

Hermann C. Brunn Oral History

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Note to Readers

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- Benson Ford Research Center staff, 2023

**AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

HERMANN C. BRUNN

1986

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

**Henry Ford Museum &
Greenfield Village**

This is David Crippen of the Edison Institute's Edsel B. Ford Design History Center of Dearborn, Michigan, and this is August 7, 1986. Today we're in beautiful San Mateo, California, talking with Mr. Hermann C. Brunn. Mr. Brunn is a well-known designer in his own right, for many years working with his father at Brunn & Company, the famous custom body shop in Buffalo, New York. And for many years with the Ford Motor Company, retiring, I believe you said, Mr. Brunn, in 1970. We'll ask Mr. Brunn to talk about his father in some detail, talk about the Brunn Company in some detail--long ensconced in Buffalo, New York, as a major custom body house whose clientele not only included Ford and Lincoln but many other makes as well. Most notably, I think, at least initially, Pierce-Arrow, whose [plant] was nearby at the time. Then we'll ask Mr. Brunn to give us an extensive review of his own career as it impacted on the custom body history and Ford Motor Company. So, let me now introduce Mr. Hermann C. Brunn.

A Brunn & Company, Inc. of Buffalo, New York, was founded by my father Hermann A. Brunn in 1908. At the age of 16, he was apprentice to his Uncle Henry Brunn who ran Brunn's Carriage Manufacturing Company in Buffalo, and Brunn's & Carriage Manufacturing was considered the top carriage builder in Western New York, and at the urging and forcing of his father and his uncle, he went to work at the age of 16 as an apprentice carriage maker.

Q What year was this, Mr. Brunn?

A Oh, what year was that?

Q I take it was pre-automobile?

A 1898.

Q Just getting into the automobile era. Had Brunn's Carriage Makers gotten into the automobile business?

A No, they had not, and Uncle Henry was death against them. My father went in there and learned the carriage body making and body building trade from the ground up. First as an apprentice, which one of his lowly jobs was to rush the growler to the saloon across the street to the men just before lunch time. Every wood worker had a pail with a handle on it, and he'd come along with a stick through the handles and go across to the saloon across the street and fill them up with foaming brew and bring them back. That was his first job. But, he went on, and he learned to become an experienced wood worker, an excellent wood worker, and one of the things that he was most proud of, he built a carriage--a landau--for Harry Hamlin--all this was when he was working for his uncle--a rich man in Buffalo and a prominent customer of Brunn's Carriage Company. And in 1901, the City of Buffalo staged the Pan American Exposition. There were exhibits from most all of the nations in North and South America. President McKinley came to see the Exposition, and he stayed in Mr. J.G. Milburn's house, and this carriage, which my father had made, was used to transport the chief executive wherever he was going or needed to go. My father being a photography fan, got his new camera and his tripod and the security clearance to set up his camera on top of a ladder directly across the street from where the President and Mrs. McKinley would emerge to go to the Exhibition grounds. Well, he was all focused and everything up on the ladder when a whole line of cavalry moved up in front of him, and he looked down in the finder, and they were coming out, so he jumped off

the ladder and ran between the horses, and he looked down just as the President was taking off his hat. I'll show you the picture. The interesting part was that McKinley--when they got there to the Exhibition grounds, the President had a handshaking ceremony, and he was assassinated, and two weeks later he died. So this was one of the last, if not the last, picture taken of the President, and it became very valuable. He made prints in his bedroom closet--contact prints--and, I think, he sold 1600 of them, to the Buffalo Express, which was the morning paper and the Evening News and places like that. Well, this was the kind of stuff he was learning to make.

Q You might describe this briefly for the--in audio terms. This is a full-on shot of President McKinley just getting into a Brunn Landau out in front of the Milburn house, I take it, and on his way to the Pan American Exposition on September 6, 1901, and he has just taken off his hat and looked as if he's sort of saying hello to your father. Did he know that the Brunn Landau was the...?

A No, no. There was applause of the people all around, I guess, you know.

Q But, in the newspaper it says, you....

A Mrs. McKinley didn't want to be seen. If you can look closely, you can see a black parasol going up in front of her face. Well, anyway, that was the kind of the work he did, but he was hell bent to get into the drafting room where they did the layout, and....

Q Woodworking was fine, but he really wanted to get into the design area.

A Yeah. And, then with the approval of his uncle, he went to the Carriage Builders Drafting School that's now known as the Andrew F.

Johnson School. This was on the Bowery in New York. He went to school there two years and graduated in whatever they called it, and evidently the denizens of the Bowery didn't fit in with Mr. Johnson's plans, and so he moved elsewhere, but this was after my father had gotten out of there. After that, he established a correspondence course in carriage and automobile body drafting from his home in Gray, Maine.

Q Mr. Johnson?

A Mr. Johnson's home in Gray, Maine, and practically every surface layout man, we should call them, in the Detroit automobile industry, went to that school at one time or another. Ray Dietrich was one of them. Of course, he was--came after my father. He was younger than my father, and two of the Fisher boys. And, well, Henry Grebe. I don't remember whether you remember him, but....

Q Oh, yes. GM and Ford [body engineer, all divisions of Ford].

A He came over to Ford.

Almost everybody, of any account, had gone to that school. See, that was back when the automobile bodies were being designed by carriage designers and using their styling types on the automobile as they did on the carriage. In other words, you had a chassis, and you built a body, and you sat it on that and bolted it down, and that's the way the custom body building went right up until the end, even through the 'Thirties. Well, after that he went to work for the Andrew J. Joyce Carriage Company in Washington where he became plant manager of the Joyce Carriage Company, but he was always trying to get into somebody's draft room.

Q What year was this roughly? Can you pinpoint it?

A Well, it was after the assassination, was that 1901?

Q 1901, yes.

A Well, it was shortly after that. And one time Mr. Joyce--Ed Joyce--introduced him to William Hooker Atwood, who was the main operator of the New Haven Carriage Company. Hiram Percy Maxim, the inventor who was working on an electric car for Colonel Pope who was, at that time, anyway, the biggest bicycle maker in the country, but he was going into the electric car. But they had to have a body designer and a body builder to build the body for this job. Maxim had got the electric mechanism working, but the New Haven Carriage Company designed and built the body, and this man, William Hooker Atwood, who was noted for his fine designed carriages. He was considered the expert on both interior and exterior design of the carriages. He had a great effect on my father's life. After that he went up to Watertown, New York, and worked for a carriage company up there where he met my mother. Then he, eventually, went home to take charge of his uncle's shop.

Q That was Babcock, wasn't it?

A Babcock--H.H. Babcock, yes. And, he was all enthused about the coming of the automobile. Uncle Henry, we'll call him, didn't see eye to eye with it. Uncle Henry, I'm sure, didn't know the meaning of atmospheric pollution or anything, but he just saw--and other carriage builders did, too--this big cloud of the automobile coming over the horizon, see, but Uncle Henry said, "Ah, that smelly, noisy, greasy old thing is never going to last." Well, they couldn't get along, and the interesting part of it was that my father's father and Uncle Henry had married two sisters, and this made the cheese more binding, as I

say, because my father finally quit--obtained local financing from an insurance man by the name of Sandrock--William J. Sandrock, a rich insurance man. How he got the money--how he got to know Mr. Sandrock, was his mother was a milliner--my grandmother. One of the prominent milliners in Buffalo, and Mrs. Sandrock was one of her customers. That's the way they got together. Because even my grandmother lived to be 96 years old, and even after I was born, one or two of her customers used to come to the house to get their bonnets made by my grandmother, because she had what they called peggies, which was a dummy. Various people had their peggies there and the size of their heads, and she'd be up there with pins in her mouth pinning up these hats for one or two people, and they'd come, and then they'd have tea or chocolate or something like that.

Q But a peggy was a favorite customer's head [size].

A Head size, yeah. So, the peculiar part of it was that the strain on the family tie was that they formed Brunn and Company. Now the other was Brunn's Carriage Manufacturing Company, and Uncle Henry had never seen fit to incorporate. So, the place they got ahold of was an empty factory right across the street from the carriage plant. This didn't help things. And, Uncle Henry's lawyers, after about six months of my father being in business, when they first started like that, the automobile was coming along, and he didn't monkey with any carriages, but the first business they had was repairing--bumping out fenders and things like that until he said he found out that repair jobs took up just as much room in the plant, but they didn't bring in the money as the new cars did. Well, anyway, Uncle Henry sent his lawyer over there and

said, "You got to take that Brunn and Company sign down because it's causing confusion with our customers," because one or two and three of the customers were coming across the street, and eight of the employees came across the street and worked for my father. Well, Mr. Sandrock's lawyer proved that Uncle Henry's nineteen year old company was younger in the eyes of the State of New York than the 6 month old company--Brunn and Company--cross the street because Brunn and Company was incorporated and Brunn's Carriage wasn't.

So, well, one of the first bodies that he built was for Leslie Carter. Well, Leslie Carter was a great competitor, if you want to call her, a Sarah Bernhardt.

Q Oh, really. Oh, Mrs. Leslie Carter!

A Flaming red hair, and she was American and liked yellow, and that was the first one--some young fellow asked me--you see that yellow and black car up there. A young fellow, who used to live in Grosse Pointe [Michigan]--he is in Florida now--he asked me one time, "What was the first job--first custom body Brunn built?" Well, I wrote a story about that. Well, I guess, it was the antique car magazine.

Q How long ago?

A Oh, that I can't remember, but....

Q And, was it Mrs. Carter's?

A Yeah, that was the one.

Q Can you describe it visually?

A Well, in her--a lot of people wonder. Look, I was born in 1908, too. Now, a lot of people wonder how do you know all of these things--all of these details. Well, I'll you, if you had sat across the dinner

table from my father for 35 years and heard the stories told and retold and things like that, why, you'd have it all up in here, too.

Q Well, tell us a bit about that propensity of your father's. Was he one that who would bring the business details home then to the dinner table and regale you and your mother.

A And grandmother.

Q Your grandmother. Did you have any siblings?

A No.

Q Any sisters?

A No.

Q You were an only child. So, you got the full story, presumably, from your father.

A Yes. I got the full story, I guess. This was one of the cars that got him started, and he had....

Q Well, this is apparently a 1908 Thomas.

A This isn't Thomas yet.

Q Is it a Flyer?

A Well, is that what they called them?

Q Yes. Thomas Flyer, yes. And so this was one of the first custom bodies that the fledgling....

A Yeah. See, he didn't go into business 'till 1908, so.... Then he built another one for Mrs. Carter a couple of years later, and she was a great actress, but she was no business person. And the second one, I'm not sure whether he got paid for a hundred percent or not, but it was bright yellow with cane work. All the rest was black.

Q Cane became the fashion of the day.

A He says that she told him she wanted it "yellow, yellow, yellow!" Well, she evidently got it, and he followed her around the country on her tours with samples of yellow to see if she liked this and liked that and would meet her in the dressing room, and finally he got a telegram in the middle of the night one time. It said, "Yellow beautiful. Go ahead." So, this little aspect of the business is what made it very fascinating and interesting.

Q Just as a footnote to that, apparently, one of her demands was it be kept very low.

A Yes. That's right. My father kept saying, "Well, if it's that low, you won't get in or get out." She said, "I don't care how long it is. If it's good looking, I'll crawl--I'll get in and out on my hands and knees." He--you know, every draftsman carried a six-foot, folding rule. He carried it in his hip pocket, and she said, "Don't pull out your old ruler. I don't care what it measures, it doesn't look good."

Q This was probably his first experience with a rather demanding and somewhat imperious....

A Imperious is the word.

Q Famous actress. With flaming red hair according to the description.

A Ashton Stevens. He told a story about--he became quite a fan of hers.

Q The famous drama critic of New York and Chicago.

A Ashton Stevens, drama critic. He [Brunn] said to her, I mean, he had a lot of nerve, I think. He said to her, "Ashton Stevens says that your hair is a credit to your apothecary!" And she says, "Is that so?"

He said, "Yes. It was in his column or something." [She said,] "Well, he didn't say anything about the night when his wife died, and he cried his heart out on my lap, did he?" Well, I don't think we need to dwell [on that] or whether that's going to be of interest to everybody or not.

Q Well, it's fascinating to know that your father's first major commission was a famous one, and it got him started on the road to [building] custom coaches.

A Well, then was--for rich people in Buffalo and rich people in Rochester. I say Rochester that--I don't know whether you want to go into the Selden story or not.

Q Please, yes. That's very important.

A Shortly along about the 1911/1912 period, he got the idea he could make a--today we'd call it a convertible. He called it Sheltered Phaeton.

Q A Sheltered Phaeton?

A Yeah. This was the first one.

Q Can you describe it in visual terms?

A Well, it was....

Q I can see it, but our audience can't see it.

A That's the way it was with the top down.

Q Did anyone commission it as a...?

A Well, he first built one for himself on the Reo chassis, and then the Selden--well, you know the Selden story, but after the second suit with Henry Ford, Mr. Selden's patent was--the first one was validated, and the second one was validated. But, Henry Ford proved that the

Selden patent was a two-cycle engine, and what they were using, and the Ford and the other people that wouldn't pay that money were using was a four-cycle engine. Hence, the judge ruled there was no infringement.

Q This is on appeal?

A On appeal, yes. You remember those details more than I do, but that....

Q But, how does the Brunn convertible fit into that story?

A Well, Selden then--George Baldwin Selden, who was a better lawyer, I guess, than he was an inventor--went into making the Selden car down in Rochester, and my father designed one, a drawing, and took it down to Rochester and got an order for a sample, and then they eventually got an order for--I don't really know the quantity, but a large quantity which he really shouldn't have handled. But, right in the middle when there was a whole bunch of these things under construction, why Selden had got into the hands of receivers, and there they were stuck with all that money. So, this was quite a crisis, but he finally obtained additional financing from Mr. Weppner, William J. Weppner. Mr. Weppner became secretary and treasurer which gave my father time to look after the designing and getting business, and he was a very shrewd businessman, and that's the way the thing went on, see?

Q Well, Mr. Weppner, what was his background, basically? Was he a local risk taker or a financier?

A No, he was--actually, his family had been, or were, meat packers in Buffalo, but he and my father had gone to school together, and he had \$5000 he wanted to invest, and he invested it. [He] took out a lot more.

Q I'll bet. The Selden receivership left your father rather short for ready cash.

A That was it. But, they finally got on their feet again and went on, and they built bodies for prominent people like Glenn Curtiss, and they did quite a business down in Pittsburgh for Packard and Pierce-Arrow--individual cars. And, one was for Mary Roberts Reinhart. I don't whether you know her. She was a mystery story writer.

Q Well-known author, right.

A Her husband was a doctor in Pittsburgh, and then along in 1921 or 1922 they got a telephone call from Ralph Getsinger, who you probably know all about. Mr. Getsinger was sales manager for the Lelands. He's been the source of a lot of information about Lincoln and Ford. Well, Brunn [got] on the phone and said that William R. Laidlaw, who made so much wool interior body cloth, had recommended that Brunn might be the guy that could get Lincoln out of their spot. You know, the Lincoln bodies weren't good. They weren't good looking, and they weren't well built. They were designed, as I understand it, by a man by the name of Woodbridge who was Mr. Leland's son-in-law, and he, himself, was a milliner. When the first Lincolns came out there, why people got out and walked home from demonstrations because of the body rumbles that were transmitted through the chassis and body, and the reason for this was that they tried to use--they tried to make an all-steel roof. And, in order to eliminate that, why you had to put a leather center in the top of the car. You know, it would be steel around and above the drip moulding, but there was this leather center, and this is what killed that rumble until General Motors came along, or Fisher Body came along with what they called the Turret Top which they accomplished by developing a sound deadener which they sprayed on the inside which everybody took up, of course.

Q But the leather top was the first baffle--sound baffle?

A Yeah. Well, the result was that they got a good front-end company. Got a good-size contract. Mr. Edsel Ford had just--he was just 27 years old then, as I remember--taken over the management of the Lincoln operation from the Lelands.

Q This would be about 1923, and the Lelands had just sold it to Henry Ford?

A Yes.

Q And, Edsel Ford had taken it over as the general manager of the division.

A Yes, well, in the meantime, my father had been made body designer and body engineer at the Lincoln Motor Company, and Mr. Ford said he wanted to carry that on--carry that contract on, and the result was that they built twelve different style bodies--sample bodies. These were then shipped to Detroit and built by production plants. One was known as the Anderson Body Company then, I think. It eventually became Murray. And, there was another production body company in Buffalo called the American Body Company that they built production bodies for Ford, and, I believe, Babcock even built some in Watertown [New York]. Anyway, after that Mr. Ford decided that he wanted to have some body engineer right there on the spot, and this is when he hired Henry Crecelius from Brewster. Mr. Ford and Mr. Crecelius made a good team because they were both conservative men.

Q This was Henry Crecelius? Before you get into Mr. Crecelius, I want to move you back a bit to something that's fascinating to me--the hiring of Mr. August Keller and the Golde Top Affair. Do you remember that?

A Well, I know Gus Keller, but....

Q The Golde Top Affair which he brought the--he had come to this country representing the Trigoide Company--the one-man top, and that was the Golde Patent, and he, apparently, came to this country and began to manufacture a certain type of one-man top. Did that ever have any connection with Brunn and Company?

A Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, we were--we--I was about that high. The Brunn and Company was the sole distributor for the Golde Patent Top in this country for quite a few years, and I used to see Gus Keller after I'd moved to Detroit. [He had] changed the name, but it was just basically the same top.

Q Moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan.

A Ypsilanti, that's right.

Q Motor State Products.

A Motor State Products, that's right.

Q And kept the Golde patent, or, at least, developed tops that were based on the original Golde patent.

A This, of course, was prior to--when we first started on the Golde Top it was not our top, by any means. It was a one-man top, and the gag that went around, yes, it took one man and two women to put it down, see.

Q But, it was quite a sensation, was it not, in the automobile business?

A Yeah, darn right.

Q Well, your father has made an important connection with Ford Motor Company, specifically the Lincoln Motor Car Division, and Mr. Edsel Ford is President of the Ford Motor Company. But, more importantly, in this

context, he is the General Manager of the Lincoln Motor Car Division, and his father has given him sort of carte blanche, has he not, to develop it as a luxury car line? This is in the early 'Twenties. So, your father, Mr. Brunn, how did he meet Mr. Ford?

A Pardon?

Q How did he meet Henry and Edsel Ford? They seem to have been fairly good friends.

A Here's the way they met. Ralph Getsinger, the sales manager, called him up, and Ralph Getsinger hired him because the interesting part is that after I came to Detroit, and was working on interior trim materials, I worked with the Getsinger Fox Company very closely with Mr. Getsinger, Sr., Ralph, Jr. and Gordon Getsinger. They were the representatives of Chatham Manufacturing Company down in North Carolina, and so I worked with Mr. Getsinger, Sr. and his sons and Tom Fox. They had--I don't know, I'm getting off the track.

Q You're okay.

A See, Mr. Getsinger was sales manager and faced with the problem of selling these cars which he couldn't sell, and was--while this car, Mr. Leland's, was the most perfectly made thing, mechanically, but from a style-wise and comfort-wise [standpoint], it lacked a lot.

Q What was the reason for that? He was a marvelous engineer, but there was nobody in the company that had any styling sense, right?

A That certainly is exactly--see, these fellows back there in those days, like the Lelands, they were machine shop, men and like.... Well, Leland, you know, he founded Cadillac, and there's one story about him was that they were over in England, and they took five Cadillacs over

there, and they took the engines all apart, spread the parts out on the floor. Have you heard this?

Q No, go ahead. I haven't heard this.

A Spread the parts, mixed them all up, laid them on the floor on the concrete floor in this place out in Croydon Airdrome, and it rained that night, and the rain leaked through, and the parts got all wet, and the next morning they came in there and put the engines all together, and they all started at the first turnover except one because of the interchangeable parts. [Also Brooklands, February, 1908]

Q Mr. Leland was a fantastic engineer.

A And, I remember it was years later when I was--the thing Father did that was so helpful to me was when I became old enough he took me around with him, and I met these people, like Mr. Edsel Ford, and we were at the auto show in Detroit. Where in the heck was it? It was downtown on Second Avenue way downtown. Anyway, we ran into Wilfred Leland.

Q Wilfred was...?

A Henry's son. Wilfred's also a brilliant man because he was the man that made [one of] the first V-8 engine[s]. That old Cadillac building on Clark Street is--what are they doing there? [See: Leland, Milbrook, Henry M. Leland: Master of Precision (Wayne State University Press, 1966)]

Q I'm not sure now.

A There's a big, bronze plaque there in honor of Wilfred Leland and his designing and engineering of the first, I don't know, four-cylinder opposed V-8 engine and signed by the old guard at Cadillac. I often wonder what became of that bronze plaque. Now, there was one Cadillac fanatic around here who went to see Mrs. Wilfred Leland who was still

alive--this is four or five years ago--and living down in a new developed area in Detroit. Well, the nearest thing I can tell you about it, it was near Stroh's Brewery. Where is that, on Lafayette Plaisance? Is that what they call that [Lafayette Pavilion]?

Q Yes.

A And, he went down to see her and see where that was, and I can't remember whether they found it or not. But, Mr. Wilfred Leland says, "You know, Mr. Brunn, I think if we'd have had your designs and engineering at the start of this thing, we'd still own our car." It was a nice statement, anyway.

Q Before you go further, can I move you back to Mr. Victor A. Lang.

A He was Executive Superintendent of--one of the men that you can give credit for for the quality that was built in to Brunn bodies. I have a friend down in Saratoga [California]--it's right outside of San Jose--who has a 1938 Brunn Limousine that he's been--these guys that are restoring these things themselves make me laugh because one guy had a touring cabriolet in Cleveland. He said he'd die before he'd get that finished.

Q Now, this is Bill Schmidt? He's been trying to restore this now for how many years?

A Well, he took it down there the first year I came here in '78 and showed it to me, and it hasn't gone much further since.

Q Has he asked you for help?

A Well, he's asked me for help. I've helped him on running boards. See, running boards are getting almost impossible to get. They have to make them for the Lincoln.

Q They used to have these distinctive, all-weather Broughams that you made from about the mid-'Thirties to the early 'Forties, and several of them, later on, for the Ford Family, did you not?

A No, no. This is much, much bigger. Bill came to me, and I had pictures of the closeup of a white running board--white rubber running board. We'll get to that later, and he said, "Where the hell can I get running boards. I'd have to have them made at \$5,000 a pair?" And I had a photograph of this white rubber running board, which is the same size and shape as this would fit on.

Q How does this relate to Mr. Lang?

A Well, Schmidt says, "Herman, I don't understand how you fellows ever made any money after I see all the quality that's built into that car." Well, Mr. Lang was one of the key men next to my father. He was the guy that built the quality into it, and he and my father agreed on things, and, like the folding canopies, you know, on town cars where the arm swung back into the box up there, that was all Victor's doing.

Q So, in effect, for a number of years your father created the designs, and Victor Lang brought them to reality through his engineering prowess.

A That's right. Now, Victor Lang during the war he, as many of these fellows were--several Europeans. He was Czechoslovakian. Actually, no, Hungarian. But, he was a German Hungarian. He spoke German. I don't whether you know or knew Martin Regitko that worked for Willoughby.

Q Longtime Ford employee while you were there.

A Yes. He was. He came from the same place in Hungary, only

Victor--I think Victor is what they called the Sudeten German, if you know what I mean, when Hitler wanted to take that over. Anyway, he came....

Q Well, that's [part of] Czechoslovakia.

A Victor could talk Hungarian and Czech, and he could also talk German and English quite well. Only he'd pronounce his v's as w. You ever heard those guys? He call himself Wictor, but, otherwise, he was great. When I came up [to Ford] in 1944, they pushed me in to work for Martin Regitko on the drafting table in the old engineering lab, he says, "Hey man, what is Victor [Lang] doing?" "Well," I said, "Victor was working--during the war was working for Curtiss Aircraft, and I don't know whether he's there or not." "Well, could you find out if he'd want to come up?" And, I found out, and, yeah, Victor came up and worked there until he retired. This was when Bob--who was the chief designer over there? [Bob] Gregorie--the head designer.

Q Remember you're talking to the microphone, not to me.

A I think it's going to be all scrambled up. Somebody's going to have to unscramble it.

Q You're fine. Chronology is not that important, I just want to get the salient...[points].

A Well, the chronology, I always thought, was very important.

Q It's important, but I want to get the details that you might have normally skipped.

A All right. Victor came up, and he and I roomed together in a place over on Pinehurst in Detroit, and the helpful thing about Victor was he had a car. He drove his car up. I didn't have any car, and it

was three months before Victor came up. I had to walk from Pinehurst over to Six Mile Road to Livernois at six o'clock in the morning and eat my breakfast there and get on a Livernois bus and go South down towards the Rouge. Get off at some street down there and walk a block up to where one of the clay modelers lived and ride in with him.

Q Who was that clay modeler? Do you remember his name?

A Well, I'll probably remember, but I can't think of him right now.

Q But, back to 1922.

A Well, Brunn and Company built a design. My father did the designing, and, of course, Victor collaborated with him and put his pieces in there, and these were to be the twelve standard Lincoln bodies. As I said, some built by American Body Company in Buffalo and some built by--I think it became, eventually, Murray. It was called Anderson at that time.

Q Can you tell us a bit about the details of this particular situation? Brunn Company is in Buffalo, and they get the contract for the bodies that your father has dreamed up--the designs.

A We built what we called samples. Today they're known as prototypes.

Q You'd ship them by rail up to....

A Up to Warren Avenue and Livernois there.

Q Right, and that would be what? The old Lincoln plant?

A Yeah, the old Lincoln plant on Warren and Livernois.

Q But, then you say--then Mr. Edsel Ford would....

A We'd go up there, and my father and Victor would go up there, and Mr. Ford would come down in that garage where I spent a lot of time after I got working in there, and then we'd take them to the garage and look the cars over.

Q Can you remember a specific instance to illustrate how Mr. Ford would choose, and what would be the relationship between your father and Mr. [Edsel] Ford?

A It was very close. There's one thing I'd really like to go back to. You like stories about--this was before Ford had bought the place, and Mr. Getsinger had called, and my father and Victor went up there, and they had all their standard cars lined up in that executive garage on Warren Avenue, and they picked them up at the Michigan Central Depot, and they started out there in this garage at 10 o'clock in the morning.

Q These were not driveable prototypes, were they?

A I'm not talking about prototypes, I'm talking about the current, first Lincoln production bodies not made by Brunn. Well, they started with three or four people taking notes and so forth, and my father and Victor going down there and criticizing them, and they had reams of paper, so the story goes, before they had even covered two cars. About 4 o'clock Mr. Henry Leland was all tired out, and he'd quit and gone home, and Wilfred finally says, "Listen, Mr. Brunn, can you design us a good-looking line of saleable automobiles?" And, boy, my father was very enthusiastic. I think he said, "Just give us a chance, Mr. Leland." So, they got a \$50,000 contract, which in that day seemed to be a lot of money, you know. A lot of this stuff, when I wrote this article, I confirmed with Mr. Getsinger. It's all in there.

Q Is he still alive?

A Oh no. He died before we left Detroit. [He was] 101, I think. But, that, I thought, was quite interesting. And another thing that showed what a fine man and a fine gentleman, there was no finer gentle-

man or no finer man, or no more considerate man to do business [with] than Mr. Edsel Ford. Now, you've probably heard this before.

Q Yes.

A Well, it certainly was with us, and he was very considerate, and we were--I was with my father that time, and we were in Mr. Ford's office over there in the old building on Schaefer Road [Dearborn], and this was about fifty bodies for the custom line--town cars. We sat there, and my father had been fretting over this all night, see. He said, "Mr. Ford, you know, we appreciate this order, and the confidence you place in us, but I almost lost my business once," (referring to the Selden situation). "by a somewhat similar production, why I took on more than I could handle, and I really almost rather have had half the number and be sure they were going to be taken. I hope you won't be offended at my making this statement, because most executives would say, 'Either take it or get the hell out,' you know." I was sitting there watching them. Mr. Ford says, "Well, Mr. Brunn, I understand, but I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll make this...." See, my father said, "Look, you might be over in Europe or someplace and the bottom fall out of the market, and we'll get a telegram to stop working, and there I'll be again." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make the contract non-cancellable, no deferred shipments, and I'll sign it myself. Now, how do you feel about that?" Father said, "Well, Mr. Ford, that's wonderful. I just feel embarrassed." And, he said, "Well, no, I understand. That's the way it'll be."

Q The business about putting together the car at this point is of interest, I think. You would have a--explain it to us again--your father would design the body in Buffalo.

A He had a little niche in our home on Otis Place there, if you want to call it a studio, with the right kind of a window or right kind of a light, and until he got the organization going and Victor Lang there and Mr. Weppner there handling the other part of it, he spent many a Sunday and many a night in the back there making these drawings. All those Selden drawings were made in that back room, and mother and I looking over his shoulder. I was only about that high, see? But then, of course, when he was able to put his full time on that, and, of course, he did the work down there, but sometimes when he was hell bent to get something done, like we had a Summer home later on out on Lake Erie, he'd bring it out there and work on it. He used to sit out on the porch in the sunshine and work all day on the thing, see?

Q And, so, he was pretty much the idea man--the design man.

A Yes.

Q And, Mr. Lang would engineer the designs, and then you would have a body company--a body builder, such as American Body and Anderson, Murray in Buffalo and Detroit...?

A We didn't have them.

Q No, but, I mean you would contract with them to complete the bodies.

A As we designed them.

Q As you designed them, and then you would ship....

A My father went there. I can remember my father and Victor and Weppner going up to--back and forth to Detroit about three times a month for four or five years.

Q To Anderson?

A Yes. Up to the plant on Warren Avenue [Detroit] to see that it was all right and so forth. Then, I drove a number of times with them over on Niagara Street to the American Body Company when they had problems on the jobs over there that weren't coming out like they were supposed to come out, you know.

Q That was in Buffalo, of course?

A Yeah.

Q So that when American or Anderson finished the cars, they would be shipped then to the Lincoln plant in Detroit.

A Yeah. Usually they were the production cars. Then after awhile, Mr. Ford wanted to get Mr. [Henry] Crecelius [Lincoln chief body engineer] in there, and as far as the engineering was concerned, but then he wanted to get some of other prominent body builders, like Dietrich and LeBaron and Willoughby and Judkins and so forth, so he established this whole custom line. And, the nice thing about it was that there was no conflict of interest in there. I mean, like Brunn built the town cars, the all-weather brougham, and the all-weather cabriolet, and the convertible victoria, and, later on, the touring cabriolet. Now, the convertible victoria, we lost that to Dietrich back in 1928, and then Waterhouse had it in '30, but we got 'em back in '31 and continued on with the convertible victoria up until the end--about 1940.

Q How about the dual-cowl phaeton?

A We built dual-cowl phaetons prior to 1930. After 1930 they began building them in the Lincoln plant, I mean, as a production job.

Q Was this a profitable as well as a [friendly] relationship between your father and Edsel Ford?

A Very much.

Q Because it really established Brunn as a custom [body house]-- although your reputation had preceded you, and your father's reputation for good engineering designs had spilled over to other companies, the Ford contract really gave you a boost.

A Well, there was one model in 1922--through the 1927.

Q Tell us about that model and why you brought it out.

A In the 1920's, we built 214 of the All-Weather, Town Broughams, as they were called--seven passenger, with forward-facing auxiliary seats. The model, 166-B--there were 214 of these built, and George Walker, who was the purchasing agent at that time, was hollering for more, and hollering for more all the time. We were shipping about 19 a month of these cars.

Q Out of Buffalo or out of American Body?

A No, no, out of Brunn. This was the custom series.

Q Custom series, not the production?

A In most cases, these bodies were shipped to Detroit to Warren Avenue where they were mounted on a chassis up there.

Q The Lincoln plant.

A At the Lincoln plant. Now, in other cases, why if there was something special about the car or it was going down East, they would send us the chassis, and we'd do the mounting down there, and it would go to the branch, like in New York or in Washington or wherever it was going, where the dealer checked over the mechanical part of the car. We didn't want to be responsible for that, although we could and did put the cars together.

Q You say the dealer, was that the Lincoln dealer?

A Well, yeah, or the [sales and service] branch. It would go to the branch first, and then the dealer would pick it up from the branch. Well, like at 1710 Broadway in New York [Ford]. Two hundred fourteen (214) of [the All-Weather Town Brougham were] made. This is one we called our bread and butter car, and the interesting part about this one here [indicating photograph], this car happened to be purchased by Tommy Hitchcock. Now, I don't whether you ever know a thing about polo.

Q Tell us about Mr. Hitchcock. Describe his background.

A Tommy Hitchcock was the world's greatest polo player. Had the world's highest handicap and a very rich man, and he had one of these, and I was at the New York Salon at the Commodore Hotel one day. I was alone there late in the morning, not many people were around, when a fellow walked in and introduced himself as Mr. Hitchcock's chauffeur and said, "We have one of your cars." And, I said, "I know who Mr. Hitchcock is." His chauffeur [began] telling me about it, what a good job it was and how he liked it, and he said, "You know, recently, we had an interesting experience with that car. Mr. Hitchcock called me in, and he said, 'You know, I'm going to have a dinner party tomorrow night and take the party to the opera, but I've got to go out to Montauk Point way out on the end of [Long] Island there and pick up the champagne from the bootleggers, so bring the Lincoln around, and we'll go out tonight together.'" "And, I said, 'Gee whiz, Mr. Hitchcock, we got a truck for other things like that.'" "But, he said, 'No, the Lincoln's the best car, and it's a hard drive and [a] long drive, and we're going to take the Town Car.'" So, he said, "We drove out there, and there was a boat

waiting on the beach, and they loaded the cases of champagne on the floor and on the seats, and when we started back, we saw the New York State Police behind us." See, in the State of New York they had a law called the Mellon Gauge Law which put the enforcing of the 18th Amendment in the hands of the State Police, and they were coming after them, behind 'em, in full cry, and he said, "I stepped on the gas, and I knew there was a crossroad down here, and I went around the curve, and I swerved into this crossroad, and when we got about a quarter of a mile in the crossroad off the main road, there is a railroad track, and I turned onto the railroad track, and," he said, "I drove the car probably five miles with the left side of the car--the wheels riding on [the ties in] the center of the rails, and the right-hand wheels riding on the ties outside the rails." He said, "That's the way we gave them the slip, and we got back down to New York...."

Q Who was driving at the time?

A The chauffeur. He said, "I unloaded the stuff and took it in the house, and I went out and then worked practically all night cleaning up the car, and the boss had his party. He took his party--I took them to opera, and I picked them up, and I brought them all, and 'Great job,' he said, and he turned to go away, and he came back, 'You know, there wasn't a goddamn squeak or a rattle in that car that morning after all that driving on the railroad ties.'"

Q Incredible. Can you give us an oral description of this particular model?

A Well, this was quite a plain car, and flat sided with probably a 1/8 inch wide moulding running fore and aft and luxurious interior, landau

leather on the roof. This particular one was painted a medium shade of gray, but the other 214, I can't answer for those.

Q Well, that was a real bread and butter car and your first introduction to the custom car market?

A Well, to the limited editions [market]. But, then what really helped all the custom body builders, but the help came too late, was when they improved the chassis. All the ones prior to 1931 had 136 inch wheelbase chassis.

Q Why was the wheelbase increased?

A From its inception [1923] to 1930, the Lincoln had a 136 inch wheelbase, and in order to get forward-facing, auxiliary seats in there, the passengers in the rear had to be riding almost exactly over the rear axle. When Mr. [Edsel] Ford gave the orders to go ahead and lengthen the chassis, then the rear passenger seats were riding in front of the axle, which gave you a much better ride.

Q You mentioned the addition of, I think for the first time, the forward-facing auxiliary seats. Was there a demand for that?

A You mean in these cars?

Q In the new ones.

A Well, some like that town car that Bill Schmidt's down in--near San Jose--they have forward-facing, auxiliary seats in them.

Q I understand that, but what was the reason for that innovation?

A Well, that wasn't anything new. I mean, seven-passenger cars had those forward-facing, auxiliary seats from time immemorial, practically.

Q They were not the reason for the lengthening of the wheelbase?

A No. The reason for the lengthening of the wheelbase was to give the passengers sitting on the rear seats a better ride and more leg room between there and the forward-facing, auxiliary seats.

Q That's what we need.

A Now, in the cabriolet 1932 KB, we had a sideward-facing seat.

Q Is that the first time a side-facing seat was introduced? [What was the reason?]

A Yes. It was our opinion that a sideward-facing seat was better than a forward-facing seat because the person in the sideward-facing seat, he faced across, and he stretched his legs out, and there wasn't a backup in front of the passengers. There wasn't a seat back up there.

Q You're talking about auxiliary seats now?

A Auxiliary seats.

Q Okay. How many would you have? One on each side? Sideward-facing seats.

A Mostly just one on the left side.

Q Okay, that left one less seat then, didn't it? If you cut out the two auxiliary seats to make one sideward-facing seat, did that cut out one passenger seat?

A Yes. Now, like the limousines--like the Willoughby limousines--they all had forward-facing seats because they used to pack--well, they were seven-passenger cars. They used to pack three on the rear seat and two in there, and that's five and a couple more up in front--at least six.

Q Well, this is interesting, I think, in terms of interior appointments. Brunnn came up with the side-facing seats. One, not two, right?

A Well, we used the one sideward-facing seat in the all-weather cabriolet beginning with the 1932 KB model, which was a little closer coupled than the seven-passenger limousine.

Q But that you lost you one passenger seat, did it not?

A Yes, it lost you one passenger seat, but we thought that was a bunch of nonsense anyway.

Q It gave the third or fourth passenger in the rear compartment, as you said earlier, [more] leg room.

A Yes, he could stretch his legs crosswise.

Q And he could converse to the rear--the forward-seating, rear passengers to his right or to his left, whatever was necessary?

A Whereas on the forward-facing, auxiliary seats, where you had four, the first thing you did was to turn around and try to talk to somebody in the back, see?

Q What a marvelous innovation. Whose idea was that?

A Well, I don't think it was--I don't know.

Q You said it was your company who was....

A Well, we made them, but Willoughby, you know, the Willoughby Panel Brougham, well, they had a sideward-facing seat. It was slightly closer coupled than a seven-passenger car. I'm not bragging about any that we invented that are created. Coach builders have been building sideward-facing seats for a long time.

Q I see, okay. Then you were not in the vanguard of that?

A Not in that, no, because.... We used them in the K Model, too, after 1936.

Q What's the first year you used the sideward-facing seats as an

innovation as a departure from the two, forward-facing, auxiliary seats.

A Well, I don't know. I'd say about 1925 or '26.

Q So, that wasn't necessarily your innovation nor was it particularly...?

A No, no, no. This was standard practice in those days.

Q Well, to wind up the discussion on that, just for my benefit, what was the percentage of those custom car makers--such as Willoughby, Brunn and the rest who were using side-facing seats as opposed to front-facing, auxiliary seats?

A Well, Willoughby, whose biggest breadwinner was a limousine--a seven-passenger limousine--they used the most of them. [In fact, all seven passenger limousines used forward facing seats.] Now, the Judkins Berline, I believe, used sideward-facing seats, because that was a little closer coupled job.

Q And Brunn?

A Well, the Brunn seven-passenger limousine. That was the one I showed you here that Bill Schmidt was down there in Saratoga, they faced forward.

Q So, when was the first year that Brunn came up with the side-facing, auxiliary seats?

A Well, I don't know. As I said, there was just--soon as we were building them along there in the early 1920's.

Q But, you had them on some models and not on the others, right?

A Yeah. Those that were seven passenger were known as broughams, which have no relation to the original job that Lord Brougham invented. He invented a closed-couple job carriage.

Q They just kept the name?

A Well, they still use it around, and it's got no relation to Lord Brougham, English member of Parliament [who] had one made because he did a lot of traveling around London--this is horse-drawn now--and he made a lot of stops. Well, when he was sitting way in the back of the carriage, he had to crawl forward and get out up there, so he had Barker--he told Barker he wanted a job where the seat was right close to where the door opened. So, he'd open the door and step right out, and it was a luxurious carriage, and they built lots of them, and then the automobile came along, and any supposedly luxurious car almost all of a sudden became a brougham.

Q Became a synonym for really a luxury car.

A A luxurious car.

Q Well, this is the mid-'Twenties, Brunn and Company has scored quite a coup in getting a major order from Edsel Ford to make custom cars. Was there anything else in the relationship between Edsel Ford and your father, Hermann Brunn?

A Nothing except that he was very nice to us and very considerate, and when he wanted those last town cars that you mentioned, why, he said he wanted to have Brunn make them. I think we built about 15 of them. We built one for Mr. & Mrs. Edsel Ford, and then had one built for his mother and father, and....

Q But, that was way into the early 'Forties, as I recall.

A Very early. It was '39 -'41. That was the last town car.

Q I'm thinking about a anecdote that you mentioned about when he first came to meet with Mr. Ford about the Hispano-Suiza chassis, do you

remember that?

A Yes.

Q That seemed to be the beginning. Can you describe how that really became the foundation for the custom body work that he was doing?

A Well, you know, I understand they found that car and that somebody's restoring it.

Q Can you describe the situation in some detail?

A Well, I mean, when my father first met him--first met Mr. Ford when they took over the Lincoln, he said, "Some day I hope we can build a car for you, Mr. Ford." He said, "It's funny that you should mention that, because I just bought a Hispano-Suiza chassis in France and had it consigned to your plant in Buffalo, and I wanted to have you build a phaeton out of it," and that was the result.

Q And, they did, huh?

A Yeah.

Q The Ford contract was very lucrative and very important. What other companies did your father's company--you and your father's company work with?

A Oh, we did work, darn right. We did quite a bit of work for Cadillac when Lawrence Fisher was general manager of Cadillac and prior to the time that they bought Fleetwood [Body Co.]. We did quite a few. And, even after they bought Fleetwood--or even after Fisher and General Motors bought Fleetwood, we did quite a few jobs for dealers, like Capitol Cadillac in Washington was one and several of them around New York and Chicago, but we didn't get into any program like we did with the Lincoln.

Q So, the contract with Ford was a non-exclusive one. You could build for competitors, even, if you liked?

A It was not an exclusive for a time there, and we also did designing and engineering for Dodge Brothers when they were owned by Dillon Read and Company, the New York stockbrokers. We did some work for Ned Jordan and the Jordan car.

Q Jordan Playboy?

A Right. And, Mr. Ford--well, we heard this through George Walker that he wanted to have an exclusive contract with them, all right, but we shouldn't have a contract with others, in other words, competitors.

Q Competitive makes.

A I just want to impress upon you that all through this time [of] this exclusive contract--engineering and so forth--was phased out when he hired Crecelius--'26 or '27.

Q Henry Crecelius.

A Yeah, and he had established a custom car line. There was--well, outside of Brunn, there was Willoughby, and there was Judkins, and LeBaron, and once in awhile there would be Murphy in there, and once in awhile there would be a Durham, but Brunn and Willoughby and Dietrich and LeBaron were the mainstays. But, the interesting part of it was, and the helpful part of it was, that there was no overlapping, or have I been through this?

Q No, no, go ahead.

A Brunn made the town cars, the cabriolets with the collapsible rear quarters, the seven-passenger broughams, town cars, they made the touring cabriolet and the convertible victoria. Willoughby made the

limousines, and they made some two-passenger coupes, and Judkins made the Judkins Berline and Judkins Coupe. There's two of them around here that have been very well restored. LeBaron made convertible sedans and types like that. See, only LeBaron and Dietrich kind of had a head start on the other people because Dietrich was owned by Briggs, and LeBaron was owned--no--LeBaron was owned by Briggs, and Dietrich was owned by Murray--production plants. So, they had advantage of a lot of tools and dies and things that the production plants had which we didn't have. This is why they built more, and they sold the cars for less because of that connection. I mean, even today Chrysler must have a patent or something on that LeBaron name?

Q They kept the name, yes.

A Because when Briggs--I guess Chrysler finally bought Briggs, didn't they?

Q Right.

A Well, they also got that name LeBaron with it. That's why they still use it.

Q That's correct. So, you specialized in town cars and convertibles pretty much?

A Pretty much. Now, there's one other thing that I want to add, and if this be bragging, why, I'll admit it, but the four versatile American coachbuilders were Dietrich and LeBaron and Murphy and Brunn. Those four could build town cars, limousines, four-door convertibles, two-door convertibles. They could be counted on to do anything, whereas--I'm not degrading them, but Mr. Judkins was educated to be a Wall Street lawyer. Mr. Willoughby was educated to be a college professor, but the family

had these two successful businesses, so they thought they'd better take them over. But, they did not enjoy designing like my father did, or Ralph Roberts did, or Ray Dietrich did, or Frank Hershey from Murphy, or Frank Spring. I don't whether you know him, but he was--you know of him?

Q Yes.

A Frank Spring married Walter Murphy's daughter and later became chief stylist at Hudson. But they're gone, but those four, I think--I'm not bragging or anything--were the most versatile. Could be counted on to do anything, whether it's a four-door convertible, a two-door convertible, or anything, see?

Q But, historically, your company specialized in town cars and convertibles pretty much?

A Well, as far as their custom series was concerned, but we built panel broughams on Cadillacs, and panel broughams on Lincolns for dealers whose customers wanted Brunn bodies, and this is where I need the pictures, see?

Q Tell me, in this era--the late 'Twenties--you have, in effect, a custom, limited edition line, and you have a bread and butter custom line which goes....

A Well, a bread and butter job I'll just show you right here. That's out of the picture then.

Q By then you've really settled down into a custom, limited edition business.

A Yes. Like the Ford Motor Company when the--well, 15 of the convertibles and 25 of the town cars and 20 of the all-weather cabriolets

and stuff like that. The car right up there [pointing] is a '38 Lincoln Touring Cabriolet which belonged to Katherine Cornell. We built thirty-five of those, and we also built the one with the top down, that's Cornell's car, too. Now, there were thirty of those made. Packard also bought five town cars for Packard. One of them belongs to Phil Hill, the automobile race driver who is now a restorer. And we built forty some odd Packard all-weather, touring cabriolets. And when we finally got rid of those, that was about the end of the thing, except for those ten or fifteen town cars that Mr. [Edsel] Ford wanted to keep in the line for--to sell to his friends and his mother and father--like Mr. Kanzler bought one. There was one for Ernie Kanzler, one for one of the Buhls, I think. I don't know whether they were related to the Buhls or not--the hardware store. Were they hardware people?

Q They had a large wholesale house. So, you're doing very well, apparently, in the late 'Twenties. You've got this continuing Lincoln custom, limited edition area, and you're working for other companies, too. What happened when the [1929] Crash came? Did it affect the business right away or was it a lingering...?

A It affected the business right away because--the sorriest looking man I ever saw was the man who used to be worth twenty-five million and was [now] worth fifteen, see. Of course, he didn't know whether it was going to go any further or not, but the last thing a rich man needed in those days, really, was a new town car, and they cut their overhead just like everybody else. There was a 1938 all-weather cabriolet that we built for Mr. G. Horton Singer, the steel man down in Pittsburgh whose wife got rocks thrown at her when she was riding by in the car. So, things like that.

Q Generally, the bottom began very rapidly dropping out of the custom car business.

A Very rapidly. I remember in 1929 while that week was going on-- when the market was going to pieces--[it] was the week of the automobile salon at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, and as far as people coming in or salesmen bringing people in to see the cars, it was like a morgue.

Q No one had any heart for talking about expensive cars. You were still based in Buffalo, of course, and your father was very much the chief person of the company. Were there changes immediately in terms of orders? Did you immediately begin to feel that orders were being cancelled by any major clientele?

A You see, no. The nice part of it was that we weren't doing business, in most cases, with the customer. We were doing business with the manufacturer, and the orders came through--the order would be taken by a dealer, and if they needed our attention or help or something, see-- what the customer actually wanted--why, one of us would go and see him. But, the orders still went through the dealer. We got the order from Ford Motor Company, not from the customer. So, Ford Motor Company always paid on the 21st of the month, so you didn't need to worry that you weren't going to get paid.

Q Well, that was my next question. How was the financing handled in terms of shipping bodies to Ford?

A What, you shipped in the month of May; you get paid for it on the 21st of June, see?

Q I've always been fascinated by the early disregard for the chauffeur, in terms of inclement weather, when the chauffeur's compartment was left completely open.

A Victor Lang was the guy that came along and helped him.

Q Can you tell us a little bit about that development? You had been making open compartment vehicles.

A Well, it didn't exactly have--it was an open compartment, but they sometimes had a piece of imitation leather that the chauffeur can pull across there.

Q Stretched over [his head]. But he was still open, was he not?

A Like, especially, in the Henry Ford Museum, they have a Brewster Cabriolet there. I don't even know whether that had a....

Q A pull-over canopy?

A Whether it pulled over the top or not, but it was not a....

Q Do you remember any discussions between yourself and your father and Mr. Victor Lang about what might be done about that?

A Well, I remember when that was going on, he took me down, and he said, "We're going to show you our all-weather job." This was the first of the all-weather jobs, and this was along about 1924 or '25.

Q Now, what was the feature of the all-weather brougham that enabled you to call it that?

A Well, the front door was made, more or less, like a convertible. There was glass that went down on it--rolled down. Now the first all-weather job--this thing came along and was part of the process of evolution--not revolution. These side arms with the leather over the top--these pulled out. They were held up by a spring-loaded device that clamped on to the windshield header.

Q This would be the top, right? The extension of the top, right? Over the chauffeur's compartment?

A Yeah. Then with these side arms....

Q Which supported it.

A Yeah, then when you didn't have it on, you kept in the trunk or in the garage. Most of the people, I found over the years, didn't ride with a chauffeur in the open as years went on.

Q Right. They began to be more compassionate towards the chauffeur's problems.

A Now then, these arms could be taken off. There would be a piece of leather across there which had snap fasteners on it, you know, and then they would snap on the side, and it would snap on the front somewhere.

Q I'm interested in the tradition rather than the engineering specifics....

A Later on, we developed a box in back of the chauffeur's head, and it had a door that dropped down, and the canvas--or not the canvas, but the canopy was rolled up and put in there, and when you wanted it, why you pulled it out, and when you--here, this was the ultimate [pointing at photograph].

Q Now, describe how it works.

A This was the ultimate in the chauffeur's canopy.

Q The town car folding canopy.

A The town car folding canopy.

Q It folded up above or folded into a compartment?

A Folded in here. See the side arms? Well, it almost swung in like this, and one swung in from the other side. This--I did this many times to demonstrate it. You laid it back there, you folded it under, and you rolled it up towards you, and you stuck it in at the top there.

Q Between the side arms?

A Above the side arms. Here's the cover, see?

Q That would snap into place.

A That would fold up after all the arms and the canopy went inside.

Q Covered the canopy folding area?

A It would cover the box. This was the spring-loaded--the one that screwed in there, and it screwed in there, and it made a real good job. It took time to put it up.

Q Supposing it rained, what happened then?

A Well....

Q While you en route to the opera, something like that, what would happen to the chauffeur at that time?

A I don't know. I never saw anything happen along those lines, but I do know that in later years, like when I was very active in the thing through the 'Thirties and late 'Twenties, very rarely did you see somebody running around with the front open unless they were going to the opera or going to a ball or something like that.

Q Pretty much they kept it in place?

A Yeah. Let's see, the theaters are on what?--on 44th Street there in New York. You'd see the cars lined up along there waiting outside the theater, and there might be one or two that had the canopy--had the front open, but most of them didn't have it open. Unless it was raining, why, then they were all up there, but it gave them good protection. I used to demonstrate it at the auto shows to show how fast you could do it.

Q And, how fast did you get?

A Well, it might have taken, maybe, five or ten minutes once you knew what to fold under and how tight to roll it up. See, you had to swing the arms in first and then roll up the top. Just jam it in there and close the door, and you were all set. Now, opening it--putting the canopy up--was quicker than taking it down really.

Q Right. You just snap it on to the front stanchions of the windshield and secure it that way. How sturdy was that canopy?

A Very sturdy.

Q What about side windows in the chauffeur's compartment? When did those begin to be standard?

A Side windows?

Q In the chauffeur's compartment. Were they always there? In other words, while he was covered, was he also covered by windows coming up out of the...?

A This was all part of the all-weather concept.

Q Good. Now, you mentioned your fascination as a young man with watching the wealthy going to the Metropolitan Opera and to the theater from your vantage point in New York City. Were you down there quite a bit demonstrating and selling?

A Well, my father, when I got out of school, he thought I ought to get right in there and get to know the salesmen, get to know the customers. Like, one of our real good customers was Mrs. Manville.

Q One of Tommy Manville's many wives?

A No.

Q Mrs. John Manville?

A No. It's Johns-Manville Company, but this was H.E. Manville, and

she would have nothing to do with Tommy, although Tommy was a customer, too. But, this was a very lovely lady--Mrs. H. Edward Manville--and they lived out at Pleasantville, and I remember going down there on a Sunday morning.

Q Pleasantville--Upstate New York?

A Yeah. I remember going down there with Alan Buchanan--the Lincoln salesman from the dealer there on Broadway--and we met her in the garage and walked off with orders for two Lincoln jobs--special jobs--and when I was riding out there and talking about Tommy [Manville] a minute, he says, "Now don't mention Tommy because he's the black sheep of the family, and this woman is simply Tommy's uncle's wife, so don't mention him."

Q Did the Brunn Company maintain a showroom in New York City?

A No, we had a showroom in Buffalo but not in New York City. There was room for [only] one car. When I came back from Paris, where I lived for a year, why, I kind of took over part of the showroom as a studio there because I got good light. See, this is another thing I haven't touched on. My father didn't think I should go to college. He thought I should learn to design automobiles and make renderings such as that yellow LaSalle up there.

Q Describe it for us in oral terms. What does that LaSalle rendering look like in terms of our listening audience? Can you describe it? They can't see what we're looking at.

A Well, it's a yellow and black convertible victoria. This, I claim, is the original convertible victoria type car which was the original type of convertible--two-door, four passengers, close-coupled in

the rear and a trunk on the back, and it had a yellow body with a yellow spear running up over the top of the hood and finishing out at the edge of the radiator shell, and the rest of the car was black with a tan Burbank top, and it was a screamer. That was my father's personal car for a couple of years.

Q Was it a LaSalle chassis?

A Yeah. That was the first LaSalle chassis built that came off the assembly line without a body on it.

Q What year was that?

A 1927.

Q Was this before Harley Earl got there?

A No. Harley Earl designed the LaSalle.

Q Right. That's what I thought.

A But, we were doing business for Cadillac at that time, and Mr. [Ernest] Seaholm, who was the chief engineer, was a very close friend of my father's and also....

Q Seaholm was chief engineer of Cadillac Motor Car Company?

A Yeah. He did all of the 'Sixties and 'Seventies Cadillac. Lawrence Fisher was a good friend, too. So, they arranged to get us a chassis--first chassis that came off the line.

Q And that was your first formal design?

A No, I don't think it was the first formal one.

Q But, it's the first one that you....

A Well, it's the first one I happened to have around here now. The great crime is that we haven't got a photograph of it because we had a flood in the basement in Detroit, and some of the photographs got

spoiled. But, I worked for a year. I went to Paris, and I worked for a year.

Q Why Paris?

A Well, because that was the style capital of the world, not only of the couturiere world but also the automobile world: the carrosserie, like Kellner and Labourdette and Million-Guiet....

Q And your father didn't want you to go to the university, but he sanctioned your trip to Paris because of this great tradition of coach-building?

A That's right. It wasn't that he didn't want me to go to [college]. That was the thing--his only mistake was that nothing goes on forever, you know what I mean?

Q He felt that this would be your college education, as it were, in body designs.

A Yeah. I get the feeling over there, there must have been fourteen or fifteen outstanding body designers in Paris and body builders.

Q Well, you went to work with Kellner, or to study under someone at Kellner?

A Kellner's, yeah.

Q What did they specialize in?

A Custom coach work. This fellow Jacques [Kellner et ses Fils] that was running the place while I was there was a fourth generation, and....

Q How did you happen to latch onto that. Did your father....?

A Well, Jacques and my father had corresponded for a long time and were very good friends, and my father didn't even want him to pay me, and I lived there for a year, and I got the feel of the whole place, and

the other builders too, and they have, you know, when you--well, like this thing down here in Hillsboro and also the one that's coming up down at Pebble Beach [California], Concours d'Elegance, but they weren't restored cars, these were new cars, and I attended all of those.

Q Those would be held in Paris, and they would be sort of a super automobile show, wouldn't they, in a sense?

A Super, pardon?

Q A super automobile show, in a sense?

A Yes, but they were custom cars or individual cars. I don't know whether you know Paris, but you know the Bois de Boulogne?

Q Please, tell us about it.

A Well, there was a big restaurant out there with the falls and cascades, and twice I went out there and went some other place where all these great body builders had their--it was almost like the couturieres, you know. The Bois de Boulogne is a big park out there--forest--all woods, you know. This big restaurant--Cascade de Bois de Boulogne--had a big parking area where they would have the cars. Right out beyond the Arc de Triomphe.

Q Why did the custom car exhibitors pick this particular area to show their wares?

A Well, it was a very plush area, a very expensive restaurant, and....

Q So sooner or later wealthy Parisians would show up there.

A Well, it wasn't exactly a show. These cars were entered by--many of them--by their owners and their wives--the owner's wives would drive them. And, it was kind of a mixture of couturiere display and automobile, too, you know. They were all decked out and everything.

Q Personal pride on both the individual clients and on the automobile makers themselves--the coach builders themselves.

A That's right. We had a terrible accident out there one time. I was out of the way of it, but you drove up to this restaurant on a circle, and the judges were up there, and then they drove down, and this Madam Carneas, who was the wife of the Spanish Ambassador, lost control of the car when she came down, and the people were jam-packed all around there, and she went too far coming down. She went too far to the right. I happened to be able to turn and jump over the fence, but she overcorrected and pinned about four or five people right up against a great, big oak tree. I was a spectator standing at the side of the road, and she overcorrected. No, she ran down this way, and then she overcorrected it. They told me later on that--see, the chauffeurs over there all wear kind of white smocks with blue caps. After that year there were no more cars to be driven by the owners. They were driven by the chauffeurs. A lady could ride with them. It was kind of like out at Longchamps [horse race track] where they had all the mannequins, you know, representing and displaying Christian Dior stuff.

Q Why were the couturieres assembled at a horse race track?

A These were mannequins displaying Christian Dior and other people's clothes.

Q But, why Longchamps?

A Well, that's where the elite meet to eat, you might say [in the Bois de Boulogne]. We were getting out of the taxi out there, the first time I went out there, and here comes Al Fisher--one of the Fisher boys--and he's got one mannequin on this arm and one mannequin on the other

arm. My father knew Al Fisher, and they spoke and shook hands, but he didn't introduce anybody to the mannequins. He just kept on walking.

Q You're talking about live models now, aren't you?

A Live models, yes.

Q The Fisher brother were known, at least some of them, for being tough customers?

A Well, so I understand. This one was Al, who was, incidentally, I don't know whether I should say this, the most affable of the Fisher boys.

Q They weren't very sociable? Anti-social?

A Well, I don't know--anti-social. They were tough guys. They'd all come into the automobile salons wearing the same kind of snap brimmed hats, you know.

Q So, those were the halcyon days of the custom coach field.

A Yes, they were.

Q You must have enjoyed your stay. How long were you there in Paris?

A A year. But, we used to go there practically every year through the 'Twenties. We might--I guess, we didn't go in '25--to the Paris Salon and the London show.

Q So, they were then beyond the Concours d'Elegance, which was largely a--at first, a private affair, but you did have the regular auto show.

A They had the regular auto show in October. It was always in October, and the weather was stinking, and we always came home with colds.

Q Why October at the Paris Salon?

A I don't know, but they had the car and coachworks from all over the world and all over Europe there, and when we got in there one time-- the first time in 1923--they had the Lincoln, all black, All-Weather Brougham parked out in a corner. You couldn't see it. When I finally got back, [and was] able to get in touch with Mr. Ford--Edsel Ford--and I said, "Why don't you have the American builders each come up with a special job and send it over there so they see that the Americans have got good coach builders too?" Well, there was three of us that did that. Brunn did it, and LeBaron did it, and Willoughby did it.

Q What year was this, roughly?

A This would be 1928.

Q And what came of that?

A What came of that, afterwards? I saw them over there. They were in the show, and it looked great. Afterwards, I found out that the Theodore Luce Company--the big dealer in New York--had bought the cars before they were even sent over there.

Q Really?

A Yeah. They were sent over, shown over there, advertised, and Theodore's Luce's showroom at Broadway at 57th Street--they had already bought it before the cars even went to Europe. They were the big Manhattan dealer.

Q No relation to Henry [Luce]?

A No. Although Henry had a Brunn Lincoln Brougham.

Q Oh, did he really? Let's talk a little bit about that: the actual, individual commissions from wealthy and famous individuals.

Describe a typical one in the late 'Twenties before the Crash, how that would work from the beginning to the end. Supposing a well-known New Yorker took a fancy to a Brunn advertisement that he saw, and he liked the coach, and he liked the design...?

A Well, all right. There were two I can think of, especially one was Mrs. Marshall Field and the other was Mrs. Reardon Havemeyer-- Havemeyers were great sugar people--big sugar people, and you know Marshall Field, although, I guess, she wasn't married to him then any more.

Q Oh, she was living in New York at the time.

A She was living up on the river there on--can't think of the name of the street, but I will, and Mrs. Havemeyer wanted a town car, close-coupled town car. This was on the 1931 Lincoln when they'd just gone into the 145 inch wheelbase, and we went down to sell Mrs. Havemeyer, and it was a big success. And, come to find out, Mrs. Marshall Field lived on the next floor in the apartment house. It's on what they call Sutton Place. So, she wanted one just like that except she just wanted black leather on the roof.

Q Well, you mean you could get other colors in leather on the roof?

A Oh, yeah.

Q I thought they were all black leather.

A No, you could get others. We got some tan or beige for a man by the name of E.J. Turner down in Pittsburgh a couple times. Just a question of embossing the grain and putting the color on. Now, I've never heard any complaints. I don't know how long it lasted.

Q How did you color the leather? What sort of process would it be?

A Well, I think, it was proxylin--regular paint. They sprayed it on. It was proxylin paint.

Q So, this customer--would he contact you?

A Through the dealer.

Q Now the dealer would be representing one or more of the large car companies?

A Well, like I mentioned, we did quite a few jobs after General Motors bought Fleetwood. Well, that put the kibosh on them doing custom business from the factory.

Q You mean, Fleetwood?

A No, that put the kibosh on Brunn or Willoughby or anybody else doing much business on Cadillac, because they wanted to have their bodies built by Fleetwood, and they bought the company, and they were going to do it that way.

Q Fleetwood had been a small, but a very prestigious [body builder]. Where were they located?

A Fleetwood, Pennsylvania. But, this fellow had Capitol Cadillac. I still see its name in the paper furnishing White House cars and everything.

Q In Washington, D.C.

A We built half a dozen cars for him.

Q Did you? So, that would be through an individual dealer. Now, would the client come into the dealership and look at your three-color brochure?

A A rendering.

Q Renderings that you'd supplied them and say, "Look, we have this Brunn coach...."

A Well, the dealer would get on the phone and talk to us and say, "Look, we got...." Well, what's that house across the street from the White House that the President stays in?

Q Blair House.

A Yeah, "We have Mrs. Gis Blair down here that wants a panel brougham on the 16 cylinder Cadillac. Would you be interested in building it?" Yes, we will." So, I'd make a rendering of it, go down there and see the lady, and we would, in that case, get the order direct from the dealer--not from Cadillac.

Q I see, would you work with her directly as to what she wanted in terms of appointments, exterior colors, and....

A Yes.

Q She would indicate she would want a basic design--a basic model, then you would work with her on the appointments that went with it.

A Well, she wants a panel brougham. All right, here's a panel brougham, and here, what about upholstered material, and what about garnish moldings and things like that.

Q In this period, you seem to have revived--I think it was Brunn that revived [it]--the cane work exterior for certain movies stars. Was it Brunn that did that?

A We put cane--you saw Mrs. Carter's [car]--but we put cane work on one car that I remember, and that was one of the--last of the town cars that Edsel had built. I don't know where it went, I don't know where it is, but that was my only experience with cane work. Now, there were two ways of doing cane work: getting a sheet of it, painting it yellow or whatever you wanted and gluing it on, or if you had a good

artist, like we had, you take a mal stick. That's a stick that artists rest their hand on and scribe it on with paint. Mal--that's German for artist. A modeler is an artist or painter.

Q So, this was a flourishing business as long as the prosperity of the 'Twenties was maintained, but after the stock market crash, there seemed to be a long, slow slide into a really major depression.

A Well, there was a period there up around 1936 when there was an upsurge.

Q Oh, yes. We'll get to that in a moment.

A But, the expenses were going up. I mean, in other words, you couldn't make any money on them.

Q Let me ask you one, quick question. In terms of the stock market crash, did you and your father recognize immediately that you were going to have--the company might have some problems?

A Well, we talked about having some problems, but everybody thought things were going to come back.

Q That it was just a temporary dislocation in the market, and that the market and the economy would rebound?

A Instead of that, it was a whole upheaval. I don't know the word for it, but....

Q A disaster.

A A whole industrial disaster. I mean, those cars never came back.

Q Never came back?

A No.

Q I wonder if I might ask you a brief question. You said after the Crash and after the ensuing economic disaster known as the Great Depression, you mentioned that those cars never came back. How come?

A I don't know. They were too big and so forth, and the people began to not have chauffeurs.

Q Didn't need them any more. They started doing their own driving.

A They started doing their own driving. And like we used to have customers--for instance, there was a fellow down in Buffalo who'd come from down in the Pennsylvania oil country, and he had four Rolls Royces and two chauffeurs, and you'd go by his place. I was always real impressed because he had a garage there and a plush chauffeur who lived upstairs with his family, and when you'd go by there and the doors were open, there were these four Rolls Royces--beautiful radiator--all backed in, you know, facing out. Had the doors open, and here were the four Rolls Royces, and he was an elderly man and had a chauffeur. And the thing about it is, with the Rolls Royce in those days--I don't know how it is right now--but those chauffeurs had to know how to service the car. They didn't take it into a dealer.

Q A chauffeur really meant that he was a mechanic and...?

A Yeah, and like this fellow had a hoist and a place to change the oil and all this and that and grind the valves. It wasn't just a guy that drove the car into the dealer and said, "Do this," see?

Q Well, obviously, the custom car business was one of the first businesses to be hit by the fact that people had lost millions of dollars--some thousands, some hundreds of thousands--in some cases, millions--so, the obvious corollary is that the custom car business began to slowly decline. In some cases, [a] precipitous decline. What happened to Brunn? What was their history--your history?

A Well, Mr. Weppner used to say he was trying to get my father to

liquidate along in 1931 and '32 and hang on to all the money they'd made, but he wouldn't do it, and, fortunately, in that period between 1929 and 1939, when we did our best work because the chassis permitted it. The chassis had been redesigned by the engineers, and this is when I learned the business, really.

Q You really had to hunker down and cut personnel.

A Because we had chassis like those to work on.

Q What were they?

A Well, I mean like the 145 inch chassis wheelbases that gave you something that you could design a car on--an imposing car and a comfortable car.

Q From the standpoint of your internal situation where you wanted to keep your key people together, you've made a fair amount of money during the 'Twenties--so you had to retrench and cut expenses.

A And lay off. At the highest peak we had 150 people working, and, I think, at the last there, we had 50 working.

Q Those 50 were key personnel, were they not?

A Well, they were key personnel in the sense that they were the most skilled that we had. We had a lot of skilled people. I mean, there wasn't anything in that plant of ours that couldn't be done whether it was making a toy Ford for me or propping up the Christmas tree or painting the--for instance, in [1930] John N. Willys was made Ambassador to Poland. And, we were building bodies at that time on Stearns-Knight, which was owned by Willys, and [Mr. Willys] had a cabriolet made to take over there to Poland with him, and we had a painter there that was a great artist, and he painted the great seal of the State Department of the

United States on both doors, and we had people who could do all that kind of stuff.

Q And yet, in spite of all your best efforts, things still got worse, right?

A Yeah, the people just weren't buying.

Q It was, obviously, a case of not having a market out there. The market almost disappeared, did it not?

A Yeah, and we had to lay these [people] off. And, like, for instance, there's a number of the fellows got up to Detroit. They finally straggled on up there and got in with Fisher Body and worked there for the rest of their lives.

Q Specifically, in the case of Brunn, if we use it as a convenient case history, what did your father do? Did he try to hang on to as much of the market as he could command in a...?

A Well, he tried to design things that he thought would be salable. Now the last really creative thing we did was that Touring Cabriolet.

Q Describe that in audio terms, if you would. Which one is that?

A Well, the last real creative thing we did was that Touring Cabriolet, and it was laid out so that it could be used by either owner or chauffeur. There was a partition in between the front compartment and the rear compartment. The top folded down, the rear-quarter top folded down--cabriolet fashion--and this was the car that could be driven either by the owner, or if they wanted to have the chauffeur drive, they put the family or the party in the back and cranked up the partition glass, and then they had the privacy back there.

Q This still featured your famous, all-weather cabriolet device for the chauffeur's compartment.

A No, these were four-door sedans. The solid roof extended all the way to the windshield. Now, this had something that I don't think people really appreciate--skylights on the front. We designed those skylights in there in tinted glass, and when you pulled up to a traffic signal, you weren't bending down to see what it was, all you did was look up through that tinted glass, and there was the traffic signal.

Q Now, where was that located?

A Between the windshield header and the roof of the car. It wasn't a reflector. It was glass. We also had visors--bigger visors on it.

Q You aimed it at the angle of the traffic signal in front of you.

A Well, you just looked up instead of crouching down.

Q According to your account, Mr. Brunn, at this point, your father, in desperation, began to turn to another innovation--something you called alteration--the alteration period. Tell us a bit about that.

A Well, this was grasping for straws, and--well, here's a story. A Buick historian devotes a whole chapter to a fellow by the name of Terry Dunham who worked for Pontiac but was a Buick fan. [Buick: The Complete History. AQ Press, Rev. Ed., 1987].

Q Tell us your impression of what happened as you went through it.

A Well, here's what happened. Harlow Curtice, who at that time was General Manger of Buick.

Q What year would this have been roughly?

A This would have been 1938/'39, and he wanted to--see, they had a big car, what they called the [Series 90] Limited.

Q Right. The famous Buick Limited.

A And, he wanted to have custom coachwork built on the Limited to compete with Cadillac, and he wanted it built--expected it to be built--by Fleetwood, but the Cadillac people swung so much weight in the corporation that the Board of Directors said, "No, nobody can have any custom coach work except Cadillac," so the chief body engineer at that time was a fellow by the name of Ed Ragsdale, who, by the way, later on became General Manager of Buick right after Harlow Curtice. But, anyway, he had known Brunn [and Co.], and Ragsdale said, "Well, if they won't do it, let's go outside." He said, "I used to work on the Pierce-Arrow in Buffalo, and I know Brunn down there. Why don't we try Brunn?"

Q As a matter of fact, Brunn did some Pierce-Arrow bodies very early on.

A Oh, we built quite a few Pierce-Arrow bodies right in our hometown. So, we got word to come on up there, and my father was not well at that time, and Victor Lang and I went up there. We talked that thing over and came back with the information that was needed [was] to design a whole custom series like Lincoln had--touring cabriolet, all-weather cabriolet, and brougham, and I worked on [their] drawings. We went up there, and all of a sudden, the war was coming on then, anyway, and Mr. Curtice got slapped down. They had picked out all four or five jobs. "No, you can't do it." But, they did put out a catalog showing the renderings and so forth and said, "Well, we could get business from the dealers." And, we built two [one] for Colonel Berdeau down in Florida and another one for--a touring cabriolet on a Buick Limited for Colonel McCormick of the Chicago Tribune.

Q This one that you've alluded to is a stretched-out Buick Limited body or chassis?

A No, that's the job for this Colonel Berdeau from down in Palm Beach. [Neither the Berdeau job nor the McCormick job were lengthened at all. The 90 series was a long car to start with.]

Q And, this was his personal car. This is a one-off, right?

A That's the one-off.

Q And, does that still exist today?

A I don't know. I have no idea if that [has] showed up.

Q Now, this was taken--this is the cabriolet with the familiar [side joints] on the rear quarters.

A That did not fold down.

Q It is a phony, in other words. It didn't fold.

A [These joints filled a large blank space.] What the French call a "false cabriolet." It was taken in front of the Buffalo State Teachers College. Then we made a couple of convertible jobs for him. [It was advertised in] The New Yorker magazine.

Q Now, can you describe that in oral terms?

A Well, it was an incredible design, and it had the fast lines sloping from front to rear.

Q What year was it, again? What was the basic chassis/body? It was a 1941 Buick Roadmaster Convertible.

A We took a Roadmaster car and cut it open down.

Q You did what?

A Hacked it up.

Q What do you mean by hacked it up?

A Well, you know, we cut the sides down, and we added [a] check

molding. Incidentally, this was the first Buick to have a power top on a convertible.

Q Really. How did it work?

A Well, it worked fine.

Q No, what was the mode of power? Electric?

A Yeah.

Q Or hydraulic?

A No, no. This was not hydraulic. Trico Windshield Wiper [of] Buffalo, tried some of those.

Q Did they? Before they got into windshield wipers or after? They tried hydraulic, convertible tops?

A They tried everything in hydraulic, but first it was the wipers. But, we knew them quite well. John O'Shei, the president of [Trico], used to be a ticket taker at the Teck Theater there in Buffalo.

Q Really?

A Yeah. It was a legitimate theater in Buffalo. [The] O'Shei's, they were very prominent. I don't know whether they're--I imagine the O'Shei's are all dead. I don't even know when Trico was in business. They had a big business going with General Motors. They furnished all the wipers, practically, for General Motors for years, and they became very wealthy. Had plants in Europe and all over.

Q They certainly have the replacement market pretty well sewed up still--the wiper replacement market.

A Well, the blade itself, yeah.

Q But, you say they were originally powered by hydraulics, and they did hydraulic power tops as well?

A Well, hydraulic power tops caused you to have to start the engine in the car and develop the hydraulic power that way by running the engine whereas an electric one didn't. It was the same problem on the wipers. I don't know whether you ever experienced it, but sometimes you'd be in a rainstorm with a hydraulic and you start going up hill, and it was raining real hard, and the wiper would begin to slow down because you were draining the hydraulic power.

Q But, this particular car was, as you say, a hacked-up '41 Buick Roadmaster Convertible.

A Cobbled is a nicer word.

Q Cobbled is a nice word, okay. In the body building business, on the line you call them hacked up, but you mean cobbled together.

A That was a sample, and then there was another one, but nothing ever came of it.

Q Let me just read this description, which is interesting. From The New Yorker, he says, "Up on the mezzanine, I...." Would it have been an automobile show?

A This was at the Grand Central Palace in New York. Grand Central Palace was where they held their auto shows for years.

Q After the Hotel Astor no longer--well, no, the Hotel Astor had them for a long time.

A Pardon?

Q Separate ones at the Hotel Astor.

A They had salons at the Hotel Astor after they gave up at the [Hotel] Commodore, but not the regular auto show.

Q Okay. So, this commentator from The New Yorker, apparently, is

attending the 1941 show. The show, in 1940, for the '41 models, and he sees the Brunn and Company cobbled-together, '41 Buick Roadmaster Convertible, and he says, "Up on the mezzanine, I ran across a Buick Roadmaster Convertible which seemed to me to forecast a whole new range of ideas in color styles."

A Well, that was a nice compliment. That's why I [kept that].

Q It's Body by Brunn is painted a rich cinnamon brown, and along each side there is a streak of light yellow in the shape of a shallow V which goes from radiator to rear. The V hitting its peak, or nadir, just at the fender line and then coming up again across the rear wheel housing."

A It's difficult to describe.

Q Yes, it is. "The sides of the body, back of each door, are cut away in a smaller V, whose contour follows the streak of color. The upholstery is tan cord trimmed with leather. Built only on order, it will cost you about \$3500," which was, in those days, quite a sum. Today you can't get a Yugo for \$3,500.

A You can't get a Yugo. You can't get anything. As I remember like these long, big 12-cylinder Lincolns. They were town cars and things like that, and they ran about \$7,000, you know, and we always thought they were a hell of a price.

Q You and your father are struggling during the late 'Thirties to try to keep things together at Brunn and Company.

A Well, his theory was what to do if you design good-looking cars and practical cars, why, you're going to get business and to sell them,

but that was not so anymore.

Q You really had to resort to heroic measures to try to keep a sense of--[to] try to keep your head above water and try to design something that you could live with.

A Yes. There was a two-year period there just before they agreed on liquidation when my father hadn't got a nickel out of that company. Everybody else did, but....

Q According to your own account, their profits stopped.

A What?

Q The profits never really resumed after that.

A No, no. Their profits never really resumed.

Q So, you were living on capital, in a sense?

A Yeah. Everybody else got paid, but I remember my mother saying, "Don't you think they could spare you \$25 down there," or something like that.

Q Now, what had happened in the finance end? What was the gentleman's name?

A Weppner [William J.].

Q What happened? Did he stay on in finance?

A No, no. He and I liquidated the place.

Q Okay. He was still an officer of the company?

A Yes. I was elected vice president because they decided that the company had only had one president, and they wouldn't have another one, and he and I went through [with] the liquidating. We got the money and paid off the creditors and put the rest in the bank, and I came up to Detroit [and Victor Lang followed soon after].

Q You say the touring cabriolet, which was your last creative effort in terms of something that was uniquely Brunn, although you sold a number of them to celebrities and to people who still had money [such as] film stars. You mentioned Kathern [Cornell] and other people who had, or at least, were making money at the time and wanted something well-built and prestigious.

A Yeah, but, you see, when they gave you an order for 30 of those-- price agreed upon--and if the customer wanted anything else done-- alterations or anything, well, that was extra, but, otherwise, when you got the order for the 30, they were \$3,000 apiece for the body or something like that.

Q That was it?

A Yeah.

Q What if they wanted extra appointments? You'd charge the dealer extra or the...?

A Yes. We charged.

Q You would charge the dealer your usual?

A Well, the customer--we just would....

Q Work with the customer then?

A No. This was--when the orders for these, which came through Lincoln dealers, they just sent their order to Dearborn, and they turned around and sent to us what they called an ISO--an irregular specification order--and, if there was anything different, why, we figured it out or they called up and said they wanted vanity cases--now, like one man there wanted a speedometer. He was ordering two--a speedometer on the back of the front seat so he could see how fast he was going.

Q How fast his chauffeur was going.

A Yeah, so that was an extra item.

Q But, you'd charge for that, of course?

A Yeah. One thing I want to emphasize here is that while I was the boss' son, the boss expected and demanded more conscientious applications to my job than anybody else in the place.

Q There you are [in a Brunn photograph].

A Do you know who that is?

Q No.

A That's Ralph Pulitzer. He was a Cadillac dealer in Great Neck, New York. I mean, you know, the financial--this is a young fellow--junior. He owned the dealership. I don't know what it was called. [It was in] Great Neck, Long Island.

Q But, this is your place in Buffalo.

A Yeah, well, that was when he took delivery of a [a Brunn car].

Q Now, Brunn and Company was on 986 what street?

A Ellicott.

Q Ellicott Street. You were there for a number of a years? Was 986 your showroom and factory?

A That's the showroom, and that's the front door, and the factory was in the back. The driveway was down here to your right.

Q So, when prominent buyers, dealers or customers would want to pick up their customized Brunn car they'd sometimes come up to Buffalo.

A Yeah, but generally we shipped it to them. Or, they would send out--like for J.P. Morgan. We'd build a job for J.P. Morgan on a 1938 Lincoln, and he had a chauffeur/lifeguard/security man by the name of

Charlie--what the hell was Charlie's name? Well, anyway, he was his chauffeur and bodyguard, and he--we never saw Mr. Morgan. We did all the business with Morgan's car through Charlie Robertson, who was the chauffeur and the bodyguard. Never dressed like a chauffeur. Most of our chauffeurs did not.

Q Didn't they? No livery?

A Once in awhile, I think, in the evening, they might wear a cap, but they'd always generally had on a gabardine suit on and snap brim hat, you know, because they frequently went into the stores with the people, you know, and they didn't have any uniform on. Charlie didn't. Charlie--he knew what the boss wanted, and this was an extra head room job, and he came up with the salesman from Great Neck Motors--this is a Lincoln dealer--and they drove the car back together down to New York, and the dealer wanted to make sure it was all tuned up, you know. I have to laugh--Mr. Morgan left this fellow quite a lot of money, and he went into politics, and he became sheriff of whatever county Manhasset, Long Island, is in [Nassau].

Q All of which reminds me, were you sad to see that the 1939 royal car was sold at auction? Was that a Brunn?

A Now, where did you see this?

Q The one that had been in the Henry Ford Museum?

A That was not our car. That was a LeBaron. But, I'll tell you why.

Q Why, what happened?

A Well, you got notice--such short notice to get a car. This is King George VI.

Q From whom? Who did you get the notice from?

A From George Walker, the purchasing agent--purchasing department at Lincoln.

Q This is about 1938, right?

A Had to have it in six weeks. Well, we couldn't possibly do it in six weeks, but LeBaron--we got together, and Ralph Roberts got together with us. They were building a four-door convertible sedan, so all Ralph Roberts did was take the body and put a town car upper structure on it. They didn't have to do anything except take the convertible, pop a body without paint and everything or anything on it--just all stamped and put together, and then they built the roof on up there, and they put a shield up in front, as I remember, and they got it done in time.

Q Was Brunn working on a prototype, or did you decide not to enter the competition?

A No, it wasn't a competition. It was just being a town car. George Walker thought it was....

Q Perfect for you?

A It was perfect for us fellows, but we couldn't get it done in six weeks. You know, it generally took two/three months. And, this had to be--I think, the rear quarter had to be folding, and it was high and all this.

Q Did you say Ralph Roberts came down to talk to you about it?

A Well, he didn't come down. I think, we had some telephone conversations.

Q He was head designer at LeBaron at that time. I'm fascinated by your father. What kind of gentleman was he?

A Well, the best father in the world.

Q In what ways? Was he attentive as a father--a loving...?

A Yeah, very much so, and also he and I were great pals. We were interested in the same kind of athletics. He got me started in track and field and going to the track meets, and he'd come over to the track when we were training in the afternoon and provide cars for the high school track team to go down to Alfred University or Colgate University. He thought it was the most important way to keep me out of trouble was to get me wrapped up in something like that, and it was, and I still believe in it.

Q It was your salvation, in a sense, that he got you into the car business.

A Well, another thing that he did that helped me a lot even after I got to working up there in Lincoln and Ford, I knew all those people almost. I mean, like body engineers, and George Walker, and purchasing.

Q Do you remember Mr. W.C. Cowling? Did you meet him?

A He was the Ford general sales manager.

Q Was he a good man to talk with?

A Well, I only talked with him once. [During] this time here, see, he didn't--Mr. Arthur Hatch was the Lincoln man.

Q He was the Lincoln sales manager?

A Yeah, he was the one that we knew the best. But, of course, he reported to Cowling.

Q Cowling had a rather--even though he was there about ten years, he had a rather checkered career, so the elder Mr. Ford didn't like him too well. But, Edsel thought he was pretty good, so he stayed.

A Mr. Hatch, up until two years ago, lived out in San Francisco on Broadway, up at 1990 Broadway. He died up there--way up to the top of the hill there going up towards the big cathedral--up there on the top of the hill.

Q Which hill was that?

A Well, on California Street where the Mark Hopkins Hotel is. [Nob Hill] An Episcopal cathedral is up there also.

Q Your father had--what about his father? You talk about his uncle, but what about his father--your grandfather?

A Well, my grandfather is on that one side. They came from Bavaria in 1848, and, I think, my grandfather was 19 or something, and he immediately became a United States citizen, evidently, because he voted for Abraham Lincoln the first time, and they came from to Bavaria to escape military service of Mad King Ludwig.

Q Universal military conscription is what he introduced.

A They came to [avoid] that, and the first thing they did when they became citizens is join the Union Army and fight through the Civil War. It's interesting, there were fourteen of them, including the grandmother, that came over, and my grandfather was the second youngest. Uncle Henry, the carriage maker, he was the youngest, and there were then twelve, thirteen, and the grandmother, who was 94, she came. She died. It took them six weeks to get over, and she died at sea and was buried at sea. It always makes me want to kick myself around the block that I didn't find out more about them. They came from Speyer--a small

town on the Rhine. There is a big cathedral there which runs back--the tombs of the Bavarian kings, and it's famous for its Romanesque architecture. Romanesque architecture has the arches--round arches where gothic has the pointed arches. The only thing my father told me once is he remembers his father sitting down there all around the table putting his finger on the Niagara frontier, and he said, "Here's the place we're going to go because that will some day become a big industrial area."

Q He was right!

A Yeah. And, some stayed in Buffalo, and the rest of them scattered around. I think there's some in--some went to Minnesota, and my grandmother, although she was of German extraction, she was born in this country down in Allentown, Pennsylvania. So, that's the only German connection, really.

Q Your father, did he have a mechanical bent?

A No. He didn't have any mechanical bent or he didn't even learn to mow the lawn. I had to do that. All he wanted to do was sit in there and make drawings.

Q He really wanted to design more than anything else?

A Yes. But, we were very fortunate because of the employees we had in that shop. As I've said before, they could do anything. If you wanted some new cupboards put in, Otto came over and put them in. If you wanted....

Q Who was that?

A Otto. He was one hell of a workman over there, and they were all very skilled fellows and excellent workmen at their jobs for almost anything you asked them to do.

Q There was a passage that I was looking at, and the reputation you had for interior coachwork decoration. Now, who was responsible for that? That was your father?

A Yeah, my father was.

Q He pretty much dictated the....

A One was built for the president of Montgomery Ward, and he wanted [special] woodwork in there. How do you think the safety people would like to have all that hard wood around in there today?

Q [Can you] describe that in oral terms?

A Well, it's hand carved. It was not....

Q It's the interior of which model?

A The 166 B--the one of Tommy Hitchcock's [polo player].

Q The all-weather?

A Yeah, the all-weather town car. He said he wanted it like this.

Q What was the president's name of Montgomery Ward?

A I can't remember, offhand. He was not the fellow that was carried out by the soldiers.

Q Not Sewell Avery? His predecessor.

A I don't know who that was and who, really, what his name was, but we built the body up in the white--doors worked, and doors were hung, and the latches worked and everything, and then it was sent down to New York to a furniture carver by the name of Orsenigo. The Orsenigo Company had an office on Madison Avenue. They were furniture carvers.

Q Speciality furniture?

A Speciality furniture, I guess, and they came up with that, and

they put that in and sent it back, and we put the headlining in it. The headlining was cloth, and, of course, the seats were beige broadcloth.

Q What were the differences, incidentally, between broadcloth [by] Weise and Laidlaw?

A No difference. Both were made of face-finish broadcloth.

Q Those are the two you that you had to choose between in the broadcloth accessory.

A Yeah. Well, there was another one by the name of Yale Woolens up in Yale, Michigan, that--we didn't buy from Yale, but Lincoln, when I got up working at Ford there, I found they were buying broadcloth from Yale. This was just when broadcloth was petering out, and synthetics were coming in, you know?

Q Right. But the interior appointments were especially opulent and very tasteful in the Brunn.

A Yes, they were. But, what they complained about [was] they were expensive to execute. But, I mean, you might get the idea that this was a one-man show; my father's one-man show. I took that picture looking over the rear end of the Packard Touring Cabriolet to make sure that it was all symmetrical. That's my father with the hat on.

Q On the right--he's the one in the hat and the vest and the tie--and Mr. Lang is on the left--another German craftsman. He looks somewhat like your father. And, they were the two who really made the company what it was. You wanted to read us something from a manuscript....

A It is the intention of this narrative to preserve for posterity the life and accomplishments of Brunn and Company Coachbuilders of Buffalo, New York. It must not

be confused with Brunn Carriage Manufacturing--the carriage builders--also of Buffalo. The Brunns of both companies are of the same family who emigrated to America from Bavaria in 1848. The two organizations and their product are as far apart as the [North and South] Poles are and as the moving spirits that guided them. My father, Herman A. Brunn, founded Brunn and Company, Inc., in 1908 for the sole purpose of building automobile bodies and promoting the progress of this new trackless engine of great speed--the automobile. Henry Brunn, founder of Brunn and Company--carriage manufacturing company--was possessed to do everything he possibly could, as did other carriage builders, to retard and delay the progress of the new mode of transportation which was sweeping the world. This story of Brunn and Company is by no means the story of one man. It is the story of an organization, which, in the course of its 33 years, became one of the most respected custom coachbuilders of two continents. Hermann A. Brunn founded the company and gradually built the organization of skilled craftsmen which made it famous. If in his son's recital of this history it appears to be the story of one man, I shall neither help nor hinder it. I intend to tell it as it was.

That's me speaking.

Q Before we leave the custom coach era, someone put together a show in Buffalo which [marked] one of very earliest celebrations of the classic custom car business. You, apparently, had a well-known art museum.

A The Albright Art Gallery.

Q Was that named after a prominent family?

A Yeah. John J. Albright who was the president and founder of the Marine Bank, now known as the Marine Midland Corporation.

Q One of the large, influential banks in Buffalo?

A Yes. In 1932, the Albright Art Gallery staged an Art in Industry in Western New York exhibit. Brunn was invited to exhibit. Unfortunately, we did not have a car close enough to completion in order to get it there, so we called up Mr. Hatch. He said, "Sure. We want to be

sure to be in on that. I'll call you back. I'll find out where there is one." Well, he called back, and he found out that there was one on the showroom floor at 1710 Broadway in New York.

Q That was the Ford main branch and showroom?

A Yes. And, he said, "Well, we'll truck it up, and we'll put it in. Our riggers will install it." Now, here's the way it got in there. It's one of the first times that, as far as we know, that an automobile was exhibited in a gallery of fine arts, and, lo and behold, we wake up one morning, and it says, "Art and Industry in Buffalo at Albright Art Gallery of Buffalo, New York, March 6th to April 24th, 1922. First prize awarded for beauty of design and excellence of workmanship." The 1932 all-weather cabriolet. Now, excellence of design is a matter of opinion. Excellence of workmanship is a fact. This is what we were quite proud of.

Q Now, this was an exhibit which some forward-looking curator got together to exhibit products made in Buffalo and Western New York. Now, were there any other automobiles on display?

A The Pierce-Arrow was there. A Buffalo product, too.

Q And, so, you think it's the first time that an automobile was exhibited in a....

A Gallery of fine art. We did at that time.

Q Now, the story that I've been noticing here is that you had a heck of a time getting it into the actual museum gallery. How did that come about? How did you get it in? You had to take it up the front steps?

A You see the front steps there?

Q I think, I've seen a picture of it. Here's this gorgeous, classical facade of a museum....

A This is copied exactly from the Acropolis in Athens.

Q And, the doors were not meant to admit automobiles, I suspect.

A Well, it wasn't the doors. It was the Doric pillars--columns, and when they got it up there with this block and tackle and everything, the management and the curator was having a shit in his pants because they were afraid they were going to chip those pillars that they had brought from Greece, see, and finally....

Q You're going up a ramp--an improvised ramp--up the steps, being pulled up.

A Yup. Finally, somebody--I think it was my idea. I said, "Let's take the fenders and the running boards off." And that did it. And, it went in, and it cleared by about--jeez--an inch on each side. Those guys were holding their breath. But, it went in that room. That's the Sculptor's Court. No, this is going in between the pillars. The floor was strong enough to hold a lot of weight, I mean, automobiles, see?
[pointing to photograph]

Q This wonderful [all-weather] cabriolet in 1932....

A Yeah. We were quite proud. We got a lot of publicity out of it.

Q It must have been the hit of show?

A Well, we thought so, but, I mean, there were a lot of other things like, now Kittenger. They were the famous furniture company in Buffalo. One of the Kittenger's son-in-law's was a neighbor of ours--lived right in the neighborhood there.

Q He was a famous furniture....

A Kittenger's furniture is still in existence, and it is very, very high-class furniture, and they had furniture [exhibited] there, and

Pierce-Arrow had a [1932] car. And I have to laugh. Last summer at this time when they were getting ready for the big show down at the Art Institute in Detroit, the curator came all the way up here to see me and other people too, and I gave her a booklet, and we didn't even get a mention.

Q Nothing? No Brunn? Not even this lovely '32 automobile?

A Well, I did give them a lot of information about how these fellows worked the thing out in getting in it, see?

Q But, no mention? Have you seen the [Detroit Institute of Arts] catalog?

A Yeah, I think they mailed me the catalog.

Q Well, so, that was, in effect, the high water mark of the Brunn Company in terms of prestige and...?

A Yes, I think it was.

Q And, recognition of classic coachwork and engineering excellence.

A Really, it's not an extreme design or anything, you know.

Q No, but it's quite good. It's very tasteful and it holds up. It looks good today.

A Yeah, it looks good today. It's just like the Mustang. It still looks good today, you know. It just proves that a simple, good design is going to look that way forever. I look at the Mustangs going down the street restored. There's a lot of them around here, and, I think, gee, there goes a good-looking car. I had one, or Augusta [Brunn] had one, when we moved out here, and I sold it for \$800. Out here they sell them for \$2200 unrestored. That's a great example of simplicity of design. It wears well on you.

Q It certainly does. All through the 'Thirties when things were flat, stale and unprofitable, as Shakespeare says, you still had Mr. Edsel Ford continuing to give you orders, although somewhat reduced from the high point of your relationship in the 'Twenties. Would you go out to Dearborn to talk with Mr. Edsel Ford?

A Well, we would get the message relayed to us from purchasing, or George Walker, or Henry Crecelius or something, see? Now are you coming down to those 15 town cars?

Q Yes. Tell us the whole story. That's a fascinating episode in Ford history.

A Well, he wanted--he liked that. As a matter of fact, the original drawing was made by a fellow there in the studio--in the department--by the name of Ross Cousins. I don't know whether you've heard of him or not. Ross was an excellent illustrator.

Q Where was he?

A He was in--they called it the Design Department. He worked for [Bob] Gregorie. And, he just made an outline drawing of this, and, I guess, Mr. Ford liked it, and he said, "I'd like to have one made like that," and Walker called up and said, "Mr. Ford wants you to make some of these, make one of these, and we'll send you the drawing. You'll have to engineer it and make it so you can build it." A lot of these illustrators didn't. That's Mr. [Ernest] Kanzler's car--he was Mr. Ford's brother-in-law--except that, originally, Mr. Kanzler wanted a trunk on the back. Very inappropriate on a town car, but the rest of them just had a--I guess, there was a couple of others who had a trunk on the back, but that was Kanzler's car.

Q Now, this was, in a sense, if this is '39 to '41, a slight throwback in terms of a town car, is it not? Something by '38 which was sort of....

A Very formal. That's why I say the trunk is inappropriate.

Q Can you describe in oral terms exactly what this looked like?

A Well, this did not have any leather on the roof. It was all sheet metal, and it was laid out so that they had, well, sideward facing seats, which we called opera seats.

Q The sideward [facing] are called opera seats?

A Yeah, similar to like they used to have in the theaters that they'd flop down. Jeez, over in the Paris Opera--God, what a fire trap. To get people in, they'd pack them in there. They'd get them into their seat, and then there was another seat hanging on to your seat.

Q On the aisle?

A On the aisle, so you'd never get out of there.

Q So, that's why it was called opera seat from the Paris Opera?

A Well, yeah, that's what I assume.

Q Or from continental operas, anyway. And, it had a very formal roof line.

A Yeah, very formal roof line.

Q It had your famous cabriolet chauffeur's canopies.

A Oh, yeah. That's an interesting thing about that canopy. Phil Hill, who I pointed out to you who has that town car up there with the top down.

Q Where is Phil Hill these days?

A Santa Monica.

Q Still in Santa Monica? What's he doing?

A I'll see him in....

Q Will you at Pebble Beach?

A Yeah, at Pebble Beach.

Q What was his background again?

A Well, he was the first American to win the world's racing championship--what do they call it?--formula...?

Q Formula One?

A Yeah. In this first and only one, I guess. No, I guess, somebody else has won it since then.

Q Where was this championship [race]?

A I think at Monte Carlo. Very winding.

Q What year was that?

A Well, I don't know, but it's quite a few years ago, because Phil is not as young as he used to be. [1961] The Saturday before the Concours de'Elegance gets [underway] down at Pebble Beach, they also have old-time automobile--hire race cars to drive around, like Bentleys and things. He always wins the race.

Q Now, what connection did Phil have with this particular [vehicle]?

A Oh, he didn't have a connection, but when you put that box in back of the chauffeur in order to put the canopy in, it took a little space. We didn't do that on the Packards. And, I can't remember why, but he [Hill] likes that better because he says if a passenger is sitting in the rear, gets a better view--clearer view--forward than when you've got the box hanging down there, and, I guess, he's got a point there. We held the material--the side parts--the side arms--the

material had to be taken off and put in the trunk. Now, the cloth-- that's fabric, convertible top material. The top rail had a slot in there, and you pull that down in there, and then you drew it forward and clamped it on the windshield header so it couldn't blow out, but there was no restriction in the vision of the passenger. And, he had a point, but....

Q But, you didn't do that on the Packard?

A We didn't have the canopy box, no. He [Hill] got that car from the Van Nuys estate. You know, Van Nuys, California, down there? Well, that was evidently--I just learned since they came out there--a very rich family, and when the Van Nuys estate was settled after they were all dead, he bought that car and restored it. He restored that car something tremendously. I almost cried it was so perfect--I mean, that Packard. He took the hardware--my father's own designed hardware and regulator handles made out of bronze, and they stripped the plating off of them, and they stripped the plating off the remote control handles and the window regulators, and they bronze-plated them all over again, and the whole thing was just excellent, and he drives that around town all the time down there.

Q Did you ever ask him why he didn't restore one of the town cars?

A Which town car?

Q [The Brunn]--how many of these were built?

A [Fifteen].

Q [Of those], how many of them still exist?

A I don't know.

Q Have you any idea? Have you ever tried to check?

A Yes, I have, but let's see, there was a couple of them--couple of them were made into limousines, if you want to call it, with a rigid roof over the front. One of them was built for a Miss Louie Hall down in Rochester, New York. I remember driving down there with my wife. We had only been married a few months, and she rode down with me, and I met the salesman down there, and Louie Hall, she was the sister of the inventor--is that the word I should use?--of aluminum. You heard of the Hall aluminum? He died relatively young, but he had first sold his patent rights to the Aluminum Company of American, and this is where they got their money from. And the reason that she was so pleased with--this was an aluminum body, see? She was an elderly lady.

Q Well, how were these special town cars received by the Ford family? Did you get any personal reaction from anyone or through anyone?

A Yeah, the personal reaction I got out of the first one that was made for Mrs. Edsel Ford....

Q That was Eleanor Ford.

A Yes. I went back [to Ford] in '44. This was a 1937 or '38 [model]. It was about six or seven years old, and she was still using this car in '45. I happened to have a little acquaintance with the chauffeur, and all of a sudden I was told--I received a message from on high that I was to supervise the restoration of this car for Mrs. Ford, minus the mechanical parts. So, that took me off of the interior trim and color job with Ted Hobbs for about six weeks. And, as a matter of fact, we did that twice. Once I was there a couple of years, and the second time, two years later--see, the [Ford] boys were after her to get a new car, for crying out loud.

Q She loved it, though?

A Yeah, well, she liked to step up, and she liked the head room and everything, and you'd go down to Ford Hospital there, and the first space right up at the door was reserved for her, and a chauffeur would be sitting in there, and I'd pass a few words with him. And, then they finally brought in it in, and they put that current grille on that I don't like. You know the one? It's also on the Sunshine Special. You know the Sunshine Special?

Q The '42 grille?

A You know that Sunshine Special that we built for F.D.R. [Franklin D. Roosevelt]?

Q Well, you can tell me about it a little bit later, but go ahead.

A Well, anyway, I was just telling you about--we restored that car for her twice until about 1946 or '48. The boys finally prevailed upon her to let them make a new job for her.

Q Who did that one?

A Well, I'll tell you who did it. We designed it, and I don't mean me, but in the [Ford] styling department. And, at that time, Ray Dietrich [had] gone back into business in Kalamazoo [Michigan]. And we were doing some business with him. Where I got connected was in building trim bucks--these skeleton wood bucks that we used to upholster and reupholster and tear it out and reupholster again, you know, to see how the trim style looked when they upholstered it?

Q Yes.

A When we used to get \$5000 for a body--a whole, complete body--that was a good price. Well, Ray was getting \$5000 apiece for these skeletons. Well, anyway, this job was given to him to build for Mrs. Edsel

Ford. Do you remember [V.Y.] Tallberg? "Stop that whistling." That's what he used to holler at his help, "Stop that whistling."

Q He was your body engineer, wasn't he, at that time?

A No, he wasn't a body engineer, but he was a general manager during that whole engineering operation there, and of building the new buildings in there and everything. Tallberg, he could do anything around there that he wanted. The family thought a lot of him. Principally, I was told that he was manager of the Ford plant in Cologne just when the Nazis took over. Have you heard that story?

Q No, I haven't. Tell me about it.

A Well, he was manager there, and he got out just before the Nazis took the place over--we were not in the war yet, I understand. I'm only repeating this--with two suitcases full of money.

Q American money?

A American money. A lot of money. I've heard anywhere from a million to hundred thousand.

Q Was this personal money, or was it Ford money?

A No, company money, and this is the way he got into the good graces of the Ford family when he got over there with all that money, and then he was given a job in charge of a bunch of tool designers, and they'd whistle, and that's how I happened to call him, "Stop that whistling Tallberg." Otherwise, he was the manager of that whole engineering and development area there while that was going on, you know?

Q So, he sort of supervised that last refurbishment.

A You know, like they've got the dynamometer building, they'd build our building--the whole styling building.

Q But, I mean, he supervised the last refurbishment of the town car?

A Yeah.

Q And, who did the actual design?

A Well, what I was going to tell you about Tallberg, Tallberg got wind that the sheriff was creeping up on Dietrich up there.

Q In Kalamazoo?

A Kalamazoo, and they....

Q What was the name of Dietrich's company up there, do you remember?

A I don't know. I think it was Dietrich, Inc. Anyway, they got Tallberg and another fellow up there. It was his right-hand man. Got a bunch of trucks together and went up there in the middle of the night and got this car of Mrs. Ford's.

Q Oh, it was up there being done.

A Out of there before the sheriff locked the doors.

Q What year was this?

A Well, this would have been about 1949 or '50 or something like that. And, there wasn't much work done on it. They had the structure up, but they also had working drafts and so forth, and they got those and the car, and they drove them down here before the sheriff closed the door the next day.

Q And, they trailered the car itself down, too?

A Well, I don't how they trailered it. They said they brought it down with a truck. I don't know. Probably, was just a body, not the chassis or anything, and it was finished up there--finished up in the engineering lab over there--not the engineering lab, but....

Q Styling.

A Not the styling lab. What was the building across the street that we now call the Triple...?

Q Triple E Building.

A Triple E Building. What's the other one over there?

Q Well, the old Engineering Laboratory.

A Where they built the airplanes for awhile. Air Frame Building. They built it up there, and they spent about \$400,000 getting it finished.

Q One story I heard, maybe you knew this, was that she had it cut especially high because she liked it up high, as you said, but with this last model she had a neck ailment, which, as she didn't like to bend to get out, so she had it cut very high so she could sort of walk out of it, as you say, at the hospital. Was that your notion?

A Well, I remember that car. I remember that it was very high, and I also remember that it--as we used to do--we did on a car for Colonel Green. I don't whether you know who Colonel...?

Q No, who's Colonel Green?

A Well, I'll tell you later. Cut the door up, opening up into the roof and back into the roof, and then they brought it back here, and then those people like that could get in here. Oh, Colonel Green was a son of Hetty Green, known as the Witch of Wall Street. Have you ever heard of her?

Q Yes, but these people haven't.

A She was a millionairess and looked like she was poverty-stricken. Lived in a cold water, walk-up flat, and....

Q She looks like today's bag ladies, right?

A Exactly. But one of the banks, I don't whether it was National,

City or what it was, gave her a desk in their lobby. If you want to read an interesting book, you'll want to read The Day They Shook the Plum Tree. This is about when they were all dead, and there was a hundred million dollar estate, see? Well, anyway, she had this hundred million dollars, and she was a millionairess, and she had this one boy, Ned, who fell down and broke his leg, and it was not properly set because she went to a cheap doctor and eventually had to have it amputated from the knee down. Well, the Colonel was a Texas Colonel. She sent him down there to get some training in running--she was grabbing up railroads all over. This was called the Texas & Southern, and, strange to say, for being quite a playboy, he a did a pretty good job. He put the thing on its feet. He and his girlfriend lived in this hotel together, and [Hetty] held the purse strings for a long time, but when she died, boy, he really went to town. And, I went down to Albany with Victor [Lang] and met the chauffeur down there, and we had designed this car on a 160 inch wheelbase ambulance chassis for him, and this roof was cut up--the door was cut up into the roof, and we had a moveable seat that moved out on the back and swiveled, and then he stepped out.

Q The first of the handicapped appliances?

A Yeah. If I had time, or it helped it here, I would show you the pictures of all that stuff.

Q You've described it graphically very well. What year was that roughly?

A That was 1931 because that was a '31 chassis. That was one of the first chassis that had the radiator--where the radiator curved down like that. But, it was an ambulance chassis--160 inches. And, then we built

him another one on a 136 inch chassis, just a two-seater job, and he was a great cigar smoker, and we had to put ash trays in there that contained water so he could put them out.

And, another interesting story--I'm jumping around, I'm not in chronology--was Glenn Curtiss. He came from Hammondsport, not far from Buffalo--the wine country down there. First he was a bicycle maker, and then he was a motorcycle racer, and then he got to building airplanes, and this was shortly after the Wright Brothers time.

Q The Henry Ford Museum has one of his early seaplanes.

A Yes, I think so. He always wore a tweed cap and a tweed coat, and one morning he walks into the showroom and says his name is Curtiss, and he was moving his plant from Hammondsport up to Buffalo, and he was told that Brunn was the guy that could build him a new car on a Pierce-Arrow [chassis].

Q Hammondsport?

A Hammondsport, New York. That's in the South Central part of the state where they've got a lot of grapes growing. And, he became a great friend of my father's and a great friend of everybody's because he hung around the shop and was on a first-name basis with a lot of the employees, and he contributed a lot to the design of things, such as streamlining and things like that.

Q Aerodynamics, maybe?

A Aerodynamics. That's what it was in those days. Well, anyway, this was on a Pierce-Arrow, 66 chassis.

Q What year again?

A Well, it must have been 1916, because he took it down to his home

in Florida after we had gotten in the war, and the car had these Westinghouse air springs. I don't whether you know them, but they improved the ride. They were a projectile-shaped thing made by Westinghouse, and it was kind of a hydraulic--not hydraulic, but air. It improved the ride of the car a hell of a lot.

Q Really. Early air suspension?

A Yeah. We got--they looked like an artillery projectile--hung on the front or on the back, but it did improve the ride of the car. This was before shock absorbers.

Q Always a problem in those days.

A Had two on the front and two on the rear of the this big, rounded thing, and he always used to laugh and [say], "You know, when I got down there, I got a call from the police department, and," he said, "they were getting complaints from people who had seen this fantastic-looking vehicle in the dark down there in the dusk, and we'd better go and find out whether it was some infernal machine that the Germans had landed on the beaches down in Florida." And, then we built a couple other Marmons and the Pierce-Arrow and the Cadillac Town Car. You know this car [pointing]? This was a town car. Mr. Edsel Ford wanted us to try to make a town car out of the Zephyr. They sent a four-door convertible LincolnZephyr down, and we built the body on top of it. Well, it didn't go because there wasn't any room in it, and that is why they went on and built this one. A year ago, or so, since I was in California, a guy called me on the phone from Westminster, California. It's down, I guess, near Long Beach or down there somewhere. Sending me a photograph. He's got this car, and he was fixing it up, and he came up

here, and he stayed to lunch one day, and I showed him some photographs that I had made, and about a year later a got a notice that here's the car, canopy's off and a chauffeur's standing there, and he's just gotten married, and he's going off on his honeymoon in this car. He's got it down there. I haven't seen him since, but he seemed real happy then.

Q This is a classic Lincoln-Zephyr, four-door, and you've lengthened or....

A No, we didn't lengthen it any. That's the trouble. Now, we just--they didn't send any top with it.

Q But, you put the top on.

A Well, we built a top.

Q The cabriolet top. Did the cabriolet top fold back, or was that a full cabriolet?

A No, no. No, that didn't fold.

Q That was a false cabriolet?

A Yeah.

Q That's marvelous. Tell us a little bit about this tradition of--this looks to be master craftsmen with the tools of their trade still making the hand-built town car rear deck.

A Yeah, this was an air hammer.

Q No, he's got a--at least, he's working on the trim--the exterior trim. He's got a hammer in his hand.

A That's a mallet. This was hand-hammered on a form.

Q So, even though you're working in 1938, you're still using the time-honored methods of hand finishing?

A Well, the only reason was we were still working in 1938. When

you're only making five, you don't go ahead and spend a lot on tooling, see?

Q Right.

A I told you about Mrs. Blair who bought a panel brougham down at the Capitol Cadillac Company in Washington?

Q Yes. I wonder if you would read a paragraph for us about the interior coachwork. I have it right here. This is Edsel Ford's Hispano-Suiza of the early 'Twenties. You did the coachwork for--he brought the Hispano-Suiza....?

A Chassis.

Q Chassis, and Brunn did the coachwork? That was your first commission from Edsel Ford, wasn't it?

A Yes, it really was. Now, there's Glenn Curtiss' new war machine.

Q Can you describe this? That's incredible. Tell us a bit about this Curtiss....

A Well, as I say, he was in the shop and kept his eye on the work, and he became on a first-name basis with a lot of the workmen. He kept it, at least, through the war, and we made five for him. He was the first man to fly from Albany down to New York. And the New York World put up a \$10,000 prize, and he told his wife, "If we win this prize, I'll buy you a smart, little runabout." I've read this in the story by Laura Scudder--his biography. They had a stop at Poughkeepsie to get gas, but he got down there, and he was given kind of a shally Lindbergh welcome there, you know.

Q The first man to fly from Albany to New York?

A Yeah. They had to stop on the way to get gas at about Poughkeepsie, and I got the story where, I don't know, it was up for an

Antique Automobile thing. It didn't say--Laura Scudder doesn't say that--whether [Mrs. Curtiss] got her smart little runabout or not, but she did get five Brunn cars on Pierce-Arrows and Marmons within the next six years. He was a great Marmon man.

Q I'd like to have you read, if you would, one of your descriptions of the internal furnishings of the typical Brunn interiors.

A The two figures showing on figure 10 and 11 are typical Brunn interiors. The interior treatment and appointments were outstanding features of Brunn coachwork. The upholstery materials in rare face-finished, wool broadcloth, although occasionally a patterned cloth, was used if the customer was so inclined. The style of the trim scheme was either perfectly plain cushions and backs, or if an extra bit of luxury was wanted, pleats with deeply drawn buttons was used.

Toward the end, we used pleats and buttons exclusively.

Coil springs and animal hair topped off with a layer of down provided the customer with apparent luxury. Hand-made garnish moldings of mahogany finished off the windows, and directly beneath the window opening on top of the door and across the face of the partition were panels of highly-finished crotch mahogany veneer. Mahogany was also used for whatever cabinets and vanity cases the car was equipped with. Occasionally, other rare woods were used, such as the blond zebra wood or jet macassar ebony. Sometimes to make the interior more elegant, oval Wedgwood medallions were recessed in the center of these rare wood panels. The interior hardware was an exclusive Brunn design, very severe and dignified in style. They were either finished in butler silver or antique bronze, whichever harmonized with the interior ensemble. Another exclusive Brunn feature was the imported sheepskin floor coverings. These were imported from Australia and furnished a plush air of luxury as well as providing a most practical type of floor covering. No real fine, elegant vehicle was complete without a Brunn custom-made lap robe. Even with the coming of the rear compartment heaters, the monogrammed robe was needed to top off a fine piece of coachwork. The face of these robes were usually of the same broadcloth material as used on the seats. The back was a deep pile plush, or in the case of a more sporty turnout, a houndstooth check.

Q Thank you. I'm glad you read it because that's a marvelous description of what seems to me to be the most tasteful, yet elaborate, interior trim that could be had in those [days].

A That's why I said, "How would like to get thrown around inside that car?"

Q There's one--just before we leave that--that type of perfection that the Brunn Company offered. There's a note in a little piece I've read by Hugo Pfau [Custom Body Era, 1971]. He said that, which you did not mention, back in the heyday of the custom body era, one of the finest Pierce-Arrows was a town car for the Shah of Iran. Could you tell us a little bit about that? How that came about?

A Yeah, well, the town car for the Shah of Persia, as he was known then, was the father of the Shah who is now dead.

Q This is in the 1920's?

A No, this was 1933, I think [1929]. We got word from this sales manager out at Pierce-Arrow that they've got an order from some representative of theirs over in Persia that they wanted a white--to be painted white--parade car for the Shah, and did we think we could do it? Well, we sure did, and--but he said we had to keep it simple. I made that design--that drawing there--and there's not much to it as far as design is concerned, but it was all white. The radiator shell was gold plated--the molding along there now.

Q Now, the Shah, being a very rich man, obviously, enjoyed having gold appointments. How did that come about? You got the order from Pierce-Arrow?

A Yeah. We were [instructed that] the coach would be gold.

Q Now, you worked--you said gold plate on the exterior. How did that work out mechanically?

A It worked out fine, but.... Well, here's another one. You see, that was the royal crown. We were sent specifications. There was to be--whatever the wheelbase was on the Pierce-Arrow town car. A parade car. This is the only one ever made.

Q Pierce-Arrow did not make town cars?

A Pierce-Arrow made the chassis.

Q Chassis only. You're doing the town car body?

A Yes. On both rear doors you would see the royal crown of Persia.

Q That's the crest--the royal family crest.

A We got that by them sending us a picture of the Shah in his royal robes, and in order to bring it up to the proper size, I had it blown up, photographically. There was supposed to be an emerald, and all the rest was gold. Well, it wasn't an emerald, but it was green, and it looked like it.

Q This is in the center of the crown--the front piece.

A Yes.

Q And, how did you discern the crest from that [illustration]?

A Well, we photographed this and gave it to some jeweler to make.

Q But, what did you see in that circle? What is the crest or the emblem?

A Well, in the description of it, this was green emerald. And, the press got ahold of this and really went to town.

Q You didn't just put a green emerald on there. Didn't you put some sort of filigree or scroll work...?

A Well, all this stuff was gold around there.

Q Oh, I see, you just simply reproduced the whole crown and had a jeweler do it?

A The whole crown. The size which we thought fit the area where it was going to go, see? Yes. A jeweler did that, and then they attached it onto the [rear doors].

Q What sort of reaction did you get from that? Any semi-official [reaction] from the Shah of Persia?

A I don't think we heard anything from him, but we got a hell of a big reaction from the press.

Q Did you? What happened?

A From the minute it was done, there was--Pierce-Arrow had a very nice showroom--or the dealer did there on Main Street at Jewett--a Cadillac dealer eventually took it over. But, this was a beautiful showroom, and they put it in there and showed it--they put in there and nothing else in there with floodlights down on it at night, and, I guess, they had a traffic jam out there. I have a clipping book with clippings sent to us. My father put an outfit by the name of Rommeke--they're a clipping bureau. Are they still around?

Q No, they're long gone.

A But, anyway, you sent them so much money, and they'll send you every mention of the Shah of Persia in any damned newspaper in the country.

Q That's a typical service you can employ--that you can purchase.

A Yeah. I didn't know whether it was still around or not, but....

Q Well, there are others. Ford Motor Company subscribed to them.

A But we got a black photo album with this stuff pasted in and from

what paper it was from, you know. Some of the prices went from as high as \$200,000 down to \$50,000. Actually, we got paid \$19,000 for it.

Q How much of that was profit?

A Well, we had to work on it and lay it out and turn it over to them, but, I mean, you ought to have seen that--estimates of the value. You know how they go?

Q This photograph that you showed me, obviously, just after it come out of the factory and was taken in front of the Albright Art Museum [Buffalo].

A Oh, yeah. I drove it out there. Leave it to me, when I got in the business and there were cars like that that ought to be photographed, I took them.

Q I noticed that was one of your favorite backdrops.

A It was because we thought it was very appropriate for a high-class automobile. Out here was Delaware Park Lake. This was all part of the area that was built for that Pan American Exposition where McKinley was assassinated. This was one of two permanent buildings. The other is the historical building which was over on the other side of the lake.

Q Are both of them still standing?

A Oh my, yes. The other buildings were--I don't know what they were made of--but, they were all torn down. They were white, but, of course, I wasn't there. All I know is what they told me.

Q This is a supreme example, I suspect. The Shah of Persia's personal, gold-plated, Pierce-Arrown/Brunn bodied limousine or town car. But, as we mentioned earlier, this era ended pretty much with the great depression, and, aside from periodic orders throughout the 'Thirties,

you and your father and Mr. Weppner really had a heck of a time keeping the company together.

A As I told you, my father didn't get any money for many years.

Q Now, this must have taken its toll on your father's physical and emotional health. How did that happen? How did it gradually unfold? The pressures of trying to keep a business together with no profitability was...?

A Yes. I mean, it was--see, Mr. Judkins, a Wall Street lawyer, and, Willoughby, he was supposed to be a college professor. But, Herman Brunn and Ray Dietrich and, well, Tom Everett, they were doing it to earn their living, but they also loved it, see? And, my father thought that he--I've heard him say, "What better thing can a man leave his son than a successful business?" Well, it didn't turn out that way, and nothing is permanent.

Q So, what happened? What were some of the stresses and inter-family...?

A I don't know. It was a Sunday morning, and Mother....

Q What year?

A 1941, September. 1941, September 21, and Mother used to walk--we were--Gus and I were living out on the lake shore at our summer home.

Q Where was that?

A In Hamburg, New York, on Lake Erie. And, Mother would walk down to the corner and get on the bus and ride down to the First Presbyterian Church and go to church and come back, and when she came back, why, Mary, the maid, said, "Well, Mr. Brunn came down and had his breakfast, but he went back to lay down." So, my mother went up there and looked in his room, and he was dead.

Q Natural causes?

A Yes. Cerebral hemorrhage, but he had one before. Probably two or three years earlier. I understand if you've had one, you're apt to have another one.

Q So, it's your impression, looking back on it, that that troubled decade from, say, '31 to '41 was really tough for your father?

A Yes, it was. I can't say anything else, except, I think, what hit him hard was when he was finally faced with signing on that line to liquidate.

Q How did that come about? He finally had no more reserves?

A Yeah, he had to admit it.

Q It was an early form of bankruptcy?

A No, no. No, we liquidated the thing, paid the creditors [100 cents on the dollar], and had some left over. Sold the physical plant.

Q Who did you sell the physical plant to?

A Well, this is another good story. We didn't own that plant on 980 Ellicott Street. No. Here's how this all came about. This was owned by the Schaeffer Estate. Christian Schaeffer was a very friendly man, and my father was in this other building on Main Street across from Uncle Henry's, and he needed more room, and he jumped out the back window one day into a field that was all full of high grass, and he waded back and here was this area--big area there--and he went to Mr. Schaeffer, and, by God, if Schaeffer didn't build a building for him. They were in real estate. Elderly man. And, Schaeffer built the building for him.

Q To your father's specifications?

A Yes. There was already a building there, and he built this other place on it, and it was two stories. Brunn and Company rented it, and then when business got so good there through the 'Twenties, why, I told you George Walker was hollering for nineteen of these a month and all this kind of stuff, we had to have more room, and they went out looking around, and they found the old Stewart Motor Company Truck [plant]. This was a truck that was built in Buffalo.

Q And, it had folded?

A Well, I don't know whether it--I guess, it had folded. It was a nice building, but, jees, am I glad they didn't buy it! Then they went back, and they got the Schaeffers, and they said, "Look, we need another story on this building, and we'll build it if you won't increase the rent," and Schaeffer said, "All right, you build it." This turned out to be the paint shop they paid for, and they had to have--they were coming into spray booths and things at that time. Built the spray booths and the vents and things up there, and then they didn't increase the rent any. At that time it would have been advantageous to the Schaeffers. I don't know who owns it now. There's a number of--I haven't been back there, well, since I came to California about eight years ago, but Marjorie [daughter] has, and it's broken up into another place--a bunch of places. There's a printer that does big printing work in there she said, and she couldn't tell me what else.

Q What assets did--if you didn't have the building or factory, what assets did you have--physical equipment?

A Equipment.

Q Equipment. Car-building equipment--body building equipment?

A Well, like power hammers and things that formed metal, you know. And, some place in there there's a picture of them putting a panel through the power hammer that's coming down like that, you know? And, I'll tell you what we did have that was most interesting in those days due to the woodwork were shapers. Did you ever see a shaper?

Q No, what's it like?

A This is the way you would shape the door pillars and things like that, and you put it in a jig, and there's a couple of handles on it, and there's two spindles turning around, and it would follow this guide that you had on your wood, and, eventually, you'd get that same shape. These were in demand at that time. Now, what I had tried to do after my father died, even though I was pretty close to doing it, United Aircraft--Pratt and Whitney Division--needed boxes--crates.

Q Large wooden crates.

A Large wooden crates to ship those engines in, and I ran around, and I got--well, jees, the first order was going to be for 5,000. I think, they built 25,000. Chevrolet had the order. Chevrolet had a plant in Tonawanda [New York], and it was a suburb of Buffalo, and it looked like we were going to get these for \$50 apiece, which would have been all right. I went down and got prices on parts and hinges because it was kind of a cradle, you know? The lower part--it was made out of 2 x 4's and things like that. The axle, or whatever it is in the plane, set down in this cradle, and then the cover was put on from the top. One day I went to Tonawanda, and the fellow said, "Well, we decided-- we've got all this equipment here, and we're not going to have this plant standing idle. We can't do anything else, so we're going to make

them ourselves." So, this is when I moved to Detroit. No, I wrote to Mr. Ford--it was Henry II--and told him the situation, and I got a letter right back from his--his name is E.C. Stevens--the secretary. He said, "Mr. Ford would be glad to have you come up. He's trying to form a new organization, and some have come already"--this was Martin Regitko--"and, if you will call me on the phone." Well, by the time I got ready to call him on the phone, I got another letter telling me to go and see [Eugene T.] Gregorie, so I went to see Gregorie and went to work there.

Q I wonder if you could read one more paragraph for me?

A Sure.

Q This is sort of a postscript to the custom car business in which your father was in. Starting here with the second paragraph.

A No custom coachwork in America can be told without giving the utmost credit to Mr. Edsel Ford and the Ford Motor Company for the part he played in the promotion of this type of craftsmanship on the Lincoln chassis. During this difficult period in the life of this great profession, the Ford Motor Company, due to Mr. Ford's desire to keep the coach builders in business, took no profit for themselves on the sale of the body work. Brunn hung on longer than any of the other coach builders, except Durham, who still survives in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. [1986]

Q That was some years ago.

A Martin Regitko saw this handwriting on the wall as far back as 1938, and he left Willoughby and joined the Ford Motor Company Surface Layout Department. Judkins turned temporarily to the building of lunch wagons before finally liquidating. Victor Lang and the other key men of the Brunn organization were loyal to the end and stayed on to their financial disadvantage as long as the boss wanted to try to keep going. All would have been better off if they had liquidated in the late 1930's rather than holding out until 1941 as they did.

Q Fine, thank you.

A And, that's the God's honest truth.

Q Right. Now, was it your father's conviction that the corner might be turned somewhere along toward the end of the decade in the 'Thirties?

A Well, it was everybody's hope. I don't whether it was conviction, but there was a lot of....

Q I mean, in terms of custom coach work?

A I don't know.

Q Did you ever ask him, "Dad, why are we hanging on? Why don't we liquidate?"

A Well, I was hanging on because I was enjoying the work.

Q And you could see that things weren't going well?

A Well, I could also see pressure from all around to liquidate before there isn't anything left.

Q But, your father finally decided to liquidate. It must have been a painful decision for him.

A Well, I'll tell you what was such a painful decision for him was when they moved him out of his office.

Q What happened?

A That was the night before he died. I mean, they were selling the desk right out from under him. Actually we didn't sell that desk. I kept that in storage in Buffalo for four or five years after I came to Detroit, but there was no sense in it because it was--flat top desk was as big as from here over to the wall, but that desk out there is the one that he did most of his designing on. The one that is out in the living room.

Q That's interesting. Well, your father was a remarkable character.

A Yes, he was, except that--you know, I was just saying--well, Franklin Roosevelt mentioned it in one of his speeches that, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I thought he originated that. Jesus Christ did in one of the Sermons on the Mount. I found this out later.

Q But, you thought it applied to your father perfectly?

A This applied to my father. There was no--he didn't have [good] vision--he was old. Well, he was only 67 when he died, but he was sick with prostate gland trouble.

Q Nothing they could do for him in those days.

A And, had a stroke, you know. We wouldn't let him drive a car. A fellow went down to pick him up and bring him to work every morning, and then when they finally began moving the furniture out, I had got the pictures and all these things off the wall. There was an amphibian car corporation that took over part of--and some of the equipment there, and I was making this rendering of this amphibious vehicle when a lady across the street called and said that my mother had been over, and my father was dead, and would I come right in, see?

Q Where were you working at that time?

A In our sun porch in our house out at the lake, you see? So, then we had to get rid of that and they got together and sold some of the equipment, especially the sheet metal equipment to this fellow that was developing an amphibious vehicle. He never built more than a half a dozen of them because, I guess, Dodge and General Motors got....

Q An amphibious vehicle for the armed forces?

A Yes. For the armed forces.

Q Ford finally got that--a portion of that contract.

A Did Ford get some of that, too?

Q The amphibian Jeep. So, the company--your father was buried, and what happened to your mother?

A Oh, Mother, she lived until we came to Detroit. She died in 1948. She was 70 years old. She died in--wait a minute.

Q She stayed in Buffalo?

A She stayed with us, and then she became quite a burden because like Augusta couldn't find her, and Mother would be out walking the streets, and then all of a sudden she'd be in fine shape. What do you call that--arteriosclerosis. I mean, all of a sudden she's perfectly normal, see? Then she went back up to Watertown [New York]--her home was at Watertown. She moved in a very nice home up there. Where the Babcocks were. Well, she died up there.

Q Interesting. Did she know the Babcocks when she lived in Watertown?

A Oh, yeah. They knew the Babcocks. Her name was Murray. They knew the Babcocks.

Q Interesting juxtaposition of the Babcocks and the Brunns?

A Especially, because my father worked there.

Q Right. Did they meet then?

A Yeah, they met there. My grandmother, she was a son-of-a-gun because they had a lot of snow in Watertown, you know, and he was over there visiting the girls. There were three girls, and they really got snowed in, and she made them stay there all night. And, my father was a--her father was an Army officer--had been in the Spanish War--and

she put a pair of Army boots and gaiters and a couple of overcoats on him and gave him a lunch and started him off to work over at the other side of the city, you know? And, I've got a picture of her that next day. The snow had been plowed, and it's way up over her head, you know?

Q What happened to your grandfather?

A Well, my grandfather, he came down to the lake shore when we were living on the lake shore, and, well, he had a heart attack out there because he went in swimming, and he shouldn't have gone in swimming, but he was only 60, and here I am almost 80, and I'm swimming like a fish.

Q I heard you were doing some water skiing down in San Diego?

A Yeah, well, it's much better. What happened was I sprained the ligaments down around here. I thought it was a....

Q That's incredible! You're almost 80?

A Well, I'll be--I'm 78 now!

Q You're looking great. I think you're in your mid-sixties.

A Gee, I wish I was.

Q Those were the days?

A Yeah, those were the great days.

Q I've mentioned your father, and I don't want to leave him shortchanged here because he was, obviously, a gentleman of considerable talent and expertise and vision and very good taste in design, and I'm sorry that, in a way, the last decade of his life must have been so terribly a burden to him that he....

A Burden to him?

Q And to everyone, and that this glorious era of the 'Twenties that he contributed so much to....

A See, he seemed to be doing pretty well. We didn't get married until 1936. It'll be fifty years this December 28th, and we didn't get married until 1936, and my father, he was the best man at the wedding, and he was driving a car just like that 1938 Lincoln touring cabriolet up there.

Q Those were gorgeous cars.

A Oh, yeah. Well, you know, he always believed that the shoemaker's children shouldn't go barefoot, you know? Because, like that LaSalle up there. That got business, not from LaSalle, but he got it from Edsel Ford on Lincoln. It didn't look so well on the Lincoln because of the stubbornness of the chassis, but.... He always had a job there of his own. And, then, of course, he'd use it a year or so, and then he'd sell it.

Q You had promised to tell us the story of the Franklin Roosevelt special vehicles. Now, I believe, there was an earlier one before the White House--or was there an earlier one in the 'Thirties that you did?

A Yes. In 1936, George Walker and Crecelius said we could build a convertible sedan on a 160-inch wheelbase, ambulance chassis for the White House garage? Attached was "the Secret Service for special occasions." And, I wrote quite an interesting story for Antique Automobile about tying that McKinley carriage in with this White House car back in 1976 for this--what was it called? What was in 1976? They wanted me to tie in that White House car with this McKinley car, and it made an interesting article, and they had an issue which was all dedicated to the Bicentennial. This is where I learned that the first man in the White House to have automobiles in the White House was William Howard Taft.

Q However, he did not go to his inauguration in an automobile?

A No, he did not. I was reading the other day about that, but he had them in the garage after that, because they had his picture up there. "Well, yes, sure, we'd love to do it." And, here were the specifications, see? Well, it called for extremely high headroom which made a ridiculous-looking vehicle. But, this was on account of the President's infirmity and to bend over to get in. And, we wrote back to a Major Cunningham. He was the Washington representative. Did you ever hear of him?

Q No.

A Major Cunningham was an ex-World War I officer who was Ford Motor Company's representative and contact man in Washington when it came to taking care of the White House garage and White House cars. So, I guess, we called him on the phone, and he had always been quite friendly, and for awhile he'd been in New York, and we knew him. When we put this thing on a blackboard, full size, he almost fainted, it was so high. "No," he said, "Secret Service says it's got to be that high, and it's got to be that high." All right.

Q Was it a Lincoln chassis?

A Yeah--160-inch wheelbase. So, we built it that high, and my father said, "Look, you're going to ship the body up to Detroit tomorrow, and don't you put that Brunn nameplate on it, either."

Q Why not?

A Well, it looked so terrible, so I didn't. The funny thing was that in ten days the car was back in our plant, and they said, "Make another top--a lower top."

Q Why? What happened?

A Well, they saw the car, and they saw the, you know, they don't know what they're looking at. So, it was sent back, and we spent a staggering sum, in that day, of \$1500 for a new top structure, and we put it on it, and I put the nameplates on it, and, well, you've seen the pictures here, and I drove it out to Delaware Park there to the Albright Art Gallery to take the picture, and.... It must have been late in '36 or '37. And I don't know whether--how the President got into the car, but he got backed up to the car, and it had to have forward-facing auxiliary seats. So he would slide himself--as I have had it described--slide himself onto this forward-facing seat, see, and then he would swing himself around with help and slide himself back onto the seat.

Q Out of a wheelchair?

A Out of the wheelchair, and the boys holding him by the arms.

Q Either the Roosevelt boys or the Secret Service?

A Yeah. So, that's the way he got in the car. Then, there was no complaint or anything, and that damned car, that was used by F.D.R. Now, did he go to Yalta?

Q He took that to Yalta with him?

A Yeah, he took that to Yalta. Truman took it to Potsdam, and then they bulletproofed it. Somebody else bulletproofed it. And, the last time I saw it in the [Henry Ford] Museum, it looked like one of George Patton's tanks at the Anzio beachhead or something like that, you know what I mean?

Q Who put on the bulletproof canopy?

A Oh, I think, the garage had it done--the Secret Service had

[requested it]. It was that way when--it had been retired by the time I got to working in Dearborn, and it is in the Museum, and it was bullet-proofed at that time.

Q The war is coming on, the company has been liquidated, your father has died, you've got to move on to other things. What happened? You'd just been married not too many years before that?

A Yeah, we had Margery then. Well....

Q This is your career now.

A My career now? What I did was--after we got liquidated--I immediately called up George Walker on the telephone in Detroit and said....

Q George Walker was still with Lincoln?

A Oh, yes. He got a job for me up there. He was buying stuff for the bomber.

Q What year was this? 1940 or '41? You liquidated in '41, didn't you?

A '42. I called up--"Mr. Walker, I'm looking for a job, and do you have anything up there that I could do 'till the war's over," and he said, "Well, just a minute. John Sullivan of the Houdialle-Hershey Corporation is sitting right beside me. Now, Maurice Houdialle was a French engineer who designed the steel recoil mechanism for the French 75's. It was a little lever type. It was a hydraulic shock absorber. There was a cylinder there that was full of oil, and there was a lever that comes back to recoil. Well, there was a rich man in Buffalo by the name of Burt Schultz, and he saw the possibility of--he and his backers saw the opportunity of adapting that to the automobile, and they went on....

Q Which, heretofore, had been very primitive in its springing, had it not?

A That's right. Hence is why we put those Westinghouse things on. And, they went over, and they bought the American rights from the French or Mr. Houdialle or whoever, and they came back here, and they collared all the shock absorber business of the automobile industry, and they became immensely wealthy. And, then the war came along, and Ford got this B-24 program, which had a nose wheel. And, this shimmy damper, as it was called, was just the kind of thing to keep that [wheel] from shimmying when it landed. Because this airplane had this wheel running down in front of the pilot, I think, and if you didn't watch out, it went like this. [hand motion] So, Houdialle and Schultz finally sold out for I don't know how many million dollars to the Hershey Company.

Q Now, which Hershey was that?

A Not the chocolate! And, they were bumper makers and things like that, and they got the job to make these shimmy dampers for this B-24 bomber. Well, George said, "Yeah, we can do that, if you want to do it now, but the war isn't over yet." He said, "Just a minute, John Sullivan from Houdialle is sitting right beside me." He was buying those shimmy dampers. And, they also made hydraulic landing gears and stuff. "Well, John says if--he's going back tonight. If you come in and see him tomorrow, why, he says he'll give you a job"--just like that.

Q What a fortuitous circumstance.

A Yeah, well, you know, they were hiring anybody in those days.

Q Okay, come on now.

A No, they were.

Q Anybody who had any experience.

A And, I went in there, and I went in to Sullivan, and he said, "Well, the thing is, Mr. Brunn, do you want to go to work?" And, I said, "Yes, I do," so he pressed a button and turned me over to the guy in charge of the gauge-making to check precision. So, I was given a job as a tool designer with a drafting board up there in the tool design department making gauges.

Q Now, where was Houdialle at this point?

A On Delavan Avenue in Buffalo--East Delavan Avenue in Buffalo. He also owned, or just got a big order from Ford--or the government, anyway, what was known as the Buffalo Arms Company. They were making machine guns. But, anyway, I stayed with Houdialle there making gauges and things like that for two years until the war was tapering off, and then I wrote to Mr. Ford, and this fellow Stevens wrote me and called me back, and....

Q Now, you wrote to Henry Ford II?

A Yeah.

Q And, what was the reply again?

A Well, the reply came from his secretary, E.C. Stevens, saying that Mr. Ford would be glad to have you come up, and he was trying to form a new organization, and he'd like to start right now.

Q That would be about 1947, wouldn't it?

A No, that was--I came in '44. I mean, I went to work here in '44. The family didn't move up there 'till '45.

Q That's incredibly early. He was just beginning, wasn't he?

A Yeah, and then I got another letter, and the next couple days,

before I could get up there, a telephone call to go and see Bob Gregorie, see?

Q Tell us a bit about that meeting. Mr. Gregorie, apparently, had been the head of design at Ford for about, maybe, a decade by then?

A Yes, and he was very close, or so he thought, to Mr. Ford. But, he thought--oh, I don't know--he thought that he and Mr. Ford were like that, and when Mr. Breech came in there, he kind of bypassed Mr. Breech.

Q And, [he] wanted to report directly to Henry Ford II?

A Yeah, and Henry didn't want it this way, and Breech finally got rid of him that way.

Q But, not before they had the famous competition. Can you fill us in on that--the '49 Ford?

A Not before that, no. George Walker was in there with his troop working in one studio, and Gregorie and the regular gang were working in another studio, and they picked George Walker's [model for the 1949 Ford].

Q Mr. Gregorie was invited, in effect, to leave.

A Well, he did anyway.

Q As a matter of fact, as you well know, his design was accepted for the [1949] Mercury.

Q You talked about Mr. Tallberg. Did you know Mr. Joe Galamb?

A No, not very well. I had a "Good morning, Mr. Galamb" arrangement. That's how I knew who he was and knew about him.

Q He was another excitable, somewhat imperious, central European?

A Is that so? He's an old-timer there.

Q He [had] been there for a long time. So, what kind of a job were you assigned?

A Well, I was assigned to work with Martin Regitko on full-size layout.

Q Your old friend from Buffalo?

A No, Regitko from Utica--from Willoughby. And, then Victor came up, and he was working with Martin, and Martin was the boss, supervisor, of that surface layout department.

Q And that was in the old Engineering Laboratory? Who else was in the group with you?

A Then, there was a young fellow that had come in from General Motors by the name of Ted Hobbs. Do you remember him?

Q I've heard of him. What about him?

A Well, Ted Hobbs had worked for the custom body [house] Holbrook and some other custom body builders down in New York, and he and I became great friends, and he had come from General Motors and then [was] put in charge in interior trim and exterior color. And, he asked Gregorie if he couldn't have me over to help him, and Gregorie said, "Why sure," and I said, "Yeah, I'd love to do it rather than laying out on this drawing board." So, that was the beginning. Ted and I were great friends. We both belonged to the Pine Lake Country Club [Pontiac, Michigan] and played golf every Saturday.

Q You went from layout work on the drawing board to interior trim work. What sort of discipline was that?

A Well, this is developing fabrics and exterior colors and things like that.

Q Well, good, now this has opened up a whole new area for you?

A Yeah. This was more fun. Then, Lincoln-Mercury--Dick Krafve--do you remember him? Assistant General Manager of the Lincoln-Mercury Division?

Q Right.

A Dick Krafve and the Lincoln-Mercury Division began to want to have some fellow just working on their interiors alone and their colors alone and not be mixed up with the Ford, so I was chosen to take the Lincoln-Mercury job.

Q Who chose you?

A Well, I don't know. Charlie Waterhouse was the big boss then.

Q Can you tell us about Charlie Waterhouse. Was he sort of an overall design supervisor?

A Yes. See, this was before there was a styling office. This was when we were part of body engineering.

Q The early 'Fifties?

A Yeah. Charlie had come there from General Motors in the General Motors exodus when [Henry] Grebe and those guys had come there. And, I was given this job and went on from there, and then....

Q Well, how did it work? Give us some details.

A I worked with the textile developers and picked out samples that I liked and other people liked on my staff, and we would put them up on racks and easels and show them to the divisional management and those that they looked upon favorably, why, we had samples made up and seat trims--upholstery, trim bucks and things. When the fabric was selected, why, we went on and matched them to the proper colors. And, I liked it because I got [to do] a lot of traveling down to the textile mills and all this stuff.

Q Oh, they didn't come to you. You had to go to them?

A Well, they came to us, but I'd go down there in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Q You'd pick out the best of the fabrics that they were offering you?

A That I thought, yeah. We had a lot of sources in those days.

Q What was the preferred fabric in the early 'Fifties?

A Well, you see, when I first got there, they were still working with wool, and then I was right there at the right time when they were beginning to bring synthetics in, like nylon and rayon and other decorative fabrics. The thing that thrilled me the most was lurex. That was a metallic thread of various widths which dolled up--I said, "It was the happiest thing that ever happened to the textile industry," and Dorothy Liebes, who was the designer and promoter of this stuff, she was so happy. I said, "That was the happiest thing that ever happened to the textile business." She was a consultant for the textile industry. She was, well, should I say, hired by Collins and Aikman and J.P. Stevens and Chatham and those other textile people. Collins and Aikman. They're still one of our suppliers.

Q Tell us about lurex. What was its composition? How was it put together?

A Well, it was a laminated synthetic, and you could get it in gold or you could get it in silver. And, then, later on, they began to bring it around in colors--in greens and reds, and, at that time, it was already being used in the garment industry on women's wear. But, the greens and the reds, well, they were all right on dresses and things like that, but they didn't look too appropriate in an automobile, so....

Q How did they achieve the metallic sheen to the thread?

A Oh, it was covered with a foil.

Q It was impregnated into the--so, it was gold foil...?

A It was a yarn itself. Now, listen--lurex had no strength or did nothing to hold the fabric together....

Q On its own?

A Just decorative. It was used as a filling. Filling yarn is the yarn that runs crosswise in the seat, and the warp runs this way, and this was used as a filling, and it would go under, and then it would come out down here, and it would come out down here and raised up the nappiness of the interior.

Q Well, but it certainly did give it a sheen and a brilliance that it never had before.

A You could overdo it, too. I mean, just because little is good doesn't mean more is better.

Q What about naugahyde? Had that come in yet?

A Well, naugahyde was nothing more than a vinyl-coated material. Naugahyde was the trade name put on it by U.S. Rubber.

Q I see. Now vinyls were coming into their own just about this time, too.

A Wool and genuine leather were gradually going out.

Q But, you could still get leather if you wanted it?

A Yes, you can get it in the Lincoln and the Cadillac.

Q But, wool was pretty much phased out, wasn't it? It didn't last.

A Yeah. I don't believe there's wool any more.

Q It's synthetic cloth now.

A I can tell by looking at them. But, I made--even the headlinings used to be made out of wool-faced cotton. Headlinings, like in my car down there, is a bunch of little pieces of cloth all chopped up and sprayed on there on a board and napped in there.

Q This is your Tempo?

A Yeah. Same on Margery's Chevy--whatever she calls it. The Celebrity or something.

Q Do you view this as--is this a good technique or is it schlock?

A No, it's a good technique. It makes a good-looking job, and, my God, it's cheaper than when the guys used to have to go around there tacking them in, you know.

Q They last?

A Yeah. What it's on, it's sprayed on a foundation board, like a piece of shirt cardboard or something, only it fits in under the rails around there, and, I believe, it must have some adhesive on the inside because they don't tack it in or do anything to it. They just put it in up there and and pass their hands over it, and it's all done, see?

Q What material is the headliner? What is it made of?

A The surface?

Q Yes.

A Well, I don't know. Some synthetic fabric that's all chopped up into a powder.

Q That looks like wool or something?

A Yeah, it looks like wool, if you want to say so.

Q That's incredible! But, it lasts.

A And, it was cemented on to a piece of flexible board of some kind--they sprayed it on. I've seen this done even before I quit, and it all

dried on there fast, and all they did was bend the board it was on and fit it under the rails around the side and under the windshield, and you couldn't get it out. It stayed there.

Q I thought that was still cloth up there of some kind. Well, back to the 'Fifties. As I recall, from looking--from coming through it and looking at materials since then, there was an explosion of colors at Ford at this point. There were two-tones, there were treble-tones, there was the Crestliner that stole your old scallop from the 'Twenties on the side, but you were doing the color coordinating with interior upholstery to the outside. How did that work? [Who] did that liaison work between interior and exterior trim?

A Well, you had to use your eyes, I mean, that's why I don't think they trust the human eye any more.

Q They don't? You were the last of the visual experts to work on it?

A Probably. I don't know. They had a fellow--I saw his name on-- Dick Chapel. Did you ever know Dick Chapel?

Q No.

A Well, he worked for me, and I got a notice the other day he retired. He was a fabric man. He worked for me as long as I was there. I was down in [Southern California] when Marty sent the invitation to the party--well, I couldn't get there anyway, but I wrote him a letter.

Q Where was it?

A In Detroit. At a place I never heard of. He's gone now, and everybody else is gone, so I got no place--nobody to go to when I need to find out why I don't get my John Hancock forms to send to the dentist or something like that. They've made an awful mess out of that.

Q Well, this was many years in the future. We're still back in the early 'Fifites. So, you've--for the purposes of your career interview, you've become an interior color coordinator in terms of...?

A Yes, and developer of exterior paints.

Q Oh, tell us a little bit about that. You didn't mention that before. How did that work out?

A Worked with the paint manufacturers. See, we had our own paint plant, you know.

Q Where was that located?

A Well, right--no, first it was at Highland Park, and then they built a plant at [Mt. Clemens, Michigan].

Q That's the one I remember.

A Now they've just sold the whole thing to Dupont. [1986]

Q Oh, and they're buying their paints from Dupont?

A Yeah.

Q Oh, great!

A Because when I was there, all the pressure was on, "Now, look, we got to get 85% of our paint from out of our own paint plants."

Q You don't want to buy from G.M.?

A No, this is buying it from G.M. really, you know? But, there were other good paint people which we got paint from, like Rinshed-Mason and Ditzler and these places.

Q Rinshed-Mason had a big plant in Detroit during the early 'Forties.

A Oh, yeah, that was right near the Lincoln plant. I was in there a lot of times. And, so, I just read recently in the Automotive News that

they had sold the paint plant to Dupont, and that the same people were going to be hired only they were going to be--same plant--and all these people there are going to be working for Dupont instead of Ford. But I don't know how they got away with it or how they did it because when I was there, we were making our own paint--80% or 85%. This discouraged outside suppliers from showing us new developments and paints because they knew they might get a year's production out of it, but if it ran on for another year, why, it would all go over to Mt. Clemens, see? So, what are they going to do now? This also caused Dupont to show their best developed colors to General Motors. Now, when they opened the Tech Center out there [Warren, Michigan], the Society of Automotive Engineers had--they invited them out there to see the place and have dinner, and then they took us on a....

Q General Motors in 1954?

A Out at [Warren], yeah. Took us on a tour of the place, and they kept you in an aisle and ropes on either side, but when we came through the trim and color department, there was a fellow by the name of J. Snyder there that I knew pretty well and worked there, and he said, "Wait a minute," and he came over and lifted up the rope, and then he took me in behind and showed it to me. General Motors had built this big, circular room with paint chips on rods 'till hell wouldn't have it, you know, and you could spin that around. If you were looking for blues, you'd spin that around until the blues came up, and you'd look for the right blues. Or, if you're looking for greens, you'd spin that around. That was because that was their biggest customer. At one time Dupont was their biggest stockholder.

Q You were telling us that you were also the exterior color coordinator or developer?

A Yes, that's right.

Q Now, tell us about that.

A Well, we worked with the paint companies--Rinshed-Mason and Ditzler and some with Dupont, but that was....

Q Was that Duco, they called it in those days?

A They called it Duco or Dulux. See, I haven't been working for sixteen years, but General Motors always used pyroxylin which required a polishing. Ford Motor Company, going way back to the soybean days, used lacquer which required no polishing but did show some orange peel.

Q What do you mean by orange peel? Was it a pebbled effect?

A Yeah. That's what we called orange peel or skin.

Q Well, why did that happen?

A Well, that's because the--General Motors, they polished that off. Now, as long as--when they had a car, and as long as you could have black, well, they didn't care whether....

Q You were saying you couldn't have the orange peel effect for what reason?

A Well, when you were competing with this beautiful General Motors stuff on the Cadillacs, you couldn't have [the] orange peel [effect] showing on your Lincolns.

Q Right. So, what did you do?

A Well, they got some very fine chemists. They hired a fellow from Dupont, even, and paid him a lot of money, and they had a fellow, I think he's still there, by the name of Johnny Young, [who] was a chemist

and did a lot of work on that stuff. He did a lot of work on pollution control out here in California or they wouldn't have been able to build cars at all.

Q In terms of paint?

A No, in terms of environmental pollution. You know, they've got real strict rules about California, especially around Los Angeles. I mean, you've seen smog down there, I'm sure.

Q So, you were happy doing this? Did you find it a rewarding existence?

A Yeah. You met a lot of nice, outside people--interesting, outside people.

Q You got away from the plant and away from the shop. So, how long did that go on--that particular segment of your Ford career?

A Well, that went on--see, I was given the job of manager of trim and color development material.

Q Were you really? Who did you report to in those days?

A Well, I reported to Ted Hobbs when he was still there. Then after he left, I reported to Jim Sipple. Do you know Jim?

Q I've heard of him, but I haven't met him.

A He's retired now.

Q What was his responsibility in those days?

A Well, he was chief manager of all interior operations. Not only materials, but designs. And, well, I think, he was--see, Jim had been sent to [Ford of] Germany twice. Jim was in Germany one time, and then he came back when Hobbs retired, and they gave the job to Hobbs, rather than to me. This is when Damon Woods was running the thing, and then Jim

was put on in charge of the truck studio. This was after I had left. Jim was the last fellow I worked for. But, when I retired, I wrote a little note to Mr. [Henry II] Ford--addressed it to him and said that--reminded him of my coming up there in 1944, and in spite of the aggravations and problems that arise in creative work, it had been both a pleasant and profitable stay and that I would always remain a loyal Ford customer. And, I got a nice, little letter from him.

Q Thanking you for your...?

A That was the end of that.

Q But, now, you don't want to end it there. What happened between 1956 and 1970? You've got 15 years there.

A Well, I was working on trim and color.

Q But, what sort of an existence was it? Did you enjoy it?

A Oh, I enjoyed it very much.

Q Did you have any interaction with your opposite numbers at the other companies? Who would those have been?

A Oh, yes. Like at General Motors? Henry Lauve. I don't know if [you know] Henry deSegur Lauve.

Q Yes, tell us about him.

A He was a Frenchman. A very great artist. Fine arts artist, too. We used to see him at parties and things, and other people, whose names I've forgotten.

Q Do you know Ted Moon? Did you know him?

A I met him, yes. I don't know--who was the head of styling now?

[G.M.]

Q Irv Rybicki. He's about ready to retire. I think, in September.

[1986]

A That's what I thought. He got the bald-headed guy's job--whose face gets purple when he drinks. Do you know who I mean?

Q Bill....

A Bill Mitchell. Did you ever see him drink?

Q No.

A Did you ever see him get blue?

Q No. Tell us about some of the people at Ford. What about Gene Bordinat? Did you have a good relationship with him?

A Oh, yes.

Q What was your impression of him?

A Well, I thought he knew his job. Another one, I think, that knows his job is Don Kopka. Awfully good man, and I predicted that when I left there that--when Gene retired, he would get the job. Now, I don't quite understand what the organization is there. He seems to be vice-president in charge of styling, but Jack Telnack, whom I've only met on the telephone between Detroit and Australia.

Q Really?

A Yeah. I used to talk with him quite a bit. Well, I think, I've seen him once since he's back over here. He seems to be in charge of North American Operations.

Q North American Design--NAD.

A And what's Don, he's...?

Q He's vice-president in charge of design. But, his operation seems to be concerned with the future rather than the present.

A Well, I like both of those fellows. As I say, I only saw Telnack once, and the other times--well, I'd talk to him on the telephone a couple times a week.

Q John Najjar was a friend of yours, was he not?

A Oh, my, yes. He was there when I came there.

Q Right. He and Regitko.

A He came there in '38.

Q Those were fun days back in the old South end of the...?

A Of the Engineering Laboratory

Q Engineering Laboratory. You and John and Regitko, and who else was there in those days?

A Well, Victor Lang was there, and there was a guy by the name of--a German by the name of Paul Ganssenhuber.

Q What did he do?

A Well, he was a surface layout man.

A Do you remember Benny Barbera?

A Oh, yes.

Q Benny's still working for the company.

A He is?

Q Yes. He refuses to retire.

A He must be a 100 years old! Wait a minute! What was he? A clay modeler?

Q He was in the fabrication and clay modeling. What about--you say when you came, or later on after Gregorie left, Mr. Waterhouse came in as overall supervisor? Remember Charlie Waterhouse?

A Oh, yeah, sure.

Q He's still alive. Can you imagine that?

A I'm trying to think. You see, Tom Hibbard was assistant to Gregorie.

Q And, Tom became....

A No, he didn't. Tom left and went down to--what's the outfit down on Livernois and Michigan, I think, it is? It makes the wheels.

Q Kelsey-Hayes?

A Kelsey-Hayes. He went down there and finished out his retirement there, his working life there and retired back up to dear old Maine.

Q Oh, that's where Tom was from.

A He died recently, or died last year, I guess.

Q I keep coming back to Bordinat. Bordinat worked his way up by force of his personality into a vice-presidency.

A He was a great salesman too.

Q Was he much of a designer that you can recall?

A Yes, he was a good designer and good salesman. I liked him. He and I got along very well. When I was first doing that Lincoln-Mercury job on trim and color, he was chief designer of the whole Lincoln-Mercury operation, and I was awfully glad that I got put with him rather than somebody else.

Q What about Al Mueller? Do you remember him?

A Oh, yes.

Q Did he come up under you?

A Al Mueller. Now, wait a minute! Al Mueller was the head of the-- wait a minute! This is where I was wrong. Jim Sipple was not the last one. Al Mueller was the last one.

Q He was head of the interior when you left. Some of the others who have signed your retirement poster--the man who's currently one of the interior chiefs: Gail Halderman.

A Is he still there?

Q Still there, yes, very much so.

A Well, he was a younger fellow than I was.

Q Do you remember Gail much?

A Oh, yes, very much.

Q And, a good man, was he?

A Yeah, very nice.

Q Don Kopka--you said, Don Kopka was, at that time, probably--what was he when you retired?

A Well, he came from Chrysler, you know?

Q Right.

A And, I picked him as a comer.

Q Did you? He certainly has done well. Of all the people you worked with in those days, who was the most inspirational to you in your latter-day career?

A Well, Ted Hobbs. He was just like my father. He had the same ideas about styling and designing of automobiles. Of course, he came from the custom body era.

Q Who had he worked for?

A Well, he worked for Holbrook-Brewster. One of the Brewster boys [Henry] got mad at his brothers and one of the Holbrook boys [Harry] got mad at their mother, so they formed a company called Holbrook Brewster down in [Bridgeport] New York [1927], and Ted worked for them, and then he worked for another company up in Boston for awhile, and then he was one of the first seven men that Harley Earl hired when he opened his Art and Colour Department. [G.M.]

Q How long did he stay with Harley Earl?

A 'Till [WW II]. Then there was nothing to do, of course, there. They gave him the job as a steel expediter, and, well, it was a job, you know, and you had to do it. Then, as the war closed, he, somehow or other, came over to Ford. That's where I met him.

Q Who do you think brought him over? Do you have any idea?

A I don't know. He never told me, because he just came over-- whether Gregorie brought him over or--I don't know who brought him over. Whether he just decided he just didn't want any more--I mean, General Motors with Harley Earl and those guys was a tough place to work, so I'm told, as I hear from Ted and other fellows.

Q So Ted Hobbs was an inspiration to you and a marvelous person to work for?

A Yes.

Q And, he appreciated your [talents]?

A Real good partner. As I said, he belonged to Pine Lake--joined after I did, and we used to have a lot of great times on the golf course until the poor fellow came down with leukemia. That's what he died of. He'd go to Ford Hospital, and they'd give him transfusions, and he'd be all right for a week or so, but then he'd be right back in there to have another transfusion, see?

Q When did he die, or when did he retire?

A He didn't retire. He retired, yes, and then he died a couple of weeks later.

Q He literally worked until he...?

A Yeah. This is what I thought was kind of silly because he said, "No, this is my pride. I'm going to stick it out 'till I'm 65." Well, this settled me that I was going to retire at 62 while I was young.

Q That's what you did?

A Yeah. While I was young and fairly healthy, and we could have fun, which we did. And, my father had a saying, you know, "Do the things you want to do now because you're going to be dead a long time."

Q And, you've never regretted that?

A No, I've never regretted it.

Q So, you retired in....

A In March of 1970, and that's [sixteen years ago].

Q Have you been doing any--in retirement, did you do any consulting work of any kind in color?

A Well, with these fellows--not in colors, but with these fellows on their car restorations, my archives are invaluable, and....

Q Tell us about your work with Hillsborough and Pebble Beach. That would be of interest, I think.

A Well, Pebble Beach and Hillsborough are the same type of thing, only Pebble Beach is much bigger.

Q And much older, isn't it?

A Oh, yes--thirty-five or forty years old.

Q Who started the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance? That's in California, is it not?

A Yeah, at Carmel.

Q Who started that?

A I don't know who started it, but it's run by Jules Heuman, and another fellow that's also--this fellow Heuman is an amazing man on the history of the Bugatti and the Hispano-Suiza. You know, he's got a list of every damned Hispano-Suiza that was ever made.

Q Incredible. What year was it started--Pebble Beach? You said thirty-five years it's been going?

A Thirty-five or forty years. They skipped one year. It was long before I came out here.

Q And, this has--where is this held--the Concours d'Elegance?

A There was a lodge at Pebble Beach....

Q Which is a golf course or...?

A Yes.

Q The famous golf course?

A Yeah. Famous golf course where the Bing Crosby tournaments have been held and national opens. It's on 17 Mile Drive, which is a very exclusive drive through the woods there, and they have a lot of--this lady--Carol Rissel. She's head of special events down there--the golf tournaments and this kind of stuff.

Q For Pebble Beach.

A Which is owned by--it used to be owned by DeI Monte, but it's now owned by Twentieth Century Fox. [In 1989, owned by the Pebble Beach Corp.].

Q Now, describe a typical Concours d'Elegance at Pebble Beach. How would it...?

A Well, these cars were all placed out.

Q Are these by invitation only?

A Yes.

Q In other words, the board of directors or the chief judges, or whoever runs the Concours, would send out invitations?

A They'd send out invitations, yeah.

Q Now, what sort of group--what kind of people would they invite?
The top owners of restored cars?

A Yeah.

Q So, the invitations would go out to whom? What type of people?

A Well, those that had the best cars and have had the best cars in the past. What they try to do is to get new cars--newly restored cars--each year that haven't been shown before. Now, like this year [1986] it's the 100th anniversary, as you know, of Mercedes. That'll be the theme this year. Last year, it was Bugatti.

Q Are there different categories of judging in the Concours d'Elegance? What would be the categories?

A Yes. Well, there are some....

Q Take the last year that you did the judging before Bugatti. What was that?

A Well, they're classified into open cars and convertibles and closed cars. Now, like we had--three of us work on elegant open cars which includes convertibles. Elegant closed cars. Don't get me started, because I claim an elegant car is a conservative car. Beautiful, but not elegant. And, they have field judges. Six or eight guys that are going around and looking for accuracy. And, we are the guys that just go around and see which one we think is most elegant, see?

Q But, in the Concours, they are paraded in front of you, aren't they?

A Well, this comes later. The cars are sitting out there on the field, and they're examined by the judges, and then they are run over that ramp, and the announcer tells--he's a minister down there. You know?

Q Oh, Mr. Paul Woudenberg?

A Do you know Paul Woudenberg?

Q Yes, I've met him.

A He's not as good as this other fellow was. Don't tell him I said that. And, they announce the car and what award has been given them, and then they finally--when they get done, why, the honorary judges go off, and they decide the best of the show, which generally is about four o'clock. Now, they're going to start the judges--they want the judges down for breakfast at 7:30 this year because--and they won't open the gates until 10:00 because this keeps the crowd out, so the judges get a better crack at it, see?

Q Well, you enjoy it very much?

A Yes, I enjoy it very much, and I see people I haven't seen. Like, Petersen, I see him there every year, and we talk....

Q Don Petersen, Chairman of Ford Motor Company?

A Don Petersen, and I hear about--talked to him about Chase Morsey [Ford product planner] and all these guys.

Q Where's Mr. Morsey again?

A Well, he had gone with RCA, but he is now retired and lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Q What do you do when you have a Brunn automobile [exhibited]?

A Well, unfortunately, we haven't had a hell of a lot of Brunns, but I would disqualify myself, I think.

Q Would you normally? You told me once that there's someone in California who has a couple of dozen Brunns that's he's collected.

A Well, this might be Jack Passy. It might be Tom Powell. They're

Lincoln hounds. There's the first Brunn touring cabriolet built by my father in 1936--a KB that is owned by Walt Shear down in Thousand Oaks, and there is Matthew Browning of the Browning Firearms Company that has an exhibition hall of his own up in Ogden, Utah, and he lives in Ogden, Utah, in the summertime and down in Borago Springs in the winter. Well, I'll you this, I just sold him \$15,000 worth of non-Brunn archives.

Q Did you?

A Yeah, for the Browning Museum. Now, he's got the shop that his grandfather first founded the Browning Firearms Company, and then he's got the railroad station up there that's he's taken over as an automobile museum. Mrs. Browning is just as rabid as he is, if not more so.

And, another very active fellow is Otis Chandler.* He's collecting cars by the bagful. I mean, like sending Harry Andrews over there and bringing them back on the Concorde--chartering the Concorde to bring it back, you know.

Q He is of the Chandler Publishing Company--Los Angeles Times and others?

A It's the Times Mirror Company.

Q Is he the oldest Chandler at the moment?

A Oh, I'd say he about sixty. One of his daughters just got married the other day.

Q Is he still active in publishing?

*Editor's Note: As of 1989, Mr. Chandler had retired from active participation in the Times-Mirror Corporation and established a vinatage car museum in Oxnard, California.

A Well, he is not active in the management of the Times. He is chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the Times-Mirror Corporation [Chairman of the Executive Committee--1989].

Q Which is the Chandler family?

A Which publishes the Times and--I've never seen the Mirror, but it sounds like tabloid to me, and other magazines of various types they publish. I don't know what they are.

Q Hillsborough is sort of a junior edition of Pebble Beach?

A That's right. Now, there's a big pavillion down there [Los Angeles] known as the Chandler Pavillion that his mother donated. Do you know that? That's where they have the Oscar presentations every year and things like that.

Q Is he angling for some sort of a classic car show there? Does he want to use that as a showplace?

A I don't think so. But, it's just a showplace. Oh, that Chandler Pavilion?

Q Yes.

A No, he's got a garage of his own that's kind of a showplace down there, too.

Q It's a private collections not open to the public. Hillsborough-- how long has that been in existence?

A Well, that's been going some thirty years.

Q Has it really?

A Oh, yeah.

Q It was sort of the counterpart, but in the Bay Area, to...?

A Well, up until two years ago, it was run by the Sports Car Club,

and then they decided, like with the coming of the Candy Store over here, that....

Q Candy Store in Burlingame?

A In Burlingame, that they would make more effort to have unique and high-class automobiles, and they certainly succeeded this last time.

Q Yes. The French classic car was marvelous.

A Well, there's a Frenchman by the name of Jacques Hardingay that's got a whole bunch of--oh, what the hell--Lamborghinis--a couple of Lamborghinis and stuff like that, and this fellow made his money washing windows. He's a Basque, and you can't get him after 12:00 at noon because he and the staff clean many, many of the business buildings in San Francisco. Not all of them, I suppose, but washing the windows and mopping the floors. He chartered the Concorde, too, for a Maybach Zeppelin, you know, to bring over.

Q Well, in the last few minutes that we have on our last tape, Mr. Brunn, can you sort of sum up your career in three or four sentences?

A Well, I can sum up my career of being a very pleasant one, and I was very fortunate to be the son of Hermann A. Brunn, and I was also very fortunate that I had a father that took me around with him when I was in my teens and early twenties, and I became acquainted with so many of these people that were prominent in the automobile industry.

Q And, you absorbed all the atmosphere in the shop and the designing areas?

A Yes. Then this experience in Paris was priceless, not only from an artistic automobile standpoint but from--you know, the French are great people. I mean....

Q Marvelous taste?

A Marvelous taste, yes.

Q In a couple of words, how do you sum up car design as you have appreciated it over the years?

A Well, I think, design people's theories on design, change with the period. And, I think, it's improved. I don't like them all, but it's improved as compared with--well, this one of Mrs. Carter's that I showed you and stuff like that.

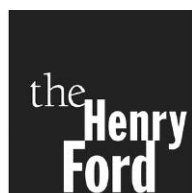
Q With the 1920's?

A Oh, yes.

Q How is it today?

A It's improved. I mean, the design and overall design--the silhouette and the pictures, but, I'll tell you there's one thing I don't like. There's no room for the passenger in the back. Now, we always used to have a story that [you should] give the passenger in the back leg room because he likes to get in the car and take all his anatomy with him. And on a lot of these these cars [today, that doesn't happen].

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