# Eugene T. Gregorie Oral History

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## Note to Readers

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

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

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DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

GREGORIE, Eugene Turenne "Bob"

1985

EDSEL B. FORD DESIGN HISTORY CENTER

Henry Ford Museum &
Greenfield Village

The Reminiscences of

E. T. GREGORIE

This oral reminiscence is the result of interviews with E. T. Gregorie by David R. Crippen during the month of February, 1985, at The Edison Institute, Dearborn, Michigan. These interviews were held under the auspices of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, Archives & Library Collections, The Edison Institute.

The questioning was primarily in the form of topics suggested to Mr. Gregorie concerning his career. No editorial insertions have been made other than brief clarifications.

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.

This transcript and the recorded tape are deposited in the Archives at The Edison Institute with the understanding that they may be used by qualified researchers for scholarly purposes. The undersigned does hereby release to The Edison Institute all literary rights to this interview.

Eugene T. Gregorie
(Eugene T. Gregorie)

Sept 30th 1987
(Date)

This is Dave Crippen of the Archives & Records Center of the Henry Ford Museum, and today we're in St. Augustine Beach, Florida, and this is February 4, 1985, on one of our design history interviews for the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center. Today we're speaking to the well-known designer, Eugene T. Gregorie. Mr. Gregorie is known to his legion of friends as Bob, and we're going to ask Mr. Gregorie to tell his own narrative in a chronological fashion.

A Speaking of the spelling of the name Gregorie, that comes from my Scotch heritage, and one of my ancestors James Gregorie, who was a professor at the University of Glasgow, and he is credited with being the inventor of the reflective telescope, so I have always had mechanical leanings--interested in things mechanical and whatnot, so that it naturally followed. My mother was quite an accomplished artist, very capable, imaginative woman, and my father, he was always interested in steam engines, and you might say pretty much like old Mr. Ford, he could name a steam engine, he could tell what steam engine it was by the sound of it. He was always interested in locomotives and things of that sort. I've always been interested--my brother and I were born and raised on the [East] Coast, and at a very early age took to boats before we could even swim. Down on the south shore of Long Island, we spent all our spare time when we could, and even some time when we should have been in school, fooling around with boats. In other words, you might refer to it as they do on the Chesapeake Bay as water boys. They refer to the men there as watermen. I guess we might have referred to us as water boys. So, when I had an opportunity--I've always been around yachts and boats

and sailing and whatnot, so even before I went to several private schools, in the course of that I never really completed a formal education. I [was] somewhere about the equivalent of ready for college--why, I decided to go to work, and I went to work for the Elco Works in Bayonne, New Jersey, which is part of the Electrodynamic Company, which in turn was the submarine boat corporation, as a marine draftsman. So, I took up yacht design.

Q Had you any training for this in high school?

A No, no, I just went to work for Elco under a very capable man, the head designer there, Bill Fleming, and I had always been interested in yachts, so it was a natural for me. I just fell right into it. I just moved right along. Following that, I went to work--the distance where I had to go from where I lived on Long Island over to New Jersey was too much every day, so after a year, year and a half, why, I couldn't do it any longer. I was able to make connections in New York with Cox & Stevens (one of the top naval architectural concerns in New York), which ultimately became Gibbs & Cox--same corporation. There, I was able to work with some very renowned marine designers, like Phil Rhodes and Dan Cox. It was very excellent training. It [provided a] very fine foundation in marine design, naval architecture, particularly as far as yachts are concerned. After several years of that work, my father had always been interested in unusual cars. Now, we can knit this thing together. We had at home, at various times, an old 1910 chain-drive Mercedes, and my dad was what you might refer to as early car nut. He loved foreign cars, and we had a French DeLage, and we had a French "Amilcar," a "Simplex" and others, and that led into my interest in auto-

motive activities. And, as much as I loved the naval architecture activity, I could see a much wider scope for my interest in cars, and my dad was quite an engineer. He understood engines and the structure of them, so I had a very fine foundation and appreciation for fine automobiles. So, the next step that I took was to give up the--quit the job at Cox & Stevens designing yachts. In the meantime, I'd sketched up some very interesting body designs and went over to see Rolls Royce--Brewster in Long Island City. Brewster at that time built the American Rolls Royce bodies. They were affiliated--building the chassis in Springfield, Massachusetts, and this would have been in 1929. I was there about a year, so that sent the message to me that [this] was the field I wanted to follow. In the Fall of 1929, I took off for Detroit.

Q What did you do for Brewster? What sort of work did you do?

A Automobile body sketches, and drawings.

Q They were a custom body house?

A Custom body--Brewster built custom bodies for most of the high-priced chassis, and they, at one time, built a car, a Brewster car, a little four-cylinder vehicle, very beautiful, [which] as I recall, had a sleeve valve engine.

Q You did want to team up [with Brewster] a little bit later at Ford--did you not? Briefly.

A Well, in a way, in a way, a very interesting connection.

Q But, let's get to that [later].

A Yeah, I took off for Detroit in the Fall of 1929 about two/three weeks before the Crash came. When I arrived in Detroit--well, of course, on the way to Detroit, I stopped to see several of the automobile manu-

facturers along the route. With the family having owned Franklin cars, I stopped in Syracuse and talked with the managing director there and what-not. Of course, they were in a bad way, and they were about throw in the sponge, as they say. While I was in Syracuse--this is an interesting side bit--the chief engineer--Ken Haven--mentioned to me that Ray Dietrich had just been there. He was on his way back to Detroit, and he said, "When you get to Detroit, why, you look up Ray, and maybe we can work out something with him."

Q Now, what was Ray Dietrich doing at this time?

A Ray Dietrich was building some special bodies--custom bodies for Franklin. He'd come from Detroit and spent a day or so at Franklin, and he said, "Ray was just here." It was about 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. So, I went over to the New York Central Depot to get a ticket to Buffalo. The family had also had Pierce-Arrow cars, and I thought, well, I'll go there and tell my story, you know. When I got to the station, I was at the ticket window, and this man was standing in front of me with a portmanteau of art you know, and he said, "Do you have a reservation for Raymond Dietrich."

Q Incredible coincidence.

A I tapped him on the shoulder, and I said that I'd been over at the Franklin plant, and I said, "I'm on my way to Detroit, I've been in body design, you know, Brewster..." Incidentally, he worked for Brewster as a boy, you see. So, we sat together in the parlor car as far as Buffalo, and he was going on to Detroit. He welcomed me, and [I] had a very nice discussion on the train going up with Ray Dietrich. He pulled out his gin flask from his hip and ordered orange juice and pro-

ceeded to get feeling quite nice and friendly.

Q This is still Prohibition, of course?

A Oh yes, he offered me one, but I wasn't old enough to consider the value of it.

Q How old were you at that time?

A Twenty-one. So, I got off at Buffalo and spent the night there, and the next morning I went over to the Pierce Arrow plant.

Q Was it the main plant?

A Main plant, of course. That was the only one they had there, and met the man in charge. It was fifty some years ago. So, of course, there was nothing there. They were about to fold up, too. So, I took the night boat, the old D & C boat, to Detroit arriving the next morning. The last one for the Fall--I mean it was getting toward Winter.

Q Detroit and Cleveland line?

A No, this is the old D & C line. Anyway, I arrived at Detroit 7 a.m. Saturday morning, my twenty-first birthday--1929. Ray Dietrich had asked me where I was going to stay in Detroit. I said, "Well, would you know where an Horatio Alger boy arriving would find lodgings with his 'straw' suitcases?" So, he mentioned the Lewis Hotel up on Woodward Avenue. It was up close to the General Motors Building, just below Grand Boulevard. It was a four/five story, commercial-type hotel. So, I took the streetcar--the Woodward Avenue streetcar--I couldn't understand what the conductor was talking about when he went "wurrerr," with the Mid-western growl he had.

Q Very flat.

A So, I took a room there, and Monday morning, I went over to General Motors and presented my credentials to them, and talked with a chap called Howard O'Leary. Howard O'Leary was Harley Earl's front office man, you know. Weed 'em out or take 'em in, see. So, Howard O'Leary hired me. As it was then, it was kind of a screening process, they'd hire anybody who could draw an automobile, I guess, in those days. So, anyway, I went to work at General Motors.

Q Was it the Earl trim and color department or the...?

A Yes, the Art and Colour they called it then. I worked there I guess three or four weeks--something like that.

Q Now, what did they have you do?

A Well, sketching cars, you know, they give you....

Q Sort of an internship?

A Yes, I suppose, yes. I'd had some experience at Brewster, you know, and I knew what it was all about. Anyway, the market crash came, and last in last out--[or] first out, as they say. Anyway, a funny little twist with Ray Dietrich in connection with the Lewis Hotel. I'll inject it. After I'd been there a week or so, the colored boy that ran the elevator, I asked him if he knew who Mr. Dietrich [was], [who] referred the hotel to me and so on. He say, "Oh yes, I know Mr. Dietrich. He come here, he come here about every so often, but he keep a nice place 'way up on the top of the hotel there. Yes, he go there and have a party every now and then." As it developed, that was his little playhouse up there. The colored [elevator] boy, he let the cat out of the bag.

Q Ray was leading a double life, perhaps.

A I told Ray some years after that, you know, and he said, "That so and so, what did he mean telling you..." It being ten/fifteen/twenty years after that.

Q That's marvelous.

A Well, anyway, things were tough in Detroit then. In the meantime...

Q Forgive me, did you get to meet Mr. Earl at all [while] you were there?

A Oh yes, yes.

Q Can you give us an impression of Mr. Earl?

A He was a pompous man. He was a big man, 6' 6" or something, and that was part of his style. He was a sporty dresser, you know, from California, and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Of course, he was associated with the Fisher brothers, and they were all pretty sporty. In later years I got to know them at the automobile shows here and there.

Q Anyway, was Bill Mitchell there, by the way?

A No, no, he came there later on.

Q Okay, good. But, Howard O'Leary and...?

A Yes, and then Frank Hershey.

Q Oh, was Frank there?

A Frank Hershey. You know about him? Well, anyway, he was at General Motors when I worked there. Frank had given up a nice room in one of the big, old mansions out on West Grand Boulevard they'd had been turned into rooming houses. A nice, old lady-like gal and her daughter had this big place, and Frank was giving up the room there and taking an apartment with some other chap, so I moved up there. In the meantime, I

went back to New York, to Long Island, to get my little French Citroen car--five horsepower Citroen. This was in early December, very cold, mean, so I went back one weekend and I started back with it for Detroit in the little convertible. No heater, cold, mean, and I got up into Pennsylvania in a little town called Hawley, broke a valve spring, went to a country garage. Talk about nerve driving a thing like that out there in those days! You couldn't have gotten a part for that thing this side of Paris.

Q What company was it? You said Citroen.

A Citroen, little Citroen. It was their little bread and butter car. A little, tiny five-horsepower, didn't have a...there was no starter, and didn't have a fan, or a water pump, thermo syphon cooling. It was a real adventure to drive that thing to Detroit in the Winter. Well, anyway, I got to Hawley, Pennsylvania, and had a valve spring go out on it. I went to a little, country garage, and this old fellow took the valve spring out. It was all simple you know, it only took a few minutes to get at the valve spring. He said, "Well, this looks like an inner valve spring on a '24 Buick." This is a little, tiny inner spring. So, he got one out of a trash bin he had, and popped it in there, and he said, "By golly," he says, "that'll work." So, he put the valve spring in, and Lord, the whole thing was a half hour, and two bucks, and I was on my way again. I did all right until I got up to a little place called Wayland, New York. It was about 40 miles below Rochester, and it had been snowing all day, and the snow had been laying in the fields but melting on the road. Along about 5 o'clock in the evening, it unknowingly had turned to a glaze of ice, and this little bugger spun

around three or four times in the middle of the road and went over the corn field and laid on its beam ends.

Q You didn't have seat belts in those days?

A No, and they only had one door--one door on one side. Fortunately, the side with the door was up. So, I had sense enough to reach down and turn the gasoline off. It had a gasoline tank in the cowl like a Model A Ford, and I cut the gas off before it set fire to the thing. So, I got out, crawled around, straightened myself up, and along came two farmers and a Model A Ford Touring Car, and in the back they had a big piece of rope. We hooked the rope on, and tipped it up right. The three of us tipped it up, pulled it up on the road, and he towed me into Wayland, about a mile. We put the car in a little country garage there. An old gal had a little farm house down the road, so I bunked in there for two or three nights. The morning after that the snow was four feet deep up over the windows, so I was holed up there for three or four days with this little car. I went to the country garage, the rear wheel was bent, and we put it in a press and straightened the wheel out. I was really tied up there five days, then I went on, finally, to Detroit. It took me about eight or ten days to get from New York to Detroit. It was so cold going across Canada in the little convertible, I had to take newspaper and caulk the window frames up. There was no heat, and every now and then I would stop at a country store and get a cup of hot tea. They always had hot tea in Canada. I'd stand there and warm my feet, you know. I finally got to Detroit, and things were rough there. There was no work anywhere. As it happened....

Q This is the winter of...?

A Winter of '29 and '30. I went down to Cadillac Square, and Cox & Stevens (the naval architect concern in New York) had an office in the Barlum Tower on the 30th floor. They used to have the old Barlum Hotel too. I went up to see my old acquaintance, Bill Ferman. He was one of the top naval architects. It used to be Hackett & Ferman. They used to build the Hackett speedboats and all that you know. Bill Ferman was so glad to see me. I had met him on some of his visits to the New York office, and at that time they were finishing up some big yachts up in DeFoe Shipyard in Bay City--leftovers from the boom era. [There was] one particular yacht that he wanted me to work on--do some drafting work and layouts and so on. It was a 126 foot yacht called "Rose Will," and it was being built for Bill Rands (W. C. Rands), who was one of the founders of Motor Products Company. He had offices--private offices--over in the National Bank Building. I worked there on the plans for that yacht until mid-summer of 1930, and...

Q He hadn't cancelled the order?

A No, no. Mr. Rands had sold out his interest in Motor Products, and he was rolling in it. He'd take me out in his big Cadillac with four-inch carpets in the back, and he'd take his shoes off, and rub his feet in those thick carpets. He was a funny, little roly-poly man with pince-nez glasses. He come up to the office up on the 30th floor, and we were drawing profiles of the yacht. Bill Ferman--we'd want to make a change on it, you know, to improve the profile--change a port light location or something of that kind. Old man Rands would lay down his little, fat pot belly on the floor, and had a cushion under his chin, and he'd look at that profile, and he said, "You boys have put something over on

me. You put something over on me. You've changed something. I don't what it is, but tell me now, tell me now, what is it?" Bill would wink at me, and I winked at Bill Ferman. Well, anyway, that kept me going, you know. We finished that work up about mid-June, and I took off for home. In the meantime, I had made contact at the Ford Engineering Laboratory out in Dearborn during that spring....

Q Spring of 1930?

A That's right. The Lincoln body engineer was Henry Crecelius.

Q He was the chief body engineer?

A Chief body engineer, and Edsel Ford had brought him from Brewster.

Q Had you known him at Brewster?

A No, I hadn't known him at Brewster. That was previous to my connection with Brewster which was just a year or so earlier than that. I spoke with Mr. Crecelius, and he was very sympathetic to my plight and so on, and I told him it wasn't a question of eating beans or anything like that. I had a very fine home in Long Island. I could go back any time. I wanted to stretch it out in Detroit as long as I could. I knew I had a future there. So, we had a nice conversation and so on, and he appreciated the fact that I had been with Brewster. Well, I went on back to home in Long Island and fooled around with boats that summer and skippered a good-sized yacht for a wealthy friend of mine. So, that was that. Well, that Fall I went South with the family down at a plantation in South Carolina, and the day before New Years I received a telegram from Henry Crecelius to come to work at Ford's in Dearborn.

Q At the Lincoln [plant]?

A No, at the laboratory [engineering] in Dearborn. I had to catch a

2 a.m. fruit train coming through on the Atlantic Coastline, and it was so cold, I went up in the signal tower at the crossing of the C & W. C R.R. and the Atlantic Coastline. They crossed there, so I went up in the signal tower, and kept warm with a little coal stove the man had up there until the train came through. Then, I arrived in Charleston the next morning and took a Clyde liner. We were able to get steamers in those days, you know for New York. I left at 1 o'clock. New Year's Eve I was out off [Cape] Hatteras, rougher than hell, and it got to New York Monday morning amidst ice flows. A gal on the boat was reading tea leaves that night, and she said, she told me, she said, "I can see a small man, dark-haired man, and I can see a long, low, white building.

Q A long, low, white building?

A Of course, I didn't give it a thought, you know.

Q Had you been out there [in Dearborn] when you talked to Mr. Crecelius earlier on, or was he at the Lincoln plant [in] downtown [Detroit]?

A No, he was at the Engineering Laboratory [in Dearborn]. That's where I saw him. But, I didn't make the connection. It didn't mean a thing to me. Well, the small man was, of course, Edsel Ford, and she said, "He's going to be an important part of your future." It wasn't until years later that that came back to me. Damnedest thing--reading tea leaves, see. Just, you know, passing the time. Anyway, that's a fact. I subsequently arrived in Dearborn to report to work for Mr. Crecelius. It would have been, perhaps, four or five days after New Year's, 1931. My work there involved design sketches for Lincoln cars, Lincoln bodies, custom-type bodies and so on.

Q Can you give us sort of a bird's-eye view of how the--what the department was [like]?

A It was a very small group. Mr. Crecelius and two or three body draftsmen and several detailers. Everything was on a very small scale.

Q In other words, you didn't have a design department like G.M. did?

A No, no, no, no way, no.

Q Styling department?

A No. You see, Lincoln at that time, as I recall, they were just going into production or developing the bodies for a standard line of Lincoln cars--sedan, close couple sedan on two-wheelbases. The production cars were on the shorter wheelbase--136". The Lincoln at that time was both 136 and 145 inch wheelbase. The shorter wheelbase was utilized for the standard bodies--the factory made bodies. The longer wheelbase car was fitted with custom-built bodies by ten or twelve custom body builders who were in production at that time--Dietrich, Willoughby, Brunn. There were eight or ten others.

Q LeBaron?

A No, they didn't get in too much. LeBaron was--LeBaron did build a convertible roadster body for the Lincoln--the big Lincoln.

Q Not for the smaller ones?

A Waterhouse and Brunn.

Q Locke?

A Locke. There were some Locke bodies. It was practice then for Mr. Ford to select from design sketches brought to Detroit by the various builders for Mr. Ford's selection.

Q This is Mr. Edsel Ford?

A Edsel Ford. He would select maybe ten or twelve, perhaps, fifteen bodies from each builder. The bodies were usually finished--what they referred to as "finished body in the white" which meant that they were unfinished. There was no paint, perhaps the prime coat, but no trim. They would come from the various body builders like Judkins in Merrimac, Massachusetts, and Brunn in Buffalo and so on and so forth. Willoughby in Utica. The bodies would come in, and then they would be trimmed and painted and fitted with custom mouldings, trim and so on as per the customer's request. So that actually most of the design work at that time was done by the body builders, and now let me interject this. When the body builders brought the sketches in to present them--a showing for Mr. Ford--he would no doubt make critical comments as to what he liked and if the moulding was too wide, etc. He was an excellent critic. Mr. Ford was in no way a designer, but he was a keen critic. He could control design by being a critic. People have frequently asked me, and people, many people, have written articles on the subject to the effect that Mr. Ford would bring in sketches and things like that. Personally, I've never seen a sketch that Mr. Ford had made. He might have made sketches at home. I've never seen a design that he ever created, but they tell me he did make sketches at home, which no doubt he did. Well, anyway, I'd never seen one, but he was an excellent critic, and he understood what I was talking about, and I understood what he was talking about. So that is why it was a two-man team, and he was not one to be pushed into some else's idea. Going back, way back in history, as far as Ford design is concerned, from the Model T on, the cars, the early Model A's and whatnot, the first Model A's, the '28 and '29 Model A's, were

really a miniature Lincoln. That is what they leaned on--the placement of the headlamps, the fender shapes, the radiator contour, and the whole thing was a scaled-down, large, old, eight-cylinder Lincoln. Joe Galamb, the old Hungarian Model T engineer--they called him Joe "Shitametal," you make it out of the shitametal, see, shitametal. Well, anyway, he started out with Henry Ford pretty much--way back in 1908 or 1910, along in there, you see. Old Joe was a clever put-[to]getherer. He was an arrogant little man, you know, very pompous. He looked like foreign diplomat. He was perfumed, and he wore fashionable clothes, a very nice looking, little guy. A little gray mustache. I'll never forget aside from the progress of what we're talking about, I'll never forget Mr. Ford came up to me one morning outside of my office at the Engineering Laboratory, and he said, "Have you seen Joe around, seen Joe around?"

Q Is this the elder Mr. Ford or Edsel?

A Yes, the old gentleman.

Q Henry Ford?

A Yes. In the meantime, Joe walked up, and he said, "Morning, Mr. Ford, good morning Mr. Ford." He's sort of like a head waiter, you know, in a fashionable restaurant, and he'd always bow to Mr. Ford.

Q A maitre d' eh?

A Yes. Mr. Ford turned around and said, "Joe, what the hell is wrong with you. I've had you around here for thirty some years, and you still can't speak English. What the hell's wrong with you?" "Yes, Mr. Ford, yes, Mr. Ford, yes, Mr. Ford." One of the few, I should I say, good-natured incidents that I can refer, can remember Mr. Ford being involved in. I mean he was a very contentious person. He never displayed much

sense of humor, only where it fitted his particular feelings of the occasion, see? Another incident, we had a Mr. Davis who was the patent attorney. His office was next to mine. Mr. Davis was quite a lush, and Mr. Ford did tolerate some of those people when they served his purpose. Another of Mr. Ford's "Bottle" Boys [was]--Newton, Charlie Newton. A great big, red faced guy who was the buyer of antique furniture and stuff for the [Henry Ford] Museum, etc. They'd send men out to sober him up sometimes. Well, anyway, as much as Mr. Ford disliked liquor, he would tolerate certain people. Look at Bill Cameron.

Q Of course.

A Wow.

Q William J. Cameron.

A What a lush--he could swim in it. Well, anyway, Mr. Ford came and asked me if I'd seen Davis, you know, next to my office, and I said, "No, Mr. Ford, I haven't seen him so far this morning." He said, "Too much booze," with Mr. Ford simulating drinking from a bottle. Let's see, where am I?

Q You're in Dearborn, and it's Spring of 1931.

A That's right. Well, anyway, I went along sketching cars and, you know, small, incidental activities.

Q I'm interested, Mr. Gregorie, in...

A Bob Gregorie.

Q Bob, thank you, Bob. I'm interested in establishing the feeling of the fledgling design department in those days. How did it work?

A They didn't have any design department.

Q It just wasn't there?

A No. That's what I was coming to in connection with these outside suppliers. Briggs and Murray were the big suppliers of Ford bodies.

Q Right, and they were in Detroit?

A They were in Detroit, and, of course, the Lincoln design was supplied pretty much by the custom body people. In those days, Lincoln chassis engineering designed the grille, the hood, and the fenders as part of the chassis, etc.

When [Henry] Ford bought the Lincoln Motor Company in 1922--I think it was for 8 million dollars--it accomplished several purposes. It gave the "boy" something to do, as Charlie Sorensen and several of his henchmen, the top, upper echelon of Henry Ford's production group referred to Edsel. It gave the boy something to play with, see, and it fitted in perfectly because he was interested in custom bodies and the possibility of being associated with that sort of thing, and a high-quality automobile. So, they bought the Lincoln Motor Company. It got Edsel Ford off their back to a certain extent because they'd gone about as far as they could from the styling standpoint with the Model T, and that was his particular purpose--Edsel Ford's particular purpose was to expand a better taste in the Ford product--a higher plane taste. You can put it that way, and, as I mentioned to Edsel Ford when I first had an opportunity to know him, one of the detriments in trying to sell the Lincoln car and service was the fact in those days most of the service came from a Ford garage. I said, "Can you imagine a man paying 5 or 6 thousand dollars--which was a big, custom price in those days--going into a car, traveling cross country into a Ford garage with an old dump truck or a garbage

truck parked next to him and say 'This is a service for my Lincoln?'" And, he got the biggest kick out of that. But, I could see those things. I could sense those things. They clicked with him, they clicked, clicked, clicked. But, I'd bring those things up. Now, Joe Galamb would never think of that, see? Now that I look back, some of my comments might have touched on some sensitive areas and were a bit presumptuous. Edsel Ford seemed to go along with it as time went on, and he appreciated my vision and sincerity.

Q Did they finally establish a separate service network for the Lincolns?

A Oh yes, oh sure. Well, they had Lincoln agents in big cities--I mean Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, you know, but in the urban areas, they didn't have them. It didn't lend any prestige to owning a Lincoln, and I felt it was kind of a drag down. I pointed that out, but I had a knack of bringing these things up as tactfully as I could, but I was always fortunate in bringing them up with the right timing. I can mention one or two little incidents where Edsel Ford--one of the few times when we had little, cross words together was right after the Mercury was introduced at the New York automobile show. Prior to that, Mr. Ford had insisted on the car being called the Ford Mercury--hub caps, battery, window glass, stenciled, you know. That didn't read right to me because we were trying to sell the car to an [income] bracket above the Ford. That's why the DeSoto was created, that's why the Pontiac was created.

Q You were plugging the gap between the Lincoln and the Ford?

A That's right. It was spanning that gap, and I had gotten charts out showing the price of the big spread, with charts that I still have.

I said, "Mr. Ford, I have second thoughts about having the name Ford-Mercury on the car." "What do you mean? What's wrong with the name Ford? Thirty-nine years we built the name Ford up. Isn't it good enough for this automobile?"

Q Edsel's speaking?

A Yes. Oh boy, this was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and I said, "Boy, here I go." Well, anyway I said, "Look, that's my thought on it, and I don't how you feel about it, Mr. Ford." Well, anyway the following week down at the New York automobile show, there's the sales managers, and the branch managers--they climbed all over Mr. Ford. He was down there. In the meantime, I had my boys get together racks of hub caps, you know, without the Ford name on it, see. I told Mr. Ford, I said, "You know, you turn the ignition on in this car, and it sounds like a Ford, the exhaust sounds like it, the whole thing. And, not only that, but the competition says, 'get down and look under the car'. If that isn't a Ford, radius rods, buggy springs, you know, boom, boom, see?" So, I met him getting off the Detroiter [train] that morning about 8 o'clock. We'd come back from the New York automobile show, and he said, "Bob..." I asked him how he liked the show. He said, "Fine, fine. There's some things we have to go over." He said, "I'll be in right after lunch." So, I had the boys get all the racks ready and so on--there was never a word said after that. We just changed it over to the Mercury hub cap, and they got the Ford name off. But, that was the only time I've ever seen him flare up at me.

Q The only time?

A Yes, yes.

Q A real gentleman, wasn't he?

A Oh, terrific. What a man. We had some of the greatest discussions--if I wanted to build a special-built car of some kind, I'd always have to contribute to the possibility of it being a production item, or something would contribute to the development work. He'd kind of wink, and he said, "Well, maybe we can arrange that." He said, "I'll see the powers that be. I'll see you next week." I began to feel a great responsibility because he depended on me to such an extent. I could see that he wanted to pull away from dependence on the outside body people. He didn't care for the flamboyance of John Tjaarda [at Briggs]. John was breezy and a bit of a playboy type, and Edsel Ford didn't go for that. He didn't care to make a decision in large company. He didn't care to discuss anything with a group standing around him. He didn't care for conferences--anything of that kind. He loved to come in and set on the end of a drawing board and have me pick up an old blueprint and sketch something on the back--a hood ornament or some damn thing. He said, "All right, let's do it that way, huh. Does it look good to you, okay?" I really didn't realize what had taken place until after the thing was underway. With his okay, it surely kept things simple.

Q This was the Model Y.

A The Model Y, yes. The small English Ford.

Q 1932?

A That's right. That was--well, the development was in 1932 for a 1933/1934 series of U.S. Fords scaled up from my small English Ford design.

Q What was the background? Why was the model needed?

A Well, I redesigned the small Dagenham English Ford. It was a horrible, boxy looking thing. Very practical, I guess, and it was very popular over there, and when Edsel Ford--this was his decision, I didn't really have anything to do with his desire to take this small English Ford that I designed. I didn't know this was taking place really. I didn't have anything to do with that. He just said, "Look, take this car and step it up for 1933-34." Kramer, the body draftsman--the body engineering department of Ford Company handled the whole process. They stepped it up a certain percentage wherever it was, you know, to produce the smart line for 1933-34.

Q What were they stepping it up from?

A From the little English Ford. So that supplied--that took care of the design needs of the '33 and '34 [domestic Ford]. The only difference between the '33 and '34, the bottom of the radiator grille on the '33 swept outwards--the '34 was perfectly straight. The '33 had curved louvers on the side of the hood panel--on the '34 they were straight. That's the only difference in the cars. I, incidentally, acquired a '34 Roadster. They were pretty, little cars, especially mine with some special touches. I had the boys down at the aircraft plant fix up my '34 Roadster. It was really a beautiful thing. I had this special windshield and a special top, and I had some beautiful aluminum disc wheels turned for it. Those are some of the little favors that--or what do call them, perks. Edsel Ford didn't mind my perks. That was one way he could compensate me for the very miniscule salary in those days. It was a very nice arrangement. I mean, I enjoyed it. Earlier, Edsel Ford came to me and wanted a special body built on one of the first '32 V-8

chassis, and I drew up a little boat tail speedster with cycle fenders. A pretty, little thing. We had it built partically in the Engineering Laboratory and over at the Lincoln plant.

Q This is Mr. Ford's personal car?

A Edsel Ford's. Yes, yes, that's right. Beautiful gun-metal gray, gray leather upholstery, and so on. He kept that out at his estate, and I don't know what ever happened to the little car. It was a pretty, little car. Have you seen pictures of it?

Q Yes, I have.

A Shortly after that Lord Perry came over--one of his frequent visits from Dagenham. Mr. Ford asked me to see what I could do with that car that was being built over there, so I redesigned it and so on and so forth.

Q The Dagenham Ford?

A Dagenham Ford, right. The Y model. A little 8 horsepower, 8 and 10, yes. So, everybody was happy about that, and everything went along smoothly, and that became the '33 and '34 Ford (stepped up in size, of course).

Q Can you describe with some detail, although you did just momentarily ago, the actual changes?

A Well, it was an engineering change--just an engineering change. They just simply stepped the car up proportionally, so to speak. I forget what the percentage was, but they stepped it up, and I think it was on a 112" wheelbase. I didn't realize it till after the thing had gotten going that that was the order that Edsel Ford had given to engineering to do this. He didn't talk to me about it, particularly. He was

very pleased with the car, and he came to me one day, he said, "How you like it?" I said, "Fine." He said, "You recognize it?" I said, "Yes."

Q Who do think might have given him that order?

A Given who?

Q Edsel.

A Oh, well that was his order.

Q His own order?

A Oh sure, oh yes. He handled all body work decisions. The funny thing was, occasionally, Mr. [Henry] Ford, the old gentleman I referred to. I think that's a nice, reverent term. I'll say that with a wink. He came in to my design department, and he'd look around, and I'd just start to describe something to him, you know, this and that, what's going on and so on. He'd throw up his hands, and he'd say, "That's between you and Edsel. That's between you and Edsel." See, that's all he'd say. Then, he'd walk out. But you know, he was frustrated by styling and design. He had no interest in that at all, and that's the reason Edsel Ford must have been awfully frustrated that his father would not take any interest in that phase of the automobile. Mr. Ford had established himself as a mechanical genius, so to speak. He didn't have any room for anything but the mechanics--the nuts and bolts. Edsel Ford, on the other hand, I think the old gentleman had a feeling that Edsel Ford was too artistic for the automobile business, if I can put it that way. Do you follow me?

Q Yes.

A He wasn't hard boiled enough in the mechanical end of it. God knows he tried to get hydraulic brakes put on the car and a suitable

suspension system and other improvements which were far past incorporating in the product. And, those are some of the things that I sensed. I was right there when a lot of these things took place--just a pantomime. I observed the pantomime between the two of them, and little side remarks between Edsel Ford and myself. He would clue me with a few comments. He knew that I sensed his problems. So, getting back to the Lincoln--the acquisition of the Lincoln. It sort of got Edsel Ford off the old man's back as far as something to do or to express himself from a design standpoint. He had the wonderful platform with the Lincoln. I mean, he could build for the types of friends he had. He had a feeling for that type of thing. He wanted to elevate himself taste-wise, and with the Lincoln in the picture, it was a perfect thing for him. Also, I think that he had the feeling that a certain amount of that would dribble down into the Ford product and be acceptable to his father, see. It was--I'd never heard a discussion--a style discussion or a peers discussion between his father and himself. That I absolutely stayed clear of, but I'm sure there [were] many very interesting conversations [that] took place. I never did get in on them, and, as a matter of fact, whenever he and his father had a discussion, usually, frequently, it took place in my quarters, and I'd always instruct the boys to stay well clear and give them all the privacy they wanted. But, they would spend, perhaps, an hour or hour and a half in the corner of our place sitting on the edge of a drawing board and talking. That's where a lot of the important company decisions were made, I presume.

Q Basically, the relationship was affectionate but possibly antagonistic?

A A mix of each, I presume.

Q Adversarial?

A Yes. In other words, obviously, old Henry Ford had absolutely no interest in the design and appearance of the car. A lot of the niceties that Edsel Ford wanted to build into the product--he felt was superfluous. He had a mania for simplicity, I mean, plain simplicity. You can put it that way. I remember talking to him one day, we were standing in the Engineering Laboratory. He had his foot up on the side rail of a Model T chassis, and he pointed down to a cross shaft that ran across between the two side rails, and it had a U indent in it that when you pull the emergency brake handle, it threw the car out of gear (disengaged the clutch.) I other words, it was sort of a cam effect. He spoke to me, he pointed to it, and he said, "That's one of the cleverest things that's ever been put in an automobile." And I agreed, I said, tongue in cheek, "Mr. Ford, that is a very, very unique development." But, you know, another time he came into my office one morning about 9:30, and, I'm trying to think, this must have been after Edsel Ford's death, between--yes, it must have been a year or so after that, and he came up to me and said, "Let's take a ride." I don't know why the hell he wants to go for a ride, but we went out in the service garage in the back and got into one of the service cars, and I said, "Where would you like to go, Mr. Ford?" Went down to the test track, down to the [Ford] airport, you know, where they have the test track, and he said, "Come on, let's go in." So, we drove in the gate, and I told Mr. Ford that, inasmuch as they're running high-speed tests around that track, brakes and skidding and various other things, it was a requirement to check in

so that they could flash the signal lights that someone else is coming on the track. He made a signal to me, and he took his two hands and put them as though he was going to sleep, you know, "that's all they do." "Come on," he said, "let's go on around there." So, we were going in the wrong direction, see. He said, "That's all right, that's all right, let's go." So here we go down the test track, these cars are swerving this way and that way, and, fortunately, there was a grass strip off of the side, and someone had seen him in the car with me, and they passed the word very quickly, and they flashed on the danger lights, and all the traffic came to a standstill. In the meantime, these cars were running various high-speed tests and whatnot. All we did was made the circuit around, and I didn't speak any more about it, and I didn't know what his thought was on it. We went on back up to the lab, and that's all there was to it. I mean he just wanted to take a ride around the test track, and we could have been the victim of a horrible thing. It would have been the two of us in that [crash]. Yes, it came that close. The cars were skidding all over the place around us. That was just one of the weird little incidents that take place when you're around the Ford situation.

Q Well, we are back in 1932, and you've just about...

A Yeah, we finished up that little two-seater for Edsel Ford at the Lincoln plant.

Q Right. Was this the boat tail?

A The little boat tail speedster. That was in the Summer of '32 we built that and ready for him in the Fall.

Q And the boat tail resulted from both your's and Edsel Ford's love of boats...?

A He was amused by the fact that I drew up the sections of it like you draw the hull of a boat and developed the paneling for it and so on. When the car was finished, it wasn't finished until around the Fall, I know the weather was cold. I drove it back from the Lincoln plant. There was snow. I never saw the car after that. He took it out to his house, and he used to use it out there. But, he made a cute remark at that time. During the Summer of 1932, the Lincoln plant was shut down--period! Just the maintenance crew there, and...

Q Sales were way down?

A Robinson--Robbie, we used to call him--he was the manager of the plant. Robbie and I and two or three of the maintenance men there did most of the work on the car. When the car was finished, Mr. Ford made the comment that it cost $25 to drive a nail there in the plant at that time. He said, "You should see the bill I got for this car." He said, "You wouldn't believe it." Of course, it was all Ford money. It didn't make any difference, you know, they had the people there. It came out as part of the overhead of the plant, see. Some of those things were interesting when you stop to think of the amount of money that was available to spend, and the way it was spent. I think he felt good about keeping a few people busy, really.

Q He was always very solicitous of his employees.

A Yes, yes. I never heard Edsel Ford make a derogatory statement about an employee or a mean comment about anyone in any form. He could be annoyed, he could be aggravated, but he always handled it in a very gentlemanly fashion. He came in one day to talk with me, and he pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket. He said, "What do you think of this?"

It was a production curve, and it happened to be the beginning of pheasant season up there in Michigan, and that's like a religious holiday. Everybody from the factory goes pheasant hunting. There must have been thousands, and he said, "Look what has happened to our production this last week because of the pheasant season." So, he shoves it back in his pocket, and he says, "Well, that's the way it is, see?" But, those are some of the little personal things that he used to talk to me about in a casual way. It seemed to be a sort of relief to him. He'd like to transfer that information to me. I don't know if he did it with other employees or not, but I always felt very satisfied that he would take me into his confidence about those little incidents that took place in the Company. Not particularly related to my activity.

Q So the 1933-34 Ford is a success, and you've established your rapport with Mr. Edsel Ford by not only that, but by working on a personal boat tail speedster that he liked.

A Yes. Then, in 1934, the Summer of 1934, he had given me the use of the Ford aircraft plant for any experimental work that we wanted to do.

Q Which was now vacant?

A Yes. They had a skeleton crew there of sheet metal workers and eight or ten top mechanics and whatnot. The reason they were kept on there was to provide service parts for the old Ford Tri-Motor planes of which there quite a number still in service--manifolds and landing gear parts, and things of that nature. It provided a place for me to do some experimental work without interfering with regular Ford activities. That summer discussions about a Ford sports car came up again. Some sort

of--this incidentally is really the beginning of the Continental. For all intents and purposes it could be classified that way. I developed a sports car chassis based on the 1934 Ford.

Q Which was one of your more beautiful designs, as I recall?

A Yes, but it--all that we used from the '34 Ford was the chassis--the chassis frame and the power unit and so on. I developed a special front-end suspension which enabled us to lower the car down five or six inches and also extend the wheelbase about 10 inches. It involved an entirely different front-end suspension, and also we lowered the rear end of it by cutting the rear end of the standard Ford frame off just ahead of the kickup and turning it upside down, welding it together which allowed the frame to go under the axle. It was underslung rear suspension. I built up a chassis based on that concept which I road tested for a couple of months in the surrounding area--with no body work on it. But later, the two front fenders were made from Ford Tri-Motor fenders. The aluminum stampings, which covered the wheels on the Ford Tri-Motor landing gear, we cut them off and pieced them out and made some very nice, extended fenders for the car. So, we finished the car up with some improvisations, and I sent it over to the Lincoln plant, had some nice trim put on it, and had it painted--Mr. Ford's favorite gun metal gray. Along in January and February, I guess it was, it had to be February, 1935, we talked about the possibility of putting it into production through one of the custom body builders. Well, we'd furnish the chassis, and the custom body builder would provide the body work and finish it up, and it would be sponsored by Ford. I suggested to Mr. Ford that we drive it down to New York and show it to Johnny Inskip.

Q Now, who was he?

A Inskip was manager of the Brewster body plant and also the Rolls Royce agent in New York. He was an old friend of Mr. Ford's.

Q And, you knew him also.

A That's right, that's right. Brewster had built some custom-built Ford town cars, extended frame, Ford town cars under the name Brewster. I don't know whether Mr. Ford had had a financial interest in that project or not, but they built them for a couple of years, and they were quite attractive.

Q '33/'34?

A Yes, that's right. It looked like a New York taxi cab with their flaired front fenders, you know. I don't know where they came from. The workmanship was fine, and the cars were, I think, sold for about $5,000, something like that.

Q Very limited edition.

A About half what you pay for a pickup truck today. Well anyway, I took the car down there, and drove it down in the dead of Winter with one of my buddies. We didn't have any heat in the thing, and we just had side curtains on it, and gee, the snow was flying around, and it was a rough trip. If we hadn't had plenty of applejack with us, I would have never made it. Anyway, we got down there, and I discussed it with Inskip, and Inskip's apparent idea was that Mr. Ford was interested in financing a factory arrangement down there, you know, set him up in a big way with a new factory. He already had the old Brewster five-story plant over in Bridge Plaza in Long Island City, but when I came back and told Mr. Ford the story, he wasn't interested in setting a factory up

or anything of that kind. Well, anyway, Mr. Ford gave me the car which I enjoyed very much having.

Q What happened to it?

A I used it for a couple of years. I kept the car, and, oh yes, I drove it around. I made several trips down East with it--beautiful car.

Q Did you sell it?

A I finally sold it--$500! A friend of mine on the Island, he couldn't wait to get that car. I could get $50,000 for it today!

Q Do you think--have you traced it? Is it still in existence?

A Yes. An interesting little story about it.

Q I'd love to hear it.

A I picked up an Old Cars magazine--the paper that's printed up in Osceola, Wisconsin. Here's a picture of the car on the front page--a "mystery car" it said. They didn't know whether it was an English Jensen or this or that. It was some sort of a Ford experimental car and this and that. I never did get around to write and tell them what it was. Somebody put a crazy top on it, and they all wind up in California it seems--those special-built cars. Two or three of them that I built.

Q Do they still not know what it is?

A No, they don't know. I don't know what happened to it. Well, anyway, the following Summer, Mr. Ford went to England.

Q Edsel Ford?

A Edsel Ford.

Q That was in the Summer of '35?

A '35, yes, Summer of '35. While he was over there, he made some arrangements with the Jensen--English Jensen company over there who built

sports cars.

Q Custom sports cars.

A That's right. They used certain Ford components--Ford engines and whatnot. So, he made an arrangement with them to use the chassis--this particular chassis design that I'd developed. We built two more hand-built chassis, crated them up, shipped them from the Lincoln plant to England. He sold them on the idea, and the conversion parts were made in the Dagenham Ford plant.

Q Where was the Jensen plant, do you know?

A West Bromwich, England. He sent me a photo and the catalog of the car showing the chassis that I designed and whatnot, you know, signed by him. They used that chassis up until the War, up until production stopped in '39. So, that was as far as that went.

Q Tell me about the Jensen Fords. They were quite popular, especially among movie stars--Clark Gable and others.

A Yes, that's right, that's right. You've seen pictures of them.

Q They were gorgeous.

A Very nice.

A Well, from 1935 until, I guess, '39. When the War started, they stopped production entirely, of course.

Q That was a limited edition?

A Oh yes, yes. I don't know, they probably built a few hundred a year--something like that.

Q On special order?

A Yes. At least the car wound up fruitfully.

Q They used your special chassis?

A Yes, that's right.

Q What motor did they use in it?

A They used a regular Ford for it. The wheel base was extended about 10 inches, and it lowered the chassis down. Finally, there was no basic frame changes needed. By the time '35 rolled around, Ford had a lower chassis level due to a higher rear kickup, so we didn't have to change the rear end of the chassis. But, they used the special front-end suspension which involved extending the radius rod--leaving the standard transverse front spring where it was--not disturbing it. There was a bridge built into the extended radius rod which carried the spring shackles so that it didn't disturb the spring location--the steering box was not disturbed, just lengthened the drag link. Nothing mechanically was changed at all except that it lowered the car down--lengthened the wheelbase ten inches. Gave you a better ride, nicer handling, beautiful suspension for a sports car.

Q Was this in 1935?

A That was in '35. I'll show you a catalog of the car showing you the note Edsel B. Ford wrote to me about it. By the time--let's see, it was in October/November of '39, about four years later, that the thought came to me. We began discussing a special-built car again, and, of course, Mr. Ford's initial thought on this special-built car was to be a Ford to glorify the Ford line. Whenever the suggestion of building that car at a Ford branch plant or interrupting Ford production in any way which it would have done, the Rouge plant fought us on it. It was just a nuisance value--anything that would interrupt production.

Q You had a quite a bit of problem with people like...

A Oh, [C.E.] Sorensen and Pete Martin--the production people.

Q Especially since you were working for Edsel Ford.

A Yes. They considered it a fruitless gesture on Mr. Ford's part. I refer to as being frivolous. I think they did too. Yeah, that's the term they use today--frivolous. Gives the "boy" something to play with, see? So, with Edsel Ford we might talk the thing over every few days, or every week or so, and he finally got up to the Mercury--would it be feasible to do it with the Mercury? Well, there again, we're up against the same problem with the production plants. There's no place in a production plant for that, without creating dissension and problems, see. No one could see a profit in it. So, at this point, an idea struck me. The old K Model Lincoln was being phased out--had been phased out, and we had one whole bay along Livernois Avenue--the Lincoln plant--where a certain amount of custom work had been done on the custom bodies that had come in in the past. We had a nucleus of custom body workers at the Lincoln plant--maybe a couple hundred of them that did custom trim work--custom paint work on the custom bodies after they arrived and mounted on the old K Model chassis. So, the idea struck me, I said, "Gee, here we've got the Zephyr over there. We've got our engine components. It's all under one roof, and we have one whole bay of this plant that's not being used, and, at that point, without going into that phase of it with Mr. Ford--maybe I discussed it briefly, but I sketched up--I took a tenth size blueprint--a catalog sheet--what they refer to as a salesman's handbook print, reduced down, showing the overall dimensions--head room and all that, you know. I took just a yellow pencil, a yellow crayon pencil, and I sketched in a lower hood.

Q You'd taken a Zephyr?

A Just to sample it--Zephyr sedan, see and moved the windshield back, lowered the steering column. Like you do if you were trying to draw a fancy version of a sporty car--what you do to change it. Well, the things that came to mind at that point were that the chassis didn't need lowering. You see, the Zephyr was designed with the concept of a chair-high seat.

Q Which at one point they had.

A They had a chair-high seat--about an 18 inch seat in the thing, and the floor pan was very low--very shallow--the car didn't have much of a side rail because of unit construction. It had a very shallow, maybe 3 inch side rail, something like that. It was silly, you know. I thought, well, we've already got a car that's down fairly low--the foundation of it, the floor pan, see? So, I drew this thing up and sketched in the roof line, and the trunk on the back and whatnot. That afternoon Edsel Ford came by on his usual visit, and I said, "How do you like this?" He said, "Oh boy, that looks great, looks good." So, I said, "How about making a little model. We'll make a little tenth-size model, 17/18 inches long." So, I had Gene Adams, a trade school boy there, I said, "Let's make a profile template of this for modeling," see? So, I had him glue it on a piece of masonite, you know, pressed wood, 1/8" masonite--glued it on there with some rubber cement, and then he punched the profile and put it in a jigsaw and sawed it out, see? That was the only drawing that was ever made of the car. As people think...when I tell them it was designed or sketched in 35 minutes or so, why--well, that's God's honest truth. The profile [was] <u>pleasing.</u> That's what sold it. He

said, "That's it," That was all that was ever made. It was a crude, little sketch. Edsel Ford loved those simple sketches.

Q Was this '38?

A This was in '39.

Q Early '39?

A No, this was in probably November of '39. Along in November, I'd say. [Mr. Gregorie amended this to 1938.]

Q So, he liked it immediately.

A Yes, we had this little 10th size scaling bridge, the model wheelbase was only 10½ inches, and we modeled it right in my office on a table, and Gene Adams and I modeled it right up with our hands. It wasn't a whole car design. We had the front end and fenders.

Q From the Zephyr?

A Of the Zephyr. That was the new '38 front end, which was real slick. It had a slick front end, and the fenders were reasonably decent, so we just pieced the front fenders out. I think we used the standard rear fender and did the little tire on the back, you know, and made this pretty little clay model.

Q Tell us more about the tire on the back because that has become the hallmark of the Continental.

A Yes, well that was part of the package, I mean, it was a necessity.

Q But, was this your idea or did Mr. Ford like the idea from a Continental he had seen earlier?

A I can't say. I just can't pinpoint that. Well, anyway, it appeared on there. I don't know whether it was his idea or mine--I just

can't say at this point. Well, anyway, it was immediately acceptable to him, and, in fact, the trunk was too small for a spare, so it was the only place available we felt that it would be acceptable. As we all know, rear mounted spares went "back to the year one." It surely was not for a styling "twist," though it apparently had that effect.

Q It was a collaboration.

A That's right, okay. Let's make it that way. That was part of the package. So, we did this little model up and painted it his favorite gray with white sidewalls and nice little chrome bumpers and all, you know. This all took maybe a week. He said, "Well, how long will it take you to get one ready? I'd like to see if we can have one ready for my vacation when I go to Hobe Sound, [Fla.]."

Q That's incredible.

A That's right. Took the offsets off with tenth size scaling bridge, turned the figures over to Martin Rigitko, and he made a paper draft--just a rough paper draft of it--full size and sent it over to the Lincoln plant and went ahead and built one just as quick as we could.

Q This is about December?

A By that time it would have been December. Well, anyway, by March or late February we had the car finished ready to ship down there by truck. [1939]

Q You shipped it down by truck.

A Yes. Have you seen pictures of the car and all?

Q Yes. Gorgeous.

A It was a pretty thing, but, man, it was all full of solder to smooth it up, and heavy, you know. It was beautiful to look at, but, I

mean, it was strictly a hand-made mockup sort of thing. Well, Edsel Ford had the car down there for a couple weeks, and he called me on the phone one day, and he said, "Gosh, I've driven this car around Palm Beach," and he said, "I could sell a thousand of them down here right away, quick." He said, "They couldn't get enough of them." So, he said, "You'd better get over to the Lincoln Plant and talk with Robbie over there [he was the Lincoln plant superintendent over there] and see what you can do to set up an arrangement for limited production." You know, some arch presses and whatnot, so we could build a few hundred of these to start off with. So, he said, "In the meantime, you'd better start a second one going right away," a second hand-built one to work out mechanical details like the steering column shift which was coming in for production at that time. I went over, and Robbie and I set down. We got going right away quick. I said, "The boss man said we should build a second one of these." He said, "Oh God, not that again!" I said, "I think it's going to jell this time. I think we have something here." At that point I told Mr. Ford about the advantages of building it as a Lincoln. I said, "In the first place, we can get more money for this car." This is after he decided for just a one off. This is prior to his calling me back to build more. I sent him away with that germ in his mind. I said, "Gee, we've got the chassis, frame, we've got the suspension system, we've got the engine, we've got the steering gear and all mechanical parts. We're not interfering with any Ford production. We've got all components in house, right there at the Lincoln plant, and we have the people to do the nice trim work and so on." So, it was a natural. It just fell together that way. So, of course, the rest is history. I mean, it went into pro-

duction, and Mickey Rooney got the first production one. At that time he was out there getting thrown off the train playing Tom Edison, or some damn thing, you know, that movie man was out there. The director I got to know pretty well--Clarence Brown. [MGM filmed exterior scenes at Greenfield Village for Young Tom Edison]

Q We have a marvelous account written by Jack Davis of the day that they drove the car up to the MGM lot and gave it to Mickey Rooney.

A Oh, is that right?

Q And, we've got pictures of him. He had just come from an Andy Hardy segment. He had a little tuxedo on. He couldn't believe his eyes. He said, "Gosh, Mr. Davis, this is fabulous. Gee, wait'll the guys see me driving around in this!" I believe there'll be a story on that in an upcoming Lincoln Continental Comments.

A Well, that's the story of the Lincoln Continental, and it was as simple as that. Though no drawings were made, other than one little marked up blueprint. When I tell people--we went to a Lincoln Continental [meet]--they have these gettogethers all over the country, you know. A couple of years ago they were here in St. Augustine, at the Ponce Lodge, and they asked me up there to talk to them about the car and all that kind of thing. I told them, I said, "You know this is the quickest-designed car on record," and they couldn't believe it. I said, "Gee, it couldn't have been over a half hour or an hour at the most to make that little profile sketch of it. That's all the design work there was." I said, "We had the parts, and we just put them together with no idea that the car would create the sensation that it did." One of the reasons it was a sensation was, it was bereft [of] trim. We had no tooling

for trim, there was no trim we could put on it. We kept it clean and neat--just fine surface lines.

Q But you did have some problems with mechanics. You talked about the lead solder...

A Oh well, no, that was all in that hand-made car. It was, you know, there was a lot of solder on it and a lot of rush work to finish it up. Edsel told me, he said, "Boy it leaks like a sieve in the waist." Oh God, it must have had 500 pounds of lead on it. The engine, you know, it was under powered. It was a mush--it was just mush. Well, you know, there's another interesting story in connection with that front end. Who was it who was talking to me--it was one of automobile people here awhile back--he said that Harley Earl was over at the automobile show in Paris at the time the announcement of that car came out, and they showed him a picture of that front end on that '38 Zephyr, and he said, "My God," he said, "how did we miss on that one. That's going to ruin us." Well, let me tell you the curious thing about that front end. It wasn't designed to style a car, not at all. Old Frank Johnson, the old Lincoln engineer, you know, he came with the Lincoln from Leland. He was, oh God, he was an old grandpappy. He started out with [Henry] Leland. Oh, yes, way back in 1910 and 1912, perhaps.

Q Oh, back in the old Cadillac days.

A Old Cadillac. He designed the old four-cylinder Cadillac. Fine old gentleman, gee. Always in a blue serge suit, and always went around in vests and his little pince-nez glasses, and, as he talked, he'd say, "See, see, see, see, see, see, see, see, see." Kind of a nervous habit, you know. The first '36 and first '37 front end I had designed...(at the

Briggs plant). Johnson asked me if I could help with a cooling problem they had with the '36-'37 cars [see pages 41 & 42].

Q Which I want to talk about.

A Yes.

Q Gorgeous car.

A Well, yes and no. I don't think it was one of our best design efforts, but anyway it sold the car to Edsel Ford. They were at a standstill at Briggs. Shall I keep on from there?

Q Please, yes.

A When Briggs had sold Edsel Ford on the idea of building this truss frame unit construction--streamlined, Zephyr-type car, as a follow-up to Chrysler's Airflow--a modernized version of it. They got as far as the front end of the car, and while Edsel Ford was sold on the body and the concept of the car, except for the rear engine. John Tjaarda had laid the car out. He was a rear engine fan and had laid it out with a rear engine. That didn't sell with Mr. Ford.

Q He'd done a prototype for the '34 World's Fair. [Chicago]

A That's right, that's right. But, that didn't go over with Mr. Ford at all, so they used the conventional Ford type drive line, and other production Ford parts, and cross springs and all that. So, they got as far as the rear windshield, and Tjaarda had designed--I'd say a more appropriate front end for that type of car. You know, more like a VW with a sheep's nose sloping thing, you know--with typical rear engine layout.

Q That's Tjaarda?

A That's right. John Tjaarda. John was sort of a designer/salesman

for Briggs, and I knew him very well. Edsel Ford asked me to go over there one morning. They were right at the crossroads. They'd held up production and the tooling on this project, and they couldn't satisfy him with the front of the car. I didn't have anything to do with it up to that point, so Edsel Ford asked me to go over there--to see if I could work out a front end that would appeal to him. So, I sat there one morning, and on a back of a blueprint I sketched up a front end in perspective. He wanted a sharp front end--he wanted a grille. He didn't want the plow nose arrangement that Briggs had proposed.

Q This is Edsel Ford?

A Yes. He wanted a pointy grille. He loved pointy shapes. No matter how you talked to him, the more they tried to sell him on their design, the more critical he got. He was obstinate on the subject. So I sketched up this pointed front end, you know, with a kind of an inverted boat hood. He liked those shapes. I knew he liked those shapes. Well, we got along that far, fine, so the front end was changed accordingly for a quick okay. Well, anyway, the front end was quite wide in the top, see. Right under the lid, it was quite wide, then it tapered down quite narrow--maybe 8, 10 inches at the bottom--bumper level. Well, it so happend, at that time all the Ford cars had the fan on the end of the crankshaft. The fan was mounted right on the crankshaft instead of higher at that time up on the water pump with a belt driving it. The net result was that they weren't getting very efficient cooling with the fan down that low instead of being up at the hot part of the radiator core. And, out in Arizona and Texas they were getting overheating complaints, and old Frank Johnson would come to me about twice a week and say, "Bob,

can't we do something about--get some more air to this car? We're having trouble pulling trailers and all that kind of stuff." So, I was coming back from lunch one day, and there was a Zephyr chassis sitting out there with the skinny, tall radiator core, a header tank on the top, and I took my scale out, and I measured it, and I said, "Should fit crossways between the side rails." I went back in the drafting office there, and I had one of my boys, I said, "Gee, get a big old hunk of vellum out, and let's sketch up a relocated radiator core, see. Maybe we'll be able to cool this thing. Let's put the radiator core down in front of the fan, in other words." So, Edsel Ford came in that afternoon, and I told him what we were doing there, and he took a quick look at it, and he said, "Well, maybe we can help Frank Johnson along that way. Maybe we can cool this thing." So, I had the boys whip together some rough sheet metal work and just piece it together with little pop rivets and all. We put it in the wind tunnel, and we ran it, standard air to boil[ing] temperature under full load, and gee, it cooled fine. It was just a rough bunch of sheet tin, you know. But, the opening was down crossways in front of the core. So, Edsel Ford said, "Well, let's go ahead and see what we can do with it." So, we went ahead, and I had a front end clayed up by Dick Beneicke and some the boys with the two grilles, quite low, and, gee, it turned out to be a right nice looking grille. Of course, Edsel Ford okayed it right away for the '38 Zephyr. In the meantime, it became a styling sensation. Packard copied it, you know, and Buick copied it. In the meantime, they still had the great, big, tall core with the fan up high, and they went to all kinds of shrouding and sheet metal work to get the air from a low grille up to their high fan in down below-

-to create the same cooling effect. They all thought it was a styling deal. They didn't know why I did it. It was to correct this damn cooling problem, see? Well, that's another one of those little things you run into.

Q You had a marvelous front end on the '37 Ford. Was that your inspiration?

A The '37--no, but that was taken from the first Zephyr.

Q Right.

A Yes. Briggs did that. Mr. Ford insisted they get something close to the first Zephyr. That's where that came from. That's the last Ford that Briggs had anything to do with. In other words, they did the '35 and '36 and '37, then that was the last of them. After that all that stuff was pulled out of Briggs and all handled in our department at Dearborn.

Q In 1935, you had effectively started the Ford styling studio, had you not?

A Yes.

Q With [Edsel] Ford's direction?

A That's right. All that work was underway at Briggs at that time.

Q I see. So, they simply transferred it over to the Engineering Laboratory.

A That's right. Briggs had done the body, and they were building the body, and they did the front end and so on.

Q But, from now on...

A From there on we did the '38, '39, all the rest of them from there on. The body was the same. You see, that old body shell went back, I

guess, to '35--the whole basic body--the floor pan and roof line and all. So, it was just a front end change. It was a face-lift deal.

Q I want to hear more about the Continental, but would this be a good point, chronologically, to insert the story of the Mercury--the development of the Mercury? Would you trace that?

A Yes, well, the Mercury, there really wasn't much to it. It was a variation of the Ford. A little more pleasing body lines, and as far as we were concerned, it was just a blown-up Ford in many respects.

Q Why was it perceived that you needed a slightly larger...?

A Oh, to fill in the pricing gap. See, there was nothing, it was about a $500 spread which was a lot in those days between the Zephyr. The Zephyr was around $1200 then--just a base price for the Zephyr, and the Ford was about $900/$950 somewhere in that bracket, so there was nothing in between there. There was probably a $400 spread, and the Mercury was the answer. In other words, we had to do a Pontiac or a DeSoto deal. As a matter of fact, I've got charts that Ed Martin had drawn up in my department showing the spread in pen and ink. I've got them out there now in a box showing the spread and showing how the competitive cars filled in, you know, in that price range. We used to get that stuff together, you know, and present it. We were doing market research. I used to get the advertising displays--the illustrations would come in for billboards and catalogs, and God, some of that distorted artwork. I mean, the steering wheels were all twisted around. The wheels looked cockeyed, and I'd take a big piece of vellum, and I'd lay it over there, and it got so they were passing all that stuff across my desk, and I'd spend half a day or a day redoing these, but the perspectives were wrong.

They didn't have an eye for right perspectives. They didn't look right. They were twisted. The cars were a little twisted, and humped up, and all kinds of funny shapes. But, I always loved to draw perspectives. Gosh, I could draw cars up on grease racks, you know, and showing the under side of it, and the whole the damn thing.

Q That's great. That's a gift.

A Yes. And, it didn't sit too well. Some of my boys in the office didn't like me to do that. It's a funny thing. Some of their professional jealousy was--I had one boy I hired there, Ross Cousins. Ross Cousins' father had been quite a prominent illustrator--advertising illustrator. What I wanted--I came up with this concept. A lot of designers have good talent but can't draw well. They couldn't make a presentation drawing, and the idea occurred to me one day, gee, I'm going hire an illustrator--a man that does these professional-looking jobs, and we'll give him a drawing and let him do it up as an illustration. As old Charlie Sorensen used to say, "Let's 'deluxy' the hell out of it. So, I got Ross Cousins, and he was good. He could make nice drawings and show the car in front of a butcher shop, and a gal stepping out there and the guy putting the groceries in the back and all that kind of stuff. Designers--some of the best cannot present their ideas to best advantage, compared to an illustrator.

Q In 1935/1936 the Briggs era ended in terms of Ford design, and it all came under your aegis, and you established yourself as you had been at the engineering laboratory, did you enlarge the design department?

A Oh yes, yes. We started out--right away as soon as Edsel Ford called from Hobe Sound. He called Charlie Sorensen and told him to get

together with me and provide any alterations in the building that were necessary just to enlarge the quarters, and Sorensen came up and, oh, he was sweet as honey, you know. He's usually hard-boiled and then some, and boy, syrup couldn't have poured out of his mouth any sweeter than that was.

Q He'd gotten the word, huh?

A He said, "Yes, anything the boy wants, anything the boy wants [meaning Edsel B. Ford], why, you just tell me, and I'll fix it up for you." So, I always got along with Charlie Sorensen. He was a boatman, you know, he loved boats, and he had a nice, big yacht called Helene.

Q Down on off Miami Beach?

A No, he used to keep it up at Algonac. He lived on it in the summer, and he lived in an apartment there at the Whittier in the winter time. But, he lived on this big, 146-foot yacht in the summer. He had it built up at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, about 1931. I always got along all right with Charlie. Well, you know, once these henchmen knew that I worked for Edsel Ford and was able to please him and get things done, why they didn't give me any trouble. They'd growl a little bit, you know, but I usually would maneuver my way around them. It was kind of a change for them, you know. It was a new experience for them, and they finally had to realize that the design of the car--the so-called styling of the car, was just about as important. As I pointed out, a hell of lot more important than selling the customer as to whether the car had a straddle-mounted axle pinion and whether they had roller bearings or ball bearings in the wheels or what have you. They bought the car on appearance!

Q Did you have a problem with Henry's edict against certain modern mechanical devices like the hydraulic brakes--but you had them on the Lincoln though?

A Oh, they had mechanical brakes. As a matter of fact, I guess--I'm trying to think of when the--I think it was about '37 or '38 when we had the hydraulic brakes come in.

Q On the Lincoln?

A Yes, on the Mercury.

Q On the Mercury?

A Yes.

Q It didn't come on the Ford until 1939 or 1940.

A '40, yes. I had nothing to do with that. That was all chassis--Larry Sheldrick--I didn't get into that phase of it at all. I used to listen to the stories.

I frequently would have a lot of the mechanical people from engineering--Sheldrick and everyone come to me to prompt me to sell Mr. Ford on some of these things, see? They knew that Mr. Ford and I sometimes discussed these things, and they would take me out and give me a sales pitch on some of these things. I'd drive the cars home, you know, weekends with a special suspension and all that kind of stuff. They liked my opinions because I knew what the hell it was all about. Another thing is, it always amused me, and didn't amuse some of the engineers too much, but finally along there after Breech came in, we had these big engineering meetings, these engineering committees and whatnot. I was just as well acquainted with engine performance and talked cars [and trucks],

and I'd frequently point out things that the engineers didn't know a damn thing about. About the the capabilities of the White truck and G.M. trucks, and I followed that sort of thing, religiously understood it. And, oh man, that would confound them. I mean, they couldn't understand how the hell I'd understood all this damn thing, see? Torque curves, and what engine would lug, and what engine wouldn't lug--'cause I got into all that in marine engineering, you know, I had to understand engines and engine performance and things of that kind.

Q I'm interested that your love of boats and your working with boats and ships was a natural for the kind of atmosphere that you had at Ford. Tell me about some of the styling innovations that you came up with. Specifically, about the styling bridge. Tell us a bit about that.

A Well, previously they had taken templates off the clay models.

Q How would that work?

A Well, they'd take the templates off--full-size templates--and put them on the drawing board and trace them out, you know, to get the shapes and forms.

Q Now, a template is?

A Well, it's a cutaway form--pattern--it's a pattern, a surface pattern. In my work in naval architecture, all hull forms you set up what is known as a table of offsets--from center line to water lines, and you can draw a graph of that. In other words, what I was able to do was to set up a system whereby you could scale a full-size automobile--a model--and put all of the table of surface offsets in a book, and that could be sent to body drafting, the pattern shop, or the model shop--body die model shop--and the people working on that wouldn't have any concept of

what the car looked like. All the dimensions were in there in this book. We could send that to the Lincoln plant or to what have you. All taken off, every inch, with this modeling bridge on the track straddling the car.

Q Did you build the first bridge for the automobile industry, do you think?

A As far as I know, yes.

Q Now, did you have that made special for you?

A They built them right in the Rouge shop.

Q To your specifications?

A Yes.

Q What did Mr. Ford think about the bridge?

A Oh, it was fine.

Q Of course, he knew a little about it from his experience with boats.

A I suppose, I don't know, it never became an issue. They just sort of--we first made one, and then we built two and three and four, and they had various adjustments on them. We could run a car in there and take the offsets, and it was a natural development. Now, of course, that's all done, I guess, with computers and all that kind of stuff.

Q Well, they're still using...

A Yes, they were still using the bridges when I was there in 1975. I noticed when Evie and I were up there, they took us through there, and they pieced them out, you know, for the longer cars. I guess we had 10 or 12 of those bridges. They were all precision made, and little fine

roller bearing wheels on them.

Q Do you remember who used to make those?

A Oh, they built them right in the Rouge plant. Tool and die shops. They built all that right there.

Q What other innovations did you pioneer there at Ford in the design department?

A Well, the two-spoke steering wheel. Up until that time, it was about 1936/1937, they had these bicycle spokes, steering wheels, you know, banjo wheels they called them with all that damn spoke work. And, just one day, I thought, let's make a steering wheel that you can look right straight through and it's simple. You can put your hand on the spokes, you know, and all that. So, I had Jim Lynch (my head machinist in the design model shop there), I said, "Turn up a damn ball about this big, see, with the guts of the hub in it," and I said, "and let's put a couple of tapered spokes on it." We made up one--a hand-made one, and I was gonna take a vacation down the Eastern shore of Maryland--first wife and myself--and I got a company Ford touring car--'37 I guess it was, '37 or '38 touring car. We put one of those steering wheels on there. I stopped at a couple of dealer friends of mine that I was acquainted with. Criss-crossing the country, I'd frequently stop and talk with dealers and get their opinion on this and that. "Oh boy, that's nice and smooth, and you can see through it." Anyway, Mr. Ford bought the idea, and we came out with that two-spoke steering wheel which, for all intents and purposes, is current today except they usually have a great big, funny-looking padded thing in the middle of the steering wheel. But, that was

simple, you know, it was just a hub about this big and two nice tapered spokes. You could rest your hand on that. And, cheap too. Sheller made them, I guess. Sheller down in Indiana.

Q Sheller-Globe?

A Yeah, I guess that's what it is now.

Q It is now, yes. That's right.

A But, there are all kind of things we got into, gee whiz. As a matter of fact, the idea of using aluminum foil on the models, you know when they first made these clay models. They'd use aluminum paint to simulate chrome. I had a Hershey bar one day, and I said, "God, isn't that a nice, chrome-plated Hershey bar with aluminum foil on there." I told my boy, I said, "Look, give me a big roll of aluminum foil." He got it from some place in Detroit. They packaged candy or something, so we fussed around with that, and found out that you could just take a brush, you know, and that thin aluminum foil and tack it on there and brush it, and damn, it looked just like chrome. Then, when you were all through you wouldn't waste the clay, you'd just rip that stuff off and threw it away.

Q They're still using it.

A Maybe they are. I guess they would. The time we were up there, there was all kinds of stuff like that, you know, available. The way those ideas come to you just in the course of events--no great big earthshaking thing, but it all adds up. There were always fresh ideas from our design group.

Q Well, the Mercury then, as far as you were concerned, was just a...

A It was nothing spectacular as a product.

Q It was really a merchandising effort more than anything else?

A Yes, that's right. The body shape was a little wider and a little easier shape, and the front end was quite Fordish as Mr. Ford wanted it to be. Someone asked me awhile back why they didn't make the front end completely different--a complete breakaway from traditional Ford-type design. Well, they have to understand when Edsel Ford made up his mind, he wanted something, he wanted it to look like he wanted it to look. He was obstinate as hell.

Q Do you think that he felt that if he'd gone too far overboard in terms of design that his father might have axed the whole thing?

A That could be. I can't answer that. I've thought of that, but I think the old gentleman left it pretty much up to Edsel. He had great confidence in Edsel's ability in this activity. Edsel would never deviate toward anything radical. I guess the concept of the Lincoln Zephyr was probably the most radical thing that Ford had attempted. Inasmuch as it came from an outside source, well, that kind of relieved him, I suppose, from a conscience problem.

Q He never used Tjaarda again, did he?

A No, no.

Q Or did you ever?

A No, no, John kind of phased out of the picture then. He didn't last long--well, the war was coming along there, and he got into other kinds of work. This book that Lee [Kollins] brought up when he was here. He left a book with me about Tjaarda's son.

Q I haven't seen it.

A About Tom Tjaarda and about his experiences working for those Italian body builders over there and all that kind of thing.

Q Ghia and others?

A Yes. God, I mean, he sounded like a wild man--he sounded like he was on pot or something. It rambles along and rambles along, and they set him up to stealing some design from another outfit or some damn thing. It was like a comic strip. I never knew Tjaarda's son, I mean--I imagine he's a man in his fifties now--he must be. Old John he was a playboy. He was a rounder. He was a womanizer. Edsel Ford never cared for him. Ralph Roberts, on the other hand, Ralph was a little more of a tactful, gentlemanly type.

Q He was where?

A He was with Briggs.

Q Oh yes.

A And, he was a product of Tom Hibbard and Ray Dietrich, and, well, let's see, there was Hibbard and Dietrich and Roberts. They started the so-called "LeBaron" name way back in the early Twenties. They were all a bunch of young body designers in New York--working for custom body people and had worked for them. Then, they set up this LeBaron, it was a name, just a classy name. Well, anyway, Ralph Roberts wound up over there with Briggs, and Tjaarda was there, and Tjaarda handled mostly the production stuff, and Ralph Roberts was more in the end of selling the custom bodies--LeBaron custom bodies which Briggs produced then to various Chrysler and Packard and different ones, including Lincoln. They built some quite nice Lincoln convertible coupes.

Q Did you like the Zephyr design?

A I never cared much for it. I'd never design cars like that myself. I hadn't up to that point, and I couldn't develop much enthusiasm for that. No one had ever requested a car like that, and the concept didn't appeal to me too much then. I knew it had its place, and I think the car would have been more appropriate probably with the rear engine at that time as Tjaarda had originally conceived it.

Q It would have been.

A The car wasn't a good car on the road. It had poor weight distribution. It was too nose heavy, and it was too light in the rear end. I know that, I can recall many a slippery night out there in Dearborn with the ice on the road driving out to Plymouth or something like that. You had to be awfully careful in playing the power to the rear wheels. The thing would just simply spin out, just fishtail, unless there were two/three people in the rear of it. It was a poorly-balanced car. Of course, the car was very poor mechanically. That engine was rough. It was just a scaled down variation of that big, old 12-cylinder Lincoln which was poorly balanced. It had a whip in it at certain speeds--vibration periods. Beautifully-built engine, and meticulously built, but wasn't a long-life engine. Although it compared to the Cadillac V-12 or the Packard, it was rough--just like the old first V-8 Lincolns were rough. It felt just like a White truck engine. It had a tremor when you held the steering wheel. Good, tough engine, but not a beautiful, silky smooth engine as a 12 should be. And, poor old Frank Johnson, I guess time had passed him by. I'd guess [it was] a 60° engine, and it was just, apparently, out of balance. I don't know if Edsel Ford, I don't know how

enthused he ever was about it, but I know it wasn't the best piece of engineering in the world. It was beautiful to look it and beautifully finished, but he didn't stint a thing on quality.

Q It was all skin deep?

A Yes, that's right, and, of course, the Zephyr engine was poor mechanically. I mean, the pitiful thing was that it came out with the Continental, and it looked like a sporty car that should have a little get up and go to it, and it lulled, it was lazy on the road. That engine was all mush. I told them one day, I was talking to one of the boys, I said, "God, if you'd have put a nice, big straight 8 Buick in this car, he'd really have something, you know, or a good lugging engine."

Q Back to the Continental, Bob, so you've done these two hand jobs, and you've brought out the...

A Well, now there was a demand for a hardtop, you know, after the first was a convertible.

Q And very successful.

A Yes. Visibility wasn't very good out of the convertible, you know, that big, deep back quarter on it. So, we were asked to develop a hardtop version, and we just simply took the lower shell and clayed up the roof over one of the production convertibles, and there was no big deal there.

Q Was that the cabriolet?

A Yes. I think that outsold the convertible two/three to one.

Q It was very popular.

A Well, the convertible--we were never able to get rid of all the

shakiness in the cowl because of the lack of a solid frame. In other words, it had a very weak frame. As a matter of fact, it was built out of a unit construction car. Once you took the roof strength out of it, you didn't have anything. You had to beef the chassis frame disproportionally and put a lot of extra weight--hundreds of pounds of extra weight to stabilize it, strengthen it, see, for the loss of the roof rail, so that it had a strike against it, and compared with the fact that it was underpowered. But, people were well pleased with the car. I mean, it was no performer. It looked like a fast car, but it was safe car to drive, let's put it that way. You couldn't break your neck in it too fast. It was no "hot performer," as they say.

Q When it first came out--the 1940 model, as I recall, it still had the word Zephyr on the...?

A I guess the first advertising was a convertible Zephyr. A special, yes. The Continental name came along...that was Edsel Ford's name that he put on it once we decided on production.

Q The story goes that you and he used to talk about European cars, and he would say, "Yes, the Continental, the Continental look," or something like that.

A Yes, well, he had a taste for European-type, design styling. Well, that car, it didn't exhibit a heck of a lot of that, I mean, it was simple like some of the custom bodies were over there, and some were quite gaudy, you know, some of those German bodies and whatnot. But, in my concept and my mind, it wasn't designed to look like a foreign car, particularly. The form was already precast using the components that we had. It just happened, it was a happy combination.

Q Yes, it worked out very well.

A Yes, there really wasn't much design to it. It just went smoothly together, and we happened to have a nice looking front end, and the fenders were nice, and by the time you squished it down and raked the windshield a little more, why you had your car, see? It would have probably, if we had decided to gussie it up and put a lot of icing on it and tutti frutti like General Motors, we'd have probably had more design problems. It was just so simple, it couldn't help look nice. Its profile, I feel, was [just] about perfect and [was] its real identity.

Q It had a gorgeous body.

A Oh, yes, it had nice body form, and by the time you extended the hood back and stretched the fenders out, why, there wasn't much you could do with it. I mean, the platform, it was the Zephyr sill, and that little chubby trunk on the back there--it wasn't anything you wanted to travel heavy with, you had to stretch your belly and lean down in there to put anything in it much less the spare wheel.

Q You're putting the spare tire in the deck lid, so to speak, gave you much more room in the trunk didn't you?

A Well, no, that tire was completely outside. That never did get in the body. The spare had to be outside to provide any usable trunk space.

Q Right.

A Except later on they put that hump in there, you know, in later Continentals.* But, the first Continental was just a bracket that hung between the bumper and body with a cover on it. That was no problem there.

*Editor's Note: The spare tire outline was a notable feature of the 1956 Continental Mark II and remained so until the 1988 Continental which eliminated it.

Q So you--the '40 model is very successful, and you've added a...

A Is it the Ford you're talking about? Oh, no, the...

Q The Continental.

A Oh, now, yes, we, let's see, the first one was the '40 and '41, yes. And, just before the war started, we designed the '42, the heavier looking front end.

Q Now that was a completely radical front end change?

A Well, we had to use the basic Zephyr body. That was the original body design from back in 1936, see, seven years later, but in the meantime, our real competition, Cadillac, had gotten a beefier look. All the General Motors cars had beefed up so they looked heavier and a little more important on the road, and, compared to that, the old Zephyr looked like a hungry horse. I mean, gee, that razor-back hood, you know, and those skinny fenders and little, skinny bumpers. Well, that's another thing that people have asked me many times, "Gee, why don't they put heavier bumpers, you know, and all that." Well, Edsel Ford didn't like that effect. He wanted something delicate looking, see? He likes fine mouldings, he liked delicate touches. He didn't want anything heavy and ponderous. Like General Motors, all those jukebox things they put on the Oldsmobiles and Buicks--all those big, old heavy chunks of chrome. Oh my God, he never would go for that. He said, "No." So, he looked at an instrument panel one day or some kind of a grain they showed on the instrumental panel, he said, "Oh, gee, that looks pukey, doesn't it?" He had some funny expressions he'd use, you know. I finally told him that the car in its price range has got to look a little more important on the road, and so that's when we developed that new hood and the new fenders

and so on which went went quite well with the body. The body began to look skinny, but they went well on the Continental. They looked good on the Continental.

Q Was this the '42 front end?

A Yes, '42, yes. And, that, of course, carried over into the '46, '47, and '48 post-war cars, yes.

Q But, at this point Mr. Ford is getting--Mr. Edsel and Mr. Henry Ford are both getting into war work.

A That's right.

Q And, so your department is...

A Yes, we thinned down. We turned over many of our draftsmen, designers and engineers to war work. They worked on--we worked on plane turrets, interchangeability of turrets, making mockups for the bombing turrets and things like that. We did some camouflage work, and as well as carrying on a certain amount of design work on a small scale.

Q Did you bring your crew with you into war work pretty much?

A Yes, yes. We turned over some. Some went to Willow Run, you know, to do drafting work, and several of our modelers went out there to do clay modeling on fuselage conversion pieces and all that kind of thing. But, we kept a small staff going there.

Q While you were working on war components or military procurement, you were attempting to keep the design spirit alive by doing some marvelous mockups in clay?

A That's right, that's right. We did some clay work and small scale model work and a lot of pictures and stuff like that--enough to keep Mr. [Edsel] Ford's interest going. As a matter of fact, when he died we were

just getting well into post-war concepts.

Q Right. He had some very ambitious plans for, along with yourself, in being prepared for the end of the war?

A Yes, yes. He stressed the necessity for production follow-up after the war. He could see the necessity for that, so they allowed us a reasonable scope there to keep things moving so we wouldn't be caught completely unprepared. He died in the spring of '43, and I had quite a lot of stuff ready. I went a couple of months trying to contact him, you know, to find out whether he was going to be back with us or not. I called up and spoke with Mr. [A. J.] Lepine, his private secretary, and he said Mr. Ford had gone down to Hobe Sound on his vacation, and he came back along toward the end of March, and he came in my back door unannounced, and I could see he appeared very ill. He was tanned, but he had lost a lot of weight. He used to show me bottles of pills he used to carry. I said, "Why don't you go over to the eastern shore of Maryland and buy a nice, big farm over there, and just go away and spend all the damn time you want." I said, "This thing will hold together." He said, "I wish I could, I wish I could." But, I mean he'd come up to you with those little things--and I'd talk back and forth with him about that. Not that I'd ever influence him.

Q Well, I think you were a good influence--you complemented his taste in design.

A That's right, that's right. We had a good, balanced way of working things out. I understood his preferences, and he had a lot of definite preferences. When he liked something, he'd say so, and when he didn't like it, he'd say he didn't like it--that was it! He could tell very

quickly, and I could tell very quickly, whether you could sell him on it or not. I got to know certain things that were acceptable to him, and he didn't like anything that was heavy and bulldozish looking or anything like that. I mean, that was very clear.

Q Keep it simple?

A Keep is simple, keep it light, keep it delicate. Ford styling has aged better. That has much more attraction today. In other words, it's grown old gracefully--put it that way, see?

Q Exactly.

A Some of these old Packards and some of these old General Motors cars, gee, they look ridiculous. I mean, they--and at times, I always thought, gee, well, maybe this is a little on the skimpy side, and he liked light bumpers. He didn't like great big, thick bumpers and great big bumper guards like some of those Cadillac things you know. They look like a football--some of those big bumper guards they used to put on there.

A He never cared for that. That, of course, is one of the things that appealed to him about the Continental--it was sleek and clean and simple. Briggs, on the other hand, everything Briggs tried to show him followed the usual trend. I mean, they did a lot of Chrysler work, you know, and they wanted all that garish decoration and tutti frutti hung on it.

Q What did you think [of] the Chrysler Airflow--you must remember that...?

A Yes I do, very well. I never thought much about it, I mean, it was an ugly damn thing, and I knew it was well engineered, and it had certain

airflow characteristics, I mean, it was easy on the air--pushing the wind....[portion of tape lost] the identity of them is the fact that the older cars were comprised of a number of components. The cars had an expression--a definite facial expression. They had a grille, they had placement of headlamps, and the fenders had individual shapes, and so it became a much more clear identity package than today's loaf of bread form. What we have today is like a loaf of rye bread, and the only identity is through the adornment of attached mouldings and gouges in the side of it and whatnot to distinguish from, just as I say, a droopy looking loaf of bread, and the later ones today look like a box. I mean, some front ends are squared off, and they look like anything but something that's supposed to move through the air. Some of the latest ads talk about the wind tunnel and the streamline; well, I think some of those older cars, like some of the old Chryslers and some of the old Cadillacs, were, if anything, better streamlined than some cars today. At least they had beautiful, tapered fenders, they had beautifully shaped headlamps, and each make of car had its own expression and composition--just like a man's face (the ears, and the nose, and the eyes, and the mouth--the mouth being the bumper, the nose being the grille, and the eyes being headlamps), they were all placed in very interesting ways in relation to each other. That's the reason the older cars have character and identity. Today, the cars have little character. Do you follow me? People look at them, and they wonder why some of those old cars look so beautiful. Gee, some of those old 1935/1936--some of those big, old Chrysler straight 8's, you know, those beautiful fenders and long, beautiful hood. Their only problem, in those days, was of the chassis

frame was so high off the ground. They weren't able to get the car down to look low, and in order to reduce the apparent height of it, they kept the belt rail very high, and, consequently, they had these little peep-hole windows about 12 inches high, and you sat up to your neck in automobile. That was one thing we were able to break away from in the Continental. We chopped about four or five inches out of the height of the hood. We finally got together with the engineering people and developed a new air cleaner and a few other changes they made under hood which are just commonplace today, but they screamed and hooted and hollered, but that was one reason the car looked nicely balanced is because you weren't up to your bosoms in automobile. But, those are some of the things that make the older cars--creates the appreciation for the appearance of them. Some had beautifully-shaped fenders, and some of the bumpers are horrible looking, but, I mean, it was the composition that made them look interesting. Some of them looked spunky, some of them looked sassy, some of them looked droopy, some of them looked terrible, but they at least had their own identity.

Q That's very good--very interesting. Can you give us a somewhat detailed sketch of Mr. Ford's personality as you experienced it?

A Edsel Ford?

Q Mr. Edsel Ford, yes.

A He didn't have [an] expressive personality. He was a very quiet, very reserved, unassuming man. He rarely exhibited enthusiasm. He rarely ever exhibited extreme distaste, and it was very difficult to know without very constant association with him how his feelings ran. He never--he was a very unemotional man, and maybe he practiced that. Maybe

that was his privacy shield.

Q His defense?

A Yes. I think he kept apart from the masses that way. He didn't want to be influenced. He didn't care to be influenced by people. He had his own way of determining whether something he liked or met with his taste, and his taste, of course, was extremely conservative. I don't know whether he just didn't care or didn't dare stick his neck out toward anything that was spectacular. That was just his nature, and he always--I believe he always felt he was on safe ground by following a good middle ground.

Q He had no technical background?

A No, no, he rarely discussed technical things, and he had no time for jokes and small talk at all--absolutely none.

Q That's interesting.

A But, we'd chit chat, you know, about some little, simple thing, but I don't know whether he did with others. He might have, I don't know, but I never saw him enthused or laugh about anything with anyone. He was always very solemn, serious. You never knew what was going on inside of his head.

Q I understand the [Ford] kids used to come around the lab a lot?

A Yes. Saturday mornings he'd bring them in there--usually when we worked Saturday A.M. back in the old days in the '30's.

Q Henry and Benson?

A Henry and Benson and Billy, and they used to--the floor polishers used to have those big power polishers on that teak floor in the engineering lab, and they'd jump on those floor polishers to the conster-

nation of the boys that were pushing them around, and they'd ride on the floor polishers, you know. Henry II, of course, was a kind of roly-poly child. He was kind of wobbly, typical overweight youngster. I guess he is today--everytime I've seen him...

Q Slimmed down a bit these days.

A I guess he has. I haven't seen him recently. Evie and I were aboard his boat down in Daytona--he came up to the races, and I guess it was in 1964, and he had his boat there, and that was just about the time he was making connections with an Italian beauty [Christina Austin] and he was in the telephone booth there one afternoon. Evie and I, we had our boat there at the time, in the marina, and he asked us aboard, and we went aboard and spent an hour or so and talked about old times, and he had a Mr. [Charles] Patterson on there (one of the men from the Rouge Plant), and he also had American Motors. Roy Chapin, Jr.--he was an old school buddy, you know, they were kids in school together, and he was with him there on that occasion. They'd come up to the races in Daytona--the 500 mile race. So, Evie and I went aboard and had a couple of drinks with him. But, I see him, on occasion. We always get along fine. Anything I want--usually from the company--we're able to arrange it--a little favor here and there. That's too bad about Ben though--Ben had never taken an interest in the company, you know, he'd just stand there with kind of silly grin on his face, you know, and he never worked seriously.

Q Henry worked hard, though?

A He did. He put in a day's work. He really did great things there. I know that when he came back to the company, the very first morning he

came back, it was in August, 1943, I guess it would have been, and he'd got out of the Navy, he came in the back door of my office, and he said, "Father told me to start here." And, we had quite a discussion, and we drove over to the Lincoln plant, and I told him there were some problems over there getting things going, and we drove over there and talked to Robbie over there. But, after that he never showed much interest in designing a car, I mean, it was difficult to--I couldn't assume full responsibility for this thing, and there was no one left to accept--to back me up as far as okaying this, okaying that, and which his father had always done, you know. And, I thought that he'd fit in and more or less take up where his father left off, but he was not even conversant with it. He acted bored with it.

Q That's interesting.

A Yes, he acted bored with it, and I think that's one of the reasons he was willing to turn the whole damn shooting match over to Breech and let Breech make whatever plans for design that he wanted to make. I think that's the way it came down. So, I was kind of left at a standstill there, and I didn't care to work under those conditions. It was awkward for me. I mean, there were no other company officials that would assume any responsibility.

Q Or were afraid to?

A Well, that's the way it was set up. The place hadn't been reorganized on any basis, I mean, they hadn't had any committees or anything like that. That came along later on, but I'm afraid it came along in such a way that it wouldn't appeal to me at all. I mean, it didn't--I like the simplicity of working with Edsel Ford--working out our deci-

sions, and it worked out to everyone's satisfaction. It was an entirely different picture--entirely different situation. And, I knew that Henry Ford had had his hands full with other complicated situations, I mean, perhaps much more important than design of the product at that time. They had labor problems, they had production problems, and all kinds of things. He just didn't take to the discussion of the automobile designs. Show him an instrument panel and, well, you know, "Yeah, go ahead." He'd just [say], "Yeah, go ahead."

Q Let me take you back to the late 'Thirties again, and you've set up the styling studio, and you've got a good bunch of trainees working under you, and you have the ear and confidence of Edsel Ford, and you're working now on the Continental--did you have interference from the Old Man himself? Was there ever any...?

A No, no way. The only interference that we ever had was from the likes of Charlie Sorensen and some of the Rouge people.

Q What ways would he interfere?

A Well, production headaches, things like that, you know. If he thought stampings were too deep or something like--in other words he was hedging against production problems. He hadn't got used to changes, you know, every year, see? Crawford, John Crawford....

Q Tell us about John.

A Well, John Crawford was a big, burly Scotchman, with a heavy brogue, and he'd been Edsel Ford's mentor from the time he was at school, I guess. A very fine looking man, and he--apparently, he was sort of a production counsel to Edsel Ford. I remember one occasion when we got into some sort of a heated argument about some part of the car--I've forgotten

what it was--and, I probably got a little hot under the collar. I used to kind of become overenthused about some things, and, anyway, the discussion got going, and Mr. Ford left and went home. It was late in the afternoon, and Crawford came up to me, he says, "If I was Mr. Ford," he says, "talking to Mr. Ford like you did, if I was him, you'd have your check and be out of here by now!" Well, I just kind of laughed, and I said, "Well, Mr. Crawford, that's the way it is, and I think Mr. Ford will see it different when he comes in tomorrow and thinks about it." I just took the chance--I thought, well, if I'm gonna move ahead, I'm gonna move ahead, and I'm not going to get stuck in a ice jam here.

Q Do you remember the detail over which Mr....?

A Oh, it was something about sheet metal or some hood shape or some damn thing--I've forgotten what it was, but we'd get into a--he was trying to protect Mr. Ford from buying some idea that he had, and he thought it might cost 15¢ or some damn thing, you know. He was running interference, see? But, I got along fine with him, he finally respected my judgment, and he was a lot older man, of course, and he was old enough to be my daddy. They just couldn't get used to a young guy blowing off that way and having Mr. Ford's confidence. Allowing Mr. Ford standing in line--to express myself about something, see, that had never been done before. It kind of unsettled him a little bit, but after a couple of years, why we--things worked out, and we used to joke about it afterwards, you know?

Q Well, he was sort of was Edsel's production troubleshooter.

A Yes, kind of a right-hand man, you know, right in Mr. Ford's office, and he handled a lot of intermediate production problems and so

on. He had a working knowledge of production, and he was one of the round table group we called them--they all had lunch together in the dining room out in back of the engineering lab. There was Cowling (he used to be sales manager), and there was Wibel (who was purchasing agent), and then there was the finance man--[B.J.] Burt Craig. He was the finance man. He was the only one of the group that looked like a high-priced executive. I mean, he might be a board member--Morgan & Company--something like that. He dressed nicely and had a nice, gentlemanly way about him, but the rest of them, they were rough, you know, they'd come up from the shops so to speak. Old Pete Martin....

Q What about Pete Martin? Tell me about him.

A Well, Pete Martin was a counterbalance for Charlie Sorensen. No one ever could say which had the upper hand or which didn't, and old man Ford would play one against the other one, see?

Q He gave Martin the vice presidency before he gave it to Charlie Sorensen.

A I've forgotten how it went, anyway. He was a rough, old SOB. If some guy looked at him cross-eyed, you know, he was reading a blueprint or something, he'd yell, "Where's your badge? I want to take your badge away for a week. Go get your pay!" Oh, I'm telling you he was brutal. We had one old draftsman there--head draftsman--under Crecelius, his name was Rivard. He was an old countryman from upstate Michigan someplace, and he looked like an old farmer. Old Rivard, you know, he wasn't very ambitious, and he was kind of lazy. He'd sit there at his desk, you know, they'd all be coming back from lunch--this group, you know, like the Russian council--they'd stroll along up the aisle, you know, and all,

between the desks there, and from about a thousand feet you could seem them coming, they'd walk along and be talking, and old Rivard would have an old blueprint, see, and he had it cut in the middle, see, and he could cock the blueprint so he could look through there. I used to go up and tap him on the back and say, "Rivard, what does it look like today." He'd say, "Ah, I'm just looking at something here, and don't ask any questions."

Q What did Rivard do?

A He'd just peek at them, you know, he'd...

Q I mean, what were his duties?

A Oh, he was under Crecelius [head body engineer] there, he was head of the drafting group. He was an old buggy man, an old horse and carriage man. He'd come up through the ranks of the horses and carriages.

Q What about Bennett? Did you ever have any input or contact with him?

A I had no dealings with him particularly, but along toward the end after Edsel Ford died, it seemed that any--I used to be asked frequently by newspaper people--magazine people, you know--for comments and articles and all that, and it was decided by someone that it should all be cleared through Harry Bennett, but I got along all right with Bennett. I started to draw up a boat for him at his request.

Q Yes, he liked boats too, didn't he? He was out there at Grosse Ile at one point.

A He had a house down there and a boat dock.

Q The Chinese Pagoda?

A Yes, some damn thing down there, but, anyway, he was a highway robber. He and the guy in the farm garage--Dahlinger, Ray Dahlinger... Did you ever read the book, you know, that thing about Dahlinger's wife and all that.

Q Yes. Written by the son. [John]

A I don't know why he had my name in there in the book. I had nothing to do with him, but Ray and I used to have a lot of dealings together because everytime I wanted to get ahold of a car or something, you know, or have a truck sent down to my house to haul some gravel for a weekend and so on, Ray would always fix it up for me, see? If I wanted to buy one of the company cars--one of the experimental cars or station wagon or something like that that they had. Ray was right next to the old man, you know, Ray was about as close to the old man as they could get. Ray looked after the farm garage, and what constituted the test driving at that time, and Ray would see about buying the outside cars--what they called the foreign cars, you know--a couple of General Motors' Buicks and a couple of Oldsmobiles and twenty or thirty cars every year they'd buy, see? And, Ray would make the deal with the dealers in town, and if I wanted a car of some kind or use a company car, you know, to take a trip or something, why, Ray would always have it for me. Ray and I worked closely together. Of course, Ray knew where I stood, too, so it was fine. It was all right. So, anything I wanted like that, why, Ray was always nice, but I knew Ray was working the angles, see, and he knew I knew it, and Ray had a couple of farms out back there. He had horse vans, trotting horses, and all kinds of stuff, you know. He'd build the vans in Fords shops, and with Mr. Ford's permission, I mean, it's

all right. Can't stop him. I had borrowed a Ford touring car one weekend to go up to Marine City. I bought a boat up there, and I had to go up and get some cushions from it. I didn't have a station wagon at the time. I just had that Ford speedster--that kind of race car thing. I borrowed a car, and that weekend some boys came up and helped me clean the boat up, and, oh, we had some wine, we had some drinks and all that kind of stuff. We made kind of a party out of it. Monday morning I brought the cushions back home and took the car out to Ray's. I sent it out there with a man from the office, and I got a call from Ray about twenty minutes after that. He said, "Bob," he said, "gee whiz, we almost had an accident here." He said, "You know that car you had? The man went to drive it to the wash rack, a wine bottle got under his foot, and he couldn't put the brakes on." I said, "Damn, I had a couple of playboys up there helping me with the boat, and they used the car a little bit, and they went up to the store, and," I said, "that's how it happened." I said, "My goodness, I would give anything in the world to not have that happen."

Q It must have been something.

A He said, "Suppose Mr. Ford had been there?" I said, "Well, that's the way it was."

Q Did you help Mr. Edsel Ford with any of his boats that he had?

A No, we used to discuss the boats, and he had a big speed boat out at his house there [Gaukler Point], and he had a sailboat called the "Buckeye," and I guess he had another boat he kept up in Maine, up at Seal Harbor. We used to talk boats. He had a big houseboat that he used in Florida--about 120 foot long. But, outside of that, we just talked

boats. He'd bring me clippings of boats, and we'd just talk back and forth.

Q Did you get to know Mrs. Ford at all?

A Not too well. I used to see her at--we set up...oh, they had a showing at the Detroit Institute of Arts way back in '31, I guess it was '32. One of those little side streets down off Woodward Avenue, and she was instrumental in promoting this thing. She and Mrs. Alger and a half dozen of those sable-coated ladies out there.

Q In Grosse Pointe?

A Grosse Pointe. And, I got to know Mrs. Edsel Ford on that occasion. I mean, that's the only contact I ever had with her.

Q She was a great lady.

A Very nice, very fine gal, yes. He was very disappointed about the boys' lack of interest in some of the things he was interested in. Yes. I don't know, I mean, as I say, I didn't have any discussion between them or with them, but, I mean, from things he'd tell me and things I gathered and put together, they never cared for boats or anything like that. It was too bad.

Q He had a number of boats.

A Oh yes.

Q In the 1920's and '30's.

A Yes. But, he'd tell me nobody in the family enjoys it. I don't know whether she enjoyed it not--I doubt it--I don't know. But, he used to go to Seal Harbor in the summer, you know. He had a nice place up there.

Q Nelson Rockefeller at one point in the mid 'Thirties that liked

a French Ford. Was that what it was? He saw something on the Continent. I guess you and Mr. Ford had put together something like a Jensen Ford--a French red convertible or something. Do you remember that?

A Well, there was that speedster that I built for him. I built a...with the cycle fenders and all. Well, you know...

Q What about the second speedster? You did the one--the boattail, and then you...

A Well, there was another boattail I built for him.

Q Yes, when was that?

A Had cycle fenders. That was in the summer of '34. I have pictures of it on the board over there.

Q Did he enjoy that very much?

A Yes, yes. He kept that out at his house there. He had private roads he'd drive around on out there.

Q Gaukler Point?

A Gaukler Point, yes. That car turned up in California somewhere too, and the second Continental which I acquired--the second, hand-made Continental--I acquired that, kept it a couple of years, and I sold it to a--I guess I had my man take it down and sold it to a used car lot down on Livernois Avenue. I moved to a new place, and I didn't have room. I had three or four cars around there--a little English Ford touring car that Edsel Ford gave me and a couple of others. But, quite a few of the foreign body builders built custom bodies on Fords, you know, which they only appeared in Europe. They didn't appear in this country at all, and it's quite likely that that's what you're referring to.

Q Nelson Rockefeller took a fancy to this, and so he wanted one, and, so, he wrote Edsel Ford, and Edsel had one made up for him in France.

A Well, that could be. Through the French Ford company.

Q Right.

A He had quite a number of the Italian and German custom body people would build custom bodies on Fords over there, and they'd sell them through the Ford dealers and whatnot. I don't know what the arrangement was, but every now and then Edsel Ford would have one sent over or something, but they never got--we never saw them--they kept them out at the house. The only time you'd see them, they sent them into the shop for some work to be done on it.

Q Looking back on it, the Continental must have been a very satisfying part of your design career at Ford, was it not?

A Well, it turned out to be.

Q But, your perspective was quite different at the time?

A It was just another special-built car which I'd built many for Edsel Ford, and it was inconceivable to me the attention that was paid to it, because, as I say, there wasn't much design effort went into it. It was just a happy combination. It was so simple that people can't understand it. There wasn't months and months of models and drawings and all the damn things they go through nowadays. I put together so many cars like that and build them for myself, you know, just out of odds and ends, so it was just like a backyard project.

Q Well, it came together in a beautiful way.

A It did, it did. I'll tell you, it gave the Lincoln the prestige that it needed. You see, I came at a time when the custom-bodied

Lincoln--the prestige Lincoln line--was gone. There was nothing but the Zephyr. There was no class to exhibit--there was no opportunity to exhibit class on the Zephyr, if you want to put it that way. It didn't lend itself to custom bodies. It didn't have a chassis. In the meantime, all the custom-body builders had gone out of business so that Mr. Ford really had very little to practice his delight on in a unusual automobile. It came about at just the right time to give him an outlet for that type of thinking, not to mention the prestige that it gave the Lincoln.

Q And, it just took off in terms of sales...

A Yes.

Q For that type of car.

A Unfortunately, the war came along just then, and it wasn't able to expand, of course, during that three or four years. By the time the war was over, why the management was in a turmoil, and that was the last thing they were interested in was producing a Continental. They were reluctant to even pick up where they left off on the '48 and '49, or '47/'48 I guess it would be--'46, '47, '48, I guess they built it after the war.

Q But, in retrospect, it was a remarkable achievement.

A It was. I mean, considering how little engineering went into it. Of course, they claimed they didn't make any money on it, and I doubt if they did.

Q What engine did you use in those days?

A It was the regular, standard Zephyr engine--Lincoln Zephyr, 12 cylinder.

Q With modifications?

A No, no, it was too bad. Many of the owners, the ones that bought them in later years, put Ford engines or Mercury engines in them, you know?

Q Did they?

A Yeah, well, a little more beef, a little more substantial than... that Zephyr engine was--it wasn't a car you could get out and drive seventy miles an hour all day long. It would give out. Very poor engineering. I think that was a great disappointment for Edsel Ford, too. The car had a bad reputation mechanically. And, at that time, the Lincoln dealership was fragmented. They didn't have the big, old K model, and it was mixed up with Ford sales, and then finally the Mercury came along, and they combined the Zephyr and the Mercury sales. You know, Lincoln-Mercury, that's when the Lincoln-Mercury combination came in, and also it lent a little more prestige to the Mercury not being associated with the Ford. That was the thing that Mr. Ford and I had a little funny feeling about. I knew that the car had to be separated for people to want to buy it. They didn't want to buy it as an expanded Ford.

Q Wanted a completely new car?

A Yes, that's the reason they wanted to step up socially, and that's the reason he did everything but cuss me out that night because I brought this fact out.

Q This seems odd. He was willing to make the break with the Continental but not with the Mercury.

A Well, the Continental wasn't tied in with the Ford, see. That was already a prestige name, and that was one of the reasons he was agreeable

to build it in the Lincoln plant when I suggested because I pointed out the fact that being a custom-built car we're going to have to get considerably more money for it, and you could get more money for the Lincoln name than you could a Mercury name. And, if we'd used the Mercury as a foundation, we're going through the same operation but still have the name of a lower-priced car. Well, he bought that logic, but when it came to naming the Mercury is where we ran into trouble. You see, all the nameplates and all the discussion of the car up until the time of production was Ford-Mercury, Ford-Mercury, see, and I could see that was big mistake. I wasn't the only one--it was the sales people, and, "Oh," they said, "My God, we got to get the Ford name off the car." Boy, that was like a hot poker on Mr. Ford. "What's wrong with the Ford name? We spent thirty-nine years building it up, and you're telling me it isn't good enough to put on this automobile?" So, what the hell are you going to say, see. I was bracketed.

Q Did you have any input, as you must have, in the design of the Mercury?

A Oh yes, sure, we did the whole thing.

Q Is there any particular story about that you'd like to save for posterity?

A No, no, not particularly. It was just a modeled up front end. He satisfied them with a front end, and we made several versions of it, but we always kept coming back to that typical Ford type front end. He liked that, and we did some interesting things with the hood, put that little speed stream on the hood there and fattened the body as much as we could, you know, give the feeling of a little more automobile, but then we had

that little hardtop coupe with the window channels, you know, kind of like the Cadillac 61, or whatever it was, you know. Kind of custom look with the chrome, frame windows. Outside of that it was just a routine process. The car wasn't spectacular in any way. People liked it. As a matter of fact, it gave good service--it was tough. My God, when I stop to think now that when that car was out it was about $850. Compared to one of Mercury's today--$14,500 yelling on television for a damn Mercury! I told people I know that car--that's ten times, twelve times.

Q But you considered it a lot of money in those days.

A It was. Well, the Ford went then for about $650/$700. You could buy a nice Ford pickup for $550. Now a pickup is $11,000! That's wild, wild! Well, we were paying 75¢ a hour then for draftsmen, 75¢ for pattern makers. That was in 1934. Those were the days, huh?

Q They certainly were. Well, the war comes on, and in February of '42 you're completely suspended of production, are you not?

A Production, yeah. We kept...

Q But you and your crew...

A Yeah, we kept going. We had only about 25% of the people. I mean we normally had about 75/80 at that time, and I think we were down [to] about 25 or something like that. And, I say we worked on a certain amount of government work. We modeled up turret shapes and things like that for Willow Run. Enough to justify the boys being there. The government had allowed for a certain amount of time to be spent by people who weren't absolutely essential in the war effort. So, we were able to keep going so that by the time production was considered again, why we had our post-war, facelift jobs ready and stuff of that kind.

Q You had done quite a bit of clay modeling mockups during the war.

A Yes. Well, of course, yes, it wasn't determined then--after the war, I mean for the post-war picture, I don't know we haven't gotten into that. I developed a 90-inch wheelbase Ford, and then there was to be a 114 inch basic Ford. In other words, it was set up for a small Ford and a large Ford. Then, actually the tooling was started on those, and then when Breech came in, about June, 1946, they all got panicky, and they got one of those little Studebakers out there--the little, double-ended Studebaker. They said, "Well, now that's the size car we want." They said, "Oh, that's too big for a Ford." In the meantime, they turned that 114" Ford into a Mercury. That was the first post-war Mercury. Then, they took the tooling for this small 90-inch Ford and shipped that to France. They built that in France.

Q Was that the Vedette?

A I guess that's what they called it. They used the small, V-8 engine in it, and that little 60 horse, V-8 engine. Then, we started out from scratch, and, of course, that was the 1949 Ford. It was designed to a formula. I mean, the wheelbase was fixed, and the hip room was fixed, and the head room, and it was a cage in other words. All you could do was fill in the cage and put tutti-fruitti on the surface. That's about the way it was worked out.

Q On the slab sides?

A Pretty much.

Q Let me go back to--before we get into that very interesting episode...

A That was, incidentally, [Harold] Youngren's 1946 project. That was

the one that took hold there, and they did some things to the engine to pep it up, etc.

Q So, you're in the midst of World War II, and you're working with a reduced group on various war materials. What sort of projects do you remember that stick in your mind that you did for the military?

A Oh, we did some camouflage work for some of the branch plants. We had a couple of boys on that. We went out to Ann Arbor, and they took camouflage lessons in the architectural school out there, and I made a couple of trips out there. We enjoyed that. We took a couple of trips to various government installations to study what tactics they used. Down at the Curtiss-Wright aircraft engine plant down at Paterson, New Jersey, there we went down there a couple of times to look at some of their plant camouflage arrangements in the parking lots and all that. Then, that's about the extent of it.

Q Did you work on any of the...?

A Oh, we worked on some truck designs.

Q Armored, any armored cars?

A No, no, we didn't get into that. That was all handled at the Rouge Plant pretty much. That was all mechanical stuff.

Q You were still at the engineering lab?

A No, we never got involved in any of that. We just made some models, and very low key. That, of course--Edsel Ford was ailing, and he didn't get in there after that really. I mean, he didn't get in. That one trip when he came back from Hobe Sound. That was in the Spring of '43, he came in that one afternoon for about an hour, and I never saw him again.

Q Incredible.

A By May he was gone. Like he died in May.

Q Very tragic.

A Yeah. It was a shame.

Q Some interesting personnel changes going on at this point, and one, at least, you ran afoul of, did you say, of Joe Galamb?

A Yes.

Q Could you tell us a bit how that happened?

A Well, going back to the time I came there, as soon as Mr. [Edsel] Ford had assigned certain design projects to me, why Joe Galamb felt slighted, of course. He'd always handled that sort of thing with Edsel Ford and for him, you know. It was just a natural for an older hand like that to be critical of an upstart who was more or less taking over his activities. I didn't get interfering with his body engineering or anything like that. He'd always handle that. He was contact man between Briggs and Murray and suppliers at Ford, and any selection of work--design development work on the part of Briggs--why, he and Edsel Ford would always work together on it. By the time I came in, why that was all through with, I mean, that was different policy then. But, Joe resented--he gave me a bad time after Edsel Ford died, and he thought, "Oh boy, I'm really going to fix this guy."

Q You mentioned Larry Sheldrick a little while ago. He also got fired.

A Oh, yes, he was fired in late 1943 as I recall.

Q Was that Sorensen who did that?

A Oh, I don't know. They were fired about the same time.

Q That's it. That's what I was getting at.

A Yes, I don't know how that worked. I don't whether there was some big mixup down at the Rouge Plant. The whole place was a nuthouse.

Q Bennett perhaps was involved?

A He might have been. I didn't get in on that. First thing I knew--that was when I was away from there six months. See, I worked there three different times.

Q You started your own design firm?

A Yes, I did.

Q Where was that?

A In Detroit--a penthouse up on the 28th floor of the Eaton Tower.

Q Doing industrial design work?

A Yes.

Q Marine design?

A No, I hadn't gotten any marine design, but I was doing work for Rohm and Haas on plastic development work for automotive body trim and all. Then I did some work for Nash-Kelvinator. Not automobile work, I was working on their appliance work. I had a boy working with me there.

Q Who's that? Do you remember?

A I guess one of the boys that had been in the office there. He came a couple days a week. I've just forgotten who it was--a young chap to help out. Well, anyway, of course as soon as I went back with Ford why I gave that up.

Q How did you get back in? You mentioned briefly that Henry Ford...

A Well, he called me--he got ahold of me and wanted me to come up to his office, and I went up there. That's the same day that Jack Davis

came in there. He said, "Now we'll get things going again." Well, anyway, I went back on the condition that I wouldn't have any interference from certain people that I knew would create problems. I wasn't interested in coming back on that basis. So, he said, "I'll get rid of Joe Galamb right now," which he did--right across the table. I felt badly about it. Joe, I'd known Joe for years, and I learned a lot from the old guy. He was a very capable engineer, you know. He started out with his father and his grandfather, and I didn't want to be responsible for firing him, which is what it amounted to, I guess. I told him, "Mr. Ford, we don't have to do it that way. Can't you give him something to do, or tell him to stay the hell out of my area there." He said, "Naw, get rid of him, get rid of him." That's the way he was. He was just impulsive as hell. He grabbed the phone and called up and talked to somebody and said, "Get rid of Joe, get rid of him, I don't care what you do. Get rid of him." That was the end of Joe!

Q Get him out of your sight.

A Yes. Couple of months later Joe came in, and he came into my office and wanted to know if I could get a man to fix the seat cushion on his car. I felt sorry for him. I said, "Joe, you don't have to worry about that." He said, "Oh, the damn seat won't work." I said, "My goodness, we can take care of that." So, I called up somebody down at the Rouge [plant] and told him to put a new seat in Joe's car. I didn't see him after that. Joe was well fixed. They say he's the richest Hungarian in Detroit. Joe made about a $100,000 a year back in those days which is equivalent to half a million today. Sure. He had a big home out there in Palmer Woods. Funny incident, I'd been over to Briggs, and this was

during the time that Tjaarda was trying to sell Ford on this rear-engine car, and before the Zephyr.

Q The one he'd had in the [1934] Chicago World's Fair?

A Yeah, or a duplicate of it or something. Well, anyway, he came over to the engineering lab to get ahold of Joe, and they were going to drive Joe back to Briggs in this car to see how it went. He got someplace over in Hamtramck, and oh it was a nasty, sloppy day, with snow on the ground and all, and the damn thing broke down, and here he was sitting on one of these side streets with all these "ragamuffins" and whatnot racing around and knocking on the doors and all. Here's little Joe sitting on the back seat, and some kid looks in and says, "Look at the funny, little man there." His fedora hat and his velvet collared overcoat. Joe said, "Get dem kid away, go on, go home, get dem kid away from here," in his broken Hungarian-English. All I could do was bust out laughing, and he didn't want to get out and walk--it was nasty. They had to send a tow truck to carry it away with little Joe sitting on the back seat.

Q All the way?

A Of course, it attracted attention, you know. All the kids were just getting out of school. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.

Q Well, it's 1945, and the war is obviously coming to an end, and you've got to come up with some post-war [designs].

A Well, we got into the retrimming the front ends of the '42 cars. We worked out some pretty decent front end "facelifts."

Q Yes you did. Some very good...

A Yeah, they worked all right.

Q You had the dies still from the [pre-war period].

A The basic tooling, yes, the hood and the fenders were all the same, and the only changes made were in the grille and some little incidental changes--I guess we had new instrument panels and things like that that didn't take too much time to tool up. The Zephyr had its new fenders from '42, you know, and that became Lincoln then. They dropped the Zephyr name at that point or thereabouts.

Q That was a complete redo, wasn't it, the '42?

A Well, same old Zephyr body that went back to 1935.

Q Never really changed that?

A Never changed the body, the doors, and the windshield, and the floor pan were all the same. That was a handicap as far as styling went, but it was a right decent looking car. It was a little out of proportion in places, like so many of those facelift deals, but it had a big, husky looking front end on it. It looked important, anyway. But that's about the extent of it. There was no new tooling as such. It wasn't until we got into the complete postwar stuff--we had the new Lincoln which we did, the post-war Lincoln, and the Mercury which was to have been the Ford. Then the all new Ford, of course, which was introduced in '49.

Q Late '48 [actually mid-1948].

A Yes. There again we made up a model, and then [George] Walker borrowed some of our men, and they made a model--a duplicate of it--same dimensions and all, and, of course, the committee picked Walker's, of course, with [Ernest] Breech, with his G.M. crew there and all. It was obviously turning out that way. It was at that point I figured that, what the hell, I'd be wasting my time there. That's when I decided to come to

Florida.

Q Did they take your design and make the Mercury out of it? Is that what you said?

A Yes.

Q Your design from the '49 Ford became the '49 Mercury?

A That's right, that's right, and also the big Lincoln we designed--the Cosmopolitan or whatever we called it.

Q You had known George Walker...

A Oh yes, surely.

Q But you didn't particularly care for him.

A Not as a consultant to me. Well, I wasn't against George, no. It was Breech's sneaky tactic.

Q Not personally, but in terms of automobile designer?

A No, George had done work on Nash, you know, he'd done Nash work for a quite a number of years, but he was doing some work for some bumper people or something, and he came out occasionally, and I knew George. We always got along fine.

Q But, he was a Breech man?

A [Yes. There's no doubt he was assured of a big deal by Breech. Breech disliked my direct contact with Henry Ford II, as I had worked with Edsel on design matters.] Oh, well sure, he and Ernie Breech were golf buddies, you know. They belonged to the same country club and were neighbors or something out there in Birmingham where they lived.

Q Had he done any work for G.M.--George Walker?

A Not that I know of, no. No, that's the only automobile work I know that he ever did was for Nash. But, I could see that was Breech's

tactic to inject him in there as a consultant to me, see? In the meantime, he'd be working for Breech.

Q Working on his projects?

A That's right. Well, in other words, he wanted to drive a wedge between Henry Ford and myself, so I'd be part of Breech's deal. As a matter of fact, my activities were placed under [Harold] Youngren--new V.P. of engineering--and as nice a gent as Youngren was, and I got along fine with Harold, I mean, we saw eye to eye, but I could see all kinds of problems shaping up there. I didn't want to get involved in it. I had enough problems at home. I was separating from my wife, and I just didn't care to get involved in it. I had ample means to get along. I didn't have to work if I didn't want to, and I said, "Oh, the hell with it." I mean, I'd had such a happy relationship with Edsel Ford and working the way I had directly with him.

Q It must have been a blow to you, personally.

A Oh, yes, sure. I mean I just lost heart in the thing. Henry treated me fine, I mean, gee, he boosted my salary up, paid me a lot of money, and that was after they brought Walker in there, you know. They doubled my salary, perhaps hoping to keep me in place.

Q What do you think Henry [Ford II] felt about Walker coming in?

A He was just going right along with Breech. [He had no choice. He had given Breech complete control of the company and was probably quite relieved to get clear of design department activities. That was not a pleasing outlook for me.]

Q He was?

A Sure. He had no interest in the design department at all, and he

as much as mentioned that. He said, "It's pretty much out of my hands. We have Mr. Breech here, and Mr. Breech is making changes." I said, "I can well understand that." I said, "I don't think it would quite fit my [style]. I think I'd be an obstacle in the path of this changeover arrangement, and if it's all right with you, why, we'll part good company."

Q That's good. You left with goodwill, and you left gracefully.

A Sure, that's right, that's right. I said, "Let's put it on a six-month basis," and I said, "After six months, if I feel like coming back, I'll get in touch with you, and if you think you'd like to have me back, why, you see how things go. In the meantime, let this new crew make it work out." I mean, it was on that basis. I said, "I don't mind giving up at this point. There are certain things I don't care for," and I said, "Before we get into it and have a hassle over it, I'd rather not stand in the way of it." I said, "Let Tom Hibbard, who's been a very capable assistant of mine," and I said, "Let Tom take over, and I'm sure he'll work things out." Which he did. He stayed on, I guess, six months there, and then they got some other guy in there. Tom used to write me a lot about it down in Florida. He said, "It's hell, it's awful there, why don't you come on back?" I said, "No, it's too late now."

Q They got Oswald and Snyder.

A That was it. Oswald.

Q John Oswald.

A Whoever he was, I didn't really know.

Q He came over from G.M.

A Did he?

Q Another Breech man.

A Yes, I don't know Snyder either. I never knew him.

Q Snyder came then. In fact, shortly after you left, as you well know, there was a great influx of G.M. people.

A Oh sure, that's what Breech wanted, you know, he was sucking all the engineering talent he could out of G.M., and that's why Youngren came in there, you know, they were having transmission problems in developing an automatic transmission. Youngren was instrumental in that Oldsmobile.

Q Rocket?

A No, the hydramatic transmission.

Q Oh yes, of course, he developed that.

A That's right, with Olds see? So, that was his place there. So, he in turn, took charge of all engineering--everything. He was very capable on transmissions and so on, but he left great big gaps as far as his knowledge of other subjects were concerned. You see, that was so specialized at General Motors. They had transmission men, they had engine men, suspension men, you know, ignition men, on down the line. But, I got along fine with Harold when he came in there, but I just didn't care to--well, we were moving back into an enclosure of the engineering department. That was one thing I fought with [Lawrence] Sheldrick about and with a group of Lincoln engineers, when I was a kid. I mean, I'd finally got things split apart from that. I put it on more or less of a separate department under Mr. [Edsel] Ford and myself. And, man, I wasn't about to step into that again, so we'd come full circle about there. I don't know what happened after that. I hear all kinds of rumors. I

don't know who this guy Oswald was, and I noticed strangely enough no one takes credit for designing the Edsel car--you know the Edsel that...?

Q Oh yes, well, that's another whole story. Roy Brown did that.

A I don't know who it was, but, I noticed there was a write-up in one of the magazines about Walker when he was elected to the Antique Automobile Club of America, see, of which I'm an honorary member; and, a couple of years after I was, or ten years after that, they elected Walker, and they gave a little resume' of his activities and so on, and it was very pointed in this article, it said, "Mr. Walker states that he was not responsible for the design of the Edsel car." Of course, he was, it went on right when he was there. I'm sure he had his finger in it.

Q He was vice president for design.

A That's right.

Q Did you get to know the two lieutenants he brought with him--Joe Oros and Elwood Engel?

A No.

Q They came in with him on the consultancy contract, but they worked downtown and then later on...

A Yes, yes. Well, he had his whole studio, I guess, down in the New Center Building, and his son, didn't he have son that took over that business of his?

Q Maybe so.

A I didn't know them at all. He had a studio or an office down there, but I didn't know them. I didn't know any of those people. As a matter of fact, we went out of our way to steer clear of other designers from other companies. I've never hired a designer from another company,

directly.

Q Really? That's interesting.

A Never, never, never, no.

Q Tom Hibbard was the closest one that.

A Oh well, Tom, he didn't come there as a designer, as such. Tom was an old timer, you know. He wasn't a designer working for another company. He had worked for General Motors a few years before that, but I didn't hire Tom. No, Tom got in there during the war working on tanks or Jeeps or something down in the Rouge Plant.

Q Armored trucks or cars?

A Yeah, something of that kind, and I didn't know Tom at all at that time until I came back with the Company, and they had brought Tom up from the Rouge Plant to run the design department, see?

Q Well, that's interesting that you were...

A Then when Mr. Ford asked me, when he took me back in there, what I want to do with Tom Hibbard, and I said, "My gosh." He wanted to know if we should fire Tom Hibbard. I said, "No, no, no, my goodness, no," I said, "Tom, I'm sure, is a very capable man, and I want some sort of an assistant there, and Tom's been running the place," and I said, "Let me talk to him, and we'll see what we work out." Of course, Tom and I, we hit it off right away. He was a splendid man, and he was so damn thankful, you know, that I kept him on there, and as it turned out, he was a great help to me, and he was sufficiently able to talk to people and hire people, interview possible designers and all that kind of stuff --kept me out of the lobby a lot, you know, that kind of thing.

Q That's good.

A Sure. So, Tom and I we got along just fine, and very able, very able man. Tom didn't do much design. He had good ideas, but he was able to interpret things, and he had a good eye for manufacturing and practicality of things, but he was a good manager. We worked nicely together, and it worked out fine, so I didn't feel I was stepping out leaving the ship without a captain or anything of that kind, and I explained that to Mr. Ford, and I said, "As far as I'm concerned, Tom, during these unsettled conditions, I'm sure Tom can work his way through it for you and do a good job."

Q So, you left with no regrets?

A Oh no, no, that was fine; no I've seen Mr. [Henry] Ford [II] on a number of occasions, and I've run into Benson down at Palm Beach and different ones, and we get along fine.

Q Did you think, inherently, that your design for the '49 Ford was better than the Walker design, looking back on it?

A Uh, I couldn't see a hell of a lot of difference. They were designed to a formula--the hood was to be so long, and the body was to be so wide.

Q They'd given you the package before?

A Oh sure, sure. That was all drawn up by Harold Youngren, see? Oh yeah, the tread was fixed on the wheel size, and we came up with practically the same sheet metal design. You couldn't change it very much. The grille was different, and maybe the hubcap design was different, but the car--you put one along side of the other one, subsequently, I couldn't tell one from the other one.

Q Were you, in a sense, working in separate...you were in the North

end, and...?

A Yes, yes, we were in our old department [engineering laboratory], and they set up a partition down at the other end of the building for Walker to model up this other car with my modelers, with my men.

Q There's a story I've heard that somehow or other they got a look at your model.

A They could have. They could very well have, as it developed. Tom Hibbard said when he saw it, he said, "For Christ's sake, it's the same damn car." He said, "Why did we go to all this trouble for?"

Q You said earlier that you thought it was Ernie Breech's input that...

A Oh well, sure, he ran the committee, the policy committee, and Bugas and all the rest of them. Christ, they were all beholden to him. They're not going to say, "Gee, let's take Gregorie's car." No, that--man, that would have been impossible. I realized that. I realized that. I told Mr. Ford that. I said, "My goodness, there's no way this thing will work." I said, "You've got a man here that's running--you've given Mr. Breech full powers in all departments, and I know that he's not going to favor me, not when he's got his own men in here." So, I said, "It's ridiculous," I said, "Gee whiz, I'm just wasting my time, and the only thing I'd be is an obstruction here." I said, "If it's all right with you, I'd just as soon go traveling," which I did.

Q Well, then, you came back to Florida to your first love--boats? Have you done much with sailing craft.

A No, not too much. I've owned a number of them, but most of the boats I've designed were big diesel yachts.

Q Mr. Gregorie, let me ask you some questions that John Najjar set out for me, most of which you've answered, by the way, but let me ask a couple. He said, "Your relationship with Mr. Edsel Ford was a very good one. You had a good rapport, he found in you qualities that he couldn't find from anyone else. You appreciated his sensitivity and taste in design." Were there any other people involved in this relationship? Were you pretty much one on one?

A Do you mean as far as the [design] activity was concerned?

Q Yes.

A Yes. There was no one else involved, I mean, like Joe Galamb used be in on the Ford work. After Joe, well, of course, he and Edsel went about the same time, but then, of course, the post-war, we know about that. During the 'Thirties and 'Forties, no, the whole thing was very simple, we just had a small staff, and Mr. Ford knew most of the boys in there by their first name, and it was all just a very friendly, folksy arrangement.

Q You mentioned that while he had great taste and an eye for a pleasing design, he, himself, did not give you any indication that he had design...

A No, like I mentioned, about many people have suggested or they have read or have written that Mr. Ford had sketches and this, and I'd never seen a sketch that Mr. Ford ever made, and I presume that if he made them, he would have shown them to me at some point.

Q The ones that have survived are mostly juvenile.

A I imagine. I don't know. I've heard that he did sketching at home, and I knew he was interested in art, but I never--I thought many

times, he never brought a sketch to me or never took a pencil in his hand. I'd never seen him describe anything with a pencil, but I knew he was intensely interested in artwork in every form. He was an excellent critic. A man doesn't have to be a designer, as such, to point out something and say, "Look, the hood line doesn't look right, or I think the window is too wide." He doesn't have to have the ability to take a pencil like I have. But, I can well understand working with a man like Mr. Ford, he knew when something looked right, see? And, I used to tell people, "He doesn't have to design the car, as such, per se, working with him, if it looks right to him, I have a feeling it looks right to me. And, if he thought it looks right to me, unless there was conspicuously wrong, why, it was all right with him."

Q He was a good editor?

A That's right, that's right, that's right. By the same token, I would rarely ever suggest anything to him. Many people have asked me why I didn't, to do something radical, and I have a feeling that he'd be offended if I suggested that sort of thing to him.

Q You indicated earlier he was basically conservative.

A Oh, iron-clad conservative. I mean, you just couldn't--he wouldn't give at any time at all. That's the reason he didn't care for John Tjaarda, and he didn't care for people like Ray Loewy; and I'll never forget Ray Loewy had bought a Continental, and he'd done some things to it. He cut the roof off, and he made a sort of a town car out of it, and he put a big porthole in the back of it, and he came out there one day after lunch, and he had a chauffeur dressed up in Fifth Avenue style with the leather boots and a pink uniform on--pink in a big sort of a French

style high hat, and Mr. Ford came out the side door of my office, and he [sniffed] went like that, and Loewy was, you know, all full of perfume. He was a real--as Tom Hibbard used to say, "Woo woo." As they say in Paris, he said, "They would go 'woo woo'!"

Q Would you say Loewy was gay do you think?

A He was reputed to be. Yes. I don't know, but he was that type. He would have passed for that, but a very clever salesman I guess and a very talented--there again, I don't think he ever drew anything up, but he hired smart designers, and he had a good way of putting things over. I know he did a lot of work for Studebaker and cigarette people, you know, and go on down the line. He made a lot of money, I guess. Well, anyway, Edsel Ford took one look at this thing, and he turned around to me, he said, "Bob, I've seen enough, let's go inside." But, he just passed the time of day and so on. I used to wait for him to come out and show him the car, but I couldn't picture him working with a man like that at all, no.

Q Incidentally, you mentioned your Citroen a few minutes ago. Did you know that Andre Citroen visited Henry Ford at the engineering lab about 1928? [1931]

A There's a funny little story about that little car. While I had it in Detroit (1929-1930), I used to park it over in the National Bank garage across Cadillac Square, and I was going up one of the upper ramps there, and the French Citroen company were dealing with Budd, you know, the Budd people engineered that car, and they had a plant in Detroit, and they were in the process of, and were always continuously in the process of dinkering to use American components, you know, transmission parts and

various things they could buy from this country. So, they had two or three French mechanics there, and they had a couple of Citroen cars there--front-wheel drive, you know, they used to build in those days. I went up there, and they saw that little car of mine. "Oh, the little Citroen, the Citroen, look, look, see the Citroen," and I got to know these boys pretty well, you know, and they said, "You no work, you want tune him up, fix him up," so boy, they took that little car, and they tuned it all up nice for me. That was their basic, little car in Paris, you know, in France, and that was kind of a cute arrangement. Oh gee, they loved that little car. First one they'd seen since they left Paris, and they came out to the house one day, and, oh boy, they ground the valves, and they did all kinds of work. They had special metric tools, and you couldn't get metric wrenches in this country in those days, and that was a real tie-in. That was cute, they were cute, little guys, and they had their jumpsuits and their bottles of wine up there, you know, and they had a regular little shop there that had a little bay that they'd rented, you know. Chain and hoist, they could change parts on the car there, and it was kind of handy, but that was a great little car. I drove that back to Long Island again that June, and I took the original fenders off of it, and I put Ford Model A fenders on it. Paid $2.50 apiece for them at a Ford dealer down on West Grand Boulevard. For $10 I bought four fenders, and the running boards were a $1.50 apiece. $15 I put over sheet metal. Yes, I've got pictures of it over here.

Q Mr. Najjar wanted me to ask you few questions. He remembers you fondly, and he said he learned a lot from you in those early days.

A We worked close together, those boys.

Q He said you had a good esprit de corps in the early days.

A Oh, yes. It was necessary!

Q Yes, it was. He mentions that you and Ed Martin would work side by side. As you mentioned earlier, you were a working designer, you weren't one of those who sat in the office...

A Oh, I liked to get out where all the activity was.

Q Work on the boards?

A Yes.

Q And, Mr. Martin had told him that Mr. Ford would visit you right at your drawing board. He'd come up and take a look and say, "I like that," and "I don't like that."

A Yes. Lots of times, you know, as I mentioned, Edsel Ford liked things that came to mind and were drawn up just off the cuff, so to speak. He didn't care for formality. He wasn't interested in fancy drawings.

Q That's interesting.

A And, he was really charmed when I could just take like an old blueprint and sketch up a hood ornament, you know, real quick like--cartoon fashion, and he loved that. He'd always accept something that was done quick like that. He didn't care anything about fancy airbrushed pictures. He might say, "Oh, how about make this a little longer. Make this a little thicker in here." Something like that, see? That's how we'd arrive at a design.

Q Would you ever consciously say, "No, Mr. Ford, we shouldn't do it that way?"

A Well, yes, if I felt that the proportions weren't good, sure. I'd

make a little sketch of it, make it a little overlay so it's bigger, and he'd usually agree that it was nice, or many instances, his suggestion's good.

Q That's good.

A That's the way it was, and he, for instance, may look at the belt-line on a car, you know, whether there was room for opinion as to proportion of door openings or window openings or maybe a roof line, and he might look at it and say, "Would it do any harm to round that a little more," or something like that, see, and that's the say it worked.

Q That's really the best way to work.

A Yes. There was no knockdown, dragout arguments. It had all been one-sided anyway, I mean, he was bossman.

Q But, all very gentlemanly.

A Oh yes, no problems at all.

Q That's good. John remembers you had a great crew there.

A We did, we sure did.

Q He gave me some of the names, which you will remember very well--he said, "The design department was located at the south end of the engineering laboratory. No smoking and chapel music was piped in every morning for fifteen minutes."

A Well, that was, not exactly. We happened to be next door to Old Man Ford's dance [area]--he had an old fashioned dance group, you know, with the old music and bouncing Ben Lovett.

Q That was in the engineering laboratory.

A In the engineering lab, and it was just partitioned off with a glass wood partition from my department, see, so, they'd play hymn music

or they'd play Gypsy music and all that, like this Hungarian Gypsy music, you know, and he...

Q The cymbalon?

A Cymbalon. Yes, he had a Gypsy string orchestra, you know, and he hired them. He had five or six of them, and they stayed right there all the time.

Q And, they were always playing.

A That's right. Every afternoon, why they'd have that band music, and every now and then, remember--who's the old guy that had the gong, you know, and they struck out?

Q Major Bowes?

A Major Bowes. Every now and then one of the boys would hit a piece of metal and bong!

Q Take 'em away?

A Yeah.

Q Well, he mentions some of your group; I'm sure you'll remember Walter Kruke?

A Oh sure.

Q Who did interiors.

A We were good buddies. When I was single up there, Walt and I we went out on the town two/three nights a week. That was the time we'd go off on a boat weekends. I'd kept the boat up there, and we'd--Walt died about, gee, 25 years ago, I guess.

Q That long? He mentioned John Walters who did your instrument...

A That's right--instrument panels, yes. They were a great group of boys.

Q Were they? He mentioned Bruno Kolt?

A Bruno, Bruno, he was German. Bruno, when the war came on, Bruno had--his name Kolarsky, or something originally, he came into this country through Canada, and, immediately, when war was declared with Germany, you know, '41, one of those, he wanted to go right back to Germany. He had family interests and whatnot there in Berlin, and I talked him out of it. I said, "Gee, you've got a safe berth here for the war, and think twice about that." So, he finally decided to stay. I got him to stay, and we could only use him on unclassified work, but Bruno was good. He was a very, very intelligent gent.

Q He worked in sheet metal?

A Just general design. He usually--more or less ornamental work. He designed lamp shades at one time. For a lamp shade manufacturerer, and that brings up a funny little incident. Tom Hibbard went out to interview a prospective illustrator in the lobby one day, and Tom, we were looking for an illustrator, and I said, "What kind of work does he do, Tom?" He said, "You know I'll tell you, he had the most beautiful ice cream cones," he said, "I can almost taste them." He said, "And beautiful hamburgers and chops." He was an advertising illustrator, you know, and he'd drawn up all these goodies. Tom had the funniest sense of humor, you know, he said, "Gee, I could smell the hamburger. It was so good."

Q But, he didn't hire him?

A No. He wouldn't have been suitable for our needs.

Q That's marvelous. We've talked about Willys Wagner (Bill Wagner), he worked on...?

A Taillight Bill.

Q Taillight Bill. Ed Martin, of course...

A Oh, Ed worked on a little bit of everything.

Q Yeah, he was [in] planning...

A Yeah, Ed was a good draftsman, and he kept track of shop activities and made up production charts and things of that kind.

Q And, we've mentioned Martin Rigitko.

A Well, Martin was the head draftsman. He was...

Q A very good one?

A A big Austrian. He'd been with Willoughby Custom Body Company, Utica, New York, for years, you know.

Q Oh, had he?

A Body draftsman for Willoughby in Utica.

Q Did you know Herman Brunn, Jr., by the way?

A Yes.

Q He's still very much alive.

A Brunn--I hired young Brunn from Buffalo. His family built Brunn Custom bodies.

Q Did you?

A Worked for me for me at Dearborn for a couple of years. Yes, they folded up, you know, building bodies in Buffalo. He came to Detroit. I got him to come there and work. He was good. He had a speech impediment. Did you ever meet him. He had sort of a--I don't know whether he ever got over it or not, but he was an awful nice chap.

Q He's still very much going strong out near [San Francisco]

A Was he retired?

Q Yes. He's retired. Do you remember Jim Lynch?

A Oh sure. Jim was my old shop boy. Jim could make anything.

Q John remembers that from time to time Jim Lynch and one or two of the men would leave the design department early in the morning and return just before quitting time. He said they would work on boat repair at the Edsel Ford Estate.

A Yeah, yeah. They'd go out to Edsel Ford's place and work on his speed boat out there.

Q On the speed boat.

A Jim was good at that sort of thing, and then there was a head mechanic [Al Esper]--he finally became head of the [Ford] test track, but he was an aircraft mechanic down at the airport there, and he finally had charge of the wind tunnel activity and all the test activity. He went up with me to Marine City one day. I bought a power boat up there--had a great, big, monster engine in it--180 horsepower engine in those days as long as this room. The boat had been stored up there. I bought it up in Marine City, and he went up and got the engine going, and we came down the river with it about 25 knots down to Trenton. It was the only trip I ever took with that great, big, enormous engine in it. I took it out and replaced it with another engine.

Q Dick Beneike.

A Oh, Dick Beneike, yes, he was an old Dutchman, an old German. Old Dick was the first man I had in the department that we got him away from

Briggs. He was a good clay modeler, and when we set the department up, why I finagled [for him] to come over from there. He'd worked for me on the front end of that Zephyr, you know, on the first Lincoln-Zephyr when I was over at Briggs for Mr. Ford, and Dick had done plaster modeling in Germany in cathedrals--all the angels, you know, and all the doves flying around and all that stuff. He was a wonderful plaster modeler, and he was head of modeling activity there.

Q A good man?

A Oh yes. His reference to Beneike--he and Beneike and the draftsman Rigitko--they both spoke very broken English, and Beneike would say, "That God damn Hungarian, that Hunkie there," and then they were both older men, you know, and oh boy, they'd get to going, you know, and their hands, arguing with each other about a dimension or some damn thing. I had to break it up, see? Gosh, they were old enough to be my daddy. Old Joe Galamb would come in, and Joe would come in and he'd say, "That sheen, you know, that sheen." Old Beneike would say, "Look at that damn Hungarian. He can't say shine, he says sheen." He can't say shine he has to say sheen!

Q That's marvelous. John mentioned that the innovations that you came up with--the bridge to facilitate clay modeling which he also mentions that you came up with a tower.

A Yes, yes.

Q A ten to twelve foot platform to...

A That's right, that's right. An observation from the top to get body shapes worked out.

Q That was a marvelous invention.

A Yes.

Q Now, was that what you also picked up from boat design?

A It was an observation stand so we could check a car from the top instead of looking out--of second story windows to see if it looked good from above.

Q That's great. What about Frank Francis?

A He was a Polish boy, and he had an unpronounceable Polish name--I forget what it was--and he was going to have his name changed. Walt Kruke was a kind of a court jester. Walt Kruke was always practical joking somebody, and Walt would make up a list of old Throckmorton and some fancy style names, you know, and he'd present them to Francis, and Francis was a serious boy, you know, and he took these very seriously. He'd bring the list to me to see of I approved of any of those names. He wanted to change his name from whatever this Polish name was, I've forgotten. It was one of those ski, ski, ski things, you know. Finally we went to a couple of weeks on this thing. I said, "Hell, Francis, why the hell don't you call you Frank Francis. Call your name Francis. Double Francis, see double FF." He said, "That's what I'm going to do. Mr. Gregorie, thank you very much." So, I named him Francis, see. He said, "Mr. Kruke, he confuses me so." He said, "Some of those names are very nice," he said, "but I think he's making fun of me." He was there at that meeting last time Evie and I went up there. He handled office records and that sort of thing you know. He was real skinny, now he's got big jowls, and he's kind of filled out. There was a lot of kidding around in there, you know, we were always kidding each other.

Q Ed Martin, as you know, did a piece on the birth of the Continental some years ago.

A On the birth of it? I think he did in one of the papers. I think it was in that Old Cars thing. I think I have a copy of it. Do you have a copy of it there?

Q I have his original copy, but it's pretty much the way you've said it. He says, "I remember the day the car came over from the Lincoln plant. It was quite an event in the styling department. The car was painted yellow, and had special hubcaps." He said, "It was a beauty."

A Yellow, no. That wasn't the one.

Q That wasn't the one?

A I had a yellow Continental.

Q Was that it?

A Yes. The number two car was yellow--the one of mine.

Q You think he's talking about number two car?

A Yes.

Q What do you think about today's design? Are you happy with it?

A I think some of these small cars are very cleverly done. I think especially the Chryslers have done a real nice job on their cars. They're neat and nicely tailored, and some of these so-called enthusiasts' cars, these humped-up things in the rear, you know, and all shovel-nosed, I think some of them are terrible looking. But, they're not my taste at all. I couldn't get any. I realize people...we have a class of people today--these young "yuppies"--that's their type of car, and their tastes run that way, but I can't get watery mouthed over any of those cars really. I mean, they come from a different era. I think some

of those little cars are quite smart. Some of that Ford--one of those new Ford models is quite nice except I think the front grille is too pinched. They've rounded the corners off. I think the profile is quite nice, but the little grille...

Q On the Thunderbird?

A Yes, it's too pinched. It's pinched.

Q It is.

A It looks like, you know.

Q Along that line, what do you think about the aerodynamic trend today?

A Well, let's face it, outside of some of those specialized cars like those Chevy Corvettes and some of those very extreme sportscars, why these cars aren't aerodynamic, in any sense. They just knocked the corners off on them. As a matter of fact, the old cars of the Thirties had much more roundness to them. And, unless you drive your car 80 and 90 miles an hour, that so-called streamlining doesn't mean a thing. About all they've done possibly is reduce the wind noise. We used to experiment with--drip mouldings and so on. You take it, you go [sound], and you take any sharp, any sharp object like that, the end of the drip moulding or the rear window, they all set up noises, see? So, what they've done on some of these, they flushed the windows up, and they've taken the drip mouldings off, because all the water you get when you open the door, but the hell with that. They don't mind that. Actually, the so-called streamlining is just like any other sales gimmick. It's a farce. It don't mean a thing.

Q Along that line, if you were to be the arbiter of today's design, what would you advocate? What direction would you go?

A Well, I think what we have today, we have two extremes of design today. We have pure utility, which you run into in these high-rise cars--Ford has one, Chevy has one--Jeep, closed in Jeep, what do they call these damn things? Front-wheel drive.

Q The Broncos?

A The Bronco, all right, we have that class of car which I think is going to become increasingly popular. More of a utility car. I expect to see the family sedan be a thing of the past as we know it today--the four-door sedan. We're going to have these little, snub-nosed vans, which I drew up fifteen years ago. I'll show you some picture of them. I could see that trend coming--long after I left there, of course. We're going to have those. Very popular for average suburban driving, and we're going to have these super sport things, these shovel-nose things with the high ass end, you know....

Q With the wedge front?

A Yes, for the heavy-footed Yuppies, and the commer uppers socially, you know. That's all, just the utility cars and the racers.

Q I think you're right.

A The station wagon, I think, is going to be a thing of the past.

Q The van is taking over.

A The van is taking over, yes. We've driven vans for 20 years. An ordinary car wouldn't have been of any use to us, no way. No, that's taken over, and I mean they put more square feet of usage on the road.

Q I want to talk about that in a minute. John Najjar wanted me to ask you, and I would have asked you this, too, do you think the Lincoln Continental is an example of your best, pretty much your best design? In retrospect, it seems to be.

A Yes, I guess it's the thing I'm better known for. Not that--it's just a very small part of our work. I mean, when you think of the trucks and the buses and the thousands of other vehicles.

Q The school bus, yes.

A Yes, we designed buses. Well, all the early--even the old tractors, the old Ferguson tractors we designed. But, it was more spectacular, and it was more of a deviation from conventional design, let's put it that way, for anything that ever went production.

Q Well, looking back on that, it was just another design...

A Yes, it was just a special-built car for Mr. Ford.

Q Of which you had done several of?

A Oh yes. Plenty of them. But, as it developed, it became very popular, and I guess it'll go down as one of my better-known activities.

Q It'll be a Gregorie car.

A I mean, I never prized it as a beautiful piece of work. I always thought that first one was kind of a razor-back, hungry-looking razor-back, but I liked the second version of it a little better with the heavier fenders, see, to my own taste.

Q Right, which was the '40/'41?

A Yes. I liked the grille on the ['41]--'42--just before the war, yes. The last grille [1946-48] I didn't care much for. It got away from us. It was a rush, rush, rush job, and I know we had diecast

problems, and we just pushed it through.

Q You're talking about the '42? [1946]

A '42, yes. [1946]

Q The '40/'41 was really gorgeous.

A Yes, but the post-war one, the '46-'48--I didn't care much for that.

Q Didn't care for that, okay. You liked the '42?

A Yes. I think the little Fords we did, considering most of them were just face-lift jobs in '39, '40, along through there. I mean, we were very limited in what we could do. None of those cars was a straight out--from the ground-up design--the old body section, the body shell went back years, you know. But, it was just a matter of a front end mostly. This little thing here--the wood body convertible.

Q I wanted to ask to you about what turned out to be the first Sportsman. How did that come about?

A Why we had a Model A chassis on the engineering laboratory floor, just for reference. Mr. Ford wanted it there, and when number two [Henry Ford II] came in there, he said, "Aw, what's this thing doing here?" He didn't have any sentiment for anything like that. He said, "I'd like to have a little car to use down at the beach at Southhampton," his summer place down there, and his wife and kids were very young, and he said, "Can you do me up some kind of a little beach wagon, something to use down there, take the kids to the beach?" So, I sketched up this thing, and on that Model A chassis we had, and they built it down in the old airplane [building] which became an experimental body shop down at the airport, and they used the plywood--the [exterior] paneling came from the

glider plane up at Iron Mountain.

Q Oh, the left-over plywood.

A Beautiful, mahogany plywood. So, we built it up, and little khaki top, and Evie and I had it down here in Florida for years. We used to drive it down to Palm Beach.

Q He gave it to you eventually, didn't he?

A He gave it me. Well, that's another story.

Q Tell me that.

A When we finished the car up, and we sent it down East for him. I said, "Mr. Ford, when you get through with this little thing, I'd like to acquire it." Like I'd done with his daddy, you know, see. I'd always come by cars that way. I didn't want to put him on the spot or anything, I said, "You know, anytime you lock the garage or something or burn it up." We used to destroy some of those cars--just crush them up. It so happened that the very day that he sent his driver out there with it to my office, Ernie Breech was there, and there was a group standing around--John Bugas and Ernie Breech, and two or three others, and we all got talking about the car. Ernie Breech said, "I've got to have this, I've got to have this, oh boy, I've got to have this." I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Breech, it's already mine." Oh boy, you know, from that day on...

Q He never forgave you?

A No, no, no, no. I said, [Mr. Breech], I spoke for that [with Mr. Ford] several months ago," and I said, "his driver is just sending it out for me so I can take it home." Well, anyway, that's that story.

Q That's good, yes.

A So, I had it, in Grosse Ile, and when I came down South in '47, why I brought it down, and we used it back and forth. We had it in Daytona, and stored it in the garage in the Summer when we went North with the boat, and we took it down to Palm Beach, and we used it down there. So, finally, it became a problem, you know, keeping it under cover. I had to rent a garage to keep it in. You couldn't leave it outside. Mr. Greiner came to me day, a wealthy guy in Ormond Beach, he and his brother owned the Ohio Springfield Road Roller Company--you know, made steam rollers and all, and he was a collector of antique cars and a couple of Rolls Royces and whatnot. He came over one day dressed in some old khaki clothes. I tried to trade it in Palm Beach with a Ford dealer down there for a regular station wagon, and I told him it had Mr. Ford's little license thing on the steering column. I still have it. I said, "Gee, this thing is worth a hell of a lot of money. It's the only one ever built like this regardless of what it cost, I imagine it cost $50,000 to build it--all hand built. Well, anyway, I sold it to Mr. Greiner for $1500, and he had it all repainted and retrimmed. We drove it over six/seven years, I guess.

Q What's happened to it?

A The last time I heard, it was up in Tennessee somewhere--Marysville, Tennessee. A fellow has it up there, yes. It doesn't look very good. We saw a picture of it--it was in a barn, and there was dust on it.

Q Would you like to get it back?

A I don't know what the hell I'd do with it. It rode rough, and...

Q You're really not a sentimentalist in that regard?

A Well, I am. I'd rather have had that speedster--that other one.

Q The boattail?

A No, the that one that I built out of those airplane parts, you know, but this is a cute little car. I mean, gee, if it was somebody out in the country, you know, and just wanted to go to the village in the morning or get the mail or something like that, it rode rougher than hell. We didn't have a house, living on the boat, and we had to have a place to store it, and it was fragile, you know, you couldn't leave it outside. It had a folding khaki top, and it was too nice a little car just to hack around with. That was the last Model A the Company ever built as such.

Q It says here that you cut out the Model A cowl without making the hood look short. Is that correct?

A Well, the hood panel was new, but we made a one-piece hood--came right back to the windshield with a cowl here. That was all hand built. There was special floor pan, and outside of the fenders, there wasn't much of the standard stuff you could use on it, but the old Model A frame was so light, it was like a couple of bed rails. Like a Model T, you know--just a little channel about three inches deep. We found that when you dropped the tailgate down, and somebody jumped on the tailgate or sat on it, the doors would pop open. Fortunately, we found that out before we turned it over to Henry, and we reinforced the frame.

Q How current was this to the Sportsman that you turned out in the [late 'Forties]?

A Well, that came along right after this.

Q Could you say that this was sort of an inspiration for it?

A I'd say so, yes. The idea of a wood panel to a convertible. Yes, that's right. Yes, we made up the first--we made a hand-made one, and this would have been in '45, in the Winter of '45, say, right around the first of year. We sent it down, and "number two Ford" used it down in wherever he was--Palm Beach or someplace down there. Then, instead of sending it back to Dearborn, I had them take it up to the branch in Jacksonville, and I came down in April, 1946. The wife was staying in Fort Lauderdale for a month or so, and I came down for a vacation, and I picked it up in Jacksonville and drove it back to Fort Lauderdale, and we drove it around down there, and I drove it back up to Dearborn again. They were quite popular--those wood-bodied cars.

Q Oh yes. Marvelous, and quite collectible today.

A Yes, we have a dentist friend, he writes to us from up in North Carolina, and he started a club--"Woodies," they call them, and he writes back and forth, sends us pictures of his cars.

Q Right, very enthusiastic. You also did one for Mercury, too?

A Yes, they were interchangeable bodies. They were quite popular. There again, they were fragile, I mean, you couldn't leave them out in all the weather. You had to keep them varnished.

Q Were you thinking in the post-war era of coming up with a new Continental?

A Yes. It was just a lukewarm interest. This would have been in 1946--'45 and '46, when we were developing the post-war Lincoln. The Continental didn't command much enthusiasm on the part of the Company, I mean, there again, they thought it was just a frivolous thing, you know, and they didn't make any money on the previous one. As a matter of fact,

the whole idea was kicked overboard completely. What they did, they took a version of the great, big Lincoln Cosmopolitan. They called it a Continental, you know. They put some extra trim on it or something, and I left about that time. I've just forgotten what the outcome was, but they called one version of that the convertible--I guess they called the convertible car the Continental, that was it.

Q But, the old spirit wasn't there?

A No, no. It was a different thing. That held out until Bill Ford was supposed to have designed that great, big monster--that $10,000 job about 1955.

Q The Mark, the so-called Mark II?

A Yes, that didn't go over too well, apparently. That was about the end of the Continental. Then, they did come along with some quite nice ones after that. I guess it was about '72--had a real nice looking car, a Continental again.

Q Well, they started the Mark III again in '68.

A This one had a kind of little, fine grille. A real neat looking car. After that it just got to be a big ponderous tub again. Nice, delicate detail on it.

Q Here's your steering wheel design that came out.

A Yes, that's it, that's right.

Q The one with the two spokes.

A Yes, that was the first version of it, I guess.

Q Well, you'll have generations of drivers blessing you for that innovation.

A Oh, of course, right after that, why, all sorts of versions of it

came out. Some simple, and then it became more detailed and all that kind of thing. Well, here, you see, this is the first Mercury, and Mr. Ford wanted a "Ford-looking car." This was supposed to be part of the Ford package.

Q He didn't want a new one?

A He didn't want a new one. You couldn't talk him into anything that deviated very far from it, and I went through the--I was going to do up something entirely different. No way! No way! He wanted the Ford look. This was going to enhance the Ford line, see? That was to be a Ford family of cars, and you couldn't sway him, and I almost got my nose punched by him clenching his fists. Those were the only cross words I ever had with Mr. Ford.

Q You mentioned the various hubcaps that you had [with the Mercury].

A These were some that we had ready when Mr. Ford came back from the New York Auto Show on the train that morning. All the boys in the office, you know, I told them about this little set to, they knew, of course, when Mr. Ford came in and we had that little discussion I had with him about the Mercury name, and they said, "Well, we wish you luck." So, when I came back from New York, you know, I told them about what took place, and I said, "He's due to be in here right after lunch. Let's get the display ready." We already had the hubcaps, you know, the samples we made up, and I said, "Get 'em set up on a rack here."

Q Well, that was probably most effective way of doing it, because then he could see it rather than having...

A Well, we didn't thrust them at him until--I knew he was going to get this flak when he went down to the automobile show, because the sales manager had called me up, and they told me that they were going to go after him, you know.

Q So, he was pretty much half-way converted when he came back.

A Oh yes, I said, "I'm glad you've taken care of it for me." I said, "I've already been burnt." I said, "We've got the stuff there." I was entirely in sympathy with him [sales manager], you know, and I'd had several calls, I don't know what we're going to do. After all, the man runs the Company, it's his, and you can't tell him to do this and tell him to do that. He'll have to learn the hard way. I said, "We're up against the fact that the car sounds like a Ford, and we know that the competitive trade is telling 'em to get down on your knees and look under and see if it isn't a Ford underneath, see, the radius rods." Turn it up, the muffler sounds the same, the engine sounds the same, looks the same. I said, "Gosh, let's get some differences." At least, get the name off the glass. The sales managers of the different branches around the country would call me up, see, and they had the same idea that I had. My God, you raise the hood, and it's on the battery, and it's--the public will think, "Hell, it's just a Ford, and they want 200 bucks more for it." Big deal, 200 bucks.

Q A different grille and a little sheet metal.

A You say $200 now, my God, they want $600/$700 for the damn air cooler/air conditioner in it!

Q Some of the men that John Najjar mentioned who were your apprentices or interns, as it were, you mentioned Bud Adams who still is very

much alive and lives in Arizona.

A He does?

Q Yes.

A He's the boy that worked with me on the little, clay model of the...

Q So you mentioned. Of which?

A Of the Continental.

Q Continental, right. He did the clay model for you?

A Yes. We both worked on it right together there, and he was a nice lad.

Q He has sent me some tapes that he's done, and I'm going to talk with him further on that. Benny Barbera--what was his particular forte, do you remember?

A Oh, he was one of the clay modelers there. We had a group of maybe seven or eight clay modelers.

Q He's still going strong [at Ford design staff].

A We had a couple of Italian boys there--I'm trying to think of the name--real Italianos! You probably mentioned the names--I've just forget.

Q Frank Beyer. Do you remember Frank Beyer?

A Yes.

Q What did he do?

A Gosh...

Q One of the workers?

A I'll tell you, they all pinch-hitted in so many different activities. Some of them did carpenter work, some did little sheet metal work. They mixed up all the way around. There were only a few real specialists that we had.

Q You've talked about Frank Francis, and, of course, John Najjar.

A Frank Francis, I named him.

Q Do you remember Emmet O'Rear?

A Oh, sure.

Q What was Emmet doing?

A Emmet was a draftsman, a detail draftsman. Emmet O'Rump we used to call him!

Q That's marvelous.

A I named him that.

Q Then, of course, Bob Thomas.

A Oh yes. But he always worked on truck designs. He more or less specialized on that.

Q Then there was...you mentioned Ross Cousins, who was an...

A An illustrator, yes.

Q And, somebody you haven't mentioned, Tucker Madawick.

A Oh yes. He was a nice boy too. He was one of the modelers.

Q Was he?

A Yes, he tried to come to our meeting there, you know, he wasn't able to get away from whatever he did there. He and Duncan...

Q Duncan Macrae?

A Yes, they came as a group from the Ford Trade School. He's probably 75. God, it just doesn't seem possible. Those boys were 18/19 years old when they came to work for me. I was only in my 'Twenties. (Mrs. Gregorie speaking here): Did you tell Dave, it's just kind of interesting, that when we went up there, we asked to be met.

A Oh yes, they met us at the airport.

(Mrs. Gregorie): Well, you know, of course, we were just expecting a driver to meet us with a car.

Q This is when you were being inducted into the AACA emeritus membership--honorary membership.

A No, no, they just had this Greenfield Village celebration. They had a parade.

Q Man of the year?

A That's right, so they had two, they usually have two, and the then president of Ford Motor Company of Canada. He was there, and he was honored on Saturday or Sunday, and I was honored on Saturday and so on an so forth.

(Mrs. Gregorie): What I wanted to say was, though, but instead of just sending anybody to meet us, they sent Bob Thomas and Duncan Macrae. They were right there at the plane when we got off. That was a thrill for Bob.

Q It must have been.

A I hadn't seen them in twenty-eight years.

Q The gentleman who wrote the Edsel Marketeer in 1958 has a ...

A Oh yeah, Lass.

Q Yes, Lass, Bill Lass.

A That's a story in itself. They sent him down. We were laying at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, with the boat, and they sent him down there, and it turned into a three-day party. He was a hell of a swell guy doing a story for the Edsel introduction, etc.

Q Well, he had a marvelous quote from you, or a marvelous anecdote from you, he says, "In the styling department, Bob Gregorie kept a number

of old prototype cars for reference, and they stood in a dark corner covered with dust sheets, and in moments when business affairs grew too oppressive, Edsel Ford would appear in the studio, climb into one of his sheeted cars and beckon into his lieutenant, Bob Gregorie."

A He was hiding from the old man.

Q And he said, "There he would sit, [you recall], in the cool shade and meditate and talk to you, and Mr. Ford just seemed to relax."

A It was just a kind of a nice subdued light, and old white dust sheets they used to put over them, you know. It was cool in there, and when he didn't want to be disturbed, he'd just climb in there, and we'd sit in there and talk about cars and various things, and we could see out, but nobody could see in. There was nice, big, soft seats. He said, "Gees, I wish I could sit here all afternoon. It's so comfortable and nice." Poor man, my God, I'm telling you. He'd just like to go back in there, and he'd spend a half hour or an hour, you know, and rest himself.

Q Did you have much to do with Larry Sheldrick, then, in the business. Did you work with him at all?

A Oh, I worked with Sheldrick, sure. We had to cooperate. Sheldrick was chassis engineer, you know, engine engineer and so on.

Q Was he good to work with?

A No.

Q No, he wasn't?

A He was a peppery little bugger. Did you ever meet him?

Q No, no.

A He was a good engineer. He'd come up, you know, through Model A days and so on, but he was, like most small men, he was very assertive

and...

Q Aggressive?

A Oh yes. He was hard boiled, and he made it tough, and there again I was considered an upstart, and he just couldn't realize that Mr. Ford had trusted me to design a chassis and a suspension system, see, inasmuch as my work had been primarily art work, and...

Q You were always considered an artist.

A Yes, I said, "Hell, I'm no artist, I've worked on diesel engines aboard boats and crawled under cars all my life." I've never allowed the arty aspect to come into the department. I said, "I run this like I would a shipyard or a boatyard. I don't want any of the affectations of art work." I said, "This is a design department, and it's a business, and you're going to have to get your hands dirty." I had to mix it occasionally with these chassis people, you know, to get what we wanted. He'd say, you can't do this, and you can't do that. I said, "Look, I'll show you how to do it. I'll show you how do it. See, it doesn't work, see?" About clearances and things like that, see? I said, "I know it'll work." I finally got my way, of course, and once I showed Mr. Ford, and he liked it, why, we ran over him like a steamroller, see, and oh boy, they disliked me. I mean I made it embarrassing for them. On the other hand, certain of them, like Farkas, Gene Farkas, who was an engine designer, and Gene and I were--we could see--Gene would always want me to come into the dynamometer room and look at the engines he designed, listen to them, and ask me what I thought, see? I knew all about bore and stroke, and I knew about bearings and lubrication systems and cooling systems. I'd fussed around--Dad and I with his foreign cars ever since I was a tiny

kid, and I'd point out certain things, and he appreciated it, and when I ran into a problem, I'd get ahold of Gene, and we'd work together on it. He appreciated the fact that I worked up that suspension. Now, Sheldrick, on the other hand, he said, "Don't let Mr. Ford get in that thing and kill himself." He said, "It might be dangerous to drive." I said, "Hell, I've driven that thing over sides of hills and up over all kinds of damned obstructions and put thousands of miles on it on the test track myself, and there it is." We put it back on the big surface plate and checked it up, and everything has just checked right out like it come off a production line. I said, "That thing was built on a surface plate, and we have the dimensions and fits." So, all we did was to scale it, and they drew it up for production in England, see? It didn't go through Sheldrick's hands at all.

Q Good. Which one was that?

A That's the special-built chassis.

Q One more question I'd like to explore briefly. We have these marvelous photographs and designs and sketches that you had done during the war. This marvelous anticipation for postwar models. Can you elaborate on that operation. Was it pretty much your idea?

A Yes, to illustrate those. That's the reason I got [Ross] Cousins in there to do those illustrations. We drew up large sheets of, you know, showing various body types. More or less like an advertising handout, and I felt, gee, all the designers usually could do--the designers from Briggs and all these people--they'd made these stilted--most of those boys couldn't draw a perspective, you know. They drew nice side views, but they couldn't draw perspectives. But, Ross, he could draw, you

know, [he was an] advertising, illustrator. So, I'd just take a design some of the boys had or I'd draw some at home over a weekend or something and take it in and ask Ross to blow it up into an illustration, see?

Q But then you produced these marvelous clays of which were done during the war in anticipation of the postwar market.

A That's right.

Q And many of the ideas and designs that you came up were incorporated in some of the [postwar models].

A Yes, well it's like they might pick a grille or a door handle or a _____ shape, you know. They weren't necessarily intended as a complete design. They were just studies--composite studies.

Q Right. And they've also come up with some of your sketches which show that you were contemplating, or at least thinking about, a convertible Lincoln.

A Yeah. Well, that was the Cosmopolitan. The convertible version of the Cosmopolitan was to be a fancier version of what was to be the Continental. We even built some chassis in the department. I designed it with a vertical engine and front-wheel drive, and we built the whole mockup of wood, you know, showing the universal joints and the engine and the whole damn thing. We whittled it all out of wood.

Q That's marvelous.

A And, of course, that aggravated the chassis people, and I guess it would have aggravated us just as well if they started making body shapes. But, I knew that Mr. Ford was interested in mechanical innovations of various kinds, and, we didn't attempt to go over anyone's head, and we thought we might as well see what we could do. As a matter of fact, the

chassis people weren't active at that time at all doing any postwar work. We could do it, but they weren't able to do any development work.

Q So, in a sense you had a little enclave there in the engineering lab that you were able to come up with some rather futuristic designs at the time.

A Yes. We didn't know, of course, whether all of this was to be held for Mr. Ford's consideration. As a matter of fact, some of these things which were done along, say, in '42/'43, they were ready for presentation for Edsel Ford at the time he died, see? That accounts for some of these clay models and so on.

Q So, he never had chance to see many of these?

A No, not some of those.

Q He was too busy with war work?

A Well, not only that, but, he passed out of the picture as of about the first of the year--'43. He was in Florida until along in March, late March, I guess, before he came back, and then he just came in that one day. As a matter of fact, he didn't even see the models. He just sat down in the office and...

Q That's too bad. You didn't have a chance to take him back and show him.

A No, no, he was in bad shape then. He said he was feeling badly, and had to be excused [as] he was going home. That was the last time I saw him.

Q That's too bad. Do you know that Charlie Waterhouse is still alive.

A I don't know.

Q Yes, yes, I've talked to him, yes.

A Charlie came from an old line of body builders, you know. He's a

fine boy.

Q Was he from the Waterhouse Body Company?

A Yes, in Webster, Massachusetts, yes. [He] was the son. He'd done body drafting for them, you know, and we had quite a collection of representative, custom body--Brunn and Regitko from Willoughby and Waterhouse, and they were not hired because they were with other companies. I got them fresh from the roost. They were all--here's that little Ford boattail that I built in '32. We had a little Jew, his name was Rosie, and he was an expert metal beater. He'd beat those fenders out on a big leather bag filled with shot. He'd take that leather panel, and he'd put it on his knee, and he'd stand there, and he'd pound that, pound it. He'd learned that in the old country, God, I don't know, he made great, big pots of some kind of metalwear, and he was a little Jew about that high, and we called him Rosie. Man, he beat, beat, beat, beat, hour after hour, and he'd shape that metal around into the most beautiful shapes by hand.

Q Well, according to this article, the second one that you did is still owned by Mr. Potash.

A Mr. Potash. Yeah, boy he turned out to be a nuisance, that guy. He was so enthused. He was from over here in Deland, and his son found the car. I don't know, it had been in California. They had made a moving picture or something, and he found it in Pensacola, some sailor had bought it and had driven it to Pensacola or some damn thing, and he got ahold of it, and he spread the word around that that was the first Mercury--first Mercury--and he called me up and came over, and he'd written this story in a magazine and was going to write a book about and all that sort of

thing. I said, "My God, that car is not a Mercury. It had nothing to do with Mercury." And he said, "How do you know?" I said, "I know all about that car. I practically lived with it while it was being built. I drew every line on it." So, I don't know where it is now. It was over in Deland the last time I knew.

Q Still in Deland, yeah. He's put a Merc flathead in it, apparently.

A Has he?

Q There's a notation on one of the photographs here that Edsel says, "This form is very good, but wonder if two grilles shouldn't join."

A Oh, that was the little wood model. That was the little model I made for the wind tunnel, yes.

Q And, as the caption says, "It looks like you decided against that."

A I don't remember how that went. This was the version that was finished up, and...

Q But he has Edsel Ford's...

A Oh, this was an early model. This was just an improvised, a little wood quarter size, a little quarter-size model.

Q But he wondered there on the notation that he wondered if the two grilles shouldn't be moved together. I guess you talked him out of it.

A I've just forgotten what the problem was. Maybe we couldn't cool it or something. We didn't get enough air into it. But, this was the final version of it here. We did have some trouble cooling it. It was paneled over the--the whole bottom of it was paneled, and we had a little problem getting rid of the hot air in there. We finally put some louvers in the bottom of it, but....

Q Well, you've had an incredible career. You must have had a lot of

fun.

A God, the research that you've done to dig up all this stuff. I mean, you're running ahead of me as far as memory goes. I had to back off on a side track and take another aim at it. Yeah, this was a cute, little car. This is just on a standard, first Ford V-8 chassis--'32.

Q '32.

A But it was beautiful.

Q Did you hop up the engine at all?

A No. I think Mr. Ford did have a new engine put in it later on--a peppier engine or something, but originally it was just a standard. It would go about 85 miles an hour, 90 miles an hour.

Q That's pretty good in those days.

A Yeah, I drove it 90 miles an hour myself. It was a cute, little car. But, I don't know, this little tight shoebox things, they never appealed to me too much. He liked them, and--wouldn't it be nice to own an automobile company like that and build just what you want like that. Oh, gee. Here was one of his early ones, I guess.

Q Yes. He was one of early hotrodders.

A He was a great gent. I built a--I don't have a picture of it--but I took a Ford two door, all this would have been about a '38, yes, and I blanked out the rear quarter, the rear quarter window, sent it over to the Lincoln plant, and had it filled in and paneled with landau leather like on the custom-built Lincolns, and it was all trimmed with pigskin. It was a beautiful thing, and I had a special paint job put on it at the Lincoln plant. I told him what I had in mind--showed him a little sketch of it. He said, "Well, we have to do those things to find out, don't

we?" He said, "Okay, go ahead. Show it to me when you get through." It must have cost $50,000, but he said, "We have to do those things, don't we?" I said, "Yes." So, he drove it home one night, and he said, "Gee that's nice and quiet, rides nice with all that padding on the roof." Well, we had considered--talked about it for a--just like all these things I was talking about, he always loved the idea of a special-built, custom version of a Ford, see? The basic Ford, but let's do something to it to make it a little different. That came along in that category. So, he allowed me just enough leeway to do that, and then I usually acquired [the prototype].

[Thank you, Mr. Gregorie.]

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