Paul W. Gillian Oral History

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Note to Readers

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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1985

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EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum &
Greenfield Village

The Reminiscences of

PAUL W. GILLAN

This oral reminiscence is the result of an interview with Paul W. Gillan during 1985 at The Edison Institute, Dearborn, Michigan. This interview was held under the sponsorship of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, Archives & Library Collections, The Edison Institute (Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village).

The questioning was primarily in the form of topics suggested to Mr. Gillan concerning his career. No editorial insertions have been made other than the brief synopsis of the interviewee's career activities.

The language of the narrative is entirely that of the interviewee. He has reviewed and corrected the manuscript and by his signature below indicated that it is a correct copy of his reminiscences.

Paul W. Gillan

Paul W. Gillan

5 SEPT 1986

Date

GILLAN, PAUL

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW - June 5, 1985

Q This is Dave Crippen and today is June 5, 1985. We are at the Design History Center, and this is one of our interviews in our design history oral reminiscences series. We are talking today with Mr. Paul W. Gillan who has had a long career at General Motors in the design department. Mr. Gillan will give us his career narrative in his own way at his own pace.

A Did you want to know something about my background--educational background? How I started out?

Q Yes

A Well, when I was very very young I was always interested in drawing, and I became involved in the Young Artists and Writers Club that the Detroit News had many many years ago. At that time I had several pictures published in the Detroit News. For a little kid of seven why, of course, that gave me a great impetus to continue my work. So I did a lot of drawing. I was always interested in cars probably because my dad had cars from way back in the early days, and he had done a lot of work on them. My grandfather, who lived in Canada, used to have a carriage building company and a blacksmith shop many years ago.

Q Where was that?

A That was in London.

Q Did he build carriages?

A He built carriages over there, and they used to in those days (I've seen pictures that my dad has shown me) have a ramp up to the top of the building. Of course, they didn't have fast-drying paints like they do today, so my dad's job was to go up there with a sprinkling can and water the whole thing down and then a little later when the dust settled water it again. Then when the carriages were taken up there, and painted, it would take about 15 to 18 days to paint a carriage because they would have to put several coats of paint on. In those days there weren't any dryers in the paints so air drying at the natural time why it took a long time as a result. I was always interested in automobiles, drawing them, painting them, that sort of thing. I was born in Detroit. I attended Southeastern High School and then I went to Wayne University where I took art, design and advertising. Then in the evenings I was also interested in all sorts of advertising because I knew you had to know a lot about clothes and how they hang and this sort of thing, because I thought I'd be an illustrator. Illustration was a big thing in those days. So at night, while I was attending the university in the daytime, I went down to Cass Tech and I took fashion illustration and more art courses. Then when I finished those, I continued at Wayne. I switched over to evenings at Wayne and got a job at Standard Accident Insurance Company. My folks knew an executive down there that could give some business training and maybe it would get me away from the art line.

Q They were a little unsure?

A They were because the artists traditionally haven't always made the best living.

Q They probably thought you would starve.

A Yes. A lot of them did. It was kind of tough to find a job but of course in those days if you could get a job as an illustrator. Illustrators made very good money. I was interested in that sort of thing.

Q How did you do at Wayne? Were your instructors encouraging?

A Oh yes very.

Q Were there any particular ones that were.

A Ralph Gross was one of the ones that did--he was a very good designer and artist and encouraged me to continue on so I did, and I liked it. Also I had an uncle that encouraged me because he was in the railroad business. He was little older and he was saying at the time that you can get into railroad or you get into insurance or some other type of business. You may do quite well financially, but it can be very very dull and it's type of thing that knowing my background he just thought that it wouldn't be the thing for me. So as a result I liked the art business. At that time I tried to get a job over at Chrysler's while I was working over at Standard Accident Insurance Company. I went over there trying to get a job as a automobile designer. I took some samples over.

Q Who did you see?

A Golly, I don't even remember the fellow's name.

Q When was this?

A This was in 19, well it was before I went in the service, so it had to be in 1941. He took my samples and looked at them and made all sorts of comments and he was encouraging. He took my name and application and so on, but about that time we were talking about conscripting all the fellows for the service, and there wasn't a war on yet but it certainly looked like there would be. So they put my name in a hat with the rest of them, and I was one of the early ones drawn. So in August, 1941, before there was a war, I went into the service for supposedly six months of training. While I was in there they extended that to eighteen months of training. Then, of course, in December war broke out and I was in for four and a half years then at that time.

Q What theater were you in? Were you in the U.S. Army?

A I was in the Army. I started out in the Army. I started out in the infantry. Nearly everyone went in the infantry. Then the war broke out and they shipped a whole group up to San Francisco up to the Presidio. We were just up there to do our indoctrination in mosquito netting and the rest of the thing to go to the Pacific. Most of the fellows I trained with did; however, they were looking for a cadre to put into the intelligence group in San Francisco, and I was one of those chosen because of my qualifications. So I worked in there for awhile, and it was a 16 hour day. It was very very busy. It was headquarters

for the Fourth Army at the time. And then I heard about new unit that was going to be activated down in the Federal Building, and that was the 12th Naval district headquarters, and they needed someone in the intelligence department down there who had the background in art and knew something about mechanical drawing and this sort of thing. I was one of those selected. So I was then transferred to the Navy, and a lot of my family and relatives in Detroit thought there must be something the matter because you had to be thoroughly investigated, and all of them were required to say what they knew about my background. But I got into this group and then I was very very lucky because while part of the time it was around the clock working arrangement, I was then put on commutations and rations and given an allowance and lived at a civilian hotel in San Francisco. That was very very nice. So I was working for the Navy and I liked it very much. Most of it was the collection and dissemination of all sorts of information and this sort of thing. A lot of interesting work. But while I was there it also gave me an opportunity to do freelance art work in my spare time because we were right downtown and being single you can just can't get along with what the Army gives you to work with, and I was dating quite a bit at the time because I was working with a lot a gals over at the Federal Building. So in the afternoon at the hotel when I would get off I would go up on the roof and would sunbathe up on the roof. It was a very very nice arrangement--I liked that. Had a good time.

But I did need more money so then I did get into the art business doing a lot of free-lance art work around San Francisco and it was easy at the time because some of the best artists were in the service and I didn't have a difficult time getting work.

Q What kind of commissions did you get?

A Well, I did all sorts of drawings and paintings--they went into the cable cars and buses and you know those cards they put on the inside of--that sort of thing. Billboards--a couple billboards that I did for the Diamond Palace Jewelry Company right there on Market Street in San Francisco. So this was great, I liked it but at the same time I still liked the automobile business and thought when I got out I might like to make some samples while I was in the service so when I got out of the service I would be able to take the samples around and conceivably get into advertising, or if not, into the automobile business. I tried at different times to get into the Air Force. I wanted to be a flyer but I couldn't because of my eyesight. They said the only thing that you will probably ever do is to fly a kite because you can't make it in the service as a flyer, so I didn't. At any rate time went on and on, and I had a good time out there and met a lot of interesting people and did a lot of nice things.

Q Did you get some contacts in the design and advertising world as well?

A It did as far as San Francisco and California, but if I wanted to continue on out there and I had every hope of continuing on in California. I knew three people out there that wanted to invest in an advertising agency with me in Southern Cal which would

have been a nice thing. But, as soon as the war was over, I returned home just to see my folks and collect my gear and then thought I'd go back to the West Coast. Well, my younger brother meantime had been a finance officer, in North Africa, flying around auditing various air fields and he got a bad case of yellow jaundice or whatever they call it. So he was in the hospital there and was sent back to the hospital in Philadelphia and flown from there to Chicago. He just had a 60/40 chance of living. His chances not being very good at all. So consequently when I returned to Detroit, I would want to go over and see him on the weekends. So in order to sustain myself, I went out looking for a job. I went to a couple of advertising agencies. One I went to in the General Motors Building said well the type of thing you've got here with these automobiles and so on you ought to go over and see Harley Earl in the General Motors Building because you'd be a good designer. Well that pleased me that they thought of me in that light. So, I went to the GM Building and that was when I first got out of the service that was in December, 1945. I went over the to General Motors Building, took some samples over, and met Harley Earl. He was from California and I had a lot of flamboyant things in there including a lot of pictures of girls and this sort of thing and this rather appealed to him. I think maybe even more so the girls than the automobiles. Then I had a California scene in there that I did--what I proposed

for an advertising agency for myself in North Hollywood at the time. Because at that time going out Sunset Strip it wasn't built up like it is today--there's plenty of vacant space out there, and I thought it might be a good place to put up a building and have an ad agency. So, I did a nice architectural rendering of this and put some automobiles around there, and Earl was very interested in these, particularly with a California background. So, he hired me. Then I started in

Q What's your impression of Earl? Could give us a sketch of your first impression of Harley Earl?

A When I first went in to see him?

Q Yes.

A Well first I had to see a man who was an assistant of his. He was in charge of the design up there. His name was Jules Andrade.

Q Oh yes. I've heard of him.

A He was the assistant in charge of design. Howard O'Leary was Earl's business associate and business assistant. So I went in and I saw Jules first before I could see Harley Earl. And then Jules said, he would stutter a little bit: I'll take you in to see Mr. Earl. Okay, he went in and he came back and said would you like to come in and meet Mr. Earl? So I went in and he had Howard O'Leary in there also. So I talked to all three of them. Oh, you asked what my first impression of Harley Earl. Well, he's a huge man--great big tall fellow. Very very well dressed, and he could be very engaging when you weren't working for him

directly or when he first met you. He had a very very good impression as far as I was concerned. He was very courteous, and to a young fellow going in, why naturally you were a bit impressed with someone who might be your potential boss to begin with so you...

Q Did you know about his Hollywood background?

A I didn't know anything about his Hollywood background. Before I went into the service he had done a couple of special cars and the photographs of those were in the Detroit News, and I clipped those out and put them in a scrapbook I had as I did with all special cars at that time. In fact I still have those in a scrapbook at home. So I was very impressed with that, and we talked about about that car. They called it the "Y" Job at the time. It was a Buick automobile, and the car that I did in my California painting that I described was an adaptation of this "Y" Job. It was a convertible, and was a three-quarter front view looking down, and the car instead of having exhaust pipes coming out of the side of the hood, I had them coming out of the plan view of the rear fender. It was quite a striking car--it was black and red, and then the interior of the car was a combination of red leather with surrounds done in Zebra skin--black and white Zebra skin which is flamboyant and probably not so great in the taste element. It did appeal to me at the time because it was a very attractive picture. I was impressed. I was very happy to work there. Usually when they get a person

in who never worked for you before they started them out in an area they call 40 Milwaukee which was an indoctrination center for young aspiring designers. That was run by a man at that time named Ned Nickles.

Q Tell us about Ned. We've heard a lot about him.

A Have you heard a lot about Ned?

Q Yes. You could add to our knowledge of what he was doing at the time.

A Well, Ned was running 40 Milwaukee at the time that I started over there. It was an area to train aspiring young designers. And there were a lot of young people around. In fact, Irv Rybicki, who got Bill Mitchell's job over there, who's now V.P. [of Design at General Motors]. (He used to be an assistant of mine) was at 40 Milwaukee at the time. And Ned tells me that at the time Irv wasn't really all that great. He never had any art training. So that's why he was at 40 Milwaukee. And Ned said that they went over there and took a look at his work and Jules Andrade said "You know, Ned, I don't think this kid's got it. I really think we ought to let him go. I just don't think he's going to develop." And Ned tells me that he said, "Well, Jules let's keep him on a little while longer" [because he didn't have as many kids in there--he lost one--it didn't make his job as important] so he said "Keep Irv on. I can see that he has a little potential, let's keep him on for a little while. Let's give him a little try." So they kept

Irv on, and this was a direct result of Ned Nickles' encouragement.

Q How did Mr. Nickles like your work?

A Mr. Nickles never liked any work but his own. I don't say that facetiously but pretty much that's the way he was because he had and has a very good impression of his work and his design ability, and rightfully so. He was a very very good designer. He was a much better designer than he was an artist in my estimation. His people were always too big for his automobiles, and this sort of thing. Another thing I want to mention about Ned Nickles, an interesting thing. One time Earl decided it would be a good idea to get his people to travel a bit--get them out in the world and see a few a things, meet people and broaden their horizons. He decided a good place for us to go would be California. So he sent a group of us out there. He sent out Bill Lang, Clare McKichan, Ned Nickles, and myself, Ed Glowacke. He was running Cadillac at that time, successor to Bill Mitchell at Cadillac studio. So Earl thought it would be a good idea if we went out to California. So Howard O'Leary set it all up. We flew to Los Angeles. He arranged for us have cars to drive there. There was a guy by the name of Hall out there who was a Buick dealer so we took a cab over to Hall's place and he got us Buicks to drive while we were out there and we saw a lot of California. Enjoyed it very very much. Put us up at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Very very nice accommodations there. Good expense accounts. Everybody had the finest meals. We got loaded every night. Then from there we went down to San Diego. Had a good

time at San Diego. But what I was going to get to with Ned Nickles was that in Los Angeles when we went out to Art Center School [of Design] and we were all to give a little dissertation to the group of design students there on our backgrounds and also critique on a lot of their designs and art work, and Ned Nickles at that time had been up a lot of the night because at that time he was a rather heavy boozer. The next morning he said to the group that it's great for you fellows to be out here working, but in my particular case I never went to art school in my life and I made it. Now this is a great thing to say to group of young fellows who saved since they were twelve years old to go to art school and thought that was the only way to get in. And, of course, nowadays it is. Ned in that regard didn't have all the tact that he might have. But he's a great guy. He's a nice guy. At General Motors he went from 40 Milwaukee to become chief designer of Buick. He was a bachelor. Great, big, tall fellow, balding. He always had special Buicks. Buick people like him very very much. In fact, it would be a good idea sometime if you could get Ned in here because he give you a good background, not just on the design aspect of General Motors, but if you want a General Motors background, also on the Buick management. Harlow Curtice, Ed Ragsdale and the fellows that were running the organization at that time; Curtice, of course, later going on to become president of GM. They thought a great deal of Ned Nickles. He could do no wrong because he used to go up every

Saturday morning and that entire group used to play cards at one of the downtown hotels in Flint. Ned was pretty good, I understand, at playing cards and they had their poker games up there which lasted all day and half the night. So he was in pretty tight with that group. Probably would be an interesting story in itself.

Q But there you are at 40 Milwaukee

A 40 Milwaukee--which was about a block away from General Motors Building on Milwaukee Avenue.

Q That was the training center for styling.

A That was the training center for young designers. I didn't go there. They put me directly into the Oldsmobile studio working for Art Ross at the time.

Q How did that happen? You're a fledgling designer and who decided that you should go right into the...

A Harley Earl decided I should go into a studio because, well, you see, a lot of these other fellows didn't have much of an art background, and some of the work, frankly wasn't all that good. And they had design ability and they could come up with designs but their presentations were bad. If you're going to make presentations to top people at the corporation, you'd better put up some presentations that look professional. A lot a times they could get artists--professional artists--who could do a very good job, but they couldn't design. If you had a combination of both things, you were in. That's what

helped me at the time. So I went to work for Art Ross.

Q Art Ross was the chief

A Chief designer for Oldsmobile studios.

Q Where is that located?

A Well, the studios themselves at that time were located in the GM Research Building which is on Milwaukee Ave. It's now GM Photographic. A large building directly behind the GM Building.

A And it was connected by a bridge across up on the ninth floor I believe from the GM Building. So I went in to work for Art Ross

Q When was this by the way?

A That in January, 1946.

Q Can you sort of sketch for us in some detail, the atmosphere of an established studio with a chief designer and you were a junior designer coming into a studio. In some detail, how did that work? What were your experiences?

A Well, when you entered the studio at that time the studios were --first of all, the design department at that time was one great big open section

Q Sort of a bull pen type thing?

A Well, it was one great big open section because this was immediately following the war and during the war, I understand it, they took down all of the partitions, and this was a great big drafting facility. So this was immediately after the war,

so what they did was have, they didn't all the permanent walls up at that time so they had huge boards on wheels separating the various studios. Each studio was very very large. But there wasn't the degree of security that they would liked to have had at that particular time immediately after the war. So I went into the Olds studio, met Art Ross. Art was a dapper little guy--had a mustache, and you hear sorts of things about artists and artistic types and this sort of thing, so Art sat me down--across from me--and said "Well kid, do you like girls." He put his hand on my knee and I thought oh, oh, my God, what did I get into. I didn't have anything to worry about cause Art did like girls. So I was all set. I said, "Oh, yes." And naturally I picked that up and said "yes, yes, fine." He said, "Good, good, that's the kind of guy I like." So that was on safe ground.

Q Was there some question in those days that artists were gay?

A Well, I guess there is sometimes with artistic types you think you could be gay and this sort of thing, and I've never had any experience working with an art group before. But, I didn't have to worry about that in the automobile design group because it's mechanically oriented. And usually in a mechanically-oriented area they don't have as much of that sort of activity. Although later they did, I understand, in the interior group out at the Tech Center.

Q Did they?

A Yes. Some of the fellows out there I think were gay. But at any rate I was working in the Oldsmobile studio...

Q And you hit it off pretty well with Art Ross?

A I got along with him alright. He had a lot of eccentricities. His idea was to work all day, work hard, then work overtime. He'd go out about 4:00, 4:30, 5:00 to dinner, wouldn't get back till 8:30, we were still working there then he'd want to sit down and regale us with all his experiences and background. Hell, we all wanted was to get home, and we'd been working all day, and at that time they didn't pay you overtime. They only gave you a dollar for your dinner at night

Q You'd have to go out and scrounge around on the Boulevard looking for restaurants...

A Yeah, look around there on the Boulevard. Grand Boulevard/ Woodward area/Cass Avenue area. So a lot of time those days the fellas go over and maybe have a drink. A lot of them liked to have a drink with dinner. Well, it cost you your dollar allowance just for the drink. That's the time that I met a lot of interesting people up there. Well, Dick Teague was in the Pontiac studio.

Q Was he? Recently a vice president of American Motors design.

A Yes. And Dick was from California. And I got along good with Dick. Dick liked old automobiles. He was single at the same time, and one day he said come on over to my place. I've got a room over here on Lothrup behind the Fisher Building, and he was restoring a old 1903 Ford in this lady's garage. So we went out around the alley way, and he opened garage door and went in there. He was restoring this 1903 Ford. He showed me his room

up there, and you had to enter the door sideways because he had so much automobilia in there and brass lamps--stashed behind the door--that you could scarcely get into the room. He was just nuts about this sort of thing. That, incidentally, turned out to be his demise at General Motors because Art Ross didn't like this sort of thing. Didn't like old cars at all. Dick was always on the telephone. Always talking to people about old cars, where to get them fixed, where to locate them, automobile meets, and so on, and he was on the phone more than he was designing automobiles. I was in Olds about one year when I was moved over to Pontiac studio, and...

Q Are you continuing with Dick [Teague]?

A I'm continuing with Dick. But I was in Pontiac studio a year later, and Dick came over, rang the bell and said, well, Paul, put out his hand, shake hands, buddy, I'm leaving. How come I said. He said, that son-of-bitch Ross fired me. So Ross fired him up there. He never liked Dick too much anyway. So that's when Dick Teague left the [GM] corporation. Of course, it was better for him that he did considering his fine career with at AMC, and I believe he was a Packard and Ford for awhile too. He worked around and had a pretty good background.

Q What sort of duties did you have at the Oldsmobile studio? What sort of projects did they put you on?

A Well, we you started out you always hear that people are put on wheel discs or they did door handles or this sort of thing. It really wasn't true. You could work on any of those projects but you did the entire automobile whatever part of the car that hadn't been completed and designed at that time, you were part of the design team to come up with ideas--make sketches. At that time they were doing the 1948 Oldsmobile 98 Futuramic.

Q Was this to be the first post-war vehicle.

A Yes, it was the first post-war GM car which was the C body at that time. It was a facelift of the A bodies in the pre-war cars which was a very, very minor face lift. However, with this new car I was put to work on that. I did a lot of the interior work because in those days interiors and exteriors were all done in the one studio. They didn't have a special interiors department so I did a lot of work on the interior. I did most of the instrument panel, the speedometer cluster and the arrangement of knobs down the side and steering wheel. I did the lettering on the automobile and the some of the script. It wasn't script we put on the Olds at that time, it was a block lettering that we put up there. I did all those things. Those were my first projects--an Oldsmobile, a 1948 Oldsmobile. When I went over there I didn't have any experience in air brush so after the war you couldn't buy air brushes or any of that sort of thing around Detroit, so I found out the address of Thayer Chandler in Chicago and called them, and they said they would be there on Saturday morning. I got a flight and flew over to Chicago on a Saturday morning and picked an air brush and flew back and had a big tank (I was living with my parents at the time), and I rented one of these

great big air compression tanks and they brought it into the house. It was a heavy damn thing. I got it all hooked up, and I was doing air brushing at home. Practicing on air brushing. So in my spare time with practicing air brushing at home I was able to turn out a lot of renderings--a lot more renderings that some of the fellows who were in the studio who were married and, of course, didn't do any work at home at all--only those in the studio. So I kept bringing my work into the studio and my work looked like twice as much as the rest of them, and I did it mainly not to show up anybody else but mainly to brush up on air brushing.

Q Now air brushing at this point had begun in the late 1930's and early 1940's hadn't it in a rather primitive way?

A Yes. Well it had been used a great deal for advertising a great deal but they used it over at General Motors because a lot of times they were making full-size renderings of automobiles, and of course an air brush you could put on a nozzle which would give you a little wider spread than you would use for close work, and it was a good way of putting highlights on black paper so that when you stood back and looked at a distance it looked like a real automobile sitting, maybe, in dim light. So I learned air brushing at that time, but Earl seemed to be impressed with a lot of the work that was going up in there. Immediately after the war, the fellows were just coming back the service, Cadallac was run by Bill Mitchell, Olds by Art Ross, Buick by a man named Henry Lauve, Pontiac by a man named Bob Lauer. Now, Bob Lauer was really an engineer. Lauer had worked for years down at Brewster Body Works before he came to General Motors--an older fellow--doing layouts and designing cars down in New York City. In his spare time he went to one of the colleges down there and got a degree in design, and so he had done

a lot of work for Earl on car work and Earl liked his background at Brewster Body so he put him in designing Pontiac cars. But at the same time, Laur wasn't really a designer, he wasn't an artist type of designer, so he had to rely on some other artist to depict what he was putting on paper. This man was Joe Schemansky. Joe was Bob Lauer's assistant, and Bob relied very heavily on him because Bob really wasn't an artistic type of designer. He could do line drawings as they did in the old days at Brewster, but he relied on Joe to make the presentations. However, Earl always felt that Pontiac studio in those days under Laur looked more like an engineering room than it did a design studio. So that was one reasons that they put me in there because I did a lot of artwork.

Q He needed help in there?

A Yes, he needed help in there at the time. So Earl wanted the studio to be sketch and rendering oriented instead of just profile line drawings filling up the walls so soon I had them covered with color drawings and sketches including murals of future products. And Earl was very happy with the way the studio looked at that time so he brought all the top brass in including all the rest of the chief designers to see the way he thought the room really should look. Because up to that time, Bill Mitchell's Cadillac studio was <u>the</u> studio up there--loaded with drawings. In fact, in those days in order to get--Bill would always try to be flamboyant, so he'd even have sketches tacked on the ceiling so it looked as though he was really put out a lot of work in the place.

Q Was this calculated?

A It was in Mitchell's case because Mitchell was a showman very much like Earl but he also was smart enough to realize that Earl liked

showmanship and this sort of gave Mitchell the edge up until that time, but at that time he didn't have large murals. I had full-size murals all around the wall. I had the shop people come up while Laur was away and put boards all over the walls--even part of the walls that were metal--had full-size murals of automobiles up there with Hawaiian scenes with search lights up in the sky with airplanes and beautiful girls in cars and all this sort of thing, so the studio was really more flamboyant than Cadillac in those days and that's why Earl brought all his cronies in there to see the place. He really liked it.

Q He would bring them to to tour your facility?

A Yes. He liked it. Of course when Laur came back from vacation and saw this, at first he didn't know what the hell to say because this was his studio and it didn't look like an engineering room any more. But as soon as he knew that Earl liked it, they everything was fine. Then I was in solid. Well, you were asking, Dave, about immediately following the war what some of the conditions were over at General Motors. It was a hectic place in those days because we were in hurry to get out the newest cars we could as fast as we could, and of course they could do them a lot faster in those days than they could today because the lead time wasn't nearly what it is today.

Q What was the lead time in those days?

A The lead time in those days would be about 16-18 months to get things done. And why they could tool things up faster in those days I don't know whether it was the work ethic or labor considerations or what. At any rate, they could do it a lot faster than they can do it today. All you have to do is consider when the war came, the very short time that it took Ford Motor Company to erect the building and start turning out

bombers at the rate of one an hour about a year and half after we entered the war. Now today it takes 24 months to start to turn out an automobile--just a face lift on an automobile! So in other words they were doing things a lot faster in those days than they are about to do it today for some reason I really don't know why. At any rate were screwing around trying to do all sorts of things, and some of automobiles in those days they weren't able to get enought chrome for, so the parts had to be sprayed. The bumpers had to be sprayed, so part of the job was to coordinate the color of the bumper with the cars and the rest of thing. In those days also they couldn't get whitewall tires, so they came out with these plastic white wheel rims to put on and they looked great for a few months until they got all dinged against the curb and all yellowed and so on they would throw them away. There was a big scurry after the war to get new cars. The big thing was to get new ideas. We were always wondering what was going on over at Ford and Chrysler and Packard and Hudson and the rest of them. The big deal in those days was if they could General Motors--if you knew anyone working over at Hudson or Packard--find out what they're doing over there, talk to the guys, go to lunch with them, see if you couldn't get a little inkling of what was going on.

Q It was genteel espionage?

A It was genteel espionage--that sort of thing. I did a grille for Pontiac one time and had big circle around the center of the thing. It was a face lift on one of the Pontiacs. One of the designers, Melvin Melwinney, who worked in there at the time--quiet little guy--said "well you know I've been doing some work in my spare time over at George Walker's studios in the New Center Building and Ford is coming out with a

grille just like that. I happened to see a picture over there." So God, this scared the hell out of me. Here we were releasing engineering drawings on this front end of the Pontiac with the circle on it. God they called Earl in on it right away. He questioned Melwinney again about the thing. He said no, that's the way it was; so then Earl called up George Walker. He knew Walker. Walker had formerly been with GM years ago. He called Walker and said that he just found that they were working on something like this and we were doing the same type of thing. How far along are you? George Walker said well hell we got the thing already to go, it's going on the 1949 Ford. That's the way it's going to be. So Earl said, Christ, if that's the case we've got to do something else, so we did. We immediately did a quick change utilizing as much of the old design as we could in just did something else in the center part of the grille. This is the type of thing we had to keep abreast of what else was going on in the car industry.

Q Now they were going to have a spinner type grille. Was yours pretty much the same type?

A Yea. It was pretty much the same. The same type of thing.

Q I guess Joe Oros was partly responsible for that.

A I understand that he was too. At that time he was with George Walker, and the thing turned out that way. Of course, it's a natural evolution, you know, to hit on these different themes because a lot of the themes you see in futuristic drawings that just appeared publicly in magazines and somebody picks it up and expounds on it and you come up with a new design along the same lines. The same thing happens with side treatments of automobiles, interiors, wheel covers and all the rest of

the things on cars.

Q So it's really just a large fraternity of designers borrowing occasionally from each other in an evolutionary way.

A In an evolutionary way, that's the way it'll be. You certainly wouldn't--nobody would borrow intentionally on anything because you wouldn't want to be considered unoriginal for one thing and secondly it just ethically it just wouldn't be the thing to do.

Q So in a sense you really absorb what going on in the design would and it's all into your own design mental matrix, and often something comes out that looks vaguely familiar.

A Oh yes. That happens all the time. It really does. That's why all the people--the public--say "why does this car look like that car? Why does it happen? They must copy from each other." And really, in reality, they don't but it's just an evolutionary trend in that it is evolution--it's not a revolutionary trend. In a revolutionary thing the car would be entirely different. We were just going to start from scratch. But mostly these things are face lifts or just change the rear fender. When you get down to it there's just so many things you can do on the rear fender or side treatment on the car and still be within the bounds of decorum, so that's why a lot of the cars, I think look, alike. Those were hectic days, and we had a pretty good time.

Q One question here at this point if I may, Harley Earl obviously runs a very tight ship, keeps close contact on what's going on. How did the Earl proprietorship of the design center--how did he keep things going? Did he have lieutenants who checked on the progress of various designs or was there an input from the body engineering department and

the fledgling product planning group?

A Well, it changed over the years naturally like everything else, but now we're talking about 1947. In the early 40's, when it was known as GM Styling, and at the time I entered GM styling they had about 600-700 employees, and that consisted of five studios, each of the car divisions, wood shop, metal shop, a plaster shop, and a paint shop (this was the fabrication group), the engineering department, draftsmen working in there, and then each studio had its own complement of clay modelers. Then there was a body development studio under the name of Vince Kaptur. Later his son came in an took over the same studio after old Kap retired.

Q Now what was their function?

A Their function was to do a general body that would be used by all cars. In other words, when were coming with say with a new small body, a new A body for the corporation, a body that would be shared by Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, and sometimes Buick, you would have to have a common body, but a body that would adapt itself to the individual design of all four divisions. So it was up to the individual studios then after a body design had been arrived at to convert it to the four different automobiles so they all looked different. In the beginning the body development people got together and worked with the chief engineers of all of the divisions to find out what interior accommodations they want. In other words, some years they want just a little bit more leg room, maybe they've gotten a beef that the leg room wasn't enough. Maybe they wanted a little more hip room or better visibility in the car, so they would make their inputs, the body development studio would then put the Oscar, as they would call it, which was the mannequin in the seats, design the body

around there to get all the interior accommodations and exterior accommodations that were required. Then in order to get some design into the car, the three or four divisions sharing the body would send a couple of their designers in to work with the body development group--each working on full-sized boards to come up with a new body design that would be pleasing.

Q When you say full-sized boards, you mean wall boards.

A Wall boards, yes, with vellum sketch paper on them. They would lay out the automobile on those, all of these were all divided up in 5 inch grids, and Earl would then spend an awful lot of time in body development studio because you see this was the architecture for the automobile. You had have that right--if you didn't have that, you had nothing. So you start with that, and then the foundation of car as he called it. You'd build up from there. Then, if you got a car that looked quite good, then he would take make prints, and Fisher Body would also be involved in that their engineers would come over and put their inputs into the thing. You know in the state of the art there are always changes. Maybe a windshield can be tilted just a little bit more because of the glass that they have now--the old glass, the laminated glass, used to be so thick that you couldn't get much of a tilt on the glass because if you did you'd have a distortion--particularly in night driving, so there were all of these parameters that we had to work within. Anyway, when they got a body that looked as though it would be pretty acceptable, then prints were given to each of the divisional studios to share that body, and they would each come up with their own designs, usually fenders and their rear decks and parts of the car to make it individual to the specific division.

Q You haven't gotten to a buck or a popular clay model at this stage have you?

A Not at this time, no. That would come later. As soon as it starts to look pretty good, and everyone likes the look of it, then they would make a buck, and then it would go down to the wood shop and they would make seating buck on the car.

Q This would be full size?

A Full size--doors that swing open.

Q By the way, Oscar is a famous average American driver isn't he?

A Yeah. 98 percentile driver.

Q How did that come about?

A I don't know. They had that when I started there, they had Oscar at that particular time was just a plastic figure.

Q Five foot eight or something?

A Five foot eight and a half

Q Average weight

A Average weight and height and later all the divisions got together to work out what they thought was the ideal Oscar and then they had a regular symposium in which Ford and Chrysler became involved through the Society of Automotive Engineers, and so as a result they got together with today's Oscar which is used for all automobile companies. In the old days they just had this plastic Oscar that they used to shove in there, and it was different in each of the automobiles companies, and it was contrived in the body development studios.

Q Can you explain at this time for us exactly how the ABC body system worked at General Motors after the war?

A When I got there they already had the AB & C body system. The three different body sizes.

Q A, of course, was the...

A Smallest, B was a little bit larger

Q What models would be in the A classification?

A A would be Chevrolet and Pontiac. Then later on they would make the small Oldsmobile and a small Buick with an A, but not all years. Some years they would if the sales weren't good then they'd drop it for awhile. The B body was the large body for Pontiac and Chevrolet, but it was the small body for Oldsmobile and Buick. The C body would be the large body, like for the Olds 98, the Buick Electra, and, of course, the Cadillac.

Q Fascinating. So you would go to a wooden buck, that would be the wood studios that would do that?

A Yea

Q They would take the sections of the drawings that applied to the

A The engineers would then make the sections--they draw up the buck roughly and then they give that to the wood shop, and the wood shop would construct it. They constructed this on a wooden platform which was the proper height from the ground which would show the proper ground clearance of an automobile so when you're stepping into it, you would be stepping in the car at curb height.

Q Then the buck would be taken once that preliminary approval was given, it would be taken to the clay model shop after that?

A Well, yeah. You'd have to call all of the engineering groups in. They'd have to look at it and so on, and the chief engineer and the chief

body engineer and all of their people would come down and the hangers on--they'd all come along on the thing to put in their little two bits. They'd look at the car. They'd sit in it, they'd see how it worked, but at the same time we had to have different floors in there because the chief engineers of the divisions would have to supply the tunnel configuration because each of them had a little bit different tunnel configurations so they each have to supply that. So we'd have one buck in there with a floor that would be removable, then we'd put the Chevrolet floor in, and then we'd put the Buick floor in the Oldsmobile and so on until it got to the point where it cost so much they decided the best they could do, they'd better get together and have a standardization of floors, which they did later on. But, to answer your question, after they decided that this looked pretty good, then we started our clay models. There would be a clay model going because it would be going actually simultaneously with the wood buck because while the wood buck was being constructed, the modelers were doing the full-sized clay.

Q Now what frame would they use to put their clay on?

A They would make a wooden frame that was probably five to seven inches smaller so that when the clay was packed on you could bring it up to the exterior dimensions. It used to be made of wood with slats all around it, then it would be shellacked, then it would be primed with clay. They'd pack the clay on. Later years and now they use Styrofoam. They use a simple wood and metal armature, then it's filled with Styrofoam. That is then shellacked and then the clay is put on that, and it makes it a lot easier because, for example, if you wanted to use an old armature and make a radical departure--if you wanted to two door out of a four-door buck for example, that means you're going to have to chop part

of the back light away. So you can do that easily in styrafoam where you couldn't do that in wood--you'd have to take all the clay off that. Woodworkers have to come up, reconstruct another armature right in the studio and then repack the clay and so on.

Q Now is armature another name for part of a buck?

A An armature in sculpturing jargon--any sculptor, whether he's doing a bust of a person or an automobile or anything always has to work around a framework. That framework is known as an armature.

Q It could be any section?

A It could be any section then at all. It's just a box really to pile the clay on, and then you do the work on the clay.

Q But it's to spec isn't it?

A Oh yes. It is so you don't have to put on too much clay--have it too thick.

Q What type of clay was being used right after the war? Was it a rather awkward clay?

A No. It really wasn't too much different than it is right now. It was worked by the Chauvant Clay Company in New York City. There were different clay companies, but it seems as though Chauvant had the inside track with this because they developed a clay that was malleable. It had to be heated, and was developed pretty much for the automobile industry, so they always keep a clay oven in each studio with huge drawers packed with this clay. They pull the clay out--they have clay handlers whose job it is to bring the clay over on little trucks to the armature, and then they have some of the fledgling modelers to pack this on so that the modelers then don't have to go through all the preliminary work, you see.

Q There's a hierarchy in the modelers field.

A Oh yes. Well, there rather is. Although if there's not enough help why anybody will grab it and slap it on. Yes, there is, like in everything else you know, this fellow's a handler, and he hasn't been with them so long, he's younger and hell, let him bring it over. So he learns. Then the modelers just fit the templates on there.

Q Tell me about the templates. How does that work?

A Templates are made by the wood shop from full-sized scale drawings for a roof. In other words, for any part of the automobile. As I said before, these full-sized drawings were done on paper that were marked off in 5 inch squares. First of all, we just do the drawings to rough out--to get some ideas. Then we put it on very very carefully on 5 inch squared drawing paper. Once it's on there, you have a reference so when you make a template of a car, you know precisely what the numbers are, and you can fit these templates so there's a section every 5 inches

Q You mean dimensions?

A Dimensions. So that what you can do is every 5 inches you get a different contour on the automobile both longitudinally and horizonally. By doing it this way you have a cross section every 5 inches. By doing it this way you have supply of templates fitted onto the clay model, you merely have to scrape off the area in between it, and you've got the shape.

Q The template gives it a scale drawing.

A Scale interpretation of the full-size drawing.

Q It gives you the actual contour of the part.

A Yes. Because you see on drawing it looks very very good, and when you're making a drawing, a real good draftsman can draw a front view of

the car on the scale drawing showing all these 5 inch sections all the way down the car so that as you look at if you have a real good eye you can just interpret what the section of the automobile is going to be. If you look in all three views you can get a very good idea. Earl had a very uncanny way of looking at these drawings and knowing what the car was going to look like, but Earl could not sketch, he was not a sketch type of artist. He couldn't come up with ideas in sketch form. He was good on full-size work. He could look at the full-size drawings, and, as I understand it in his dad's early automobile company out in California doing custom bodies, this is what he was used to doing--not sketches and coming up with wild ideas that way, so he would work with his full-size draftsmen out there and that's what they would work on. This is what he was used to doing, but then it had to be put into 3-D,in clay so that you could see how it looked, but when you see it in 3-D, often times it doesn't look--it looks more bulbous or you have hollow sections, and it doesn't look nearly as good as you'd find on the drawing so then you'd have to scrape off a little here and a little there and change the whole car. When you're finished with a full-sized clay drawing it really is a great deal different than the original full-sized line drawing that it was taken from. Then after we'd get the full-sized clay model completed, we used to slick it down and get it real slick section so you could see the highlights on the thing, and then they used to over it and now they put on what they call di-noc.

Q That was the trade name?

A It's probably the trade name of the stuff. It's a real thin plastic film. They spray it any color you want in the shop, and then they give this to the modelers and the modelers take sections of the di-

noc, this thin film, and they wet it, as it's very malleable, and they just then take slicks--small plastic squares--run over it, and over the surface, and it adheres to the surface of the automobile. So when it's all done, you know even around compound surfaces, they are very very good at cutting out little wedges and slicing it and being very very thin one piece can go over the other without actually showing any depth of surface, and they will do that until the entire car appears to be painted. Then we take the car outside to look at it at a distance in comparing with other automobiles.

Q You say take it outside. Does it have wheels and tires, and can it be pulled?

A No, as I said before this is built on a platform, and the platform has small casters under it so it can be transported outside.

Q At this point are you using a bridge in the clay modeling department? Could you tell us a little about what a bridge is and what it does?

A Yes. Well, to begin with, all clay models are built within a platform. A platform is a metal plate which surrounds the entire car. The platform is measured off in inch lines so that when you fit these templates to the clay model, you have lines of reference to set the templates. These metal plates--platforms--and then when they want to put a bridge across and automobile, they have this bridge that fits across the automobile and comes down each side and fits on the plate. It moves fore and aft so that you can take your points on the model to correspond to the points on a full-size drawing.

Q Now a bridge is something that allows you to get the proper shape does it not to the automobile?

A That's right. In early days they didn't have those. They had a bridge but the bridge would fit your template. You'd fit your roof template on there, you'd fit your body template on there, and then you'd just scrape the clay down to fit the contour of the template. Nowadays they have bridges and the bridges have probes, and probes are actually like small needles. The size of a knitting needle. These can all be pushed in or out all the way around--you pull them out so you can take the probe and set the probe to the outline that you desire on the clay model right from the drawing, and then this bridge fits over the automobile. This takes the place of templates. It's a speedy way of transposing the drawings to the shape of the car in clay.

Q It gives you your coordinates.

A Oh yes.

Q When did that come into general use? Was it there when you got there in the mid 40's?

A No, it wasn't. We didn't have a complete bridge in those days either. We'd have--in the early 40's they used to have a platform around the car, and of course the plates had to be removable at each end so you could withdraw the model when you wanted to take it out for observation outside. In those days they used to just have surface plates that they would put up against the side with measuring increments on it that move up and down, and then, of course, from there if they wanted across the car that the two would be interconnected as a template.

Q When do you remember bridges coming into general use?

A Bridges came in General Motors, general use probably not about 1965, 1966.

Q Not until 1965?

A Not until 1965 did they use the full bridges. Ford Motor Company, as I understand it, used it much before that.

Q Did they?

A Yes. I think they had the jump on General Motors in that regard.

Q It was much more convenient, wasn't it?

A Oh yes, it was. Because you didn't have to move surface plates on each side. You just get a fellow on each side of it and move the entire deal. You'd have both sides of the automobile at one time instead of one side. It was twice as fast, really. Of course, nowadays they do it a little bit differently. They use what they--they have an electronic system there which they set up and it's a point taking system, and so they just touch the car at these various points on the side of the automobile, press a button, and it immediately goes on a tape, and it's all electronically recorded.

Q Videotape?

A It's similar to a videotape, but then you can just run this videotape and the tape goes through and be used on the drafting machines, and its transposed from the tape to the paper, so you've got your new surfaces which have developed in clay then can go right into the drafting. Now that doesn't mean that you don't need draftsmen because they always have to clean up the lines, but this means generally you've got the points pretty accurately taken.

Q That takes out a lot of work, doesn't it?

A Oh definitely, it does. It makes the process a lot faster which makes you wonder why the lead time is longer than it used to be.

Q Well, this has been rewarding. Thank you. So this is the late 40's, you're in the Pontiac studio, and you're working directly for Bob Lauer. Obviously you and Mr. Lauer got along fairly well.

A Yes. Bob was very nice man. He was a gentleman as opposed to a lot of them who weren't--or you know in general who aren't. Bob was always a gentleman, got along with everyone very very well. Everyone liked him, and particularly the people up at Pontiac, the engineering people up there. They liked him because he was an engineer, he talked their language, and these kooky guys down at styling, they're all right but Bob was an engineer, and they had more rapport with Bob. The Pontiac group up there was a little unique, I guess, over some of the divisional people in that they were a close-knit group, there were a lot of older engineers working up there, and it was known as sort of an old fuddy-duddy group. Mr. Earl used to refer to them as that group anyway. The chief engineer up there at that time--well, there had been a man named Ben Anibel but he retired--and he was well thought of in the automobile industry. In fact after he retired, General Motors put him over to England on a consulting basis to develop of Vauxhall engines. He was a very very smart man. However, George Delaney came in then to be chief engineer. George was a very very good engineer, very capable man, an unflappable sort of a guy, but he used to wear high white collars, and he used to wear high shoes. This dated the guy naturally, and Earl just couldn't stand this sort of thing--he couldn't stand Delaney just because of his appearance. And then Delaney always smoked a great big cigar, and his teeth matched the color of the cigar. When he wasn't smoking it, he'd chew it. Of course, he wore a hat a lot of the time because it seems like in the old days in the automobile industry and walking through the

shops the only way that the workers could tell the bosses was that they were wearing hats.

Q So he's definitely by this time an anachronism

A Right. Especially to Harley Earl. Then his assistant who was chief body engineer was named Roy Milner, and Roy Milner was one of what they called the four horsemen. There was Anibel, there was Milner, there was a couple other guys whose names I forget--it was long before my time. They'd worked at the big P companies. They worked at the Peerless, Pierce Arrow, and Pontiac. Roy Milner was in there. Roy was also a gentleman. White haired guy, straight back, came in, and both smoked cigars. When they got together at a meeting, it was dullsville really. Their cronies around there--Art Sharp and some of the rest of them were the same caliber. It didn't mean that they weren't smart. They were very intelligent guys. They weren't avant-garde by any means in their engineering ideas. I think Pontiac was lagging behind in the car business.

Q Mr. Gillan, can you sketch for us the development of the body development materials that came out of the styling laboratories in terms of using wood and clay, and as you've mentioned later, fiberglass models?

A Yes, I can Dave. Actually when I started at General Motors the completed evaluation models used for advertising, marketing, and general evaluation were all made of wood and metal. They were called wood and metal models, and they were a frame of metal, and all the panels simulating metal body panels, were made of wood, and then rubbed down and painted and the car was an interior/exterior model as they called it. You could get in the car. The had the same accommodations as a real automobile, and for all the world looked like one including instrument panel. This car had rubber tires and wheels on it and so on, but it

took a great deal of time to construct, and naturally because of the wood it was necessarily heavy, and it was very very thick. So part of the time if they wanted a quick model or just a partial model, they would take plaster cast of the clay model, they grease the inside of the female mold and make another mold--male plaster mold--and put this on the metal chassis and you'd have a plaster and metal model. When it was painted that also looked like an automobile. Although these were not interior/exterior models, it was just a more or less a solid model. Then fiberglass came in. Fiberglass came in probably about--at General Motors--about 1948 or 1949. They started first experimenting with fiberglass, and then the first 1950 models were all done in fiberglass. This then was a much more realistic medium, and it also meant if you wanted to change any part of the car that didn't meet the approval of the directors, they could saw off a portion of the trunk, do another trunk, cast it, and mold it right into the fiberglass, and you'd have new rear deck or new fenders or new fender or whatever. And it was also a fast way to do the thing so if you wanted you could do one body and get cut lines at the cowl and push one front end up which simulate an Oldsmobile design, retract that, push another front end up that would reflect Oldsmobile or Buick or whatever, and it was a real fast medium, and so they continued to use that today.

Q Now fiberglass had been developed by

A It was an Owens-Corning thing.

Q Owens Corning/

A Yes. You see we always had to experimental groups at General Motors experimental engineers working with our shops, and so you always had these people from all the supplier companies coming in, bringing

along their latest developments, and, of course, our people kept abreast of the latest developments and some of those developments came from General Motors own research laboratories, and they brought their findings in and Harley Earl felt it was a good idea to try it. That's the way it started.

Q Was GM the first to use the fiberglass?

A I don't know whether they were. I think they probably were. The rest of the automobile companies were still using the wood and metal models pretty much.

Q This gave you, obviously, much greater flexibility.

A It did and much more realism in the car because you could lift the trunks, you could lift the hoods, and so on; in fact, if you wanted to in some of the cars--the divisions could mold their own engine compartments and put dummy-up engines in and place those in fiberglass models. For all the world the car looked a real automobile including the trunk compartments.

Q At this point Harley Earl's personality has obviously asserted itself, and he is is listened to by Sloan and the other officers very carefully. Is he also attempting to bring the design process in terms of prestige and visibility to a higher level. Are you less becoming the lackeys of the engineering department as you may have been earlier on. How is that working about now?

A Your right. Although I can't say that while Earl was there they were ever the lackeys of the engineering department. Although to begin with, yes, you're probably right, because when Earl came in there I understand he was resented to begin with because at that time Fisher Body had complete reign of designing the bodies of the cars, and the divisions had complete say on what the appearance of their cars would be.

Q And the stylists were really decorators at that point?

A They were pretty much decorators, in fact they didn't even have stylists before Harley Earl got there. Harley Earl did the first one in 1927--that was the LaSalle, and, of course, as you know he came at the bidding of L. P. Fisher, and L. P. and Harley Earl were very much alike in their ways. They were both flamboyant type of guys. They were both womanizers, and they liked to travel, and they liked the good life. In those days along with the good life flamboyant automobiles were part of the scene.

Q And flamboyant dress?

A And flamboyant dress. Some of the fellows said it looks as though Harley Earl has a new pair of shoes each time he comes in. Everybody else's shoes would have creases in them and so on, but his shoes because of his weight they were completely filled out--there were no creases that looked like you would find in a mannequin in the window, shined. His pants were always immaculately creased--always a well-dressed guy before I got there. When I got there he always dressed quite conventionally. Sometimes a little bright colors, but before I got there I understood that he used to come in sometimes with riding boots and jodhpurs and this sort of thing because this was the type of thing they did in Hollywood. This was the type of thing Cecil B. DeMille was famous for. The DeMille family lived close to the Earl family in California, and he'd been over on the set several times--invited over to see some of the productions that DeMille was working on, so as a young man he was very favorably impressed

with this sort of thing. You know, the names on the back of the chairs and this sort of thing, and he kind of liked the Hollywood thing and brought it here, and L. P. Fisher liked that part of it. Well, Alfred P. Sloan, as I understand it, took a liking to Earl right away. First of all when he saw what Earl could do with the LaSalle and what a fine car it was and how people just clamored for it. He could see it in dollar and cents. Earl was doing something for the corporation, but I understand he also liked Harley Earl very very much. He was that same sort of guy. As I heard the story one time told out there by a couple of the old fellows up at Pontiac that there was a time--I guess it was after that really--but there was a time when Earl wanted to get his point across he had a line--a direct line--down to Sloan's office, and one time they were in the auditorium looking at some of the models and one of the Buick cars Harlow Curtice (he was President of Buick at the time) differed with Earl on the appearance of the car that Earl had shown as a brand new Buick design proposal. And Curtice didn't like it, didn't like it all, so Earl just didn't say much, he walked over to the phone, and dialed Alfred Sloan. "Hello Alfred, this is Harley. How's Carol, and how are the kids? Oh, my kids are fine. They are growing up and getting big. Say, I don't want to take all your time, you know, Alfred, but Harlow Curtice is in here with me right now, and I think Harlow is kind of mixed up on a few things here, and I know we got us a real good, a knockout of a design for this Buick and Harlow seems to a little confused on who's running Buick and who's running design. Maybe you could set him

straight. Here he is." By that time his face was ashen, and he got on the line and the new Buick went Harley Earl's way. This is the sort of thing--these things only have to happen, these little examples, two or three times and the word gets around that you better go Harley's way.

Q So, in effect, his personality dominated pretty much design by the time you got there.

A Yes, it did dominate everything--definitely.

Q He had broken the hold of the body engineers over the complete design process.

A But he told me it was very very difficult. One time he was in there, and he was talking to me. Sometimes he wasn't all that busy so he'd come in and had a little bit more time to talk with you if he wasn't pressed. When I was running one of the studios one time, he came in and mentioned, "You know you're working on this bumper here and did I ever tell you about the bumper, how they came to be. You know before you ever got mixed up in this thing, they used to use a heavy band of steel, these bumpers, they were flexible. They were all flexible. They used have certain formulas for this steel, they had to be flexible. I wanted to stamp out some of these bumpers to have shapes in. I just didn't want a band of steel across the front of the car. The engineers just wouldn't do it. I told them to do this and do that, but they wouldn't do it. So I'll tell you what I did. I know these guys down at the steel company. I found out who they were, so I called them down in Pittsburgh and I told them I was coming down and I wanted to see if they had as much imagination as I

thought they had. I took the train down one night, and the next day I was in Pittsburgh. I went out to whatever steel company it was, talked to--he mentioned the man's name--, and he showed me the plant. We went out to lunch, and I said 'now listen, things are going to change in every industry, and the steel companies got to help us change. Now here's what I've got.'" He said, took down this roll of drawings with the bumper as he thought it should be on a new car. This required a much thinner gauge of steel because it had to be stamped to the shape. Now these were not the intricate shapes that you see today. Actually, it was very mild by today's standards of design. But Earl did take these drawings down [to Pittsburgh]. He won the confidence of the steel people. The steel people made one of these steel stampings--a prototype model--and sent it back to Earl. Earl also had the head of the steel company come back and show the divisions--put on a presentation to show the divisions that these could be done. Now this is the beginning of the formed steel bumpers, and Earl told me exactly how he did it. So this was the sort of thing, not only was he just designing things, but he used his stature and his creative approach to get things done in the car industry.

Q Now the Fisher brothers were, of course, responsible for the body design, right?

A They were responsible for the body design.

Q Were they responsible for the body engineering as well?

A Oh yes. The body engineering as well was done over at Fisher.

Q So even though he was friends with Larry Fisher, he still had to

overcome that age-old reluctance to allow designers to get into body engineering.

A That's right. But after the 1927 LaSalle was done, and L. P. Fisher could see how the thing turned out and how great it was, boy, he expanded the design staff up there right away. And so then Harley Earl had a design staff. He wasn't the vice president. He didn't become a vice president. I don't know--it was before I started there. But I understand he became a vice president in 1939 or 1940 somewhere in there. But Earl did have the design section--I guess it was a small fledgling little group at that time, and they didn't have a viewing yard to look at the cars in. Even when I was there they used to take the freight elevator and haul the clay models up to the roof of the GM research building and put big canvas panels across so the office workers of the GM building couldn't see the new models over there while they took them out for evaluation. The reason they always take them outside for evaluation is that, as Mitchell used to say, "You can't judge a horse in the kitchen." And that's right, you know. They're huge, but get them outside and it's just a little animal. Well, it's the same thing with a car. A car looks much smaller, and besides it's in its own environs when it's outside and then you put other cars there for evaluation then you can really judge it a lot better, so that's why they always take cars outside.

Q Well, that's fascinating. So Earl made a great impact on design.

A Oh yes--impact on the history of design, on everything. Earl did this and a lot of people from the divisions and different people/places hadn't

worked with him probably don't realize it, but Harley Earl would go down to New York City, he'd go to Europe, he'd go to different places, and he had a keen awareness of new things. He'd walk into a jewelry shop and look at their jewelry and come back with two or three watches, with, you know, the Florentine finish that the jewelers put on the inside of watches. They were beautiful. He wanted this same sort of thing to be on some of the instrument panel speedos and this sort of thing. He'd bring back neckties and silk scarves and swatches of material and things made of leather when he was in Italy and this sort of thing, and the way they were stitched. He'd have a briefcase, he'd open it and throw the stuff out on the table, call the interior people up and say "Now take a look at this. Now, by god, Steve that's what the hell a god damn stitching ought to look like. You're giving me this same horseshit year after year, and, god damn it, these guys are have got something new. Now do you mean to tell me you don't have machines that can stitch like these guys. Now, by God, you'd better do it on that new Cadillac." Well, naturally this got them off the dead center and as a result changes came about. If they couldn't do exactly what he wanted, at least a change came about. It was usually for the better. Earl did motivate people. He motivated them, not just by the fear that he instilled in them, but also by personal examples of things that he would bring back that he thought should be in our products. One time, he mentioned, he was in a quandary over here on design, what to do on some new bodies and new things that were coming up. He wasn't quite sure what to do. He had the corporation breathing down his back because he had a lot of detractors

at the corporation that would have liked to put him on the chute and get rid of him. So one day, he told us, he took the Queen Mary out of New York over to England. It docked over there at Southhampton, he stayed right on board. He came all the way back. He spent a lot of time by himself. He'd meet different people. He'd talk to people. He always travelled first class--he talked to a lot of people who weren't automobile people but people who had a lot of money and were very demanding for the best in the world. He'd talk to these people about automobiles, what they wanted in cars, what they thought they ought to be, and so on. He'd write all this stuff down. He'd bring it back and have it typed up, and he would go over this with his designers telling them what people wanted. In other words, he didn't direct all of this design without really knowing what he wanted a lot of the time.

Q He was an incredible character.

A He was. He was an incredible character. Now his family is just, on a personal note, I understand suffered a great deal as a result of it because he was always thinking of cars. He wasn't home a lot of the time. He was a strict, stern man. I talked to his sons there, Jerry and Jim Earl. In fact, Jim worked at General Motors design staff for awhile. Jim used to say, "Oh hell." The guys used to say, how could you live with a dad like that, Jim? God, he must have been a bear all the time. Jim said he was. He said there were times when, Christ, even around Christmas time he wasn't even the friendly guy he should be, you know.

He was a strict sort of guy all the time--disciplinarian type of guy. I guess sometimes he was fine but other times they had a lot of trouble with him at home. They said he wasn't as friendly and good as he should have been a lot of the time. But all he was doing was thinking about the car business, and he could be mean and nasty to people. I think I told you one time just before Christmas he wanted to make an example of some of the people--a lot of people maybe weren't what they should have been over at General Motors. So he thought this is good time to get rid of those guys and it's going to make an example to the rest of the employees here. So there was a designer named Monroe Conn, an exterior designer, and interior guy named Dave Long, and one of the other guys up there, there were two or three draftsmen and a couple of engineers--altogether there were about seven of them. The day before Christmas he had the personnel department fire all of these guys and he did it in the middle of day so that they left about 10:30 in the morning. The parking lot was out behind the building, and word got out that they were all fired, and so here we saw all these guys the day before Christmas walking out through the back door out across the parking lot to their automobiles with their sweeps and drawing equipment underneath their arms. It was a sad thing, you know, to do it then ; if he didn't like the guys, hell, fire them the month before or after the New Year, but he fired the guys right at that time because he wanted to show them, by God, you're going to do your work here, and if you don't do the work, out you go--Harley Earl said so! He did this sort of thing. He had a lot of nice things about him, a lot of things that weren't so good. You say, what would be some of the nice things. Well, if he met you somewhere at a party or

somewhere and your wife was along, he'd walk and he'd say, "Mrs. Gillan, your husband here is the best god damn designer, Christ, you should be proud of this guy. He's a talented guy. Do you know the other day he did this and that." He'd never tell me that, but he'd tell my wife that. So he did this in other designers cases too. The wives then would think, my God, Mr. Earl is just a wonderful man, you're just so lucky to work for fellow like this, you know. He's such a gentleman and so on. So he was a Jekyll and Hyde type of character. Another thing that he did though that was really nice, he appreciated how hard the men worked, and they all worked hard, including as much as anybody, the fabrication department. So once a year he would have a party for all the men. He did this for several years shortly after I started there. He'd have a stag party for the guys out at some golf club or at some dude ranch out here in the country somewhere. He'd have the personnel department rent all the facilities, have horses out there, let the guys play golf (he liked to golf himself), they'd have catering facilities come in with complete huge roasts--everything you wanted in the way of a dinner. Tents were set up to go through the line and eat your dinner. They'd have swimming, baseball, the whole works. Wonderful day off. Everybody gets the day off. Then they would have prizes, drawings for prizes. Earl would go to each of the studio heads and the engineers and say "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to go up to Pontiac or I want to do to Cadillac or so on and, god damn it, (he'd ask Howard O'Leary, his assistant, to do this) you tell them that we're going to have this

party and, by God, Harley Earl says they'd better donate so and so and so and so." So the engineering departments in the different divisions would donate all the prizes that were to be given to the fellows at Earl's parties. He'd maybe invite a couple of the guys out, hell, if he had their prizes, so a couple of the head guys would be out there--chief engineers and so on, and Earl would play golf with them. It was a hierarchy sort of thing. He would play golf with them and the rest of them. So that's the type of thing he would do. Then at Christmas parties, he'd have a Christmas party for the wives and children. Well, when you're talking about six or seven hundred people, not as many as they have today, today's its about fourteen hundred, so we had a huge auditorium where we used to have indoor showing of models. So, he would have the designers draw up carousels, all sorts of things, have them made by the shop, made upstairs in wood, metal and plaster. The paint shop would paint them all up for the annual party so that the employees' children could ride on the carousel. He'd have the designers go up there a month ahead, take time off, and paint murals around the top of the auditorium. I remember one time, it was right after I started there, I was up there painting murals around the top of the auditorium--Eskimo dogs and snow scenes and all these things. In fact, Wally Ford, who was with Ford and Earl down here; well, Wally Ford and I were up there painting Eskimo dogs and stuff around up there. Wally was working there before he started his own business downtown, and we used to do a lot of this sort of thing, and people loved him. Earl used to give big prizes, bicycles to the children, he'd take everyone down to the cafeteria. They'd all have dinner there, the

wives and children. It was just a really good thing. He'd take one of the older employees and have them dress as Santa Claus. He was good to his employees. He could be very very good, but he was nasty to the employees when he wanted to be. He was very very mean.

Q A sadistic streak?

A Yes, very sadistic. I guess that's what you'd call it.

Q He had no respect much for the officers of the company either except maybe, Sloan?

A Yes. There were the ones he got along good with on a personal basis. Some of the other ones he didn't. He'd have different work done. I talked to some of the older fellows up there and they remember the days when the fabrication department would be called out to put a whole new front end cabin on L. P. Fisher's yacht, and this sort of thing you know and everything. He did a lot of favors for a lot of the big people up there, and they reciprocated, and they all got along great. But he did turn out automobiles that sold, and that's number one, the bottom line on the whole thing.

Q He had a very good feel for what a General Motors car should look like.

A But toward the end when he got into his late years, he, I guess like everyone, they lose their touch. And he just didn't quite know what to do. He was just floundering. I remember on the C body, which is a large body--Buick, Olds, Cadillacs--the last one that he did, it was for 1959, he started out by making them put a front end on the thing to be a Buick that emulated his LeSabre. Now the LeSabre front end had a very

high theme, and it was a scoop, it was very highly located on the car, but the LeSabre was very low automobile, so it went on the LeSabre, it was a good design, it worked on that. But it didn't work on this other car. Here you got this huge, high hood, and you put this funny scoop on the front. Everyone thought he'd lost his marbles when they saw that thing. The division looked at it and, and right away they got together and talked about it. They got Curtice involved on the thing, and Curtice talked to Earl about it and said, in a nice way, that "he thought it would be good if they saw several proposals and take a couple of different groups and put together. Let Mitchell would be in charge of one group, and somebody else here, and we'd like to see several. We think, the corporation, we've all gotten together, and we all feel that design staff owes it to us to show several proposals from which to make a selection, because we're in a transitional period and what looked good a while back may not look good now." I think knowing that he wasn't sure himself, Earl accepted this, and they came up with other proposals, and they sort of pushed his aside, and he was smart enough to recognize that he'd lost his touch. This is the way I felt about it. Nobody said that, but I'd known it for quite a long time, and I felt that Harley Earl knew that he didn't have it any more, and he didn't want to be responsible for having his swan song be a stupid design. So in other words, he could of pushed it for his way, but he didn't, and he was smart enough to realize that.

Q He bowed out?

A He let Mitchell do the thing.

Q Well, at this point Paul Gillan is doing very well at the Pontiac studio. You were getting along with Lauer and your boss, and he's promoting you about May, 1950. How did that come about?

A Well, they moved Joe Schemansky, who was his assistant, they moved him into Chevrolet to take over. There was a man by the name of Ed Anderson running that. Ed Anderson had trouble with his voice, his voice box or something. He couldn't speak very well, so they moved him into something else or he quit. At any rate, I didn't know him very well. They moved Schemansky into that slot, and Lauer needed an assistant. There was another fellow that worked in the studio, his name was Jim Pepin. They made Jim Pepin the assistant. Then Jim was always caught up, he was always a good artist--he was always caught up in little detail. Christ, he could work all day just doing fancy Indian heads and all that crap, you know. The Pontiac group loved that stuff. Anyway, he did this, but that's when the Korean War, he was in the reserves, the war came along and he was called in. He was called in for a year or two, so they decided they needed someone else in there, so they said, Lauer called me over one day and Howard O'Leary, we went up to Howard's office and said "Paul, you know you've always said, you always talked, we never felt we could rely on you too well because you've always talked about going back to California, [which I always wanted to do and never did] and you're always going back to California. Now if you could tell us that you would stay here, then we'll make you an assistant [chief designer]. You would be an assistant here while Jim's gone and chances are we'll put him someplace else when he returns. So you would be an assistant. Would

you be willing to take the job?" I said, "Well, Christ, I'd design baby carriages in Oklahoma City if you know if it's a good job, give me the money for it and the title." I said, "okay." So they made me an assistant to Lauer, and it worked very well. But I did a lot of stuff up there. In fact I did nearly all the design at that time.

Q Tell us about what you did for Pontiac. Was Pontiac doing well during the post-war period?

A Yes. Like all automobile companies, you know, was going quite well. But Pontiac probably wasn't going as well as some as them probably because of the management up there and partially because Pontiac was still pushing their straight 8 and straight 6 engines, and some of the rest of them were into the V-8 thing see, and Pontiac wasn't. But, of course, that had nothing to do with design part of the thing so we tried to design the cars as best we could, and I came up with a lot of designs then. The cars seemed to sell very very well. We did a Catalina which was one of the first that was a real successful automobile up there. I named it after a California island resort.

Q Catalina was your name?

A Oh yes. Catalina was mine. God, I named a lot of stuff up there. The Safari later, the Pontiac wagon, I named it the Safari Wagon. In fact, one time I was out to California with Glowake, and we were having breakfast, and Glowake was trying to think of a name for a couple show cars they did, and hell, there was the Eldorado Special, because Eldorado, you know, is the big silver thing in the early days over in Nevada. So

then we had breakfast, and we were sitting there in the St. Francis Hotel, and we were trying to get a name for the god damned thing, what'll we come up with? I said, "Shit, Eldorado. There it is right there." Well, by God, it was pretty good so we wrote it down. So we called one of the show cars Eldorado, Motorama Cars, and later it came on they used the name. Another one they used for a show car, well, I said why don't you use the El Camino Real because that was the main highway down in California you know, and so they said, "What the hell is that." I said that it was the king's highway, meaning "kings' highway" down in California. So he said that was good. So they called the show car El Camino, and then Cadillac didn't want it for a car, so it went in the pool, and GMC picked it up or Chevrolet and put it on one of their trucks, later on.

Q Which was the famous half truck, half sedan, half roadster. Very popular.

A Yes. That was the El Camino. That was it. The truck bed was part of the cab and it flowed, it has nice flowing lines. It was a nice looking car.

Q So, your California experience came in handy there?

A Well, you just happen to hit on a couple of things there, yes.

Q Well, what did you like about working in the Pontiac studio?

A I didn't like it. I hated to go in. You see, I was a young guy. I was trying to save my money. I wanted a Buick convertible. I had a Buick convertible before I went into the service. It was an old one, it was a 1937 Buick convertible sedan I used to own. It was a neat car though. I'd sold it, and then I got out. I had to buy a second-hand

Chevy, because you couldn't get cars. You'd go around to the car lots, you couldn't get any. Well, General Motors, the guys that were there first, the old timers, were the ones that got cars. I remember you had to get on a list after the war or put money under the table to dealers or whatever. I put money under the table, and I was trying to get a Ford Sportsman, one of those wooden sided things, but, hell, my name never came up on the damn thing. I wasn't offering them enough. So now I wanted a Buick convertible--working for there [GM], I should have a Buick--so I put in for a Buick. But Howard O'Leary was pushing this, so was Earl, but mostly Howard, damn him, and he was the guy that pushed this where you had to drive a car in the studio in which you were working. You couldn't get the expensive model, you'd get the cheapie, but you should have that. So I said, "Oh hell". Well, okay, I was going to take a Olds 98 convertible, because I'd worked on that, and they were going to be coming out for 1948. So, I had to buy an old Chevy to run around with, but then they said where they going to put me, and I still had my name on it for the Buick, and Howard said, you were going to work and Earl wants you here in Pontiac. Earl said, "Now Paul, I want that god damn studio to look like a designer's studio. I don't want to walk in there and see these god damn drawings that Lauer and Schemansky are putting up, these line drawings, put some god damn color in it. That's what I want to see in there." I said, "Okay." He got the color he wanted in there, and it worked out to his satisfaction, and to mine, and Pontiac studio, which was great, but then I did a lot of the designing there, got the stuff going. You see, Bob Lauer was a good engineer as well as a designer, and

what they needed was an executive head to be over the engineering department up there. In other words, up to that time they had a supervisor of the drafting department, the supervisor in body development, and so on, but they wanted an executive head. Lauer was chosen to be that man, with an engineering background, to be over both of these operations. So that means that they had to remove him from Pontiac studio, and then old Paul got the job. So I became then chief designer of Pontiac studio [May, 1953]. But Lauer, you know, he was also a cigar smoker, everytime there was a meeting, I had to put minutes out and send a notice out to the top people there's going to be a meeting at a certain time, Pontiac people were coming down to view such and such. Lauer would get a copy of this, and Lauer would come into the meeting with his big stogie out there, and blowing smoke with George Delany and Milner, and they'd all congregate, and so Lauer was telling them what he thought. I was a younger guy, young guy at the time, and Christ, it's my studio and my design, and I'm trying to sell my stuff but Lauer was selling what he thought it out to be. So this happened for three or four months, so finally I went up to Harley Earl and said, "You know, this has got to change. I can't tell Lauer, you know I used to work for the guy, but you can. You can just put yourself in my spot, it puts me at a real disadvantage working with these older Pontiac men who have complete faith in Lauer, as well they should, but it makes it bad for Paul Gillan." So he said, "We'll take care of that." So he took care of that and got a word into Lauer, and it never happened again. I mean Lauer was still friendly with the Pontiac group

and Lauer and I were always friends, but Lauer could see the light and it worked out to my advantage. So we did a lot of stuff, got a lot of things done, and I got along quite well with the Pontiac group.

Q How did Pontiac fit? It always seemed to be slightly outside the general GM popular cars. Was there a reason for that or am I mistaken?

A I don't know whether it was outside the general; like you, I was an outsider just looking in at all the rest of the automobiles until I started there, and then I only knew about the Oldsmobile pretty much. I think it maybe was outside a little bit in that Oldsmobile used to seem to get the nod on the latest engineering innovations from the corporation. They were the ones that got the hydramatic, and they were the ones that got this sort of thing.

Q Pontiac seemed sort of like a step-sister.

A They did, and I think. I don't know if part of that may of been the fact that there was a general manager up there who was a terrific general manager. He kept the thing going for years, but he was a salesman. He wasn't engineering-oriented. He was a salesman, and he felt that everything was price and quality, and quantity and price, so if he could get to the dealers and make the right deal with them they could sell anything. We know you get to the point after awhile where you couldn't, and appearance got to be the big thing, and I don't think he was right up on the appearance the way he should have been.

Q It was a little dowdy?

A Yes, dowdy. The whole staff up there was. In fact, one of the engineers, and old guy, You see, I was a young guy at the time I was running

that thing, this old fellow comes up and he was telling me about the great fire in San Francisco. Hell, that was in April, 1906, and I thought, now I look back forty years and it doesn't seem long because I'm an old guy myself. But at the time I thought what the hell have they got this old guy working up here for, you know. He's been here since the San Francisco fire, and we're trying to turn out new automobiles--he doesn't know a new thing when he sees it, how the hell can you sell things to people like this. Then Earl kind of got this story, and then he got things changed around up there. They got a new general manager in. He was only there for a short while, he was hit by a train, guy named Arnold Lands, he got hit by a train. He went out. Then they had another guy come in there and his name was Bob Critchfield. Critchfield came through Delco. He was an electrical engineer--came through Delco products, I guess, down in Anderson, Indiana. Then he was in there, and then after awhile then Bunkie Knudsen came in there, and they got rid of Critchfield and then Knudsen came in there.

Q Did things pick up a little bit, design wise?

A When Critchfield was in there?

Q When Knudsen came in.

A They did, yes. Well, even under Critchfield. Critchfield wasn't a real dynamic personality, but he had taste, and he knew new things. Some people aren't real new themselves, but hey, there's a new thing. He had a way of picking up on new things, and he had a way of getting along with people, and if he thought he was good on something, he'd put the approval on it right away, so he was able to talk to top people downtown

into giving a lot bigger budgets to Pontiac than they ever had before. So they were willing to put more money into the things. We did a lot of Motorama Show Cars right around that time.

Q GM Motorama was a Harley Earl device was it?

A A Harley Earl device that was by Harley Earl.

Q To showcase new models?

A Yes. That's what they did, and all kinds of cars came out. They used to travel around the country. The opened at the Waldorf Astoria down in New York City, and that was a great big swinging wonderful party time for General Motors, and it was after the war. There was plenty of money available. Everything went great for the preview of the big show at the Waldorf Astoria. We all had custom show cars in there, and we'd take a train out of here with our wives, and they'd get you on the train because they thought it would be more fun because the whole group--they all get together--Pontiac, Olds people. You get them on a plane, and there wasn't that much room on it, so in those days trains were'nt bad.

Q The Twentieth Century Limited perhaps?

A Yes. You'd go down through Canada and you couldn't drink until it passed over the boarder down into Buffalo or somewhere down there. Anyway, we'd be on the thing and have a hell of a big time--have a wonderful time. Good dinners, wine, drinks. It was very very nice. We'd ride down there the next morning, and we'd stay at the best hotels. In those days all the big suppliers wanted to be nice to GM. That was their way of getting in the top brass--all the top brass was in one area at one

time so they could be nice to them. So they used to put on parties. We had all kinds of parties down in New York. Bill Earl, Harley Earl's brother, was a representative of one of the big cloth companies, interior cloth company, so he used to put on parties down at the Stork Club. He was the only one to ever rent out the Stork Club for a night--Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club in those days. So he put on a great big party down there. Old Harley was there, and all the guys, and all the top brass. They were really wonderful parties. Another guy put on a party one day for us over at the Twenty-One Club--Jack and Charley's. Before Jack died down there, I understand, he had this great big apartment, so they used his apartment upstairs, and they had all the food catered and brought upstairs, and we had wonderful brunch up there, and all kinds of drinks in the morning. At night they had parties--I remember one up at the St. Regis. All the top people from the automobile companies--Ford's, Chrysler's, Packard's in those days--was there. People try to act half way decent, but I remember there was Ed McCauley from Packard, he was there, and he was always embarrassed cause his wife used to get drunk and kick off her shoes and dance around there with her skirts up. They had all kinds of big things you know, and we had a good time down at New York.

Q Well, that was the icing on the cake.

A The whole thing was about showing General Motors products.

Q Was it current products and advance models?

A Oh yes. It was just a regular auto show, showing all of our current products, but, on top of that, Earl always wanted to throw in a spectacular automobile for each of the divisions. In some cases, two cars

for each of the divisions if they would pay for it, because see we'd do the work but they were budgeted, it didn't come out of our budget. We'd do the things but then they were charged for the car.

Q This would be a show car?

A Yes. I was in Pontiac so they came out with a car one year there--Pontiac said they didn't have any money. They didn't want to do anything. He said, well, just do this convertible, we'll a convertible with a special interior on it and everything--a few special little things--take off the moldings, lead them in, put a little thing, a name on the side of it, fix it up nice, special paint job and so on. He said, you render that, will you? I said okay. I thought, what the hell, what I'm going to do is do a convertible, have a beautiful rendering of it. But it just didn't look very different. He was going to bring Harlow Curtice around to take a look at all that stuff and see what we had to show, and he took him through the different places, and all we had there was a Pontiac convertible which didn't look any different at all, so I decided what I would do there I can draw women real good with my fashion background, so I put a real low-cut dress formal on this gal standing back there with fur around her shoulder, and man in white tie standing next to her. Then I put a half-roof over the automobile--a landau type of thing with a half-roof over to give it a DeVille appearance. Well, I put that on as a overlay. I did the car, it's all done on black paper, the car was all sparkling up, beautiful. Then I did this DeVille roof to fit over the top of it, and put a name on the side of it, and a little round window in the thing, and you could look inside and it looked

fancy and a little compact on the inside, it looked beautiful. Earl came in and said "By God!" He liked it. First of all he said "Look at the tits on that one, Harlow." This gal was standing back there. Then he said, "Christ, is that what Pontiac's going to do?" I said no, it really isn't but I'll tell you what. I had the fellow there take a staple lifter and just fold it back. This is what Pontiac is really going to do, but this really isn't much more, hell, all we have to do is put a roof on it and you got the whole thing here. They agreed, that's what they ought to do. They talked Pontiac into doing the god damn thing. Earl said, "Harlow [Curtice], give them the money for the god damn budget. If they can't do it, you pay me back but we got to do this." So he did it, and that's the car they called the Parisienne. Henry Lauve gave it the name Parisienne. They did the whole thing in black--all done in ebony with pink interior. A very very nice car. They liked it so well they thought they needed two of them, so they had two of them built. The other one we did all in silver.

Q These were drivable prototypes?

A Yes. Drivable prototypes.

Q What's happened to them I wonder?

A I don't know. They used to use them for parades up at Pontiac. They had a big garage. They used them for parades for years. The other day I went over to a show over here at the Historical Museum in Detroit. I went through there, and they had an old Bonneville--one of our show cars in there--a red one.

Q The first Bonneville?

A Yes. The first Bonneville show car that we did there. Earl put that name on it--Bonneville.

Q Was he a racing fan?

A Well, we had to call it something, and he thought just before that there was a guy by the name of Johnson who'd raced Pontiacs. He used Pontiac cars and raced and got a record with a Pontiac engine out on Bonneville Salt Flats, in Utah, and Earl thought, hell, why don't we call the god damned thing the Bonneville--that was his name. So I said okay, so we put the name Bonneville on it. That's where the name Bonneville came from.

Q What about the Parisienne? Did you come in an see it and say that looks like something out of...

A Well, we had to call that car something. Yes, Lauve came up with the name Parisienne. Henry Lauve went to school in Paris at the Sorbonne over there. That's where he met his wife--he and Mary met over there. So Henry was always a little on the French side, and he always tried to give things a little French twist--it gave him a little mystique or some damn thing. He was looking for an edge, so it had to be French. So Henry put that damn thing--he had a French name--so he called it Parisienne, and they thought that was good. Eventually, it was used for the Parisienne for the name of the Canadian Pontiacs over there. Now they use it over here. Parisienne now takes the place of the Bonneville cars for the size.

Q What was your name for that particular car?

A I didn't even have a name on it. I just did the god damn thing,

and I thought I would be lucky if they just grabbed it, so they did. They grabbed the thing, and we were very very lucky.

Q What were some other show cars in this early period from say 1950 to 1958 that you worked on?

A Well, we did the Club deMere. The Club deMer, I did that one. That was a neat little car. It was one of the most spectacular of the show cars. It was much better. We designed it with a long nose. Earl wanted to snub the thing off. We had that big mouth around up there--I got the design patents on that. Big scoop underneath you know, around the thing. Wheel covers going way out, it gave it a nice wide stance. The car was very low. It was only 38½ inches up to the height of the windshield. But when people sat in the car, you see, their head would be above the little windshield unless you got a short little guy. So you'd have models of all sizes getting in and out of it, so Earl wanted to make sure that the seat would be low enough. What he did--he says to a couple people--he said, oh, Christ we can't have that--I'll tell you what you do, underneath the seat here it's got springs and it sinks down. In the fiberglass floor board here, put a great big piece of rubber bladder under there--big truck innertube--have that thing bolted into place and paint it silver to match the bottom of the car. Guys would sit in it, and, of course, their ass would go down and depress in this hole, and they looked the right height for the windshield, you see. That was phoney, but anyway, it worked. They didn't drive the car anyway, so it was okay. It was a static thing. It would go, but they didn't drive it really. It was a nice looking automobile, it had a lot of very fine features on it. I liked that car. I've always been a boating fan, so I

had a drive shaft--in other words, you've got a hump in the floor with the drive shaft running under it. Well, I had a torque tube around the drive shaft with fins around it running right through the center of the car so you could really reach right underneath it and it was just a pole going right through, because it was the divided type of car. It was really neat.

Q So many of the devices that you used on the show cars would turn up later?

A Oh yes. A lot them did.

Q By this time you're pretty close to the top at Pontiac studio. Would you then keep a file of devices?

A No. You just inherently remember what you've done, and when we'd come up with a new design if it was successful, if it was dog, you'd forget it, because you didn't want to be associated with it.

Q What about the response you got at the Autorama.

A Yes. Marketing response and so on. If it went over big, and the public liked it, and if the division liked it too, because you had to sell them on things too. It's easier to sell if they like it, so then you'd try to put some of these little things in if you could. I did the Strato Streak up there.

Q That's yours?

A Yes. They eventually called it called Strato Streak and then they changed it to the Strato Star because Ford had an engine called the Strato Streak. They came out with an engine about the same time, because

we were out with the car first, but they called the engine Strato Streak, but with a car in order to get the name, you have to have stickers on the windshield and the car has to pass the state line under the Board of Commerce laws, and you have to have the name on the window or on the automobile of 150 cars and they have to pass over this state line so that you can then say it's your name--take proprietary interest in the name, see? So Ford then they just came out--we only had that one car--Ford had this name on their engine. We said, Christ, we can't use that, but we can use Strato. We called it the Strato Star.

Q It worked out very well.

A Yes. So it turned out pretty good.

Q Growing up I always remember a running motif on the Pontiac. Of course, the Indian head hood ornament was used with varying degrees over the years. And then there were the five running stripes along the hood to the ornament and then down. Did you have to, when you came into Pontiac in '47, in that decade that you were there, did you have to work around that. Was it sort of sacrosanct, you couldn't...

A In a way, yes, I'd say it was. First of all, when I got there we were doing face lifts, so when you do a face lift, there was a channel built down in the hood to accept these. They called them silver streaks, and they were metal. So it was a metal stamping that fit down into this little channel, so you couldn't get rid of the channel, so you just had to do new silver streaks to fit in the same damn thing. Just fill it in so it would be a different looking ornamentation on the hood from the old one. So sometimes you'd try three, five and whatever to make them a

little bit different and paint fill them.

Q It worked out very well. It became a sort of trademark.

A It was a trademark. I understand it was Frank Hershey was the one that initiated that back in 1935 or somewhere like that. So they just kept it--so if you can get a trademark and people like it, well, hang on to the damn thing. That's the way they figured. So they got those, and I understand that, when the silver streaks were first accepted, that Knudsen's dad was running the thing at that particular time, and then they still were on and Knudsen was the guy--Bunkie Knudsen was the guy that said they've been there since my dad started the thing, I'm going to take the god damned things off. I was there at the meeting out in our court-yard at the time, and we had them on there for what the hell car was that? We had them on for the 1957 I think it was. We showed it in '55 or '56. We went out in the yard and looked at it, and Knudsen said "Christ, we got to some of the crap off this car, there is so much on it." There was, you know, Indians everywhere; God, there was a whole tribe of Indians on that god damn Pontiac.

Q After Chief Pontiac.

A After Chief Pontiac.

Q Which was the location of the main factory.

A That's what I hear. So they always had this lighted hood ornament. They'd have a regular hood ornament, then for 12 bucks more, they'd give you the lighted hood ornament which had a amber plastic in it which a light in the damn thing. I remember there was a guy named Bill De Beaubien, an electrical engineer in charge of that, he got that. He got

his big bonuses because he was always making money on those damn things. You know what he did? Their taste was so terrible up there, he took a lighted hood ornament, and found the contour of the rear fender was just about the same as the contour of the hood, so he came down one day and he had a lighted hood ornament there and he had two on the back fender looking backwards with little wings sticking out. We said, oh my God, Bill, get that thing out of here. We made such a big thing out of it, we shamed the guy. We had a fellow go downstairs, we had a fellow go down to the shop and get one of the shop men to come up and take the god damn thing off cause we wouldn't let it sit in the garage there--it had frigging Indians on the back fenders. But that shows you the way they thought at Pontiac. They thought they could make three times as much money by having three lighted hood ornaments on. Put them anywhere.

Q Well, your chief designer at Pontiac in the early fifties--has Bunkie Knudsen come in yet?

A Bunkie Knudsen came in about, 1957 I think.

Q So you had a pretty good tenure there from the early fifties to the late fifties.

A Yes.

Q Were you happy with the designs the studio turned out?

A No, I wasn't. Because I always had the idea that you could go in and design stuff and be accepted, but it's not. It's a combination like everything else in life--it's compromise. You're compromising with you wife on a vacation, you're compromising with your kids on the kind of car you should get, life is a compromise, as you know. Compromising with your

wallet. And you're compromising with the people at General Motors, and everyone involved, engineering, what they can build, what they want to keep, and their personal likes and dislikes, so the car was a hodgepodge. Some of the cars were quite good looking. I can't really say there's any of them that I was really proud of looking back, and you look at them in retrospect--the longer back you look, the worse they become, I'd say pretty much. I never really, as I told you earlier, liked Pontiac products all that much, but I got to like them, I was driving them, and I got new cars all the time, and had a pretty good time. It was a good thing. It was a job, and I enjoyed that. I was in there when Knudsen came in, and he obviously wanted a lot of big changes--Knudsen was the General Manager. His chief engineer was Pete Estes, and the experimental engineer was John DeLorean. So that's when I first met those guys. So they were down all the time, and Knudsen would have an idea that, regardless of what you showed him on the design, maybe Mitchell's trying to push this god damn thing cause Mitchell was my boss, so maybe Mitchell's pushing that so somebody else or maybe Mitchell is, or some guy in Buick or Christ, maybe they got something better, and Christ, Mitchell doesn't like us. Anyway, Knudsen would walk around at the designer's desk, the only general manager I ever saw do that, lifting up all the papers, all the papers see: "What the hell you got over here, George? Harry, what's this? Well, hell, this would look pretty good. That would look pretty good." He didn't know what he wanted, but it was different from what we were showing him. Finally, you had to in a nice way tell--we'd look through everything--"We feel this is going to fit your

design and be the best knowing what all the rest of the divisions are doing." He wasn't able to walk into Buick or Olds or the rest of them, he had to take Mitchell's idea--Mitchell's word and my word--for what they were showing, and if you try this this is going to look too much like the god damn Buick, you'd better stick with this. This is a Pontiac design. We always had a hard time trying to sell him on something. He always thought there was a better one that we were hiding--keeping back from him. He was a good guy. He was great for new things--wanted to do the best he could. The completely new car that we designed for him--oh, first of all, he kept hopping up the engines. He did a good Bonneville, they took a Bonneville and really made a good car of that.

Q He had pretty much an engineering background, didn't he?

A Yes. He had engineering background.

Q Had an engineering degree?

A Yes, an engineering degree. GM Tech? But I know he went to MIT.

Q So he had a good background in engineering?

A Yes. As I understand it, his dad had to have some tutor practically live with them down there to get him through the thing. But I guess he's a smart guy and everything--he's good on car stuff. That's just what I heard. At any rate, Estes was there, and Estes was a good engineer. You could talk to Estes, Estes says, "Well, hell, I'll talk to Bunkie out here, we'll get that thing, don't worry about it, we'll get that done." So he'd talk to him at lunch, and what we thought, and then he'd get John's--John didn't say too much in the beginning.

Q DeLorean?

A DeLorean. 'Cause he was feeling his way. He was trying to be a good guy, and he was always following Knudsen around all the time. "Yeah, Mr. Knudsen, Yeah, Mr. Knudsen, Oh sure, yeah, yeah." He didn't even call him Bunkie then. John was just pushing his way around, in fact they used to say if John follows Knudsen so close that Knudsen turned the corner quick, John would break his nose. John was a good guy, he was a nice fellow, and happily married. His wife out here, Liz, introduced us to a couple of places in New York. He was talented in his own line--John's a very good engineer. He's very smart. He's very dedicated, loves automobiles, and in those days he wasn't the flamboyant character that he later turned out to be. I think there were probably a number of reasons for that, and that's not inherent in this design thing we're speaking about but it's my observation that we went through a period when all of a sudden guys--it was the thing to do--when there was more permissiveness, and sex. Guys were wearing big wide ties. They had lapels out to here. They were wearing silk striped shirts and god awful things. They were putting checkered ties with striped shirts, and all that stuff. It was anything goes type of thing, so you'd better work hard at trying to impress this group and go a step further. So John kind of got caught up in this type of a thing and he wanted to keep going a step further. So he kept going on and on and on, and he got a very good impression of himself. Everyone liked him, he was a likeable sort of guy, and he just went up the ladder. He did a lot for Pontiac up there. He did a lot for Knudsen, and a lot for Estes, and they both thought highly of him. And well they should.

Q What's Mitchell doing at this point in the mid-fifties?

A Running the thing. Mitchell was running design staff at that time, but I'm at a loss to say precisely when, I think it was about '50 or '51 when Harley Earl, to begin with, had his own independent design firm called Harley Earl Associates. He had rented a building over the east side of Detroit, and he had Harley Earl Associates. He had a number of different accounts, big accounts.

Q He was able to do this because of the force of his personality?

A That's about it. Nobody else in the corporation did that, but Earl was able to do it. But he didn't have automotive accounts but they were automotive allied like U.S. Rubber and all these various things you see, doing tires and all the products they were doing. So he needed someone to run the thing. He had a fellow run it for a short while, some designer, an older designer, Dick Arbib his name was, I think, he was Egyptian or something. So then Mitchell went in. He talked Mitchell into going in and running the thing. Well, Mitchell had a good personality, and because in industrial design business you have to go out and not only be a good designer but you have to be a hail fellow well met out of there and getting the business. He'd travel out to Iowa and get all the different accounts that he could get out there. He had this fork lift outfit you know and all the rest of them--a lot of the accounts.

Q Clark Equipment?

A Yes, Clark Equipment. So, Mitchell was involved in all that, but Mitchell as I understand, Mitchell said later that he only went there with the idea that he'd only be there for three or four years and could

return to General Motors and still get his tenure back.

Q So he was out of General Motors?

A He was out of General Motors really. But when he came back, they didn't want to give him his tenure, added it on to the three or four he'd been gone. I guess Earl had to get in there and they really talked downtown, and I guess they finally got it back again. It was almost an unheard of thing to do that because you see it establishing a precedent. So Mitchell was gone during that time so, when we did our first early Motorama cars, Mitchell wasn't there. He wasn't aware of all those things that were going on when we did our first cars. Then he came back, and we were supposed to bring him up to speed on everything that was going on in the studios. Meantime, Henry Lauve, heading the interior department, had Earl thinking he was the fair-haired boy, and they thought I wonder who will ever be Earl's successor--it looked like it could be Henry Lauve or maybe Bill Mitchell, but Henry was right in there really pushing Earl all the time on stuff, see. So that established knowing that about each other--that established a rivalry between Henry Lauve and Bill Mitchell. But Bill returned, and finally after several months, Earl announced one day at lunch and then, in a general bulletin, that he was making Bill his successor and consider him his assistant of now, so Henry was still in the interior department. But Henry then--well, you wondered what happened to Henry--what happened to Henry then--Henry used to drink quite a lot, a lot of the guys there did. Henry drank quite a bit, and at one of the Motoramas in New York, one of the later Motoramas, the General Motors goes through like all companies, a little austerity program. We're not going to send everybody down right now, only the top executives go this

year. So they sent the top executives down. Well, Henry took his vacation, and some of the rest of them could go like the middle of the next week or something, so Henry decided to take a vacation and go down there on his own. He knew all these people, and they had their big parties, so Henry went into some of the big parties down there, he crashed the big parties, he got in and was talking to some of the big men down there. But Henry got too much to drink, and Henry used to have differences with Fisher Body cause there was a lot of the interior trim stuff they used to fight him on, things they could do and so on. So he would say pretty demeaning and nasty things about them; so he got down there in New York, he'd been drinking too much, he went to some of the parties, and in talking to some of the top General Motors people he talked demeaningly about Fisher Body and their top people, and they wouldn't do this and they wouldn't do that, you ought to get rid of this guy and so on. They said nobody is ever going to do that. The next day they called up, I think it was the president of General Motors, called up Harley Earl and said you're going to have to fire Henry.

Q Who was president at that time?

A I think it was Curtice was in there at that time, and he called and said you've got to get rid of Henry Lauve, because you just can't have somebody coming in--it wasn't just talking to two or three guys, I mean he made a scene, and everyone was gathering around him, and he was saying nasty things about the corporation and about Fisher Body, and he says we may feel that way about other people we work with but we just don't come

out openly and stab our other divisions in the back. You can't do it. And he said, there were press people around. It was just a bad scene. So they got rid of Henry. But then Earl didn't want to do it, so he gave Mitchell a job of telling Henry that he'd no longer be there. And they had a couple of security people come up, and Henry had to take all his stuff out, and they said they'd send the rest of the stuff later, have your secretary put it in a box and we'll send it to you later. They escorted him down to his car in the garage, and that was the end of Henry Lauve at General Motors.

Q Why was there such elaborate precautions?

A I don't know.

Q Did they think he'd make a scene or something?

A They might have and they just wanted to make it damn sure that he got the message. And he did. And that was a real bad thing.

Q It was awkward for Mitchell, because I suppose he probably worked for Lauve.

A No, they were both about the same level. But nobody likes to do it to anybody really, and it made it kind of bad for him since they were kind of rivals for the job and everything. So that's what happened at that particular point. We turned out a lot of cars for the Motorama. There's another aspect of design staff that I don't know if you're aware--that's that they had an industrial design group working right there. General Motors, when I got there, had this department. They called it their industrial design department. It was composed of a lot of designers who weren't involved in automotive work at all. At the time, I got there, they were working on this "train of tomorrow" sort of thing, and

they were doing astrodomes for General Motors Electric Motor Division for their train. They also became involved in Frigidaire's work. They did Frigidaire's ranges.

Q Was it a GM subsidiary?

A It was a GM subsidiary--household appliances. They'd all be appliances for Frigidaire.

Q Design as well as engineering?

A Preliminary engineering. But all of the engineering, of course, was done down at Dayton at Frigidaire Manufacturing. But they had engineers that worked up there as well as industrial designers who worked in this aspect of it.

Q Was this all under Harley Earl?

A This was all under Harley Earl, and along with it they had designers who were exhibit designers who worked on shows, because any show that came along, if you were going to exhibit your products, you had a way of making a very attractive presentation. Earl, recognizing this, also started the exhibit design group up there.

Q Really far out for this time.

A It really was far out, and it showed that he was very interested in industrial design, even at that time. Of course, the big industrial designer at that time was the one who had done for General Motors and had probably got Earl mostly interested in it was Norman Bel Geddes who did their World's Fair Ride of Tomorrow--their Futuramic ride at the New York's World Fair back in 1939 and 1940. Remember the Trylon and Perisphere theme--"World of Tomorrow." Norman Bel Geddes did that. Well, at that time, the corporation brought him in there, and Earl was going to

put some of his people on it but he recognized that he did not have capable designers who could handle this aspect of design. So that's when the industrial design department was born.

Q Did Earl bring Norman Bel Geddes in to do the Futurama?

A No, the corporation did that.

Q I wonder who had the idea to do that?

A I don't know who did that at the time.

Q It was a marvelous stroke of luck.

A It was really was.

Q That was the hit of the Fair, wasn't it?

A Absolutely, it was.

Q The World of Tomorrow?

A The World of Tomorrow. In fact the ride that they did subsequently at world fairs that they did at 1964 and 1965 was actually a throw-back with a bit of a change to Norman Bel Geddes' original idea.

Q So the industrial design department was probably a real pioneering effort in the industry, was it not.

A Yes. It was as far as the corporation was concerned.

Q He combined the multiple talents of the design department, engineering department, and probably even product planning at that time.

A Yes, it did. In all of them. This part worked very well. The man who was in charge of this industrial design department when I started there was right after that--he left and he went out to teach at Art Centre School--teach design. He was a Californian, his name was George Jergensen. George Jergenson went out to California to Art Centre School,

and he was teacher out there--he was actually the head of the school under the man who owned it. George was one of the founders of this school. He got the thing organized, and remained out there a number of years. So they found another man by the name of Roy Keifer. Roy Keifer headed the organization then until he retired and passed away shortly afterward. It was during this time that I noticed that the lettering on automobiles was very crude and very immature in appearance.

Q Pedestrian?

A It was. I mentioned this to Bill Mitchell because most of the designers weren't schooled in lettering. It's a specialty all if its own. So I talked to Bill and said it would be a good idea to get someone from the advertising profession come in and maybe a small department started in this line. They could also work on instrument panels, lettering, and some of the speedometers and the rest of it. Mitchell agreed and hired a couple of young fellows, and that's how the lettering department was born and that also then became a part of the industrial design section. The industrial design department under Keifer was responsible for all the exhibit design at the world's fairs, in a lot of our showrooms, and then we even--I say we--General Motors design staff even got the contract of doing a lot of the exhibit design work for various divisions, and then they would pay styling for the amount of work. So Earl then put it on paying basis, and it was making money for the corporation, although we had the men on our payroll at design staff. The Motoramas were conceived by Earl, and I think the first one came around 1950, 1952, 1953. The exhibit design group then under Keifer is the one that did all the backgrounds and made the presentation of all the models in the Waldorf-Astoria. These Motoramas travelled around the country. They

went to Boston, Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and they were well attended. As a matter of fact, down in New York, they had to get these big barriers out to keep people from falling into the street. They lined up for two blocks waiting to get in because it was a free show to the public, and it was a beautiful show. It featured not only our automobiles--all of our General Motors products --but also dancers, singers, and a complete on-going, stage show.

Q Could you describe the physical aspect of these Motoramas.

A Well, they were held in the main ballroom at the Waldorf-Astoria that's where they started out. They used the Waldorf because it's a name spot in New York City. The exhibit design group under Keifer came out with a magnificent presentation device which would really be like a huge hand holding the automobile and then moving out into the wings, and then another one--there were five of them--would move back down onto the stage under the spotlight after the presentation was made on that model along with dancers and singers and what have you, that would slide back and simultaneously another one would come out of the shadows down into the bright lights with another product on it until all five cars were accounted for. It was a very huge undertaking, and it worked very very well.

Q They travelled also in large vans did they not?

A Yes, they travelled in large vans by semis--they went around the country that way. There was so much stuff you really couldn't move it any other way.

Q Were certain personnel assigned to the Motorama?

A Yes, they were. In public relations, Fisher Body had its people

they would assign, each of the divisions had its people assigned to it to see that everything went well. I remember one time going down, I happened to be in Boston one time with the public relations guy from Pontiac, and we'd just make up certain dresses for the girls that would be shown with the models with the automobiles. He put out a call down there for girls, but they had to be a specific size, and then they had to come in and read their lines, and he had to audition all of them. So I went in there with him while he was auditioning some of these girls, and you really felt sorry for some of the little girls because some of them wanted the job very badly, but they had to fit into these tight gowns. They would zip themselves into the gowns, and they were just so terribly uncomfortable in there--it was very very apparent--and they were trying to read their lines, and you felt sorry they weren't going to make it, and you had to tell them in a nice way, and I kind of felt sorry for the PR guy having to go through that with this horde of women out there who all wanted the job.

Q Well, at this point, in 1958, you've come up with an interesting fiberglass prototype. Can you tell us a little about that, what happened, why it happened?

A Well, we were making a fiberglass prototype to show some of the newest thinking, having an advanced studio at that time. We wanted an advanced prototype that showed all the latest thinking in the corporation. We went to Guide Lamp to see what they were working on.

Q Guide Lamp was?

A It was their electrical supplier--headlamps and so on. We went

there and were trying to get new configurations for headlamps for the car, and so my group came up with the idea of having long narrow rectangular headlamps. Well, this presents certainly an engineering problem because you have to get the depth of beam, and you had high and low beam, and you also have to get them squeezed down into this small form which we were doing just strictly for appearance. Guide Lamp wasn't too receptive on working too hard on it, so we had a fellow who was a Chinese fellow by the name of John Yee, an engineer, who used to work on a lot of our lighting. We prevailed upon John to come up with some of the backing and some of the reflectors that would make this plausible, and while it wasn't 100% perfected, we did it to the point that it, making a physical model, convinced Guide Lamp that it was possible. As a result, an outgrowth of the rectangular sealed beams came out of this. Of course, Harley Earl was the one that brought back the idea of the twin lamps. Do you remember when they came out with the dual circular lamps? That was Earl's idea.

Q Where did he pick that up?

A He picked that up because they used to use those--Santa Fe used to use those on their railroads, and he took a train out there, and he noticed some of these lights switching back and forth, and they had two lights on the front of some of the trains. Earl also picked up another thing from them. Years ago before I ever got started out there--there were a lot of lamps that you could buy at Western Auto supply stores and so on that had a blue button in the middle--tail lamp--it was a red lamp with a blue button in the middle of it, and that gave it a little distinction--made it almost look like a purple light at night. Earl brought that

back, and he called it the Santa Fe lamp because Santa Fe used to use that on the back of their railroad cars--on the cabooses--and he thought that was neat--so he brought it back and put it on cars. It was just an innovation--but it was something else the rest were putting red on, and Earl was putting the one on with the blue dots.

Q What was this dual intake grille that was so successful, and how did it come about?

A Well, that was the last Pontiac I worked on. That was the 1959 Pontiac. We needed a new theme. We were doing a new automobile, a new Pontiac for 1959. The body had pretty much been worked out, and it was a C body, and here we were going in, we needed a new A body. There wasn't enought money to come up with a new A body at the time, so we decided why just don't we just take the C body, give it to Chevrolet and Pontiac, and see what we can come up with. Well, part of it turned out good, and part of it didn't. Pontiac's worked out good because John DeLorean put the wide track on the Pontiac so that we had a wide body you see, but the rest of them, like Chevrolet, had a narrower track because they usually used the A body. So they used the A body track, they were given this C body to work with, so if you looked at it in profile, it was all right, but if you looked at it head on--rearward--you'd see the wheels were well inset under the body, and it looked the body was overpowering the automobile, which in effect it really was. It overbalanced really. It wasn't good on cornering and a lot of things; so, at any rate, in order to make the car look good, I worked out a front end. I liked this idea of a dual theme type of a front end--twin grille openings. I started out by taking--

there was one that Mitchell wanted in there that we were working on--but I took the hood contour and took a piece of cardboard--a great big piece of illustration board. I put two of them together, had the paint shop spray it clay color to match the clay, then I pinned it on the front of the car with heavy pins, then I carved out these two openings to see how it would look. Then I took chrome tape and put it around the periphery of the openings so that looking at it from a distance it gave you at least the appearance of a front end without going through all the modeling. Bill Mitchell did not like this. Jules Andrade liked it. Jules was a sort of design assistant that went around with--to Earl. He continued on after Earl went out, he continued on with Bill because he was Bill's senior really, an old guy. Andrade liked it, and he thought it was great. I took pictures of that, and the fellows in the studio thought it was great. Bunkie Knudsen thought it was great, so we started to model it. We did Bill's over here, so I brought another buck over and started to model the one I was doing. Bill didn't like that very well, and so he then got enough people behind him from the corporation--brought them in, talked them into it--he covered the other one up. He covered mine up.

Q How could he do that?

A He's the boss.

Q Oh, he's taken over now? He's taken over from Earl now?

A Yes, Bill Mitchell had. Because Bill got back there about 1954 or 1955. He was back in the swing of things. So Bill then was a big man, you see, because you see Earl was kind of on his way out. As I explained that was his last model, and Earl wasn't quite a sure of him-

self as he should have been. So, Bill was there. So, anyway, Bill wanted his. So, he finally talked Knudsen into it, and the corporation, into going with this other type of grille. But what happend, and the one that I had worked on, at that particular time, everyone thought it was the way to go. Then I was transferred--this was in late 1957, and I was transferred to run two advanced rooms. I was given Advanced 1 and 2, and so I was out of there, and I didn't have anything to say about it. So, they brought Shemansky back in there to run Pontiac. So he started working on the one that Bill did, but then he put this big monolithic front on the thing and they didn't like it up at Pontiac. They didn't like Shemansky too well, either. Bunkie Knudsen didn't like him, DeLorean, and Pete Estes. So he was okay, he was a nice guy, but he didn't seem to have what they wanted. So anyway, they went for this other front end, and mine was gathering dust. So Knudsen came back and said "God damn it, this is the one I wanted. Bill, this is my car, I'll be responsible for it. They is the one I want." So he got his way, and he prevailed, and that's the one they came out with. Mine went almost straight across. DeLorean told me eventually his contribution was to bring it up a little bit on the end over the headlamps, straight on the bottom and a little up over the headlamps --put a little grille texture behind it. That ended up being the '59 Pontiac. Most of it was all done, but that was the thing that was hanging fire, and they just had to come out with something to the end, because you had to release for engineering.

Q It was very successful.

A It was very very successful. That's the dual theme that has

followed right on through in the Pontiacs ever since. Now there was a book written here--Pontiac Years--I've got the book here in my briefcase. A guy by the name of Jan Norbye, and another guy, wrote the thing. I wrote them a letter and they had talked to Jack Humber, who later was a chief designer in there, and Jack Humber wasn't even in there at the time, he was down somewhere. He told them that he thought it was a Shemansky front end. It's in the book, so I write to this guy, and a got a letter back from him from Paris--he's over there now, this Norbye--and he was sorry as hell. When changes go through on the thing, he'll see that it's corrected. He really wishes he had talked to me, blah, blah, blah. But Jack didn't have anything to do with it, he wasn't even in there at the time, and Joe didn't have anything to do with it either. Joe's dad (Shemansky) was a--I used to kid him about it because--Joe's dad had a tombstone outfit, and he was running that when Joe got out of art school. He went to work for his old man doing these big god damn tombstones. I said, what are you doing there--it looks like a tombstone, Joe. Then they wanted to get rid of him. Mitchell still didn't think that the '59 Pontiac front was that good, so the following year he had Shemansky do this great big front. They brought it out and the dealers kicked like hell. It wasn't accepted anywhere. The following year they brought the dual theme back, changed it a little bit, and they've been using it ever since. So it shows you that you can be a top man, and be perceptive, be pretty smart, but you can make mistakes like anyone else--and Mitchell did on that one.

Q In spite of that, Mitchell asked you to work for him at this point,

in a sense, did he not?

A Well, I was working for him. We kept expanding the advanced design studios, and pretty soon we had six of them, we had a preliminary design studio, and we had a couple of studios where I'd do overseas and Canadian stuff. Well see, because Bob Lauer had done some stuff on Canadian Pontiacs, years ago when they used to want to convert old Chevys to Pontiacs, Lauer being in Chevy and Pontiac studio, would just cobble up something and put it on. So he got to know the Canadian guys, so my association with them was a natural outgrowth of my job in Pontiac. So I was in charge of the design for the Canadian stuff because they were changing a lot of their cars then. One of the cars the Canadians wanted to do--they were importing Vauxhalls, and one of the cars they wanted to bring in was a Vauxhall Victor.

Q Vauxhall was the?

A Was the subsidiary of General Motors in London, outside of London, Luton, England. So they made the Vauxhall cars over there--a real old organization. They used to have race cars, and they were well thought of in the early days. The Canadians had a Victor that they wanted to convert, and they wanted to call it they Viscount. So they needed some changes. They shipped over a car to one of my studios--we went about to change it to make the car, got the Canadians over, the top people, they all approved this is the way to go, but then the president of GM was the guy that apologized to Ralph Nader [James Roche]--anyway, he was in there and he said "Paul, tell you what I want you to do. I want you to go over to Vauxhall, I want you to go over there with the sales manager of GM Canada, and we're also going to send another fellow." So they sent

an interior guy over, Jay Snyder, who was an engineer/expeditor type of guy in the interior group. So we flew over there, the guy's name in Canada was Jeff Humphrey. Jeff was a sales manager. Everybody loved him there. God, he really was a real powerful speaker--a Billy Graham type of guy. He started out as a clergyman. We went over there with him, he'd been to England many times, so, Jay and I being younger, he wanted to show us the ropes. We went out to some nice places and so on, we stayed at the Dorchester Hotel, and he had a suite in there with liquor all over the table, and flowers, you know, being sales manager, the Canadians fixed that up for him and the Vauxhall people. Jay and I had a suite down at the other end--a nice big living room, bedroom on each end, it was really a nice place. So we stayed there, and we got acquainted there. We out to the meeting that old Jeff was conducting out at Vauxhall. The Vauxhall people, all the top people were involved, including the factory managers and all of them. We outlined what had been approved by the president of General Motors at that time. They thought they might be able to do it. Jeff Humphrey said "You'd better do it. We're buying this automobile, and if we are going to buy it and sell it in Canada, this is what you're going to have. It's already been approved, and we want it." Well, we think we can get that. How many colors? We need special colors, can you get them? Well, I guess we can. We need special taillamps, we need this and that. We need different interiors. We don't know, sir when we might be able to get all these things. They talked to the general manager at Vauxhall, and he said, fine. So Jeff had to get back to Canada. He said okay, I'll leave it up to Paul. I'll leave it up to you and Jay. So he told the guy, "Paul Gillan and Jay Snyder are

going to represent me here. They'll be working with you on this to get the whole program accomplished. They might have to be over here awhile." So the general manager invites us out to his home, and we had a nice time out there. He had servants, and the whole bit, the English bit with his horses--that was very impressive you know. With the idea that he's Mr. Big and you'd better do it his way. Then he gets talking to his people, and the factory people say that well, they can't add any more paint lines in there, because if there's more paint lines--there just isn't more room for tubs of paint in there. Then the guy comes in from the lamp department, and he says they can't possibly get a new taillamp to fit back in the old fender, a new taillamp for this Viscount. They can't get one of those until, maybe, anywhere from twelve to eighteen months before they can get a new one. We asked why they hadn't told Mr. Humphrey that yesterday. Well, we didn't know that, at that time. My God, here we're stuck with a dog over here and there's nothing we can do about it, and they're leaving it up to us. So, I had copies of this meeting we made here, and I said the president of General Motor has sent me over here to see that this is going to be done. This is what he asked for. It would behoove all of us to get it done, and I'm here to see that it's going to get done, and I'm going to show you how it can happen. So, what I did was go through the factory with Jeff, we talked at different places, wrote down what these stations were. We said, "Why can't you talk to the guys working there, is there any reason why you can't put these extra barrels of paint on the other side of the wall out here and just run your hoses in." "Why, no sir there's no reason we can't do that." "We can do that and that." Then what I did was I called up Guide Lamp in Detroit

(they were down in Anderson, Indiana). I knew the contacts there. I called them up and asked, "How long would it take you to tool a lamp." I told them how big the thing was, and how it looked similar to a certain type of Pontiac lamp. "How long would it take you to tool a lamp like this. I mean Canada needs this damn thing. We bring the car in to Canada sans tail lamp then the Canadians could mount this damn thing, and you guys would get the business. Well, hell, they could do it between three and four months. Very good. So we got all the answers to the whole thing, and the rest of things they couldn't even work it out in time. We got all that taken care of. The next day from Lucas Lamp Company, over in England, did all the Lucas lamps for them over there. They got old Joe Lucas and some of his guys out there because they heard that Guide Lamp was going to make the god damn tail lamp. They got it out, and god damn it, they got down where they could get it done in four months. So they got the thing done, and they put the paint thing out, and we got everything we wanted out of the damn thing. The Canadians liked that. Well, they told Bill about it, and that put me in good over there, see, on the overseas things from there on. This was way back in '59, I guess, it was when I first went over there. So then I had the overseas tour. So then I was on all the overseas things. I got things accomplished all over. I went over there and Opel--Bill said I want you to go over there.

Q Who's this?

A Bill Mitchell asked me to go over to Opel, which was a subsidiary of General Motors in Germany.

Q What city was that?

A That's over in--right outside of Frankfurt. It's called Russelsheim. So I went over there, and they had a guy Bill had known for many years, about Bill's age or so, Carl Mager, and he was in charge of the design section. But the design section over there was really under the chief engineer, a man named Hans Mersheimer.

Q They were in the old mode?

A They were in the old mode. And whatever Mersheimer said went. So I got in that afternoon, and, boy, Mersheimer was out there with a car. He was a pretty nice guy and everything, because you know we were coming from the States, and he had to be nice. So he took us out there and went to dinner and the whole thing. And they sent Shemansky with me at that time. Joe and I both went over on that one. The next day we went out, and the styling section there was up on the roof and there was like an upper story built on the roof of the factory. This is where the styling was done, and you would walk out of one door and you would have to walk across this pebbled roof to go into the door of the styling section--up on the third deck. What a hell of an uninspirational area for a design center. Carl Mager who ran the design section, working for the chief engineer over there, his name was Hans Merscheimer, and he had to do what Merscheimer did. Some of the guys I got talking to,

and you know the designers, you know the nice guys. They said well, this guy Mager, has to do what Merscheimer says, but we put out all these seats, they had all the trim stuff to show what they had designed, but Merscheimer always selects this one and this one. I'll tell you why, we all know why, because the guy that runs the vinyl works or the plastic company that puts out all the stuff down there, you ought to see the presents he gives Merscheimer at Christmas time. Merscheimer's house is filled with presents, and the ones that give him the presents are the ones whose stuff he selects. No kidding. That's the way it goes. Of course, over in the States you can't do that, beacause GM has everyone sign a letter that lays out rules for dealing with vendors. But in Germany they hadn't caught up with it yet. So, he ran that whole operation with a real personal tight fist.

Q Excuse me. You had quite a thing going on over there, didn't you?

A Yes.

Q How did you do it?

A Well, we finally got the thing all set. Some of the designs weren't so good. We worked with it, with them, worked with them on the full size stuff, and that type of thing. What we done was this, before we went over--they had to send all their stuff over to Mitchell--their line drawings. In one of my studios we got some stuff that Mitchell liked. We designed the car the way we thought, so we took the stuff over with us--folded up--put it up on the boards, and their guys made overlays and put it against their cars so you could see how they stacked up. What

we wanted to do was start a model that looked this this. So they did, and while we were there they were working on part of the model to get part of it done. We got the thing so it looked quite good. Merscheimer went along with it. I forget the general manager's name at the time, he was a nice guy but he wasn't in it at all. He never went to the design staff, didn't care about engineering, he was a sales manager type, and he just didn't give a damn about stuff. We went out, stayed a lot of times--we spent a lot of time over there at their design staff, their styling section. The head of GM, Jim Roche, had asked me to write a report... From there I went over to Vauxhall. Davy Jones was the chief designer at Vauxhall, the director of design. So when I got back Mitchell says "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to write a report for me exactly what your impression of the design staff at Opel and what is your impression of the design staff over at Vauxhall? What do you think ought to be done." This was a report for Mitchell. Well, knowing Mitchell real well, hell I just wrote up exactly what I thought they ought to do, I wrote about all the guys, I wrote about Merscheimer selecting the stuff because of getting the stuff in his pocket, and so on, the whole bit, see? I said he was a nice man, which he was and everything, but I wrote the whole story up. I just wrote it in every day language just as though I were talking to you now. Mitchell thought God, this is really something. So what does he do? He takes it downtown and gives it to the president of General Motors, and the chairman of the board. Gave each a copy of the thing. Well, they read it over, and they said "God damn it, we're going to make some changes." So they decided to make some changes, and they took a trip over there with Mitchell. They agreed with me on

the thing, they decided that Mager should be phased out. We ought to take and put another guy over there, an American guy, that Mitchell would trust to go over and run the design staff, and appropriate money to build a new building. So the corporation then at the next big meeting appropriated money to build a brand new building for design staff over there at Russelsheim, Opel in Germany, which they did. They built a beautiful building over there, so that upgraded them. Then at the same time there was an engineering building already started over at Vauxhall. They decided to take the top part of that and make it a design staff for Davy Jones at Vauxhall in England.

Q Your career as an overseas design specialist...

A Well, we're speaking about the design staffs being both built up over at both Vauxhall and Opal with their new buildings and so on. From there on it just rapidly matured, and every one was very very glad. The products that came out have just been very successful ever since, but a lot of it, of course, is due to the fact they also made some changes over there in management about that time because knowing that some of this stuff was happening in design staff, in engineering, they also decided to take a look at their complete engineering staff over there, including the fellows that were running the factories to see that they were well qualified. Up to that time overseas had been an old organization of General Motors. They were headquartered out of New York City. They were all gentlemen, good fellows. GM stateside representatives would pretty much take whatever was recommended to them engineering wise and design wise

when they arrived. In those days, they were still used to--they were not in the airplane age--they were still used to taking the boat, and all the top people would take the boat over to Europe. Well, on something, they were talking on the phone, and they'd get there a week or so later. They'd take the boat back. And the fellow that went over to Australia used to take the boat. They used to have a man go over to help on overseas projects, he would take the boat, and it would be three months before he got back from Australia so the corporation would know what the hell was happening over there. This sort of thing couldn't happen. So then, the corporation became a lot more interested in overseas stuff, and Ford Motor Company was making a lot of strides in this direction, and General Motors realized they had to to, and they did. As a result of that, one day I was down in Toronto with Bill Mitchell and the top Canadian management group, and Steve McDaniel. We had lunch late and a couple drinks, and one day Bill was very proud to offer me the job of director of design for Adam Opel. He said "How would you feel about that." I didn't have to hesitate, maybe if I had it may have sounded better, but I said "No, Bill, I thank you very much but I really would rather stay in the States." Well, I had personal reasons at that particular time, what with my family involvement and so on. I wasn't able at the time to make a change. Mitchell had offered me something, and I guess I should have been very grateful. But because I didn't accept it, he never quite forgot that. His treatment of me, his attitude toward me seemed to be just a little more strained after that as a result. He then, we had Davy Jones, who had been a long-time friend of Bill's and who was in charge of design, an

Englishman, at Vauxhall, he was a very capable man. He was willing to stay on, but since they wanted to make the change at Opel, they were looking for a man, so then they asked Irv Rybicki who was running Chevrolet studio at the time if he would accept the job. I guess Irv was in Oldsmobile at that time. They asked Irv if he would accept the job. Irv said, "Give me a week." He thought it over, and at the end of the week he said no, he just wouldn't be able to accept it. Irv didn't take the job either, so then they asked Clare MacKichan. Clare was running Chevy at that time. So MacKichan jumped at it, he took it. So Mac took the job, and he went over and became the first American director at Opel. He had a nice home over there which they provided, in an area up on a hill where all the top executives for Opel lived. It had a beautiful view, a very nice place. Mac liked it very much. He seemed to get along over there, and because of Mac's attitude, he's a strict, stern Scotch descendant type of guy, very spartan with his conversation and so on, and the Germans seemed to, at least he got the job done, whether or not they really liked him as a man. I used to travel back and forth, and I used to see Mac over there frequently. A lot of the things I saw, even though Mac was over there, I didn't approve of them. So I would come back, make recommendations in my studio, get Mitchell's approval, and the approval of overseas management in this country, take it over and then Mac would implement it in his design studios. Mac had somewhat--he was a complete authority over there--while he owed his position to Bill Mitchell and indirectly to me for having gone over there originally, he resented the fact that I would come over there and bring changes that

occurred in one of my studios. He would go ahead with it grudgingly because he knew the consequences with Mitchell if he didn't. However, my relationship with MacKichan was never that good from then on, either. But I did enjoy travelling. One of my jobs was to go to the European auto shows each year. I'd been doing that for many years. I'd go to the Paris show first, then to the London show, and then the Turin show. The Turin show came in the Spring.

Q Turin was the center of design?

A Design--Italian design activity.

Q Torino?

A Torino. Yes. In fact, Ford called one of the cars the Torino after that. So I used to travel around over there. When I would get there I call GM France or GM London and arrange for a photographer--a still photographer--and often times a movie photographer, and we'd go out to the auto show early in the morning. I'd usually go the day before and make notes of everything I thought was new and all the cars that I wanted to highlight. Then we'd go out and take photographs and movies of these automobiles, and they'd develop them and send them back to the States and I'd make a presentation here to design staff and to General Motors Corporation on what I considered the latest design innovations on European cars. We found it very helpful.

Q But in spite of the position, in which you enjoyed the travelling and prestige of being a sort of home office trouble shooter for the European operation, it really wasn't what you had wanted to do.

A I like designing. That was my first love, art and design, I like

that sort of thing. I got to the point where I did like travelling quite a bit. I used to go to South America frequently. I loved it. You can't help but like it to a large extent. I didn't like being away from my family all that much, but I did like travelling. For example, you know you're travelling first class. You stay at the very best hotels. You have the finest food, you meet a lot of interesting people. When you get there, because you are a dignitary so to speak from the States from the home office, they treat you nicely. They put on little cocktail parties for you. You always had chauffeurs, and you get VIP treatment, and that was very gratifying. You go to South America and have a weekend to spend by yourself, and you go from Sao Paulo, fly over to Rio, spend the whole weekend in Rio, and just really enjoy yourself, go over to the local yacht club down there and go to their pool, and swim, and just meet fellows with boats down there in Rio, and it's a very nice life.

Q Did you go to Australia at all?

A I'd been to Australia once years ago. Later on Bill Mitchell got that job and then Bill got Chuck Jordan for an assistant, and Chuck reserved the Australian deal for himself because Chuck was a Californian. Chuck would fly to California, stay over there, then he'd fly to Hawaii, he'd stay a few days in Hawaii, then he'd fly to Fiji, from Fiji he'd go over to Australia, which was the route they'd send us on. But he'd spend it down there because he liked being away, so that was a long trip. He'd been to Europe several times, but he kind of liked the long ones. Later on they would tie that trip into a Japan trip so he'd go from Australia over to Japan.

Q In terms of overseas operations, give us a little of GM's historical background. It's my impression that Ford had established first European subsidiaries largely from the beginning, but that General Motors seemed to prefer to take over an established if somewhat smaller companies and make them into their subsidiaries. Is that the way it happened with Vauxhall?

A Yes. With Vauxhall and Opel, it started out that way.

Q Were they small automobile companies?

A No. Actually they were quite large automobile companies by the time the corporation took them over. As far as the one over at Holden's, over in Australia, they used to make Holden's--Holden's was a company that used to make custom bodies. They used to make a body they used to call the Calaisch. They used to make that, and so they had quite a good engineering works. Then they would take some American cars over there and customize them, and work on them, and that became Holden's. So as a result, they had facilities for manufacturing, and General Motors bought them and started manufacturing automobiles. Actually doing the engines, castings and the whole bit.

Q That was tailor-made for them.

A It was, yes.

Q What about, you mentioned Adam Opel. Was that their original name?

A Their name was Adam Opel. That was the man's name who started it. He started making sewing machines and bicycles.

Q In the early part of the century?

A Probably in the late 1800's, I guess.

Q The latter part of the last century. He made what again, please?

A Adam Opal made sewing machines and bicycles and then he got into early automobiles over there after Daimler and Benz and the rest of them in Germany did. He started making cars. At Vauxhall they used to make marine engines to begin with. They were located right along the Thames River. Then when the cars started coming in, why they were just making pretty good engines, a couple small automobile companies bought their engines, and they decided they may as well go into the business themselves. So then they got into the automobile business and phased out the marine engine business.

Q And so General Motors, sensing that these two areas of opportunity, to take over an established industrial plant, expanded them into their overseas facilities.

A Yes, that's true.

Q Did they do that in South America too?

A In South America they started their Chevrolet operation down at Sao Paulo, Brazil. They bought existing buildings, I don't know who was in them before Chevrolet, but they started manufacturing Chevrolets down in Brazil. They started manufacturing Chevrolets, but then Brazil had a local content law where you had to have about 90%--local content--so as a result, and they had import laws so we couldn't export our Chevys from here down there or even our parts except for maybe 10% local content, so that we had established manufacturing facilities down there. It was built practically verbatim--design wise, engineering and design wise to

the American cars. Then they began to also manufacture Chevrolets in Argentina. And so I used to go down to Buenos Aires, Argentina, also. They used to do their cars down there. It very interesting.

Q Ford had sort of gotten a head start on them. I think Henry Ford II, right after World War II, decided that there should be an overseas operation.

A That's what I understand. You see, General Motors overseas in the early days just started out shipping all kinds of batteries and wheels, and tires, and transmissions, and parts and stuff like that over to Egypt and different places where they would get a car and they would make sort of a hybrid out of it, and then General Motors decided to get in the car business over there, which they did.

Q Well, it worked out very well.

A Yes it did. Then, of course, for awhile they used to have their Frigidaire plant outside of Paris, and they used to make Frigidaires there. Of course, they phased that out also.

Q Did they?

A Yes.

Q Well, it's been sort of a bittersweet kind of experience for you. You were pleased with the recognition you're getting, you're pleased with the work your doing, and you're pleased with expanding the design centers overseas, but it just is not designing, is it?

A It's not designing, no. I love to design automobiles, I enjoy it. I liked being in charge of the advanced group. I could design in there. I was working with the actual designers. When the the last World's Fair came along which was in '64 and '65, I frequently went back and forth to

New York with Roy Keifer's boys, Jack Didion and his group. Well, they did the World's Fair, they did the entire building. The designed the building. Jack Didion and his group designed that building. Jack was a good architect, a good designer, and a good guy all the way around. Jack and his group designed most of that, with Keifer heading the thing up. Keifer was getting pretty old at the time. Jack and his group handled that. Then they did the sets for the whole thing. Well, along with the sets, it's all transportation oriented being General Motors, so we needed the finest contemporary designs we could get so, they wrote a story. What they were going to have was an underseas area to go through on this ride. Were you through that, Dave?

Q No.

A An underseas area. They also had like similar to an earlier World's Fair, a world of tomorrow that you go through. They had an Arctic section, they had a jungle scene where roads were being laid through there, and all sorts of things. That means you had to have vehicles for all these things, and so being in advanced design group it was up to me to come up and meet what they had set up as a set and design vehicles for all of these operations--underseas, and Arctic vehicles, and all of them. So along with that we had three cars that we did--way out cars. So, I had a meeting in our auditorium, and put out a notice for all of the designers to meet in the auditorium, all of General Motors designers, be there for a 10:00 meeting. So I gave them a background what we were attempting to have--at the World's Fair--a background of the thing. Jack Didion told them what was going to happen, and I told them

what we were going to need in the way of vehicles. We listed them up there. I wanted to find out who were the most interested people. Who would like to take part in this--to leave their names when they left the auditorium, which they did. Some fellows like it, some don't. So those that did let me know. Then I went into the studio to look over a lot of their portfolios and see what type of work they were working on. Then I got Mitchell's okay to take over his studio down in a building where the World's Fair stuff was being developed, that General Motors had rented down on Mound Road. So I took over a large area for a studio. We shipped in the necessary equipment, we shipped seven or eight designers in there at a time, they'd stay for two to three week periods, until they were designed dry so to speak on the particular project. We'd send another group in, and that time we were able to come up with vehicles for the whole show. We had vehicles in the jungle that would cut down trees, that would pour cement, and do the whole thing. And these were believable because we got top engineers in to look at the thing and they said they were production feasible. And we did the same thing with underseas vehicles, and it worked out great. Then I also did the three automobiles that were presented at that time.

Q What were those three?

A Well, one was shopper type of vehicle.

Q An idea car?

A They were all idea cars, yes. We had the idea cars down there. One was a shopper. In the back of that we had shopping cart, but it was a three-wheel vehicle, and the lower under part of the car the trunk was

actually a shopping cart with retractable wheels. So the gal would go back there, open up the back light, turn a button, the wheels come on to the shopping cart, it would let itself down, she'd pull it out and take it into the super market, just bring it back, plug it in the back of the car, the wheels would retract, and you'd drive it home and you could wheel it right into your kitchen.

Q They still haven't come out with anything like that.

A No they haven't. It was a pretty neat little arrangement. It worked good. Then we did another car called the GMX which started out being called the Stiletto. It had a real bullet nose. Mitchell always liked a real pointed nose. Later after the shows, so that Pontiac could use the car to show around, we put a completly different front on it because, with safety regulations coming in at that time, it was just absolutely the wrong way to go. But we did show it that way at the World's Fair, and it created a lot of attention. It was an interior/exterior model. We had a lot of good exposure with that. Then we did another sedan--way out--Turnpike Cruiser we called it. It had seats that had television in it, seats that would swivel in there, you could lock into a computerized road systems and so on.

Q Ford had one of them earlier.

A Yes. They had a Turnpike Cruiser one time.

Q They dropped the trademark, apparently.

A Well, maybe we didn't even call it the Turnpike Cruiser, I don't know. But we what did, we had a lot of different names for these things see. We started out calling the Turnpike Cruiser, it became Firebird IV.

That was a Firebird IV you see--we had at that time--that was a turbo job. This was interior of the GMX. This is the GMX job--that's the point I was telling you about. Later, we rounded that all off and just left the scoops on the side. Then this is the other little car. We called that the Runabout. It was actually a shopper vehicle.

Q The shopper Runabout. Oh, there it is. You're able to use the cart as an integral part of it. It's fantastic.

A You have to have something at a World's Fair for everybody--for the hot rodders, for the women, for everybody; so this sort of hit a broad scope.

Q That's fascinating.

A It was pretty interesting.

Q You must have been very delighted with that.

A That was good duty. I enjoyed doing that very much because we had to have modelers working on cars because we had this diarama that the cars fit in. Of course, in a diarama you got everything up close that's full size, then as it goes out into the distance, for a limited area, you have to have everything scaled down to meet it. All these cars and stuff were running around the back. We had to have all the right scale cars running all the way back, and all these had to be modeled and detailed so that they could be cast in fiberglass to fit on these tracks. So it was a fantastic project to get the whole thing done.

Q You were the Norman Bel Geddes of the '64--'65 World's Fair.

A Not really. Because Jack Didion and his group got that whole thing together and the ride vehicle. All I was responsible for was the

transportation aspect of it. But we had a good time.

Q You brought in the idea of the dream cars--show cars?

A Yes. We had that in there. But along with it we got plaudits from Walt Disney because Walt Disney used to stay at the same motel--we used to stay right across from the airport cause it was real close. We used to fly in and out. There was a short drive on that same expressway out to the Fair site.

Q Where was the Fair site in those days?

A Flushing.

Q Still in Flushing?

A Yes. And the airport right across from there, what airport is it? That's LaGuardia. So we went into LaGuardia.

Q Disney did a lot of things there?

A Disney did a lot of things there. We used to talk to him, and Walt Disney thought that the concept that we had was fantastic. He really did.

Q He'd done something for Ford, their exhibit at the '64-'65 World's Fair, hadn't he?

A Yes. That's right. He thought it was good. There were a lot of people involved in it, an awful lot of people were involved. Didion hired an awful lot of people from all over industrial design groups added into the group to make their inputs. But they did a good job.

Q Are any of those fiberglass prototypes that you did for the World's Fair, have any of them survived, are they still out at the Tech Center?

A Well, I don't know where they are right now, I really don't. Sometime the division needs a car, they put their identification on it,

and show it in a showroom or somewhere, and then some keep them, and some put them in their square houses and so on. GM has not done a good job in their archives or in documenting their history, their recent history, they did in the old days, not in their recent history, or in their photographic files, or in keeping prototypes of different models that they've got. They just scrap them, they just break them up. Because they say storage space is necessary. Then you get a new management group in who have had absolutely nothing to do with the old stuff, and so they have no interest in it whatsoever. They can't see putting out part of their budget for warehouses to house this stuff of which they know nothing. It's just, consequently, thrown out. General Motors is always right up with "What can you do for me now--right now."

Q And tomorrow?

A And tomorrow, yes. That's it.

Q There's no interest in the past.

A No interest in the past, and I guess that's fine from the standpoint of making money, but you have to think about the people coming after us. History, you need history. It's a very important thing.

Q Well, your career has--so from about 1960 to about 1980 you're pretty much involved with the overseas operation.

A A lot of the overseas operation, plus my advanced design groups.

Q So you're shuttling back and forth?

A So you're back and forth, and you get back here and there's a fire on this, Pontiac needs front end, they got to have this, and Bill didn't like the stuff that Humbert and the guys do, you need a new front end.

So I'd get down there, I'd say "Jesus, okay lets stack these sealed beams. Let's put one here, put this thing around here." Bernie Smith was working for me then, he works for Dave Holls now, and said "Do this. I want to come back and see this." So they'd do it and make a sketch, sometimes full size on the board. Sometimes take tape and make it--try this one, try that one, and Bill would like it, take it up and the guys upstairs didn't turn out exactly maybe as we were doing cause it wasn't all detailed, but they got the concept, and they had a concept to start with. We did that on Cadillacs, we did it on Pontiacs, Buick and Olds--all of them.

Q You've got seven designs, six or seven design studios, in the advanced area.

A Plus the preliminary design. You see, in the preliminary design studio we usually took the kids, the young fellows that we got from the schools, started them in preliminary design and let them just work for awhile on whatever they could come up with to sort of get a lot of the cobwebs out of their system and come up with their own without being tainted in General Motors requirements.

Q Were Strother MacMinn involved in this operation at all?

A Strother MacMinn, I knew Mac when I started at General Motors. I started in Oldsmobile studio. Mac had a little studio, and he was working on one of the overseas cars, he was working on an Opel. I remember going over and saying "What the hell you working on." "I'm working on an Opel." He was good friend of Johnny Foster, who was one of the senior designers in Oldsmobile, and Johnny Foster and MacMinn

lived together out in Grosse Pointe in some lady's house out there. They were both Californians. They knew each other in California. Mac decided, well he was going to return out there and teach at this Art Centre school that started out there. So he went back, but I remember Mac used to have a '36 cut down Carson top Ford. I remember going to a proving ground show out there with MacMinn and Johnny Foster out there one time. Mac didn't stay here too long, he went back out there. A real car nut. You know him?

Q No. I've never met him. No. I'd like to go out and see the Art Centre operation.

A Yes. Mac's a good guy. He doesn't teach there any more. He's working for one of the Japanese design centers out there. I don't which one that is--whether it's Honda or Toyota. Maybe it's Toyota.

Q The Japanese are grabbing up all the good freelance designers these days, aren't they?

A Are they?

Q A lot of them, anyway.

A They probably are. I can see why they would. Of course, the Japanese got a lot of their start through American designers because Japanese knowing that they were going in the car business, wanted to educate their designers. So they sent them to Art Centre School. Well, Ford, Chrysler and GM would go out to Art Centre School and send their top people out there like Chuck Jordan, and our group, and I used to go out with Chuck and different people. We'd give them a project out there, to young designers: "Design this for us, we'll be back a week from Tuesday to see how your doing, and we'll have a crit at that particular

time. So they'd work day and night to get the stuff out. We'd see what they had. We'd select the stuff we thought was the best, then they would develop that. We'd go out in another two or three weeks, and they'd put on a whole show for us. These models would be all dinocced. They'd be all painted up. They'd look great. The scale models and stuff. They'd have full-size drawings and the whole bit.

Q Three-eighths, or quarters?

A A lot of three-eighths models they'd have out there. So, they'd have full-size renderings and the whole bit. So the Japanese were sending their people over you see and that meant that we would go out and criticize and tell them why this would work, why it wouldn't work, and we'd work with them and show them how our stuff was going and so on. Well, the Japanese kids were out there, they're getting all this kind of stuff. Then they'd take it straight back to Japan, and so they were being educated by our Big Three here, so Ford, Chrysler and GM were really paying for their design and they'd go back to Japan and they've got all the stuff over there. Well, of course, it's a logical outgrowth, they have a lot on the ball themselves, and they just continue. So that's the way the thing went.

Q Well, at this point, I sense there's a certain disenchantment in your career somewhere in those intermittent years between '60 and '80--working like a Trojan, going back and forth, but it isn't quite what you'd hoped it would have been.

A That's because of the people that I'm working for. You see after I didn't take this overseas assignment over at Opel, MacKichan took it over

there. Meantime, they put me working for--it looked as though Chuck Jordan was going to be Bill's successor. So Bill made him design, big design man. Then, they brought Irv Rybicki up there, (who eventually got Bill's job) and he was running kind of neck and neck with Chuck, and they didn't know who was going to get it. Then Irv got the job, so Chuck was like an assistant to Irv, and there's not a good relationship between those fellows at all. Not by a long shot. So I was working for Chuck, then Chuck got to the point where he didn't want to be around there any more. He started taking off on the overseas thing at lot, mostly to Australia and over that way because you were gone a longer time. But then Chuck can be a very nice ingratiating sort of guy. I get along good with Chuck and his wife--they're both nice people. But Chuck, some days for some reason or another, he comes in and he's like a different man. He comes in and he's angry. Nothing is right. Everything's got to be his way. Designer's temperament is such in order to come up with things and be the creative people they are, they're individuals, and it's hard for an individual to be subordinate to a man who you can't understand--who runs hot and cold. And for some unknown reason doesn't like something and turns you off completely--rejects everything you're doing. This is very difficult. I've never had run ins with Chuck at all on that, but then what they did was, a guy overseas is only there for so long, so they bring another man back. So in the meantime, they brought MacKichan back.

Q Back to...

A Back to the United States. So all these guys, they keep bring back, they have to find more jobs for them, see. There's only so many

jobs. You got to divide up the pie. So they would divide up the pie, and they would take it partly away from me. So, in other words, I had the overseas and the advance stuff. They brought him back, and gave MacKichan two of the advanced studios, or three of the advanced studios I guess. Then they gave him preliminary design. Then, after that we were working side by side, then they put him over me, and I ended up working for MacKichan. Now, MacKichan didn't like the fact that I was always taking stuff over there, and I didn't necessarily agree with what he was doing. I would come back and tell the management here. "Ah hah, he's got a chance to stick it to me." Which he did, in many regards. So Mac was always playing up to Bill and his wife. They'd buy Mrs. Mitchell a nice fluffy little poodle dog over there, and they'd get this for her, and they'd buy her this, and they'd buy Bill a wristwatch, and they'd do this sort of thing. They'd take them out to dinner, and you know, the royal treatment. So, Mac got in pretty close with Bill in a lot of cases. In Irv's case, why, Irv was a good guy, he didn't the overseas thing. Irv was a drinking buddy of Bill's, and they were real good friends. This isn't to say he doesn't have a lot on the ball, he does. He's a nice guy, and I like Irv and Chuck too. I don't like MacKichan. I wouldn't say anything nasty about him, but I don't like people that aren't honest, aren't up forward, and you would say something to and tell him what you think, and they don't hold it against you. Mac would necessarilly leave me out of important meetings. He was the boss then, and so there would be important meetings come up with the top people downtown. Well, they all knew me, I knew them over the years. See, I worked with

Pete Estes. "Hi Paul", Pete would come up, you know and John DeLorean. "How are they treating you, how's it going." Well, I'm working for this clown, and he sends me over to Chicago or out of town somewhere on some assignment so I'll be gone when that meeting is here, and I won't be there when the top people come in. You know that's a devious means of getting rid of somebody, and I was treated that way to a great extent. But anyway I made the most of it during that time. It isn't only me who felt that way about Mac, everyone that worked for him on the design staff felt that way. When MacKichan left, he left in anger because he thought he would inherit the job that Irv Rybicki got, and Mac wasn't selected for the job and Irv Rybicki was.

Q Do you know the reason why?

A Why Irv got it instead of Mac?

Q Yes

A Well, I feel they felt Irv was better qualified than MacKichan, and he was certainly better liked. In this day and age, personality has a lot to do with--the way you run people has an awful lot do with your success in business. Irv was head and shoulders above Mac in this regard and Mac was running it like the old curmudgeon would, and this isn't appreciated by business or by people today, so Mac lost out and he retired, and he left and as far as I know no one has heard of him since and feel very happy about it.

Q Is he in the design business anywhere?

A As far as I know, he isn't.

Q At this time you have another diversion.

A Well, yes, you see. While I was still with General Motors probably about 1970 I became involved in a venture in Florida with a financier in Detroit and a builder in Florida. Dick Dawson and Bill Lutz. I was told at that time that mobile homes were the big thing in Florida--there was a lot of money to be made in them.

Q What year was that?

A That was 1970. We didn't know that in 1973 there would be a big depression, and it hit Florida particularly hard, and particularly the people who lived in mobile homes, which are not necessarily the high-income group. So, we went to Florida, looked around, found what we considered to be a very good piece of land, bought the land, and then proceeded to get mortgages and develop the mobile home park. I helped to lay the whole thing out. We had two recreational buildings down there and beautiful club houses.

Q Where was this?

A It was in Tampa, Florida--just on the outskirts of Tampa, Florida. We called it Fountain View Estates. It was to be the largest mobile home park on the west coast of Florida.

Q Did you have a fountain in view?

A We did have a fountain. I said, "Hell, we have to have a fountain." Bill wanted to call it Fountain View. We did have a fountain as you drove in. We had a regular boulevard in there, we had big palms; you know, if you're to have a place look like fountain view you'd better have palms, so we had palms brought in. It was a beautiful place. It cost a great deal of money. It had a lot of plaudits and write-ups in

architectual books for the way we landscaped and developed the entry and so on and the club houses. Then the depression came along. It wasn't really, you know when you're doing anything, you're in another business, you should spend a great deal of time right on the site. I was with General Motors, 1500 miles away, and the man who was developing it was there part of the time, Dick Dawson the financier in Detroit, was never there, and consequently we had very few meetings, and the man that was put in charge as our resident manager turned out to be a sort of a fraud. The thing went right downhill. The depression came along, and as a result of a lot of expenses and so on we were going to lose it plus a great deal of money. We finally found someone to take over, over $200,000 of our debts, and in my particular case I lost $138,000, which wasn't recoverable. This, plus my situation at General Motors, which I was not happy with, and I was probably striving all the harder at General Motors to make my worth felt, culminated in a heart attack. It was a very very serious heart attack, and I was hospitalized for quite a long time. On the advice of my physician, he suggested I retire. That was in 1981 I retired. But I'd been out for quite a long time on a recuperating leave. I'd been out for about a year on that, and then my doctor got with the General Motor's doctor, and they put me through all sorts of tests, and the chief physician for General Motors decided that it would be better if I'd--they didn't want to be responsible for my staying on at General Motors, so then I retired.

Q Did you feel this was--you obviously survived very nicely.

A I felt very happy to retire as a matter of fact. I felt happy to

retire, because I wouldn't have if I hadn't had a heart attack. When you have a heart attack, it frightens you--you never know when you're going to have a recurrence, and it's a frightening thing, and you're not really sure what caused it to begin with and you don't want to put yourself in any position that might cause a recurrence, so I was really happy to retire. I miss the corporation, I miss going to work every day, I had wonderful years, I had 35 good years at General Motors, really great, was a good career. When you consider that you're getting paid for something that you like to do, you're going first class all the way, I like future things, and you know precisely what's going to be happening in the automobile industry, design wise, several years hence. That's very gratifying, and then to have a part in it, that's more than gratifying. You know I can be driving along in Arizona and California and I see an old Pontiac coming along, and God, I remember the day that the people came in approved that design. I remember when we were up at the board designing that particular aspect of the thing. It may be a dog, or may be a good looking car, but you still remember all the background of it, and it's very interesting. There's a lot of nostalgia with it, and I've worked with some of the best guys in the business. God, one of the fellows is at the Center for Creative Studies now, Homer LaGassy used to be my assistant for quite a long time there. Homer and I got along real good. I've known so many good people in the car business, both in this country and overseas. I've been to a lot of interesting places, I've been to a lot of other interesting companies. I've done a lot of good things. I've driven the best cars in the world, and seen some of the nicest sce-

nery, and that's not all bad. It's been a very rewarding career, I liked it. Now, I've always liked to paint and draw, as I said. I started out that way as a child. So, now I've been doing a lot of painting, and I'm developing a series of historical events that happened in the United States, and now call this Gillan's Americana. I usually always manage to get old automobiles into the picture, old trains, usually some transportation vehicle. I like to do people. I like fashions, I'm interested in architecture, and so I try to combine all of these into these paintings that I'm doing right now. I don't know whether I will have prints made of these or copies made or whether I'll get some print company to make them--I'd rather have a print company handle them because they have the distribution facilities, and I could end up with a thousand prints, then have a hard time getting rid of them, because you can't spend all your time travelling in the United States to get art dealers to handle this stuff for you. Well, they have the outlets. So that's the direction I feel I'll go right now. It's working out very well--I've done a lot of commission work doing people's antique and classic cars as well as people's yachts. I belong to the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club--and I know a lot of people with boats. I do all sorts of paintings of boats. In fact, I just finished two paintings with the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in the back for Roger Rinke, the Cadillac dealer out here. Roger's really happy with that, and I have paintings all over the United State, and that makes you feel good. Just last year I had one of my paintings selected for the opening of the Golden Age of Flight Museum in the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. They had a black-tie party down

there, I met a lot of the aviation greats, and lot of people in the government and so on were down there. It was very very nice. I met old Jimmy Doolittle that used to fly in World War II.

Q Still going strong at 90?

A Yes. Real old guy now. Barry Goldwater--he's an old guy--I met him down there. A lot of people. So these are sort of the little things that you do when you're an old retiree, but I enjoy what I'm doing. I love to paint, and I'll paint just a long as I can hold a brush. I think this is great.

Q You've had no recurrence of your heart problem?

A No I haven't. I feel good.

Q Obviously the stress was getting to you.

A I think it was, and I exercise all the time now. Frequently. I'm on a regular diet, take care of myself, and generally have a very very good life. If you've had a gratifying life, then you retire, you don't mind it, because you have something to look back on that you did. But I'm still looking forward to doing a lot of work in painting.

Q You're still not completely fulfilled yet?

A Oh no, no. I want to keep painting forever. I mean, what the hell. I figure if Winston Churchill could find the time to do it and Dwight Eisenhower, what the hell, ol' Paul Gillan can find a little time to swing the brush. And here's the good thing about it, long after those god damn old Pontiacs are all junk and on the rust heap somewhere, my paintings will still be around, because people usually don't throw away an oil painting. Even if they don't like it, they pass it down to their

kids or it goes to some second-hand place, but sometime, many many years from now, those damn paintings with my name will still be around. That makes me feel pretty good.

Q Even though you said that your reputation in design would fade with the disappearance of the automobiles you worked on, still in all, they are being restored.

A Oh yes.

Q I believe Pontiac's cars are still very much considered collectible and restorable.

A Oh yes they are--in fact I've been in contact with some of the old Pontiac car clubs. Fellows write to me and want to know this or that about old Pontiacs you know, and so they collect a lot of those old junkers.

Q Along that line, I'd like to ask you on a sort of semi-final note, what were you proudest of in terms of automotive design. Can you point to any particular models or any particular innovations.

A Golly, that's hard to say, Dave. You know you work on so damn many things over the years you just forget what you're proud of. I can't really say I'm particularly proud of any of the old line of Pontiacs. One that I was kind of proud of--I thought was good and I had a lot to do with that--was the 1950 Catalina because we coordinated the interior and exterior color. That car was one of the first to have interior and exterior coordinated color. Even the steering column. You see, ordinarily they use steering column in whatever the chassis or rest of it comes through. This car was done--we just had it in two colors. They

were reversible colors--San Pedro Cream and Sierra Rust--rust and ivory. We had all other interior trim on the car--the steering wheel was cast in a rust color. The steering column was painted. The instrument board was done that way. All the carpeting in the car, the headlining in it. We had chrome roof bows in the car. Everything was special on the automobile, and it was one of the first cars to come out that was a hallmark in this regard. Then Cadillac picked it up and all the rest of them, they were all doing it. But at that time they didn't have it, they couldn't afford to have one automobile that was completely coordinated throughout--and that was the Catalina. Then I named that one too. I named a lot of different automobiles over the years.

Q Do you remember some of the names?

A Well, I don't know. As I said before, the El Camino was one I mentioned to you, and the Eldorado. As I said, I got that off a menu when Ed Glowake and I were having breakfast one morning out there. One of the specials was called the Eldorado, one of the breakfast specials when we were at the St. Francis. Ed said, "What the hell's Eldorado mean." I said, "Hell, well that's what they used to call--that's the old Spanish name meaning great find when they found the silver over in Nevada back in the 1800's." Then he was looking for a name for that other car, and that's when we got the El Camino Real.

Q You mentioned the Catalina too.

A And the Catalina, yes. That was mine. Then we had one--what's the capital of--that city on Catalina island?

Q Avalon.

A Avalon, yes.

Q Did you pick that?

A Yes, we picked Avalon. It didn't last for long. We had that on one of the cars. Then, I had one yet that I was going to put on the car, the Polaris. Mitchell, "God damn it, that sounds like a shaving cream." So he wouldn't take it. But anyway I put that on the list--I know Dodge had the name Polaris on theirs. I put the name--I had a lot of names down there because when they did a car, the guys of the design staff were looking for a name, and you can't always think of a name. So I had a lot of names and I put these names all together, compiled them in a book and went to our design staff library up there, and every time the guys were looking, they'd kind of go down through the list you know, and some of the advertising groups would look, and they'd go down there. Like the Celebrity that now on the Chevrolet since I've retired. Really, Celebrity is my name, it was on the book way back. I did all kinds of names, I just made up a whole lot of names--like Safari on the wagon that Pontiac put out.

Q Well, the Pontiac was a good workmanlike car.

A It was a good workhorse type of car, yes, it was.

Q It was aimed at a specific market.

A It was, but it became more of a glamour car when we came out with the '59. But Knudsen and Pete Estes put in the necessary horsepower that you had to have to make that thing roll. That made a good automobile.

Q Did you know Larry Shinoda at that time?

A Yes, I know Larry Shinoda.

Q Could you tell us a little about him--his background?

A Sure. I knew Larry Shinoda very well. Larry Shinoda worked for me for awhile there. Larry was from California, went to Art Centre out there, and Larry always felt badly about the fact that part of his family during the war had been interned, as they did so many of the Japanese-Americans in California--mistakenly, they did that. Larry's always had a little chip on his shoulder about a lot of different things, but he's a very nice guy and a very talented guy. Mitchell recognized his talent and put in him in the studio working on Corvettes, and Larry did an awful lot of Corvettes, in fact, most of the Corvettes that were done, Larry Shinoda was responsible for a lot them. Now, he is working under Bill Mitchell's direction, and Bill would come out and tell everybody, I'm the only guy that knows how to do a Corvette. Well, a lot of that was Larry Shinoda's stuff. When Larry does make a sketch or drawing, he goes all the way through the drawing. He doesn't just try to make a pretty picture. He goes through the drawing putting contour lines through it so you have a good idea of reading what the surfaces are and they aren't just camouflaged by highlight and shadow. Another guy worked there, was Tony Lapine. Tony Lapine had been--a young guy--he had been under Hitler's youth movement over there. He was just a kid, and got a brown shirt or black shirt or whatever hell they gave them, and he was working over there, then he came to this country. He always kind of had a chip on his shoulder--always kind of pissed off about something--but he was a nice guy, a good guy--more of an engineer than a designer, but a designer too. He had a design flair, so he and Larry worked together on

design in Mitchell's Corvette studios. Both were good guys, and I see Tony today--Tony says "Paul, I've got you to thank for the fact that you got me on the overseas thing. I got into this job over at Opel." From Opel he got his job, because I recommended him, because I'd recommend people to get those jobs. From there he got over to Porsche, and he's the chief designer for Porsche now, runs the design department at Porsche. Tony Lapine is doing good. Tony always says "Paul, God, I got to thank you for getting me over there in the first place, because, Christ, these other guys wouldn't even listen to me." Both Tony Lapine and Larry Shinoda, they didn't get along with Chuck Jordan at all. He'd stomp all over them. They just didn't hit it off at all.

Q Somehow or another, Shinoda latched on to Bunkie Knudsen.

A Right. Shinoda was working at Pontiac, and Knudsen came down, and Knudsen liked a lot of his sketches, and Knudsen was on this hot car thing at the time, and Larry Shinoda was working in his off time around the Indy 500 time in the pits for some racing crew down there. Knudsen heard about that, and he just thinks this guy knows racing cars, see. So he got him in to talk to some of his race-oriented engineers up there, and it got Larry in tight. So when Knudsen left the corporation, he decided to open up his own design group out here for recreational vehicles, and he took Larry out with him to head that program and do the work along with one of the engineers from Chevrolet, and so Larry got that job. Then some outfit bought them out. Somebody bought him out in order to get Knudsen to go to Ford. So they took the whole thing out, and Shinoda went over there with Knudsen. Then he stayed on for quite a

long time. Then he left after that, and Larry started his own design firm, but he got so much money out of --, it was called RecTrans, and he got so much money out of the RecTrans outfit that he invested it, and I guess he's living happily ever after.

Q As a footnote, what happened Knudsen at GM? What was the reason? Can you go into detail?

A Well, not really, but Knudsen was up for the top job and he was vying for the president's job.

Q He'd done well at Pontiac.

A Yes, but then he was put in as group vice president in charge of all the car groups. Well, at the same time they put Ed Cole in a comparable job over there.

Q He had an engineering background.

A Yes, he had the engineering background. He was really good. He did a lot of stuff during the war in the tank plants and so on, and he was chief engineer and ran the Cadillac show over there. He did a lot of stuff for the corporation, and all the group engineering stuff, so they put him in over Knudsen as the president of General Motors. Ed Cole was a hell of a good guy, real good guy. Knudsen was too, but I guess Cole just got the nod, and then Knudsen was ticked off about the thing, and then he went over to Ford's. But Knudsen is not the kind of guy who could work with people well, he has to run the whole show himself. He'd had a lot of money in his background, he was in General Motors, and he was big man there you know, and he'd come late in the day if he was going--so he wouldn't have to go home and change. It was late in the day, and he'd

come in his black tie--he was always going out to a dinner that night, and he'd walk through the studio, just kind of showing off a little bit. He was going to a party that night and so on. He was kind of a hard guy to get along with, and you know I think Ed Cole is a lot more easy going, easier to get along with, and got along better with all the top people in the corporation, and they just selected him for the job, and I think rightfully so. Bunkie Knudsen's a good man and nice guy and so on, but there's usually a reason on these things. So that's the way it worked out. To sum this thing up, Dave, I can just say that I want to thank you for inviting me out here to just share with you some of the highlights of what I've been able to do in my career, and some of the experiences I've had. There's a lot of other ones you know, but a lot of things just don't come to mind.

Q I wonder if we can ask you one last question. Over the years as your artistic sense developed, have you ever come up with sort of a personal design philosophy as it was reflected in the projects you worked on at General Motors?

A No, I haven't. The reason--I thought of this many times, and it's like any project anybody gives you, there's several answers, and there's never just any one right answer to anything, and so if you're a designer you have to leave yourself wide open, and while you have a philosophy, you find yourself influenced by so many factors that you can't always justify your philosophy, because particularly having worked in the design business, a commercial design business, you're not just doing something that's going to be enduring throughout history as if you were doing a

beautiful sculpture or doing a beautiful painting. That's going to be your life forever. But you don't have this design philosophy when you're doing an automobile, because it's not going to be here forever. Its transitory, it's true. and you find yourself influenced by market research, by the people that you work for, by costs, by what they can do, so you're never designing just to suit yourself a hundred percent, and then even if you did, you'd find within yourself different reasons that would destroy some of your pet philosophy. It's difficult thing to say design philosophy--all I could say is that I'd have to design the way I feel is best--the way I'd been influenced as a person from the time I was born based on taste, background, and there's different things that last forever, things that are classics. They just last forever. If you're imbued with this sort of thinking, it's the type of philosophy that you adhere to and automatically come into your designs. They flow into your designs. Often times you don't know why they're there, but they flow into your designs. Some people are influenced by hard ridges, hard lines, creases and this sort of thing. Others are just a blob, like a baked potato, and this sort of thing. I just tried to make the car look at good as I can, but there again you're trying to appeal to a certain market. If you're doing an automobile that's going to appeal to a group for a world's fair, people are coming to the show, damn it they want to be entertained, and you'd better entertain them, so you're going to do a lot of fancy stuff that you know sure as hell isn't going to live too long, but, by God, it's going to give those people a feeling that their ticket was worth the price of admission, and this is the way it is. So,

it's hard. People come out and say this is my design philosophy, I believe that this is, and they expound on the thing. Artists do that, they go into a guy, and they ask them why they did this. You don't really give a damn why they did it--you either like it or you don't like it. If it's no good, no matter what his philosophy is, the thing's a dog. That's kind of the way I feel about it, I guess. I try to do the best I can, and I hope it appeals to people.

Q With taste?

A With taste and flair.

Q I suspect though that you may have had your best times when you were allowed in the advance studios to do concept cars.

A Oh, yes.

Q Which embodied the best thinking that you had at that time.

A That's right, and I enjoyed that very very much. The thing that was frustrating there was that I thought they were good, and Bill Mitchell comes in, and he doesn't think they are, or Harley Earl, "What the hell did you do, no, no, no, we don't want this, do this, do that." They'd just completely change the concept. They'd make it longer, they make the lines droop too fast. They make it funny looking or they add this or that to it, well, then you have to alter some other thing to be in accordance with what they've done, and they've just destroyed the concept. This happens all the time. There's no doubt, the man that's running it is the one responsible and does a good job, as I understand it. I haven't been back to design staff since I left. Oh, they invite you

back, they call up; Dave Holls said the other day, "Paul, let's have lunch. You've got to come out here." I said, "No Dave, I'll eat any other place, but I wont go into design staff. I've been there for the last time." "Okay, I'll meet you over at S_____ or somewhere." So I meet Dave, I pick him up in front of the place, and drive him over there you know. We do this, and I'm supposed to go out with some of the other guys next week, but I don't want to go back there anymore. I had a good life, I don't want to return to it again. When I was at design staff I saw too many old retirees come back, and Jesus, you know, they'd come back, and they don't mean it, but they've let themselves down, they wear funny things with a belt in the back, a funny little coat, pants that are kind of baggy. They're good yet, they don't want to throw them out, their shoes are, well, there's a lot of mileage in them yet, and the retirees--I mean, let themselves get sloppy when they get out. Maybe, when I go back they'd see that on me. I try not to be that way, but they might see that in me. I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me going back or think that's the way it used to be because I left on a high note. I've had success at General Motors, I did a lot of good things for the corporation, both design wise and in starting policy, and overseas, and a lot of different projects that we were involved in and different things that are there now as a result of my being with General Motors. I'd like to leave it that way, so I don't want to go back as an old retiree because I found this: When you're working in a work-a-day world, a fellow walks in, he was a retiree, he walks in there, he used to work with the guys, "Hi Fred, how are you? Good to see you. Gee, you're looking good." While they're talking to you, they're shaking hands

with you, they are talking with someone else over here who's got to see them on a particular rush assignment which is understandable, and I walk in and I think, "What the hell am I doing here. I don't need this." They are trying to be nice to me, and I thought that's never going to happen. I've done it to other guys--old guys when they've come back while I was there, and I said at the time "God damn it, I shouldn't have been that way to old George." It's never going to happen to me. Old Paul is not ever going to go back there that way.

Q No testimonials, no benefits?

A No, no, none of that. I won't. I don't. I had it good, and it was good, and let's leave it at that, and go on from here.

Q And you're on to another career.

A Absolutely, and doing what I like to do. I enjoy it. There's nothing like sleeping in in the morning, getting up when you feel like it, going out in the day. You say, God, I love what I'm doing. You get up and you say, "Isn't it beautiful out? There can't be another day as nice as this." The blue, blue sky, you know, and the leaves are out, and the grass is green, and the air is just right, and it's fantastic. I don't have a boat anymore, but I used to have a boat, and I was a boater for many years. I had a 35 foot Cris Craft, and I'd drive along on a nice day. I opened up the windshield, and sometime in September, it's getting crisp and cool, and maybe even late August, you have the air rushing, in. It's cool, it's almost on the verge of being chilly, but it's fantastic, and you look around and say, "Paul, you're the luckiest guy in the world. Where could you be where you'd enjoy it more." The water's splashing,

it's blue, the sky is blue, it's just the best time in the world. People are on board having a good time. I really just enjoy it. I've enjoyed life, and I'm going to continue to as long as I can.

Q Thank you, Paul W. Gillan, General Motors designer for many years, and now his own man in his own right.

A Thank you, Dave.

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Q Mr. Gillan has agreed to write an interesting postscript to design history. The genesis of the well-known early post-war Oldsmobile grille and who actually designed and fabricated it.

A Sure, I'd be glad to, Dave. Actually you'd just happened to have to have a picture here of the Olds '98, the 1948 Oldsmobile. And Ijust mentioned to you that that grille--many people have taken credit for it, but happen to know that that was designed by a modeler named Charlie Stobar.

Q What was Stobar's background.

A Stobar's background was that of a sculptor and clay modeler, and he eventually left General Motors to become director of all fabrication at Ford.

Q Had he recently had a firm with his brother, I believe?

A Yes, both Charlie and Leonard Stobar.

Q Known as Stobars.

A Known as the Stobar brothers. They were both working as clay modelers. Then Leonard Stobar came into Oldsmobile studio right after that and Charlie Stobar went into another studio.

Q Tell me how Charlie got this particular assignment.

A Well, right after the war, Harley Earl was starting the nucleus of a design staff because a lot of people were still engaged in war work--a lot of the employees; so, he asked Charlie to do some work on a front end. Charlie took the liberty of making a front end the way he thought it should look, and without direction from anyone came up with the design, and it was liked so well that no designer put his finger to it after that.

Q Can you describe it in audio terms--converting visual terms to audio terms?

A Well, up to that time all grille's hole for the air to cool the car in the front end usually consisted of a header bar with a filling of either bars or some type of grille work. This car was unique in that it was aircraft inspired and consisted of a huge header bar which went across the front of the car turning down at the ends. It was very very close to the height of the bumper. Beneath it was a secondary bar attached to the bumper and with bumper guards that worked fore and aft directly under this huge header bar and gave the appearance of being a bumper grille and was one of the forerunners of today's bumper grille. It was just a huge air intake and not filled with grille work of any type. Dave, you were mentioning the Club De Mer--which was one of our Motorama show cars. I have the design patent for the front end of that automobile. That also did not have a complete grille but actually was like an aircraft type opening in the front, and it was a very sleek automobile all constructed of aluminum. After the aluminum was all assembled, it was all brushed finished and a cerulean blue glaze was put over the whole car so that

the brushed-aluminum effect shown through, but in effect it was a highly metallic blue finish--a very beautiful automobile. The seats were bright red leather, and the fin wheel discs were the first of its type which I also have the design patent on, and which set the trend for wheel discs for quite some time to come.

Q It was a cooling device wasn't it?

A It was a cooling device, yes, and then I put the stars on the side of that automobile, and then the stars went on many Pontiacs after that, and they called it the Star Chief model, and it was designated by the amount of stars on the side of it.

Q And the scallops were later adopted.

A And the scallops too, yes, they were.

Q They were called wind splits?

A Yes, those are wind splits, you're right. Then they put the fin on the back which was not necessary, but they put on just for effect, being a Club de Mer ("Car of the Sea"), it sort of had a shark-like effect. It also gave directional stability.

Q What year was this?

A That was probably 1954. It was 1954.

Q Now, there an occasion for this to be done.

A Yes, the Motorama.

Q Oh, this is for the--was it the '54 Motorama?

A Yes. It went around the country in all the Motoramas.

Q Was that a sensation of the show?

A Oh yes, it was a sensation of the show. Everyone loved this automobile. It was a great little car. It got a tremendous amount of

popularity.

Q Was it a drivable vehicle.

A Oh yes, it was drivable automobile. It had a motor in the car.

Q Did you take it outside, as you recall?

A Oh yes. Drive it around outside in the car. It was a thrill just to drive a car like it.

Q Club De Mer.

A The Club De Mer. Club of the Sea. Harley Earl named the automobile, and he called it Club De Mer because he wanted the automobile to be announced at the Miami show that year, so he had a friend who owned the Surf Club in North Miami Beach. This is a very very exclusive club, people from all over the world belong to it. The man that owned the club, although these people were members, he was a director and owned the whole damn thing. It was his property and so on, and he loved to put on shows. He had a fascination with staging musicals and so on, so periodically, like every six-eight weeks, he would put on a show. The people were down there--they'd come to see it, and if it was spectacular they'd come from all over the world, fly in to see this guy's show. He was rather effeminate guy. I had to go down there on occasion with Jack Didion, and his eye glasses were very pale metallic blue which up to that time I'd only seen women wearing glasses like that, and with little sparkles in them, and he was rather an effeminate guy, but he was a guy who was very headstrong and wanted his own way on everything and could get it because he owned the club. Since Earl wanted the car announced there, he asked me to obtain a chassis of a small Corvette which was a

child's toy at the time and run on electric batteries--a small car that children could ride in. Earl asked me to obtain one of those, which I did. I bought it and shipped it in, and then he asked that this Club De Mer design be scaled down, and a miniature of the Club De Mer be made to be shown down at this Surf Club in Florida, and he made the car for his grandson, Tiger. Tiger was to get in the car and drive off. 'Cause I remember it was quite awhile before our staff could get around to developing a body for it, because I remember having the Corvette model put in my trunk--stuck out the back, we had long trunks in those days. I drove it home, let my little girls drive it all around. I remember walking half a mile away because the storage battery ran out of juice, and I had to push the thing back. At any rate, I took the thing back to General Motors. They put the Club De Mer on it, and Tiger (Earl's grandson), drove the car down there on the stage that night. Earl also wanted the Club De Mer, the full-sized model, announced down there, so he had to arrange to have a crane brought in to lift over the wall because there was no opening in the wall to drive the car through. So he had a crane lift the car over the wall, and people from all over the world came to that show. Sometimes this guy came up with very corny notions for backgrounds, and music and the rest of it, so Earl called me in one day along with Jack Didion, and said "Fellas, I want you guys--it's a tough assignment--but I want you guys to go down and see that this guy doesn't put on a corny show in his own place, because we're announcing this thing. So make sure the background has something to do with cars or make it look like Detroit in the background or do something there." So, we

were going to do that, and at that particular time Pontiac had Mr. Critchfield, who was the president of Pontiac at that time, fly down to Florida for some reason, so he and his wife were flying down. He had the plane, so Earl asked Didion and I to take our wives with us to Florida and Bob Emerick who was the head publicity man for PR out there--old Bob--took his wife along. Another guy who has since bought Buffalo Bill football team, he and wife, no, his wife didn't go, that's right.

Q Wilson?

A Wilson, yes. Wilson went along at the time. I remember his wife brought him over to the airport--a real good looking blond, I remember. Sorry she wasn't going. At any rate we all got on the plane and flew down, and you'd fly down on a GM plane, and they always had food and liquor on it. In those days we went on a DC-3, and that meant landing in Louisville, somewhere in Georgia, probably Atlanta, and then we flew down the coast. It was very very nice because Critchfield wanted us to see how all the big hotels looked along the coast, and we flew very very low right along the ocean front--in front of all the buildings, but at that time we flying actually down--Didion and I had to go down to work with this guy down there. But one interesting thing, I think, on the flight going down, Bob Emerick got on the radio in the pilot's compartment and made a list of what all the women were wearing you know--one would be wearing a pink outfit, one would be wearing a blue, and a green, and he told the dealership in Miami to have a car for each of us at the airport for our use and make the cars the same color--have the cars done in the color as what our wives were wearing. Bob then came in and announced then

"When you fellas get off the airport down here when we land, just look for the car with the same color as you wife's dress, that's your car." So we did that. We stayed out at the Key Biscayne Hotel. It was very very nice out there. We stayed in the hotel, and Critchfield had a villa out there, and then every night have cocktail parties in his villa. It was a real nice deal. But anyway, Dideon and I went over and tried to persuade this guy in a nice way because you know it belongs to the man, and he's set on what he's doing. But anyway, we prevailed, and came up with a background there of Detroit, with all the lights of the Penobscot Building--it wasn't what is now with Ren Cen, so we had all those backgrounds there and we came up with what we thought was a pretty good show. It was put together with the talent that he had to work with, and Earl was very very pleased with the announcement of the car down there. It was pretty good.

Q Well, let's record for posterity that the Club De Mer was your design.

A Yes, it was my design. I have design patents on that. The front end and the rest of the thing on there. That's also the automobile that Harley Earl wanted because the car only 38½ inches to the top of windshield. He wanted to make sure that the passengers weren't higher than the automobile for publicity pictures. So had the shop cut a huge hole under the seats, and put a rubber bladder underneath there so with the depression of the seats, the first person's posterior would be resting only about an inch or so above the ground.

Q This was probably your proudest achievement, do you think?

A Well, I did some other show cars which I thought were very very good there too.

Q Could you tell us about some of them?

A Oh yes, I could tell you about some of those other cars. There were some nice looking automobiles there. GM cars are turning around. Asking about today's GM car designs I feel that today's automobiles are beginning to turn around for the better, and it's just the beginning now of a new era in automotive design. I think for a long time now our designs have been what people call the econo box design. They all look like they were done with a cookie cutter. I'm not only talking about General Motors' cars but all automobiles including the design competition from overseas, and I think General Motors made somewhat of a breakthrough, and it wasn't probably unanimously received--I'm talking about the breakthrough that we made on the Cadillac Seville in that we didn't have a regular trunk. We had a trunk that went out, ala the old classic Rolls Royce line. But the car looked different, and the car sloped in the back, and it had direction, and it had elegance. More than anything I feel we've lost elegance in our automobiles today. Elegance has to come about as a result of a lot of things--mainly sophistication which is achieved through smooth lines, lines that carry through, lines that delight the eye, an exhibit of a form which excites you when you see it. A box is not visually exciting. You've seen boxes, there's four sides--a top and a bottom--and that's it. That's pretty much a combination of what our automobiles are and have been in the last few years--a combination of boxes. Understandably, they've done that because the

cars have gotten smaller, and a box is probably more commodious than shapes which would stretch out the lines, and limit interior room, so a box from that point of view would probably be economically the best way to go. But it certainly isn't an exciting form, and an automobile has come over the years, grown to be a part of us--it's something that we want to be excited about. It's something we want to be proud of when it's parked in our driveway or when we go to church on Sunday, we want to be proud of what we're driving. It's an integral part of us, and I think that there's a way to make automobiles small and still make them exciting.

Q Do you think GM is pointing in that direction?

A I think GM is pointing that way, but not just General Motors also Ford Motor Company. I think Ford's new line of cars--their Fords and their Lincolns are very very well designed automobiles. I think they're visually exciting automobiles. I think they look good.

Q You spent almost two decades in Europe, so you're well acquainted with the aero look, the aerodynamic concept, are you not?

A I am, yes. I am, but oddly enough it wasn't practiced in Europe. The aerodynamic concept wasn't practiced in Europe as much as it was in this country. They've always had rather boxy designs over there. You can look way back at the old Rolls Royces, you can look back at the old Mercedes. They were all very boxy automobiles, and if anything now we've emulated their style by going boxy. I think we've always had pretty exciting, well-styled automobiles.

Q Because until recently, the aerodynamic look was inherent in much of American design, was it not?

A I think it was. Inherent--aerodynamic perhaps in appearance, not necessarily in function. They found out since with their wind tunnels that often times it belies us to say that function can best be described by flat boxes.

Q Do you feel form follows function? Is that a personal design philosophy of yours?

A Well, I think it's good design philosophy, and I think it's right, but I think form follows function, but then I think you have to decorate that function to make it acceptable sometimes and exciting. Because you can take a cough drop or a lozenge, it's very functional, and you swallow it, and it slips down smoothly, but you wouldn't want to design everything that way--the bar of soap design.

Q What about the Euro look, you hear a lot about that today, especially at Ford. You were over there for many years, what is the Euro design? Is that a phoney slogan?

A I think it's a phoney slogan. I think because people on this of the water think because it comes from Europe, it's got to be nice, and it's over-used, it's completely over-used on everything. Even the automotive writers love to say that it's got the European flavor--it's European-inspired design. What is European-inspired design? It's just what you've asked. What is it? Well, you have to go back and say what were they doing in Europe a few years ago? What are they doing now? They haven't come up with anything that's innovative, new and exciting. I sincerely feel this. The Mercedes is a wonderful automobile. The steering wheel is too big, it's like driving a truck when you drive a Mercedes.

They're squared off. I think they get their romance through their craftsmanship, their finish, their ability to put out a good automobile. But I don't think that the design is particularly innovative. They still have a large, tall, flat grille on the automobile reminiscent of the first cars, and Rolls Royce is pretty much the same way.

Q I suppose there's a sense of roundness in miniature, perhaps.

A Yes, and I would say that when people talk about the Euro look, they're talking about very limited production cars; such as the Ferrari, the Maserati, and those that are built by custom Italian coach builders. They come out with nice cars.

Q Graceful, rounded...

A Graceful, rounded, very dynamic, very pleasing, slippery forms. Yet often times with just enough interest on them to make them exciting.

Q Those aren't the bread and butter cars are they?

A No, not at all. And so the automobile writers like to refer to those, or anything that we do, as competitive with that type of thing. And, we're not really in competition with that type of car at all. Perhaps our Corvette is, even some of the Mustangs, but other than that I would say that...

Q How about the new Thunderbird?

A I like the Thunderbird. I have a friend with a Thunderbird. I've driven it. I like it very much. It's a nice automobile.

Q The Taurus is coming out this year.

A The Taurus is nice. The Merkur, which comes from Germany, is a nice car.

Q That seems to have pretty much European antecedents utilizing what Porsche is doing and what Audi is doing?

A That's true and yet if you look at the Tauras it's very very much like the T-Bird.

Q That's true. You wouldn't be able to tell between the Taurus and Sable, it's pretty much the same conception.

A Yes, it is like an Audi.

Q But Thunderbird is slightly unique.

A Oh yes. The Thunderbird is a very nice automobile. Now the Audi has a very slippery design. It's a nice car, and I think of any car in Europe right now would point the way to the future, the way we would be going on things, it would probably be the Audi. But then again I think this year's Buick Electra and Olds 98 fit in that same vein. I have a new Buick Park Avenue, and it's a pretty slippery car--smooth front on it and everything. It's not the most interesting car I've ever seen, but it sure is a good driver.

Q You mentioned Bob Lutz a little while ago. Did you know--was he the same, or did you know Bob Lutz when he was with Opel

A Yes. I knew Bob Lutz when he was with Opel. I had lunch with him over there when he was having some old car restored over there at the time. He's an old car nut and a motorcycle enthusiast.

Q Apparently when he was hired by Ford he developed the Sierra, did he not, or at least under his direction?

A That's what I hear, yes.

Q Well, you've had a fascinating career. We're very pleased that you came and spent the time with us.

A Well, thank you. I'm really sorry I took so much of your time.

Q No, our pleasure.

A You're going to be hungry for a long time with skipping lunch, it's probably not one of your favorite things.

Q It's good for my diet. Thank you, Paul W. Gillan.

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The Reminiscences of

PAUL W. GILLAN

This oral reminiscence is the result of an interview with Paul W. Gillan during 1985 at The Edison Institute, Dearborn, Michigan. This interview was held under the sponsorship of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, Archives & Library Collections, The Edison Institute (Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village).

The questioning was primarily in the form of topics suggested to Mr. Gillan concerning his career. No editorial insertions have been made other than the brief synopsis of the interviewee's career activities.

The language of the narrative is entirely that of the interviewee. He has reviewed and corrected the manuscript and by his signature below indicated that it is a correct copy of his reminiscences.

Paul W. Gillan

Paul W. Gillan

AUG. 14, 1986

Date

REVISED BY PAUL GILLAN - AUG. 14, 1986

Q What city was that?

A That's over in--right outside of Frankfurt. It's called Russelsheim. So I went over there, and they had a guy Bill had known for many years, about Bill's age or so, Carl Mager, and he was in charge of the design section. But the design section over there was really under the chief engineer, A MAN NAMED HANS MERSHEIMER.

Q They were in the old mode?

A They were in the old mode. And whatever ~~he~~ MERSHEIMER said went. ~~Well, there was something in the Nazi hierarchy during the thing where~~ the guy that was the chief engineer was a ~~Nazi guy, and even old Carl didn't want to get in the thing, but he was kind of stabbing him a little bit--but now he didn't want any more part of it. Carl still knew that he'd been in the Nazi thing. One of those deals you know.~~ So I got in that afternoon, and, boy, ~~he~~ MERSHEIMER was out there with a car. He was a pretty nice guy and everything, because you know we were coming from the States, and he had to be nice. So he took us out there and went to dinner and the whole thing. And they sent Shemansky with me at that time. Joe and I both went over on that one. The next day we went out, and the styling section there was up on the roof and there was like an upper story built on the roof of the factory. This is where the styling was done, and you would walk out of one door and you would have to walk across this pebbled roof to go into the door of the styling section--up on the third deck. What a hell of a ~~thing it was in there.~~ AN UNINSPIRATIONAL AREA FOR A DESIGN CENTER. Carl Mager who ran the design section, working for the chief engineer over there, his name was Hans Merscheimer, and he had to do what Merscheimer did. Some of the guys I got talking to,

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and you know the designers, you know the nice guys. They said well, ~~Jesus,~~ this guy Mager, ~~he~~ has to do what Merscheimer says, but ~~Merscheimer~~ we put out all these seats, they had all the trim stuff to show what they had DESIGNED, ~~and everything,~~ but Merscheimer always selects this one and this one. I'll tell you why, we all know why, because the guy that runs the vinyl works or the plastic company that puts out all the stuff down there, you ought to see the presents he gives Merscheimer at Christmas time. Merscheimer's house is filled with presents, and the ones that give him the presents are the ones whose stuff he selects. No kidding. That's the way it goes. Of course, over in the States you can't do that, ~~see~~ BECAUSE GM ~~that~~ HAS, everyone signs a ~~thing~~ LETTER that ~~says you can't~~ LAYS OUT RULES FOR DEALING WITH VENDORS. But in Germany they ~~didn't catch~~ HADN'T CAUGHT up with it yet. So, he ran that whole operation with a real PERSONAL tight fist.

Q Excuse me. You had quite a thing going on over there, didn't you?

A Yes.

Q How did you do it?

A Well, we finally got the thing all set. Some of the designs weren't so good. We worked with it, with them, worked with them on the full size stuff, and that type of thing. What we done was this, before we went over--they had to send all their stuff over to Mitchell--their line drawings. In one of my studios we got some stuff that Mitchell liked. We designed the car the way we thought, so we took the stuff over with us--folded up--put it up on the boards, and their guys made overlays and put it against their cars so you could see how they stacked up. What

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