough to really take the movement out of the frame. The original car had a very light sheet metal box section that ran along the bottom of the floor and stiffened the body so that the body worked better and worked harder. Then, in '54, that box was heavied up a little bit, but not enough. Then I took a '54 -- my own personal car -- and I put a big box on it. It was wide and deep of fairly heavy gauge sheet metal, and my car is just as stiff as an X-member frame car. It's a really stiff car. And I reworked the car after it rusted apart, and I spent seventeen years on the darned thing, and I got it back, and it's a real going machine again, but a nice-looking car. A lot of time, a lot of effort and a lot of money.

Q But things are not going too well at this point?

A Everything is bad.

Q It's discouraging after all your work?

A It certainly was. Then we patterned the four-door sedans, which had very bad proportions, somewhat after the '53 hardtop series -- the so-called show car, and there were some modifications in the R Series truck, as far as front end facelifts on it.

Q You're still selling trucks pretty well?

A Yes, they were still going along pretty good. Now that truck is not too young any more, but it's still going -- still selling. They were good trucks, and they were economical trucks to run. They all had engines. Later on, they put the V-8 in the trucks.

Q What were the internal problems, vis-a-vis the design department? At this point, the '54 picked up a bit, but there seems to be a general malaise in the corporation?

A Yes. The '56 was the first Hawk series.

Q At that point, who came up with the Hawk concept?

A We did.

Q How did it go?

A Actually, the Hawk concept, strangely enough -- the sales department felt that the '53 with the rounded-off nose and the loss of a hood, like we do today, was definitely wrong, because we should be out there -- way out -- with a big hood top ornament and all that kind of stuff. If we could have put portholes on the side of it and got away with it, we'd have done that, too. Goodness! So that was the reason for the Hawk.

Q Was Brooks Stevens involved in that?

A Not at that point, no. A little bit later on. The year before, in '55, we did a Speedster series, and we used the 352 Packard V-8 engine, which was a great big chunk of iron -- very, very heavy. Not all that many cubic inches, but it was an overcast piece of iron. It was extremely heavy, and we put that in this light Hawk.

Backing up, for a minute, when I say light Hawk, even with a 120½ inch wheelbase, those cars ran from 2,079 pounds to 2,100. Imagine how light they were? They don't build 'em like that any more. It's a very critical thing to keep a car light, providing it's strong enough.

Q Light is better?

A Weight is the enemy all the way around the place.

Q The Loewy/Bourke axiom.

A Yeah, gosh. It was primarily Loewy.

Q How did that Speedster go?

A In a straight line, it was murder. In a straight line, boy, but you just didn't want to take it around a corner fast.

Q Did you sell many?

A Not very many. It had an engine-turned instrument panel, and it had a built-in tach and a few other things. It was a fast car. Straight line. It was just scary. The other thing is, you could break the rear wheels loose with that big engine, and with all the weight pirouetting on the front, and the back is light, and, woosh! The wheels would come up, and the tires would smoke, and, oh boy, it's a lot of fun in the back -- it's fishtailing. Crazy nuts. I was always a great one for speed. I was always about two notches away from losing my license for some dumb thing. I have one son like that, and the other guy never gets pinched. He drives faster than the other son. It's strange. I can't believe it.

Q The Hawk was a great idea?

A Right. And then we did the Hawk series.

Q Do you remember where you got that inspiration?

A I'd say from Mercedes. If you look at the hood, if you look at the radiator, sure -- it's a Mercedes look.

Q It was a creative borrowing.

A Yeah, it was different. But the other funny thing that I mentioned yesterday when I was chewing the fat over there -- did you attend that [SAE] thing yesterday?

Q I was there, but tell us for the tape.

A We had a Tri-Star, at one point, on the '53. Mercedes took exception to the Tri-Star and contacted Studebaker and told them they wanted

them to stop using the Tri-Star because it was their emblem. Studebaker said, "Fine, we'll drop it. Don't worry about it," type of thing, because notification came from a law firm in New York City. So Studebaker said, "What can you do, Bob?" "It's very, very simple," I said, "I'll just take the tine off the bottom, and we'll use the V on the top with the 8 and the S, and that looks just about as good." And, I said, "Before we put that on there," it was Vance I was talking to.... I had checked that out a bit and found out that the Tri-Star was a [symbol] of Christianity -- the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost -- the Holy Trinity. I said, "In that regard, do you think we still have to take it off?" He said, "Just get it off of there." I said, "Yes, sir." Lo and behold, at Studebaker, at one time, that would have been their saving grace if they could have hung on to them. They were the distributors for all of Mercedes cars. Did you ever know that? In the United States.

Q I didn't know that.

A Oh, yes. They had a contract with them. Mercedes wes going to be sold through Studebaker dealerships, and that was on paper.

Q What happened to that?

A Somebody must have burned it up or got rid of it. No doubt, Mercedes! Gosh, Almighty! That's probably one of the reasons we certainly should take it off. Then, all of a sudden, my next door neighbor was the German lawyer that really got Studebaker to take it off.

Q That heavily-chromed front end the next year was a disaster?

A The '55. I'd say that it wasn't too successful, and that was the model before the Hawk. We fattened up the hood and put this heavy bunch of chrome down below. Then I tried to get them to cool it and improve

the breed, mechanically, literally. Give it better trim on the inside. Primarily to get rid of some bad fits and bad joints and things that should have been handled in a different manner. That's what I did with my car and stiffened the thing.

But in any case, then we did the Hawk. That is when the whole situation blew up. At that point....

Q The Hawk was a critical success. You certainly got a lot of publicity. But, for some reason or another, the sales and distribution end of it...?

A The sales department had just been blown apart about that time. It wasn't really doing its job, number one. A lot of dealers were having a hard time because they just weren't selling enough cars. At one point in time, engineering had taken the Studebaker -- which one was it? It wasn't the hardtop. It was one of the earlier ones. It was a '50 Commander. We took the car apart completely -- all the components of it -- and laid it out on the floor in the engineering building showroom. We took a Chevrolet of the same year and took all the parts -- engine, everything -- and everything was tagged and weighed. We took one of Studebaker's bigger, more expensive cars (the Commander), and compared it to the Chevrolet. If General Motors had built the Commander, they could have built it for 500 bucks less than they built the Chevrolet, and still the Commander was commanding Buick prices. So it just shows you how far -- there was a big differential in payment of labor, number one. There was a big differential in -- oh, gosh, so many darned things. The way they assembled the stuff, it was a disgrace. And when you walked down the assembly lines, and the floors had mounds of packed grease with nuts

and bolts in the mounds. They were not level, and in a lot of places just piled up grease. And gray light bulbs hanging down. It was really bad.

At one point, they tried to clean it up, and then they let it go again. There are so many of these things going on, and there are many stories written about Studebaker, and I'm sure they're more accurate than what I'm saying, but I happened to be there and experienced a lot of this stuff first hand.

Q What was the basic reason? You've given some hints here and there, but if you had to capsulize it in two or three sentences, what would you say?

A I'd say, basically, this: when Studebaker made money, like in '47 and the years that were good, they made very good money. They, in turn, immediately took that money, and they did not plow enough of it back into the facilities.

Q They let them deteriorate?

A They let the facilities deteriorate.

Q The physical plant?

A They let the physical plant deteriorate. They did plow a certain amount back into new model changes. Then the rest of it went into the stockholders; in other words, in dividends and one thing and another to keep the price of stock up.

Q At that time, that was considered the thing to do?

A Yes, and still is today, up to a point.

Q Was it management? In the early post-war era, you had Vance and Hoffman. Did their successors, or did they, pay excessive attention to the stockholders?

A They did as time progressed. However, when [James J.] Nance took over -- he came from Packard, as I recall -- they did have money in the bank. It was about twenty-seven/twenty-eight million dollars cash, which, for them, was a lot of bucks. In other words, so they were not completely zonked, at that time, or out of business. But Nance's group came in, and they just couldn't get anything off the ground, and they blew all that money away in a matter of less than two years. They had nothing left. Then when Sherwood Egbert came in, and I happened to have known Egbert at....

Q Where had he come from?

A Scott-Atwater is where I met him. Of course, I was gone by then. I did some Scott-Atwater outboard motors and got to know Sherwood Egbert there. He was a great, huge guy, and he had a burn. He liked automobiles. The poor chap, he was at Studebaker just a few years, and he died with cancer -- just rapid. Probably hit him in his liver. He wasn't a drinker or a carouser. He was a very serious big man and bright and intelligent.

Q Who brought Nance in?

A I don't really know. I would assume that it had something to do with stockholders or the money lenders in New York City.

Q Banks really controlled you?

A Absolutely.

Q They were calling the shots. What had happened to Churchill?

A Churchill had had success with the Lark, and they piled up some money for a couple of years. Duncan McCrea was on that project with the Lark. It was mostly Duncan McCrea. That was before Bill Schmidt or maybe after Bill Schmidt. Bill Schmidt was in it for awhile.

Q And Churchill was much later then?

A Yes.

Q Where was Loewy at this point in time in the mid-'Fifties when things were looking bad. What is his position? Is he trying to hang on?

A Certainly. They did the best they could to try and appease everybody and help them out, but they didn't want to have any part of Loewy. That was the new echelon.

Q Nance didn't care for Loewy?

A No, I guess not.

Q So things sort of just fell apart with the Loewy group. What was your position at this point?

A When the thing folded up like that, there were a number of men that didn't have jobs, and we just kept them on. I took them to my house, and we had about four or five men working in my big basement. We tried to scrounge up some work around there. Little by little, they all got themselves settled with Ford or G.M. or somebody else.

Q Do you remember some of their names?

A Sure. Bob Koto was there for awhile.

Q He caught on at Ford.

A Yes, he did. Who else worked in the basement? John Cuccio. He finally came to Ford. And who the heck else? Kurt Boehn was in the basement. Those three chaps in particular, and there might have been one or two others for a very short period of time.

Q The beginning of the Bob Bourke Associates?

A No, not really at this point. We fooled around, and we'd get a few jobs from Loewy in Chicago or New York, and we'd work on these things.

We were making money for the old man, and these guys were getting paid for working in this crazy basement situation. Then, after they all got jobs and were stabilized, Loewy wanted to hang on to me.

Q Even though the Studebaker contract was gone?

A That was gone, yes. I guess he had hopes of doing something for somebody some day that I could handle for him. Of course, he had used me on a variety of things, as far as products were concerned. I worked on the Greyhound Bus -- the Scenic Cruiser.

Q Did you?

A Yes, when I was the head man at Studebaker, so I was busy. Once in awhile, I'd go to Chicago and meet Barney out there, and we had a huge Scenic Cruiser buck built, and we made the thing out of wood. Then it went into production. That was a fantastic bus.

Q Did you have input into the design?

A Oh, sure. I worked on it quite a bit. The details of this and, goodness, so many things. Later on, I did a bus for Greyhound. That was when I had my own business, and that was built by Mack Trucks, and they were great bus builders, and they did this bus for Greyhound. I've got so many slides at home, you could sit for five hours and look at stuff.

Q You should think about putting them in an institution that could take care of them for you.

A Why not? They're sitting in my garage right now.

Q We have a marvelous design history archives that's looking for that sort of thing.

A I've got drawers full of slides, just a million of them.

Q It would be the Bob Bourke accession.

A The Bob Bourke memorial. This corner in Westport where I had my accident, the neighbors all call it the Bob Bourke Memorial Corner. I almost kicked the bucket, can you imagine that?

Q Loewy wanted to keep you on, obviously?

A That's right. So I went to the Chicago office, and I worked under Franz Wagner, who ran the Chicago office. Half German and half Mexican is what his parentage was. He's world educated. Tremendous promoter type of individual. A handsome guy. Highly-qualified man. Ran Loewy's Chicago office and took care of a lot of accounts. I would live in Chicago during the week and go home on the weekends. I had family in Chicago, which was a bit different, and my wife did, too. We both came from Chicago. So I was there for not too long -- five months. In the meantime, I had this thing. I wanted to try it on my own. A little stupid. I'm forty years old. I'm just a kid. Really stupid. In any case, I wanted to try it on my own. So my contact -- Clare Hodgman -- we always kept in contact.

Q Your old buddy from G.M.?

A Yes. The old buddy from G.M. who came into Sears, Roebuck, and he made great money there as a young fellow.

Q He stayed at Sears.

A Yeah, he stayed on at Sears. Then he went to work for the Army. He did engineering work for them on the drawing board just like I did for the Tilly Division in engine testing. He had a tremendous salary at Sears, Roebuck. They really thought the world of this guy. He was great.

So I got together with Clare, and Clare was back with Loewy in New York City. He was handling Frigidare accounts and doing a lot of work

for Coca Cola and clients like that. I talked to him, and we decided to go try it. He said, "Do you have any accounts in your pocket?" I said, "No, Clare, how about you? " He said, "No, I haven't got a thing." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing I don't want to do is I don't want to start trying to get accounts away from Loewy. If they contact us -- unsolicited -- and they want us to do some work for them, that's one thing, but we won't go after them, because they are accounts that have been feeding us indirectly through Mr. Loewy for years." Clare felt the same as I did. So we had to start out fresh, and, believe me, it was nothing but beans. It was very tough. And here's a guy from the Midwest going into the heart of New York City.

Clare, of course, was more established there. He lived in Mamaroneck, New York, and I had to find a house. I couldn't sell my house in South Bend. Things were down. So I had a lump there that I owed a bundle on. I had to get another place and move my family. I lived at Clare's house for a number of months. I used to drive back to South Bend on the weekends. I had a '55 Ford station wagon at this point. I'd fill the car up, and what a wonderful car that was.

Q I had a '55 Ford, too. Great car.

A Oh, gosh, that was a tough automobile -- really tough. That's when they had the good V-8 engine. The year before, they had a rotten one. I got lucky on that. I used to drive there over the weekend. I made it from Mamaroneck to South Bend. The fastest time I ever made was eleven hours, and I'd go from tankfull to tankfull. Then the last hundred miles or so were just two-lane, blacktop roads. It wasn't express all the way then. Pretty wild.

Q Con you tell us about Hodgman & Bourke?

A We started this business up. We started out in Manhattan at 57th and 5th Avenue in an old building on the corner. Some young promoter had purchased or had contracted for an area on a certain floor and took the area and divided it all up, and we, in essence, worked down a hallway. He put a door on the end of the hall, and he rented that to us. We had a hallway type of office. You came in the front door, and there was a secretary there at a small desk. Her name was Jackie, and I forget what her last name was, and she was a secretary to Clare when he was at Loewy. She was very proficient. She helped us -- by feeding us, more than anything. Then you walked, maybe, seven feet, and there was a door, and you walked through a little conference room that was about as long as from here to the end of the wall. Our total office was about the width of this room or narrower. Then you walked through the conference room through another door, and we had one office with a desk for calling up people. You walked through that one to a drafting room, and there were three drafting tables in there -- Clare at one, and me at the other, and it was just a hallway. So we worked there in that spot.

Q Things began to fall in place?

A Well, no. It took us almost six months to get a job in there. Surprising, I sent out a lot of letters and told them our background, and it was kind of a written thing. Most of them go in a wastebasket, but once in awhile somebody will read it. We'd try to get it all on one sheet and not make it too lengthy a list of those things that we did.

Lo and behold, I got a call from Coolerator Corporation in Albion, Michigan.

Q What did they make?

A Window air conditioners, electric fans, space heaters. Primarily, those were their main lines. They were suppliers to Montgomery Ward, primarily, and Sears Roebuck, secondarily, plus they had their own line which they called Coolerator. A fellow by the name of John Lonergan, a great, huge, dark-haired Irishman, well into his fifties with two grown sons that worked at the factory, contacted me one day. He called me up on the phone. He said, "Bob Bourke?" I said, "Yes, sir." "I'm John Lonergan." I said, "Yes, I sent you a letter, Mr. Lonergan. I remember." He said, "Well, yes, and it's right here in front of me. You say you've had experience doing this, that and the other thing, and you say you worked for Sears at one time?" I said, "Yes, I did. When I first started working, I was there for four years." He said, "We're having a problem here, and maybe you could help us." I said, "I'd be delighted if I can." I was so damned excited, because this was the difference between beans and, maybe, a hamburger, you know? Big John Lonergan said, "Well, look, when could you come out and see me?" I said, "As a matter of fact, I'm driving out to South Bend." I explained that I'd worked at Studebaker, and, "I have a house in South Bend, and, little by little, I'm moving parts and components back East, and I come home to see my family practically every weekend. You're in Albion, and that's close by. I'd be happy to be there next Monday."

Actually, what had happened, I had already moved my family, and I was still going back to the home place, because I hadn't sold it yet, and I was still picking some stuff up and bringing them East. He said, "That's fine. What time do you think you can get here?" I said, "I'm

sure I could get there shortly after lunch." And he said, "Well, that sounds good to me. I'll be here. Drive carefully." I said, "Okay. I'll see you Monday." This was like a Thursday.

So I told Clare, "At least, I've got somebody who's going to listen to me." I started out, and I drove the '55 Ford all the way to South Bend. I loaded the darned thing up, then I drove the car, and I was going to stay somewhere close to Albion. I can't quite recollect, but I had to go through Michigan City. I had started out early, and I went to Weil-MacLean, the furnace manufacturer in Michigan City, Indiana, and talked with them. They make boilers and stuff of that nature, and I thought maybe I could do something for them. Well, I talked with them. After I got through talking with them.... Wait a minute. I was to see them Monday morning, and I was to see Lonergan Monday afternoon. Okay, so I drove all the way to Michigan City, and I was going to stay overnight in a motel and go to Weil-MacLean in the morning. I had to fill a day up with contacts. And, boy, that was important!

So, I came into Michigan City, and it was quite late at night, in this '55 Ford, and I was tired as hell. I drove down the main street, and the South Bend Interurban crosses the main street, comes between two brick buildings. I'm driving down the street, and there's no flagman, no ding dong, ding dong, no sign, nothing. I go across this railroad track, and as I passed over the railroad track, in the corner of my eye, I saw this big headlight loom and come out between the two buildings at, maybe, two miles an hour -- very slow, fortunately. I don't know whether the thing was coasting in or what. But, in any case, it caught the right rear fender of the Ford just behind the rear wheel, fortunately, and just

pushed everything in like, wow, bam! And the car pirouetted around, and the train just went past, and I'm looking at the train, and I'm facing the other direction. It didn't hurt me at all, but the car! I thought, "Oh, my God!" I got out, and the car still ran. I backed it up and pulled it to the curb, and I got out and looked at it, and I thought, "Oh, my God! What am I going to do?" Fortunately, it was all sheet metal damage. I had no leak in the gas tank. I drove the car to a motel, slept that night and went to Weil-MacLean the next day with the busted-up automobile. It looked like a terrible wreck riding along.

The next day I met Lonergan. The thing that was really amazing is I went into his office, and he was a friendly, comfortable big man. I remember the man well. He immediately had me sit down and showed me a series of window air conditioners, and he said, "This is the problem. We developed these and showed them to Montgomery Ward, and they don't like any of them. They want us to redo them, and we have a week or two to redo them. Can you help us?" I told him quickly, "Well, the only thing I can do is -- yes, I think maybe I can, but I'll have to have some paper and some pencils. Then I want to be left alone. Let me study them and work, and you come back, maybe, eight or nine o'clock after your dinner tonight. You get me a lot of coffee, and then come back, and then you can see what I think we could do for you. Then you can make a judgment."

Q And you got the account?

A I got the account. From then on, we were eating.

Q Hodgman & Bourke was a success?

A I called up Clare Hodgman, reversed the charges, because I didn't have any money in my pocket, and told him we got an account. That held

us for the next four or five months, and then they began to trickle in, little by little.

Q That's a great story.

A At one time, we had close to twenty people working for us. We had an office in the Seagram Building, which is a really nice spot -- a battery of secretaries, and we were busy as heck. We had a lot of fun.

Q Thank you, Mr. Bourke.

A Well, thank you, sir.

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