Transcript for

AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE W. WALKER, 1985

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NOTE TO READERS

This PDF-format version of the George W. Walker interview transcript was created from a Word document, created in turn from the transcript available on the *Automobile in American Life and Society* Web site (http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu).

The Automotive Design Oral History Project, Accession 91.1.1673, consists of over 120 interviews with designers and engineers conducted by David Crippen of The Henry Ford during the 1980s. For more information, please contact staff at the Benson Ford Research Center (research.center@thehenryford.org).

Staff of the Benson Ford Research Center
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AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of George W. Walker

Reminiscence from the 1985 Interview with George W. Walker. Automotive Design Oral History, Accession 1673. Benson Ford Research Center. The Henry Ford.

This oral reminiscence is the result of a series of interviews with George W. Walker by David R. Crippen during the month of April, 1985, in Tucson, Arizona. These interviews were held under the auspices of the Edsel B. Ford Design History Center, Archives & Library Collections, and The Edison Institute.

The questioning was primarily in the form of topics suggested to Mr. Walker concerning his career.

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. The page numbers refer to the pages in the transcript.

This is Dave Crippen of the Edison Institute, and we are in Tucson, Arizona, and it is April 15 [1985] and a lovely, sunny day at the Tucson National Country Club where we are talking today with Mr. George W. Walker—a well-known industrial and automotive designer who is in remarkably good shape and fettle after all these years, and we look forward to hearing a career story that probably has no parallel. Mr. Walker will tell his career in industrial design from his earliest influences.

A: Thank you, Dave. I'll try to say as the chips fall. I don't remember things of way, way back—that far—but when I mentioned about what happened in grammar school, whether I did any styling then, you know the kind of styling you do, you draw pictures of Mutt and Jeff, which at that time was very prominent.

Q: That was a popular comic strip.

A: That was one of the things that even Bob Hope, which his brother and I were schoolmates, and Bob was just a little youngster then, and Freddy Hope used to bring him to school with him. I would do this Mutt and Jeff act for them, which I would copy, and I got pretty good at that—just doing that work. But, it just seemed to go further along, and the styling and design that you automatically do because it's like playing a piano, the more you play it the more you accomplish.

That is also—all my life has been the same thing—practice, practice, practice. I never practiced on the violin or piano, but I have on my hands. It's goes through—your creativity goes through one arm [and] out the other, and that's just what it is, and then as I say it's like playing the piano, but that is the story about how you start. But that kept going until I

went down to industrial design school--industrial school in Cleveland, and then I committed myself a little bit more into the drawing stages. It was a good school to learn preliminaries of styling and design. And later on I went to Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, and a pretty good education in drawing and anatomy. Anatomy was very important to my way of thinking. If you didn't have anatomy, you couldn't draw figures; and, of course, figures to me were very simple after I learned to draw. While I was in school there in Los Angeles, Bullocks Company was a very large [department] store, and from there I got a job doing some work on Saturdays for them.

Q: What year was that?

A: 1920. We started—several of my drawings were put into Vogue and Harper's [Bazaar] at that time.

Q: Were these advertising sketches?

A: Yes. And they were—[it would] be a story on how a student can really get along in that kind of business—art business. Well, that was very good because it was my starting point into styling, and then the more I did, the better I became. I guess that's all you can say, and continually practice, practice, practice. So, I got back into Cleveland, Ohio, and I did all the stores there in Cleveland—Halle's, Aymar Yeager's and a whole group of them. I did all the products, and I was an individual and different of a type of a guy than some of the people that were doing that kind of work. I got known very well, and I started—I was quite athletic at the time, and I got a lot of publicity through my work as a stylist, designer, and artist of women's wear.

Q: Forgive me, this is remarkable that had you—what do you attribute

this—your own aggressiveness, your own—you've come far in a short time?

A: It's hard to say just what it is. Automatically, you grow into it. That's how it works, and the more you do the better you become, so I think that's what helped me.

Q: You were freelancing then in Cleveland. You weren't with an agency.

A: No, no, not at that time. First I got a job at Powers House, an advertising agency, and then I stayed there for a short time and went over to Premier Press—a neighbor put in through a lot of press work.

Q: In those days printers did a lot of advertising work.

A: Yes they did, and they were doing the same kind of work as a lot of agencies were doing, and so they had the accounts. They had three big accounts.

Q: This is Premier Press?

A: Premier Press, and they were all in the style program—dresses, coats, and so we—I had a very good in on how to do them, and that was very good. A lot of work. Then they came along, and I thought I was pretty good. I was working for myself. I had a lot of good entrees, and the people that we did the work for wanted to know who was doing the type of work that they were paying for, so I automatically got in to do their work as a consultant and the outside freelance was it, and I had my offices in Carnegie Hall at 14th and Euclid, and it was very well known.

Q: What was the name of the firm?

A: George W. Walker.

Q: I thought you said George W. Walker illustrated, do I recall?

A: Yes. So, I guess that's about the story of how it began, then I'd

done work that I had been doing for sketching, and they were showing it in papers—newspapers—and so we had a lot of good ink, and the Peerless president, Mr. Bohannon [James A.].

Q: Peerless was?

A: Peerless Motor Car Company.

Q: Ah, of course. Where were they located then?

A: Around 93rd and Euclid—93rd and Carnegie I think. It was in Cleveland. So, he wanted to know who was doing this work. It was advertised so well in Cleveland.

Q: Mr. Bohannon was president of Peerless?

A: Yeah, Peerless. And he'd like to know who was doing their work, so somebody told him, and he said, "I'd like to have him do some of our work." At that time Peerless was going downhill so badly, they had no money, and that was in 1928, so, again, I did their work for them. And a lot of it was for free, and then he said, "Well, why don't you go over to Baker-Raulang Company. Now Baker-Raulang was a body company.

Q: They were in Cleveland?

A: Yes. So, I got in with Baker-Raulang Company and stayed there eight months, and Amos Northup was quite a designer for Murray Body Company in Cleveland. [Detroit] Amos Northup—and he was down one day to research some body companies down in Cleveland, so he saw my work, and he said, "You should be up in Detroit. You shouldn't be down here." So, I said, "Well, sometime I'll go up there," and in May—first, I think it was 1929—I took all my drawings under my arm, and I said, "Well, I'm going to try it," and I thought I was pretty hot, but I found out I wasn't, but, anyhow ….

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Q: You went to Detroit?

A: I went to Detroit, then I got to show some of my wares to Harley Earl.

Q: Did you see Earl the first time you contacted [General Motors]?

A: Yup, yup, well, the first one was his right-hand man.

Q: Who was that—[Howard O'Leary]?

A: No. I'll think of it in a minute. John Tjaarda was the second man.

Q: Was he really?

A: Yeah.

Q: He worked for—now he….

A: He was the body man with Harley.

Q: And they were in the what was then just established the Colour and Trim Department.

A: Yeah.

Q: The Art and Colour Department?

A: The Art and Colour.

Q: At General Motors, yes, right.

A: And, they were on the other side of General Motors. They weren't right in the building at that time. So, he said, "Well, we would like to hire you," and so I said, "Well, fine. Now the first of May I'll go to work." Then Joe Graham of Graham-Paige [Motors Corporation] had a nice, little doing one day, and I was drawing and sketching, and I always had a knack for drawing on

tablecloths which probably was very rude, but I did. So, we were drawing one day, and he said, "Say, why don't you go over to our place," he said, "and I'd like to talk to you. You're with G.M.

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now," he said, "but..." I said, "Well, it would be very fine. I think I'd like to." So, I went over there, and Graham Page, and I got on with Graham-Paige

Q: Now, what has happened at G.M.? You weren't too happy there?

A: Well, I felt it was bigger than—too big, too big—and I didn't know whether I was going succeed in a big company like that.

Q: You needed a smaller area?

A: Yeah. So….

Q: Now, where was Graham-Paige?

A: They were around Warren [Avenue, Dearborn], and so I got in with Joe Graham and the Graham boys very well. Knew them very well, and, but each time that I got in with these people, I had a knack of helping—I could get farther ahead, and I did by salesmanship. Maybe you can say that. I tried my best to do it.

Q: Self confidence. What were your duties with Graham-Paige?

A: Styling. The first one I did work with was Amos Northup, the guy that insisted on me coming up there. He was then working with Graham-Paige in that body company—Murray Body Company.

Q: Oh, I see. Murray was Paige's body company.

A: Yes, right at that time, so I helped him on his first Bluestreak [8] car.

Q: The Bluestreak. Graham-Paige's?

A: Yeah, Graham-Paige. Then there was….

Q: Was that about 1929?

A: Right in '29—latter part of '29. And, then, of course, you know the bottom fell out of the world, and I was out of a job, and I said,

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"Well, if I'm going to be out of a job, it's going to be hard for me to get one, so I'm going to take my drawings and see what I can do." So, I rapped at every door—big industry and got on. First of all, I got the Dura Company.

Q: What was that in?

A: Hardware—how-to-build hardware. That gave me a chance to go to say to the companies and help them style hardware.

Q: This would be exterior and interior?

A: Exterior and interior, and at that time there were

Q: Excuse me, what do you mean by hardware?

A: Well, to wind up your window, instead of electric that we're doing to a lot of our cars now, they had a little crank.

Q: Right, I remember it.

A: You had a little turn, but I started out with big, long, thin—same amount of material, but it was just as easy to make it as this small, and it made a very good effect to drive. So, I'll come to another thing on that one in just a minute. So, then I got Dura Company. Then I got four different companies. I'm trying to think of what they were now. A paint company—Jones, Dabney Paint Company. I was to tell the public—tell the automobile people what kind of colors to use. Whether they were good or not, I told them and made them sketches on how to do it.

Q: You said the use of multiple colors are just coming into vogue about this time.

A: That's right. Black was a great color for it, and we were trying to get everybody away from black. We didn't do it, of course, you know that General Motors were the first to really take a small car like

Chevrolet and tell the public that they could have any color they want, but not like Ford. He said, "You can have any color you want so long as it's black." So that kind of helped us along quite a bit.

Q: Do you think that was Mr. Earl's influence on that?

A: Well, a lot of it must have been. That's so, sure. There's no doubt about it, because the Fisher Brothers, which I became very, very well acquainted with for years after that. Yes, they, in turn, had a lot of faith in Harley, because he was a great salesman, great guy. He was just an Adonis type of guy. Seven foot, maybe, and knew all the good- looking women from the people in town. Very popular. So, Harley Earl's name is pretty good.

Q: Also very contentious, I think.

A: Yes, he was. And, so that I started meeting people around Detroit, and the right kind of people.

Q: Well, you had the automobile hardware and the paint—and the automobile paint company accounts to do.

A: Yes, and then I had—Cleveland I had a company that made the shock absorbers.

Q: Oh, yes. Not Houdaille?

A: No, not Houdaille—it just slips my mind.

Q: That's all right. That was a long time ago.

A: Well, anyhow, yeah, a long time ago. But, they started going out of business then, and it seems funny that every time I was with somebody, they'd be going out of business. But, it wasn't so. It was just a matter of timing and the time of the—because I look back to that very well to see that….

Q: This is where you were getting your groundwork, really, so to speak.

A: Yes, yes. I met, I met—each time I met somebody—all the engineers—top engineers at that time. And, engineers had a feeling that stylists were crawling in on their work, so we weren't too popular with them, and it got to the point where—I got inside of them, but the other designers didn't, and talked their language and talked styling, talked football—talked baseball—everything. The kind of thing that they would like to hear, but not a sissy type of a thing. So….

Q: I guess you had had, earlier on, some athletic experience playing football.

A: Yes I did. I was all-state in high school ball, and then years ago after that I got in with Canton for Jim Thrope.

Q: That's what I read, yes. You were playing with the Goodyear semi-pro….

A: Yeah, that was out in California. Out there, I played with Goodyear. Then I got in with Canton down in Canton.

Q: Oh, the Canton Bulldogs.

A: Canton Bulldogs, and so I had a few games there, but got to know people, and I got a lot of—and they featured me to a certain extent because it was different. They said, "Here is a designer

playing football." And, of course, I was afraid of hurting my hands, but I did it. And, again, back again with the….

Q: You were working with the body engineers.

A: Yes, body engineers. I did a lot of work for Ford, not as their Ford company but as the suppliers.

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Q: Really?

A: Yes. For the—and been the hardware company which Dura Company were—and I went to Joe Galamb. He was then the chief engineer for Ford. Do you remember him?

Q: We have his memoirs.

A: Ah huh. And Joe said, "What do you do?" And, I said, "Well, I show the hardware to the management, to you, and this is my type of hardware." He said, "Oh, that's too thin. Mr. Ford would never like that." I said, "Well, I want to show it." He said, "Well, we can't—I'm supposed to tell—the best thing he wants to see." Well, I said, "Please let me." He said, "Put it on this table." It was a fortunate time when [I was allowed to show my hardware]. So, on this table, I said, "No, I'll put a black cloth over this." He said, "Oh, you can't do that. Mr. Ford doesn't like that." I said, "Well, Mr. Ford isn't doing this, I am." And, he said, "Well, you shouldn't have an attitude like that. You don't know Mr. Ford." I said, "No, I don't care, either." That's the way I did everything. Everything I was doing, I wasn't really showing off. It was just I wasn't going to let anybody step on me at any time that didn't know my business. I knew what I was doing. So….

Q: Joe was kind of a cantankerous fellow, wasn't he?

A: Yes, he was, yes, he was. Later I got to know him very well and was very nice, but….

Q: Was this at the engineering lab?

A: At the engineering lab.

Q: Right, okay, on Oakwood [Blvd.].

A: So, I sneaked. He told me I couldn't be in there when Mr. Ford

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passed by, but he went down all this row of hardware, and he just said, "That's it." He pointed to mine.

Q: That's marvelous.

A: And Joe said afterward, "I can't understand that. He hates that stuff." I said, "Well, he doesn't hate it, because, inherently, he loves it. But he doesn't bring it out because he's too inventive."

Q: What specific quality about your product do you think that attracted him?

A: Well, inherently everybody has style feeling. Even though how tough they could be and how tough they are, they still have it. A guy can wear Gucci shoes and won't acknowledge them, but he wears them because he likes them, and that's the same way that he does everything else. But engineers, at that time, were all blue collar guys and tough, tough.

Q: Yeah, right. Like Joe.

A: Yeah, just like Joe. But I got into them very, very well, and the same thing happened in hardware that—I can't think of the name of the place now. But, anyhow, MacPherson, at that time, was chief engineer.

Q: At G.M.?

A: No, over at….

Q: Earle MacPherson?

A: Yeah, Earle, yeah, and that's when I first met Earle. He said at the same, he said, "You can't go in and make this hardware because," he said, "it would cost too much money." I said, "Well, if everything's on the same level, it isn't too much money is it?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, it's on the same level, and we'll just prove it to you." So,

I was just a salesman, and at Ford with design of this hardware, and I'm trying to get them to take it.

Q: You're still at Dura at this time?

A: Still with Dura.

Q: And, you don't remember the company that MacPherson was with?

A: I'll think about it.

Q: Was it in Detroit?

A: Yes, in Detroit.

Q: Automotive supplier?

A: Yes. No, he was in an automobile company. They made cars.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: Damon Lawrey was the first to design the car for them.

Q: Studebaker?

A: No, it wasn't Studebaker. Oh, isn't that something? Well, anyhow.

Q: Well, it'll come to you.*

A: So, that's when I first met MacPherson.

Q: What kind of a guy was he?

A: Antagonistic. [He] couldn't—didn't like

Q: People telling him what to do?

A: And I was only a consultant then. When I was a consultant for Ford, he came over and took the place of Youngren. Youngren at that time was chief engineer, and, again, the kind of a guy that was against all stylists and designers—very bad, very bad.

Q: That was in the mid-'40's?

A: Yes.

* Editor's Note: Walker may have been referring to Borg-Warner for which Harold Youngren, not MacPherson, was chief of engineering development from 1944 to August, 1946, when he joined Ford as chief engineer.

Q: Well, we're still back in '29.

A: Yeah, I'm getting ahead of myself. But, anyhow, my offices were in the New Center Building.

Q: What were the offices [called]?

A: Industrial Design.

Q: George W. Walker Industrial Design?

A: Industrial Design, and so….

Q: You're right next to G.M., aren't you?

A: We were very close. One of the funny things happened, I was right across from the Fisher Building, and on the top floor of the Fisher Building was the Recess Club, and one of the vendors took me up there for lunch, and I said, "Well, this is certainly fine of you." He said, "Well, it's a great club." He says, "You meet every top man in the industry." And it was. All the G.M. people ate there. No Ford people—very few of them. But, so, I said, "Well, it would be something if I ever joined this. I'd love to." Right across the way. I became president of it in 1929.

Q: Really. That's marvelous.

A: 1939 to '49.

Q: Oh, '49, okay.

A: I became president of it, and so that's where I had a lot of meetings at the time with Harley Earl because he was trying to get people in the Recess Club. They had to go through me at the time. So, we were very closely associated. Then the association, again, just sort of evolved into an action of not trying to do it, not trying to sell but automatically selling. I keep talking about salesmanship in the styling,

but that is it. There are very few people in the styling business realize how important salesmanship is. Well, that's a long story.

Q: That's good. We'll get to your theory on that.

A: So, after all, that was 19….

Q: So, you opened your own firm at the New Center Building in 19….

A: Wait a minute, 1934.

Q: Now, you've been with Dura since '29?

A: Yeah. Then I had Jones Dabney. I had the shock absorber people who made trunks and did all of their work for them. I'll draw you a picture of that. To draw it, I would have to [better explain it].

Q: Oh, that's good. As far as the Depression went, did it affect the—how badly did it affect the suppliers in the industry?

A: Very badly. See, that's why Helen Dryden was a great artist from New York. She was an interiorist, and did a lot of wood interiors, and so Dura was paying her $35,000 a year, and that was a lot of money for Dura Company, and then when the cut down came with everybody being fired, she was thrown out. That's when I went in and said, "I'll do it for $200 a month." I did.

Q: Which was rock bottom.

A: It was rock bottom. So I got twelve companies at $200 a month for one year. But you had to work like the devil to do what you were supposed to do.

Q: I can imagine. A lot of deadlines.

A: Yup, but it started me going.

Q: And that's where you achieved your early reputation?

A: Well, it works out that way. Let's put it that way. So, then one

day I got the Waltham account for watches. They did all Ford watches and clocks.

Q: Of course, clocks were just coming in those days.

A: Yes, and Doumaine was the president of Waltham and a very, very close friend of Henry Ford—the old man. So they were very close friends. But that had nothing to do with me, anyhow. But I used to go down there quite a bit, and they'd always tell me how Mr. Ford would run up those stairs—Mr. Doumaine was about 90, and Mr. Ford was close to it, and these two old men would race up those stairs.

Q: Where was this?

A: In Waltham, Massachusetts.

Q: Okay, the headquarters of the watch company?

A: Yeah. So, we had the Waltham account. I got stuck on that detail work, and I'm not very good in detail, so a young man came to the door at my office in the New Center Building and said he wanted a job, and he showed me his work, and I said, "Well, here's one thing. I have these watches. I want you to take these watches and make a couple clocks on them—for bedside clocks." And he came back next couple days with [work] where the airbrush work is beautiful. That was Ted Ornes, and he then became, later, vice president of International Harvester. So, then the war came along.

Q: You're moving too fast.

A: Ted Ornes had a job at G.M., but he was only getting $75 a month.

Q: What was he doing there?

A: In design. Apprentice design.

Q: Oh yes. Working for Earl.

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A: So, he told me his story, and I said, "Well, I'll hire you for $75." He said, "Fine." He said, "Same amount of money." I said, "No, that's $75 a week," because I thought that would be just the thing to do. Of course, I can make money on that, and I did.

Q: You needed a good detailer?

A: I needed a good detailer. I needed him, he was very good, and that was that. So, from then on a lot of the stuff Ted did helped me. Same as Joe Oros helped me. Elwood Engel helped me. They were all my stars, and I had the right men—to pick the right men that I could just send out and do it.

Q: That's good. Now in the mid-'30's you're doing fairly well. You're picking up these accounts.

A: They're pretty good, yes.

Q: What kind of industrial design accounts did you have?

A: Well, over 3000 products of different types: Bread boxes, chemistry sets, bicycles, roller skates, interiors, and then all interiors, plastics. I did a lot of plastic work. I'll show them when we go outside. All the plastic work we were doing, and then it was just one thing right after another.

Q: Do you remember a particular product that sticks in your memory? Do I remember hearing about the Westclock?

A: Very good.

Q: Baby Ben?

A: Very good. That was ours. That was—Elwood [Engel] implemented that one, and he and I went down to Westclock in Connecticut, and set at the table with all their top guys—their advertising people. Elwood sat

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at one end, and I sat at the other, and all the time we were talking, we were drawing, and Elwood threw it down, and they said, "Oh, how did you do that that Quick?" He said, "Well, that's my

business," and I took the same thing and threw it down there, and I had the same kind of a drawing, and they said, "Well, these are a pair." That's what they said, so we got the account, briefly.

Q: The Westclock?

A: We got the Westclock account. Then we did the New Haven, Connecticut, Clock Company. We had, at that time had to give it up because of the Waltham account because you can't have two….

Q: Conflict of interest?

A: Conflict of interest, but we were very careful. Sometimes we did get our tit in the wringer.

Q: Lines crossed.

A: But, not very often, and then we started doing an awful lot of work during the beginning of the war. The beginning of war came along, and we were a little bit worried.

Q: Before you get into that, if I may pull you back a bit. Give us a sort of a capsulized version of a successful industrial design firm such as yours. The people you brought in—Elwood Engel, Mr. Oros, and others. How did that happen? I mean, how did you find these people?

A: First of all, I'm just trying to think about Joe. Joe Oros was the first one of the three. This was right after Ted Ornes came and took over in my place—Ted Ornes.

Q: Was it about the mid-'30's?

A: Yes, mid-'30's. And then he said he had a friend from Cleveland

that would be a very good man for us to get a hold of. That was Joe Oros. So Joe came over one day, and we hired Joe. At that time we doing some work with—that was the Nash account. Then we had the Nash.

Q: The Nash account.

A: And, the story you probably heard of about Nash.

Q: Please tell me.

A: We went to Milwaukee with a man that had a lot of influence with Mr. Nash, and at that time George Mason just took over Nash. Do you remember?

Q: Yes.

A: And just took over Nash and Kelvinator, and they wanted me to show them the hardware—what we were going to do. So, that's how I got in there, and we rode from Milwaukee down by car down to Chicago. And Mr. Mason said, "George, why don't you ever come over and talk to us about styling?" He said, "I understand you're doing an awful lot of automobile work."

Q: And were you?

A: Not a lot of it, but enough.

Q: But enough to attract attention.

A: Publicity-wise, and I was getting a lot of that. So, I said, "I would like to do that, and I'll prepare a group of drawings and bring them over to you." This was on a hot day, hotter than the devil.

Q: Nash-Kelvinator was….

A: Yeah, they were out in Detroit then. The offices of Nash were implemented right in the Kelvinator building.

Q: Which American Motors still uses.

A: Right, yeah. So, he [Mason] called one day and said, "George, I thought you were coming over here." he said, "We have our board of directors here waiting for you. We would like to see your sketches." I said—I told them before, we had them, but I didn't bring them over. So, some of the silly things that happened in my life—how I ever got by them. Well, I went over to the Fisher Building, grabbed my car and all these drawings and started out over on Grand River, and a parade was going by—Barnum and Bailey. I pulled over to the curb and watched the parade for nearly an hour.

Q: You were at the Nash-Kelvinator building in Detroit where Mason is waiting for you.

A: Yes. I went up in the board room, and they were sitting around there—all the members—and all were perspiring. [Mason] said, "Where have you been because it's been over an hour since we called you." I said, "Well, I'll tell you, I saw a parade, and I like little parades, and I pulled over and watched the parade." And, Mr. Mason went like that [slapped his forehead], and Mr. Nash, he smiled, and he acted like it was amusing to him.

Q: Of course, with a Barnum and Bailey circus parade.

A: Here's a guy that's starving, so to speak. That's the way they put it, and [has] guts enough to tell us how all these men around here that a parade meant more than him and money and the

$75,000 we were paying him—going to pay him. I hadn't had the account yet, and so I got the account.

Q: Mr. Nash was amused?

A: But he turned out to be a very nice gentleman—very good friend of

mine.

Q: This is Charles Nash?

A: Charlie Nash, yeah. I came back from Europe one time, and I ended up with a dress coat on and derby hat and gloves, and got off the plane and happened to be going down Lexington Avenue to the automobile show, and here's this old gentleman walking along and said, "Hello George." I said, "How are you," and I shook hands. He said, "Where you bound for?" He said, "I'm going to the automobile show." He said, "I can't get in yet even though we have an exhibition there." And, I couldn't think of who he was. He knew me. So, we went to the automobile show, and he said, "We can't get in until 10:00," and said, "Sure, we can." I went in and asked for the manager, and I said "I have Mr. Nash with me." He said, "Well, oh yeah, bring him in. He said, "How did you do that?" I said, "Well, that's just ignorance, I think maybe on my part." I said, "I don't like to see a man like you—a gentleman like you with all that industrial power that you have and what you're doing for the company standing outside there on a cold day waiting for you to get in." He said, "You shouldn't do things like that." Well, anyhow.

Q: You presented your sketches to the board. What did they think of them?

A: Fine. They just thought they didn't make any of it, but they didn't have any money. But Wahlburg, this chief engineer, and Wahlburg and I got very close together. So, we got very closely associated, and….

Q: Which seems to have been your technique to find out who the decision makers were and….

A: That's right, and we got to know—we had to start with the lower part of the engineers at first, then we go into the better engineers through a series of ways of doing it like in getting football tickets and inviting their wives to the football games, and the other guys didn't do that. The stylists were afraid—so many of them—there were very few that were like Bill Schmidt. He wasn't afraid of anybody, and there were a few of them like Harley Earl, of course, who had no fear.

Q: He wasn't afraid of anybody.

A: So, I guess I'm talking way ahead of myself here. But I'm getting, you know, more on tape. So many things like that's happened.

Q: So what were you going to do for Nash? What did they ask you to do?

A: Well, first of all, [they] had a hardware problem, and that was down my alley.

Q: Perfect. You still had your contact with Dura?

A: Yes, oh, sure. I had to give Dura up when I took them [Nash], and then I had to give up Jones Dabney Paint Company, when I took them, and I. had to give up Kelsey [Hayes] Wheel Company, and I had instrument panels from Ann Arbor. I had to give up the instrument panel company.

Q: Oh, that was King-Seeley.

A: King-Seeley, and I had to give up Goodyear. At that time, I had B. F. Goodrich in order to take the Nash account, but that's, you know.

Q: You had a complete automotive component family there.

A: Absolutely, for a long, long time. Then I got to know all these top people of [the] suppliers which was a nice thing—with your hand on it and say, "Well, this guy is good, and this guy is [good]," and you're not getting in trouble. You're doing the right thing because you know them,

and they would do anything for you, and that's the way we worked.

Q: You knew the engineers and the purchasing agents in the various companies?

A: Yes, and it seemed like everybody was cemented together. Through our—not just for us—but it just happened to be that way.

Q: A little, mini-conglomerate there of automotive suppliers that you were directing.

A: That's right.

Q: I can see where Nash would have been impressed.

A: They were, and it got to the point where it helped in later years. Everything I did, everything I did, even when I was president of the Recess Club, people were coming to me, calling me on the phone. It was an ego, but I was very popular with all the vendors. The top people would call me and say, "George, we have a friend here that would like "Even Harley [Earl] one day called me and said, "Could you get a fellow into the Recess Club?" He said, "If you don't mind, would you put his name on the top of the list if you can?" And, I said, "What's his name?" He told me, and I

said, "No, Harley, I'll have to talk to you about that guy." He came up one day. It was on a Saturday and bossed all our people around, and he wasn't even a member, and I said, "It would be better not." He said, "I didn't know that." He said, "Tell him to get the hell out of it." I said, "I will," so he did. Then George Storer one day of Storer Broadcasting Company, he was down in Florida. He had a home in Indian Creek, and I was just starting down in Florida. We had gotten acquainted there, and I had joined Indian Creek [Country Club] or was about to join. He was in my office next door, and he came

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in my New Center Building [offices] and said his offices were next door. He'd like to get into the Recess Club, so I said, "Why, definitely, I'll take care of that right away," and I went over at noon and put his name right on top of the list. That's all you had to do. It's just like anything else. So, he said, "If you can do that," he said, "I'll get you in the Indian Creek in Florida which you wanted." That was a very fine club.

Q: Was that Palm Beach?

A: It was in Miami Beach. Then right at that time I became a governor/president of one of the fine clubs down there. So, anyhow, that's how associations began. So, that everything that he did from then on, it concerned me, and I concerned myself with everything he did, so we got both well acquainted, and I got on the air a lot of the times for him. I wouldn't have done if I didn't know somebody like that.

Q: And they got you—gave you a break on advertising?

A: Oh, yeah. So as I say that just seems that everything started out, I got well known. I got well known from every little angle, and there was one guy that when we were trying to get an airport out on 8 Mile Road was a guy by the name of Ernie Breech. Well, I didn't know Ernie Breech—only by name—and he was the opposition, and we tried both of them
trying to get this airport out there, and so we failed to get it out there [8 Mile Road], but he remembered me from that so one time—oh time and again—when he wanted people at the Recess Club he'd come to me and talk about it—how we fought against each other. But Ernie became a very close friend. He was my sponsor at Ford, and he got me again the Ford account. I had the International Harvester account, which was a very big

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account.

Q: Had Mr. Ornes gone to International Harvester then?

A: Not then, he was working for me. Then, that was during the war—ginning of the war—got the International Harvester account. General Barnes in Washington became a very good friend of mine and had me [appointed] head of all the industrial design of the Army [vehicle command].

Q: What was that?

A: I [worked on] many jeeps, worked on turrets on the gun—turrets—and getting moving vans to get them out, and put guns on top of them, and then the half-tracks in the desert. They were laying allover our half- tracks. They'd not gotten enough supplies, so it was our thing to circle all our half-track companies—everything that they did. There again was my supplier [contracts]. I called all the suppliers I could get, all of them together, and I did this for the Army. Then the….

Q: Was the International Harvester involved in that?

A: Well, I was coming to that. Yes they were, and so I got to know the International Harvester people very well.

Q: You'd had their account?

A: And Raymond Loewy did the work. Do you remember Raymond Loewy?

Q: Yes.

A: A very good man—a very good man. He did their new logo for them. That's all he did, but he….

Q: Which one?

A: The IH.

Q: The I and H. They still use it, don't they?

A: Oh yes, and one day at the Pentagon building, he had written a letter and wanted to do their work. And so General Campbell handed me the letter and said, "Here's a friend of yours, probably. Would you like to read the letter? He wants this account." He told me how much money he made which was a lot more than the government was paying me, and read the letter, and I said, "Well..." He said, "You answer it." So, I said, "I'd write." So, Raymond came up, had lunch with Campbell and all of the people….

Q: He came up to Detroit?

A: No—in Washington.

Q: Oh, you had gone to Washington by this time.

A: At the Pentagon.

Q: Now, if you went to Washington to work for the government or for the Army…

A: I was only a consultant.

Q: As a consultant. Okay, so you haven't left your company. That's still intact.

A: No, oh no. That's still intact. So, Raymond was telling he had in his pocket all the things he'd done for International Harvester. Big trucks. He said, "I will do all of this." He talked very Frenchy. He said, "I do all these trucks along with what I'm doing now. Then [General Campbell] said, "Well, fine. Mr. Walker is the man that you have to talk to." Raymond Loewy said, "Well," he said, "I know George very well. I'll talk to him."

Q: Now, Mr. Loewy's career had sort of paralleled yours.

A: Well, as an industrial designer, and he had done that one automo-

tive account that he did while he was on a boat coming back from Europe. He made a sketch just like I used to do—just make sketch after sketch.

Q: And that's how he got it?

A: Yes. So, I just explained to him. He said, "Oh, I'm doing this." I said, "Well, I am." I had, fortunately—a day after, "Me too," I said, "and after I get through with this, I'm going to take their account." He said, "You can't get too excited about that." I said, "All right." But, I had it—I had the contract in my pocket.

Q: He didn't know that?

A: Oh, no. Well, later on he said, "You certainly slipped one over on me." Well, anyhow, that's how the story ends.

Q: That's a good story.

A: So, it is a funny story, and I got to know them very well. But, anyhow, this idea surrounding a tractor truck—where we would have out in the desert all our paraphernalia shot to pieces, and they had to stay there and unless we found a way—we had a regular machine shop that we would put around there. It had half tracks and all the bearings companies and with the pins and everything—gasoline that would implement this tractor—or this half track so it would be back in business again. We did that for General Campbell, and that was publicized quite a bit.

Q: So, you were actually setting up a sophisticated repair facility?

A: That's exactly what it was. It worked out beautifully, and Baltimore locomotive. I got to do things for them because we had used them, see, and we got to know them, and with Goodyear,

we got Eddie Thomas because Eddie Thomas worked with us very closely with the tire companies. So, we had to tell them we couldn't handle it because we had

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Ford then.

Q: You'd gotten Ford then?

A: Well, we'd just gotten Ford.

Q: How did that come about? That's you're first major automobile company?

A: That was because Ernie Breech wanted—one day he came in the office and said, "How would you like to have the Ford account?" And, I said—he had just gone with Ford. He [had] worked in General Motors.

Q: '46?

A: Yeah, '46. So, I said, "I'd like it. I'll show you all of my stuff that I've been doing for Ford for years," but I didn't have the account. One of the things was that Jack Davis wanted me to—before that, and Jack Davis wanted me to make a presentation so he could show it to Mr. Ford.

Q: Jack Davis was the sales manager?

A: Yes, sales manager. So, I made this great, big, heavy folder of all drawings of what I could do for Ford. Way up—way past what they were doing.

Q: And this was to be a presentation for Henry Ford II?

A: Yeah. Plastic—black and white—the part that holds it together—white and black spiral out on the [cover]. This is so important, and so he said, "You sit here in my office, and you look through there and see what's going on because Mr. Ford's going to come in there and see what your work…."

Q: This is Henry Ford II?

A: No, no.

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Q: Oh, this is Henry Ford I.

A: Yeah. I'm getting there. I'm ahead of my story. The old man opened the thing. It fell apart. It was too heavy. It went all on the floor—all my drawings that I paid 1,000 bucks of my money for. He walked on it and walked right out of the room.

Q: Now, what year was this, Mr. Walker?

A: I believe '46. Well, it was before '46, it was, oh yes.

Q: Probably '45.

A: About '44 or '45, yeah. So….

Q: This was for post-war...?

A: Yeah, post-war stuff. Jack Davis had never, never showed anything like it to the old man. He said, "He doesn't like [dys]functional things." So, I learned a lesson. Well, getting back, when young Henry took over, that was in '46, so that's when Breech said, "We want you out here to take a look." He said, "We know you have Nash and International Harvester, and that's unethical to do it," but he said, "don't tell anybody about it. I want for you to do this for Mr. Ford"—young Henry. "So, would you come out and look at this car?" And, I looked at it, and I said, "Gees, that's terrible. You can go broke doing that." And, Henry said, "Well, we're going to put that one out." I said, "Don't do that."

Q: What were you looking at? Were you looking at...?

A: The Mercury—a Mercury that a [Ford] designer at that time….

Q: Bob Gregorie?

A: Gregorie—Bob did, and it was a big, old, heavy thing. It was all out of shape. It looked like the pregnant Buick from years ago.

Q: This is the post-war Mercury?

A: Post-war Mercury, and I didn't know Gregorie had done that. It didn't make any difference. I didn't even know Gregorie. So, I said, "You couldn't put that out." He said, "Could you do any better?" I said, "I could do that better with my eyes closed." Well, he said, "You have got a job?" I said, "Well, no, I haven't," I said, "I got to unload Nash, if they would do it, and I also got International Harvester, and they're two toughies." So, they each paid $75,000 apiece, and that is not for every hour as I said, because I had made much more than that. So, Breech said, "Call me on the phone." That night we were at the Bloomfield Hills Country Club where we used to be, and he said, "Well, did you make up your mind what you want to do?" He said, "That's a great opportunity." He said, "I can't tell you what's going to happen," he said, "but, you can make yourself millions of dollars for coming with us." I said, "Well, fine, I'll do it." I went to Mason, and Mason said, "Well, George, you've done a great job for us, and we're happy with you, but if that's going to benefit you, and it will benefit us, what you do for Ford." So, in the same there with International Harvester. Fowler McCormick said the same thing. He said, "Well, you've

done a great job for us," he said, "we're pleased with you, but we're not going to stop and hold you up. So, you take the Ford account."

Q: So, he let you out of the contract?

A: Both of them, yeah. And, so that was the story on that.

Q: So, you're in 1945?

A: Then the '45's and '46 we took the—to do a job for Ford for the post-war car.

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Q: Now, tell me, if I may, if I can ask you to… It's 1945, and you've had a call from Ernie Breech.

A: Yes, 1945. And, he wanted to know if I could come out and talk to Henry (II). Henry had just taken over the parent company from his grandfather, and I said, "I'd like to. I'd like to meet him." I'd never met Henry, so I went out there right across from the Rotunda, and what was that—the engineering department then? I don't know.

Q: It was the headquarters—the administration building.

A: So, he took me over and showed me the car that was supposed to be for 1949 car. They were in so much trouble. They had to get out of it and get out of it quick. And, they had to have a car that would be hurried to manufacture and to get dies and everything all set in three months time. That was unheard of. So, Henry showed me the car. I said, "Why, that is terrible." I said, "You know…." I was allowed to say it because I wasn't connected with Ford, and I would have, anyhow, and I said, "It just looks like me stooping over an oven, and it's kinda fat." I said, "You can go broke if you put this on the market." And, Breech turned to Henry and said, "Well, how can you take this car and make it a Mercury?" I said, "That's what you should do. Make it a Mercury and not a Ford. It has no bearing with Ford." So he said, "What could you do to make this car a good selling car?" I said, "Well, that's my job. I'll research it to a point, and then I'll do the sketches and all that, but you have to come down with your engineers and look at it every time we call. We won't overdo it." So, they get Meade [Bricker, production chief] to do it. Benson, Henry [II] (not Bill)—Benson, Henry and [Harold, engineering chief] Youngren, and Breech—Bricker.

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Q: Meade Bricker.

A: Meade Bricker, and somebody else. Then Jack Davis [sales chief]—they all came down.

Q: Came down to your studio?

A: They liked our girls in the office. All of them did—pretty girls. So, they kidded about standing out there instead of coming in—so, they looked at our sketches all around the room and said, "This looks good, this looks good, do this, do that. No, not that one. That doesn't look good. Do this one." I said, "We'll do this. A mock-up—mock-up job—a mock-up. Just like that one out there [in his garage]. Quarter size, no, eighth size. Then we'll do it at quarter size and from quarter size, we'll do a full size. If you like it [fine], if you don't like it, we'll have to start allover again." But I said, "My way of thinking [is], don't ever put out that thing you've got out there." I didn't even know that Gregorie did that. I didn't even know who Gregorie was. So, they said, "That's fine. We'll do it; then [we'll] sit down with the terms of what we're going to pay you for what you're going to do." And, I said, "That's ridiculous." I said, "I did $75,000 for each one of them—Ford—and $75,000 for International Harvester. The price is—I'll give you my services for $100,000."

Q: What did they say?

A: Well, Breech said, "Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it. Don't worry about that." I said, "Hell, you've gotten me to give up two accounts, and you tell me not to worry about it. You're not going to worry. I want to sleep nights." So, then I mentioned the other—a couple nights after was where were eating dinner at Bloomfield Hills, and

Ernie and his wife were there, and he asked me to come over to his table. I said, "Yes."

Q: You met Ernie Breech at the Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

A: And, he mentioned the fact about the money, and he said, "Well, I didn't specify in front of Henry," he said, "what we could do for you, but," he said, "you're going to find out for a five-year program that we can make you $5,000,000." I said, "Well," they did through stocks. They didn't tell me they were going to put stock out—wasn't out yet. So, I said, "Well, then I can have something to go to Mr. Nash and Mr. Mason and Mr. Fowler McCormick." So, I said, "Now, I got something to go for—talk to them about." Without that, I couldn't diverse myself, and then I said, "Our program's pretty well [in] hand, so I can go and [prevent] jeopardy." I didn't want to jeopardize anything they had. So, then, they told me their story. So, I said, "Well, I'll do it." Then, I said, "But, you've got to come down every time I call and review it because we won't have time, we'll be on deadline." So, we hurried and got everything—our whole organization—27—27 on the staff.

Q: This is the George Walker Associates?

A: Yeah. Right there in the New Center Building. Then, we got to the point where we made the showing, and they came down for the showing after it was in clay size, and they said, "That's it. That's it."

Q: You have 3/8th or a quarter [size]?

A: An eighth size. Then we got into the quarter size after that. Then, they shaped it up and little bit better. Then, the full size. And, the full size we did out there at the plant in the engineering department, and there was supposed to be a guard there all morning noon

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and night—two guards—one guard for every hour of the day. Nobody could enter into it, and we saw to it that they didn't to a point. But we didn't know that Youngren and Tallberg [V.Y.] was going to take Gregorie and Johnny Najjar [through] too. They never acknowledged that, but we heard [about it] later. Johnny told somebody else that. I never liked that, but Johnny [Najjar] was very true to us, and a very good boy. We tried our best to forget about it.

Q: He probably was told to do it by Youngren?

A: He was. So, they tried—they drew pictures of mine—what we had. It was very, very admirable and all set for him [Henry Ford II], but it looked like a bathtub. It looked just like the other one. So, when they found out how ours was and the company was leaning towards it—that's when they wanted it in green. That's another thing. Greenish Blue. Gregorie's is greenish blue. I didn't know that about Gregorie's. Then, I said, "No, this is going to be a yellowish tan." "Oh, Mr. Ford doesn't like that." I said, "This is not his car. It's my car. Until he buys it." So, again, I was off base for saying that, but Breech told me that later. He said, "You have more fucking guts." He said, "You know, you could have been fired before you were hired." I said, "Yeah, I know that." I had to say that, anyhow. So, we painted it that color something like the one out there [garage]. Beigish—the beige with a lot of white in it, and a bright yellow. So, the car looked so nice and all glassed in, sprayed and hardware, and when they saw [it] they, all 100% okayed it. Even Youngren.

Q: Really?

A: Yup.

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Q: Who was in attendance there? Who was with you at this meeting?

A: [Meade] Bricker, Jack Davis, Harold Youngren, Benson Ford and Henry [II] [and] Breech. I think that's about all.

Q: Good group.

A: Yup. They all came down, and they looked at the sketches and said, "Well, that's fine," and they looked at the finished quarter size [clay]. They said, "That's it." They said, "How long are we going to take to do it?" I told them to tell Youngren to pave the way—get that [into] Walker's hands—the guards are on it, and nobody is to see it—absolutely nobody to see it. Until we got the full size, and then when they got full size, they had another meeting for a final okay with the same board—same board. And, they all went in there, and I wasn't allowed in there. They all

walked around the car, and the first of all we showed it to the old man—Mr. Henry Ford—and he took the handle, and it was only stuck in clay, and he threw it on the ground and said, "That doesn't work." They laughed, and they laughed, and then when they got through, then the Board came in and okayed it.

Q: And, that was the '49 Ford?

A: That '49 Ford. Then we started to make all drawings and full-size sketches.

Q: That was in 1946?

A: 1946.

Q: And, did you finalize the design right there?

A: Yup, yup, we did.

Q: I wonder if I can take you back to….

A: There were a few little details—details—of course, that had to

be ironed out on any kind of a car.

Q: Tell me about stories I've heard—Joe Oros talks about the spinner front end that he worked on. Mr. Calleal—Dick Calleal. He's still in Detroit.

A: He is?

Q: Yes. And, Mr. Calleal tells about the story about asking Holden "Bob" Koto to come out and help him with the clay model. Do you know any details about that?

A: I don't remember about—I know Bob Koto.

Q: He's down in Boynton Beach.

A: Yeah, he is. Dick—we hired Dick—he didn't have a job. We hired Dick, and he was kind of a nuisance. He'd come into the office—clay all over his feet—and want to talk all the time how good he was. Well, that was one of the things some guys do. But then he started to telling around—designed it, but he didn't—no. Joe [Oros] and Elwood [Engel]—they did. And, Koto--that's right--Koto worked with them* not Calleal. I took Dick in and paid him three months for doing nothing--just sitting around. 'Cause he did work, and I called "Tex" Colbert and told Tex, which I knew very well Cat Chrysler), I said, "Tex, you said if any of our people wanted to get connected, he'd have them come out and to talk them." So, I said, "There's one guy here, Dick

Calleal, he did a little bit of our clay modeling." I didn't say anything else because he didn't—[only a] clay modeler. So, I sent him out there and he gave
him a job—gave him a very good job at Chrysler, and then Dick was very

* Editor's Note: Koto worked on the model with Bob Bourke which Calleal brought back from South Bend.

grateful, but he did the same thing. When he got out there, he was trying to dictate everything he wanted to [do]. He said he didn't—Raymond Loewy, when they worked Studebaker and Koto, and they'd do stuff. He's be talking there all the time. It was getting so boresome. But, we still liked old Dick.

Q: Yes. He's still ….

A: Elwood and Joe didn't, they just couldn't stand him, but they did not. But, he [Calleal] had nothing to do with the front end—not a thing—neither one of them. But, Joe did, and that was Joe's type spinner. Then, another time, we had the sketches allover the room on spinners alone one time. The spinners alone—or front ends, and the spinner type I liked. Breech liked that. He came down one day just for the front end showing. Who was the guy who had a lot of cars? He was a great singer?

Q: Melton, James Melton.

A: James Melton. We had a showing, and he brought James Melton, and I told him, I said, "They're looking for front ends," and he said, "I like that one." That was the spinner. So that was that.

Q: And, that was Joe Oros'?

A: Yeah. Pretty soon, Henry [II] was looking at this [showing], and then Jim Melton said, "Hey, I like this. This is good."

Q: Henry said, "I like it too."

A: Yes.

Q: Who were the chief assistants [working on] the '49 Ford?

A: We had at that time about 14 people doing the work at our office at the beginning—Hopkins, Calleal, Oros.

Q: Who was the second one?

A: Oros.

Q: You said Calleal.

A: Calleal, and then Ornes. And Bob Koto, and that's about all in our office that we can—this is our old office, and when we got out to Ford's to do the full size, then we took some of their clay modelers to help finish it up—finished full size—full size. Because it had to be precision. It couldn't be just guess work. So, then we hired them, and they furnished that force at no other extra expense.

Q: You had the North wing, didn't you?

A: Yup.

Q: Of the engineering [laboratory in Dearborn]?

A: In the engineering department.

Q: Who were your—I think, Mr. Engel?

A: Engel. I'm trying to think of who was out there.

Q: Who you put out there.

A: But Engel supervised it to point where he and Joe Oros were in charge. That was their car. I called it their car, and everybody else around there called it their car. We gave them credit for it.

Q: Who were you competing with at that time?

A: Ourselves. We didn't know, at that time, that Ford had—or that Tallberg and Youngren had Gregorie doing the work assembling—trying to get a car out. So, that's all. Then we heard about what was happening out in the other part of the room which we didn't know—the other part of the engineering department. That was one end, and that was where Gregorie had his car.

Q: Did you ever see it?

A: No, no. Only in pictures.

Q: Well, the decision has been made, and is it 1946?

A: 1946 and called the 1949 car. The dies were started in the latter part of '46—the dies. So, they had to hurry and get the—they had rush program—crash program. Then we had to supervise just

to see that everything was going well. We had three engineers who were very good that worked with us very closely to see that we didn't get off base. When we did, they put us on base.

Q: Do you know who they were?

A: Well, there was Charlie Blanton. That's name one, that's not….

Q: He was the chief body engineer?

A: Yes. He was very good, so he'd come back, and he said, "Well, here, we got a little something here. The drip molding here, if you did it like this, would it hurt your design?" And, we'd say, "No." Then do it that way, because we're saving money. "Then, how about this cut here, how about the hood cut? If we did this, we can't curve it around there because that's going to be a problem if we do that, and this way you can get..." "Well, that's all right. We can get it just the way you want it." We worked hand in hand, and they never had that on Fords. They were always pompous about it, and the engineer wanted to do this, and he's going to it, and nobody could tell him that.

Q: That had been your technique all through the Thirties?

A: All through everything I ever did. Work with, not against. I've told that to Henry time and again. He asked me that one day. He said, "We understand that you're getting along fine with these guys." "Henry,"

I said, "this is just the same." He called and told me to be sure and always call him Henry, but I wouldn't in front of a lot of people, and so—"I call you George, and you call me Henry." So, I said, "That's it—all we tried to do is to make you money and our client. We don't make it. We make a certain amount to keep living, but we want to make you money. That's our forte." He said, "That's a good idea, a good way to talk."

Q: Did you have any input into the post-war facelifts of the '46 to '48 line?

A: Well, we drew some pictures for them. We never adopted anything. But, that was set—again, that was really Gregorie's.

Q: He had set that up?

A: So, they had some very good things, but we weren't disturbed by this. If they had good potential, we said, "Well, that's good, or that's lousy."

Q: Well, you had some—of course, it was a buyer's market—it was a seller's market, and you had, of course, the Woodie and the Sportsman and the Continental, but in 1948 all that came to a halt as you introduced the '49 Ford. Do you remember anything about the reception of the car?

A: The reception to all of this story is that it was very, very wonderful. We had the press there.

Q: This was, I think, in the summer of '48, wasn't it?

A: I'm not sure. But, that was just when they hired [John] Oswald. They had the banquet that night, and Walter Dorwin Teague was there at the meeting, and he had no reason to be there, but he was there.

Q: He'd worked for Edsel Ford back in the Thirties.

A: So, Youngren got up and told about how this car was going to be a great car, and we hope it's a success, and he said, "The great contribution of Mr. Oswald." Breech was sitting like this [facial expression], and he got up—Breech did—right there and said, "I just want to correct one thing," he said, "This car," he said, "was styled by George Walker and his staff, and don't you forget it," and this was the press he was talking to. "I don't want anybody to forget about that." It was very good. Otherwise, it would have been Oswald and Youngren.

Q: Of course, Oswald had very little to do with it?

A: He had nothing to do with it! Absolutely nothing! He said that one day to Henry, he said, "Well, we'll take of this," he said, "I used to do this with G.M." He said, "When that everything is all shot, I can pick up the pieces and patch 'em up." Henry [II] said, "Well, I don't think there's anything that needs to be patched up about it." Well, that's the story on that one.

Q: Do you know what Dick Calleal has kept all these years? He's kept the mould for the quarter-size model.

A: He has?

Q: He has that mould.

A: Did you see it?

Q: Yeah, in four pieces.

A: He did?

Q: Do you remember that incident?

A: No, no, I don't.

Q: But, he says that when it came time to do the [three] eighths scale [which Walker wanted] that he asked—he took it, and he brought a

[package sketch] design to Bob Koto—Holden Koto—and who was, apparently, back at Studebaker at that point, and said, "I need your help to make a model." And, he said they did it on Calleal's kitchen table, and that was the first [model for the 1949 Ford]. That's not a story you remember?

A: No. No, it wasn't this story. It's a marvelous story, but Dick always—he said one day, he said, "I appreciate what you're doing," he said, "but I couldn't work over there at Chrysler. They're terrible," he said. He said, "I appreciate what you're doing." He said, "You know another thing? I never told them I did the '49 Ford." I said, "You son of a bitch. What are you talking about?" Then Joe heard it and Elwood.

Q: They really hit the roof.

A: They sure did. He did so little. He did clay modeling for us, that's what he did. But he was a blackboard man, and he had a blackboard, and when they took the line and he interpreted it on to a blackboard so they could make an engineering drawing. That's all he knew, you see? Dick is not a designer. He wasn't even a clay modeler. He was a blackboard man. But, I shouldn't have done what I did which was to try to bend to help him. I helped everybody that way. But, I shouldn't have done it with Dick Calleal because he took it on himself to think that I meant it, that he did everything. So, when he told that story, oh, I was upset about it.

Q: I can see why. Well, the car was a great success, and you won a fashion [institute award].

A: I won the fashion award on it, and then….

Q: Mr. Ford was properly appreciative of...?

A: Oh, he was very much so. Every time after—he was wanted everybody—he always pointed out that I did the [1949 Ford].

Q: About this time you were still consulting?

A: Yes. Yes, I was. And, then when they decided to really have a vice president in charge of all styling, and this was promoted by Youngren for Oswald, and Oswald [had] come out there [to Ford styling].

Q: They were both ex-G.M. people, weren't they?

A: Yeah. Then, what I did was to mark time, I said for awhile, and then I didn't have the new contract, so I didn't have any more work.

Q: They had installed Oswald?

A: Yup. And, then Henry—not as vice president, just installed. Then Henry called me up one day and said that's what they wanted to do. They've decided that their organization warrants somebody, and I wouldn't do it because at that time because I had my own business, and that was true. I told him that. But, he said, "If there's anything I can do for you," he said, "at any time." He said, "We appreciate what you did and very, very much." I said, "Well, you didn't do what you said you were going to do."

Q: Which was?

A: Give me five million dollars. I said, "This is not… " But, I said, "You jeopardized a couple of my accounts," which was International Harvester and Nash. I said, "I can't recuperate those again." I said, "And, I don't want any of your money," and I knew him well enough to say, "Shove it up your ass!" I did! I was so upset.

Q: That was in 1950?

A: In 1950. So, I left the organization. I had my home being built

down in Florida. Down in Bal Harbour, and that's when Breech came over at our house to tell me they wanted me back, and Henry insisted on having me back and to write my own ticket.

Q: About a year later? In 1951?

A: Yeah. Yeah, that was when

Q: Now, what does he say was the problem? Did he mention that the. ..?

A: No, not a thing.

Q: He didn't say a thing?

A: No.

Q: They wanted you back.

A: Wanted me back. I could write my own ticket. Then, he said, "I know, number one, what you want, you don't want Youngren." I said, "And, I don't want Oswald around. I don't want George Snyder around." Because they were….

Q: All G.M. people.

A: G.M.

Q: Had Breech brought them in?

A: Youngren brought them in, but Breech sanctioned it, and he had to swallow it.

Q: Youngren was vice president for engineering, wasn't he?

A: But, he left there, after he left G.M. and went out to some company down in—it's out in California.

Q: Who's this?

A: Youngren. And, he wasn't faring very well, so they got a hold of Youngren to come out as a consultant [to Ford] and this [was] before I

came into the picture. That's all.

Q: What happened? It didn't work out?

A: Well, it didn't work out because they didn't want him any more. I said that I wouldn't come back unless they did this. And, I didn't need them. They needed me. I needed to….

Q: So, you brought your own staff, and so you brought Oros and...?

A: Yes. Oros, and Engel and Hopkins.

Q: He's a new name [to me].

A: Yeah.

Q: What was his first name?

A: He'd been with us a long time. Hopkins—Ken Hopkins. Then the—so, we had three other fellas out there. Three key people besides that. So, that was our staff. It wasn't over-paid there. We weren't over staffed. In other words, Ford was getting over staffed, but we knew at all times what everybody was doing. Ford never did that. They always had to say that so and so and so and so to find four times around what one guy did.

Q: So, did you install them as studio heads at that time?

A: Yes.

Q: Who went where?

A: Well, Oros we appointed as head of all Ford. Engel was research and development for all vehicles—all the special cars because he liked that. They did that other car—that Lincoln car 100.

Q: Oh, the X-100.

A: The X-100. He did that.

Q: That's still at the [Henry Ford] museum. We have that. It's in

bad shape, but we still have it there.

A: I'm sure. Then, let's see—then, we had Hopkins on all appointments, and it was his job to see all the chrome went to this and all the moldings, and then my son got his moldings. Not quite that bad. But, that's what he was supposed to do. Then, Calleal—we had Calleal at the time out there at the plant and had him to see that the clay was there every day—the right amount of clay, and how the clay modelers worked on it. And he got in a tailspin again with the guys—all the clay modelers there—well, and we had to pacify them all the time. He really got ahead of himself.

Q: You were putting out fires.

A: Yeah, putting the fires out. But, that was my job.

Q: And, so you began working in earnest on the early Fifties cars?

A: Yup, then we started—let's see. And then we had to leave them. We didn't have the account. And, that's when Mr. MacCauley came into the office.

Q: Was this Alvin MacCauley?

A: Yes, Alvin MacCauley, and then we took on the Packard [account]. Then, we got the…

Q: What did you do for them?

A: Well, they had a car that was all clay but very, very badly done, even though that [John] Tjaarda had a lot to do with it. Tjaarda was a very good designer.

Q: He was working for Packard in the early Fifties?

A: No, he was working for Briggs, and he….

Q: Still with Briggs after all these years?

A: Yes, he was. And, he and Ed MacCauley had been working on it, but they were dovetailing again, and also swords end again. See, each time they did a thing, they lost—Alvin MacCauley knew that. And, then, of course, the….

Q: Was Ed, Alvin's younger brother?

A: Yeah. And they were sons of the old man [Alvin MacCauley, Senior]. Let's see, what else?

Q: You said—were they working on the Packard Clipper?

A: Yeah, but, it was Packard Clipper.

Q: You had a clay model?

A: Yeah. And, we never told anybody we designed the car. We didn't. We just helped.

Q: Helped, but you contributed a lot to it?

A: We did.

Q: And it became fairly successful?

A: It was for awhile, yeah. They didn't have any money. Then, Jim Nance—old Jim Nance, he….

Q: James J. Nance?

A: He had to leave there because they didn't pay him. Then, a whole group left—sales managers and everybody else did the same thing. So, they just folded up.

Q: Didn't an automobile company pick them up there for a time? Studebake—didn't they go with Studebaker?

A: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q: And, they combined the two. Now, Bill Schmidt was involved with that.

A: Yeah, Bill worked on it, too. I remember that, yeah, Bill did, too.

Q: Bill worked on the Clipper?

A: Yeah. They worked with Alvin—or with Ed. Pretty nice car.

Q: He's still very—going very strong. He has his own design firm in Detroit. He's actually near Grosse Pointe.

A: Well, that's where he lived. A: lot of water's gone over the dam. We don't know—see, it's a long thing. It's been all these years. It was in 1960. I retired in '60, and to try to put things together in the right perspective is a little bit ambiguous.

Q: Well, let's try it. There you are in 1950—early '51. You're still a consultant, but you have the Ford contract, and you have your own people in the key studios. Was Eugene Bordinat there at that time?

A: He was at the Company. He was a [Ford Motor] Company man.

Q: Oh, he was a Company man.

A: Yeah. He wasn't our man.

Q: Did you—how did that work out? Did you have a good relationship with...?

A: No.

Q: It didn't work out?

A: No.

Q: What happened?

A: Gene, of course, was very hurt. He was very hurt to think he was no longer head of styling.

Q: Had he been?

A: Yeah.

Q: Under Oswald?

A: Yup, he had been. So, when I came into the picture as, again, as a consultant. I was a vice president. [Lewis] Crusoe saw to that.

Q: Tell me about Mr. Crusoe.

A: Well, he was a finance man for General Motors and a very good one—a pinch penny—and he watched that all the pennies were [accounted for]. So, I remember, I was very close to him. We had a very good relationship. Very few people did.

Q: Now, he had been brought over to Ford by...?

A: By Breech. But, nobody could get along with him. We got along with him, and we didn't "yes" him. We kidded with him all the time about something he'd say. We'd say, "Aw, horseshit." Something like that. Nobody would be allowed to say that because he'd fire them. But, you see, he didn't. Maybe, we were just lucky about that. Just lucky about that.

Q: You and he hit it off pretty good?

A: We hit it off pretty good.

Q: Now, he became increasingly influential in the automobile division.

A: Oh yes, he did. He was very good, and he was Breech's right-hand man—his whipping post.

Q: Yes, for finance and cost cutting. So, when did you get your vice presidency? Was that in '52?

A: That was just before they made Krafve a vice president. That was in '55.

Q: So, the years between 1950 and 1955, what models do you remember as being key creations of your...?

A: Well, nearly all of them [we] had something to do with—right after that as we got in as vice president—we established that—then everybody went to town. We were no longer consultants. We were top dogs then.

Q: How did that come about? Who was the one that decided that you would come in as vice president?

A: Well, Breech did and Crusoe.

Q: You were having problems with the current design staff?

A: Yeah, and that [was] worked out. They had to have a head of it, and they'd never had a head of it. The guy that was running styling—and he wasn't even an automobile man—years ago. [Charles Waterhouse]

Q: You've become a vice president now in 1955 at Mr. Breech's behest and with Henry's concurrence, and you've taken over the complete styling operation. Everybody now reports to you. So, could you explain in some detail, Mr. Walker, just how the models progressed—the years progressed during your tenure as vice president?

A: I can't. No. I just have to think back—little things.

Q: Things that occurred.

A: Everything seemed to run very smooth as could be under the circumstances of anybody going into a big organization. After they've had all this time that Mr. Ford senior had guided them—the way he wanted to guide them. Young Henry didn't want that to happen. He wanted to have individuals to get the work done, to get this organization the way he wanted it, and with Breech, Crusoe and that staff, they had it pretty good. Then, they brought Krafve in. When Krafve came in….

Q: Richard Krafve.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Where had he been? Was he at Lincoln first?

A: Well, he was in charge of the Lincoln, yes—production. Then, they had him on the special car—the special car, Special design.

Q: Special products?

A: Special products. And, then they were trying to create this car called an Edsel, which, we didn't know, what the name was at the time—special car.

Q: The E car.

A: E car. So, they made him the vice president. Not now—no, they didn't. I was made vice president before he was, because he—over at the Rotunda one day they were having lunch with somebody, and I had to go over there for some reason, and Benson [Ford] shook hands with me and said, "Congratulations." I said, "What for?" I didn't know I was—he said, "Well, you were just made a vice president." I said, "Why the hell didn't somebody tell me?" I really said that to him. And Benson said, "Well, you are. We created that." Then Krafve was staring over with a face about four feet long and said—never said thank you or never said, "congratulations" or anything like this. And, for a long time we didn't even speak. I don't know why. He was just mad because he wasn't made a vice president. Then, finally, he was.

Q: With disastrous results.

A: Very bad. See, then again, he'd been out—knowing nothing about people, he hired garage guys—garage people who had an old, broken down garage and made them an Edsel dealer, and they knew nothing about business. Most of these. This is part of them, not all of them, of course. But, for instance, a fellow in Fort Lauderdale by the name of Mark

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Martinis, never was in the business before, and he, too, bought into a garage, and then they made it into a dealership, and they had a big flurry around the flags and all and the new Edsel as they gave me one to drive, and I was in Fort Lauderdale at the time. Gave me one to drive, and the guy said that he'd have a car sent over by Ford Motor Company—a new Edsel—a white one. I got in it, drove it down, and the minute I got it down the ramp—boom! And it fell apart. I got out of the car, and I said, "Call Martinis right away." And, Martinis didn't know what to do. He said, "I'll have to call Detroit." He said, "I don't know anything about these cars." That's the same thing that happened and with everything. Then, their advertising. What was the name of the company—the advertising [agency]?

Q: Foote, Cone and Belding.

A: Foote, Cone and Belding. They got all mixed up and tried to fight with Henry about how Krafve—and they always said, "That's the way Mr. Krafve wanted it." Instead of saying, "Henry, we're trying to do this for the Company," and the guy that was head of it, he came down one time, and they got into quite a tailspin about it, and it kept getting worse and worse, and they kept losing money. Everything was falling apart, so they finally decided to throw it out after too long. They waited too long.

Q: Too long. Tell me about the design aspect of the Edsel. I think you assigned Roy Brown to it, didn't you?

A: Yes.

Q: Had Roy been with you for some time?

A: No, not too long. He didn't work for me. He came over from G.M.

and got the job with Gene [Bordinat]. Then he—Krafve picked him up and wanted him to do the car.

Q: Oh, it was Krafve's idea?

A: Yeah. We weren't allowed in that room.

Q: Really. Special products division all by themselves?

A: That was a special car. Benson's. It was Benson Ford's father, and Benson Ford's father kept….

Q: And so, what kind of a job did you think Roy did?

A: Well, he meant good—he tried. He had a bad staff, he didn't dictate—he let dictation do the work, like Krafve. Krafve said, "I don't like that." Now, Krafve was in Florida when I was—just before this thing happened with Breech—coming into my house and telling me that Ford had to have it. Krafve had an instrument panel, and Henry told him to go down and show it to Walker in Bal Harbour. He didn't want to do it. Finally he did, and he said, "My staff wants it this way." I said, "Well, what are you coming and showing me for?" That I knew damn well. "Well," he said, "we had a research [project], and the research was that we called all our research to Toledo." "God, Toledo," I said, "there's a truck company in that town." I said, "They're all the truck drivers." See, that's terrible, and they said, "That's the way it's going to be because they like that instrument panel."

Q: They went to Toledo and did the market research?

A: That's the way Krafve did.

Q: That doesn't sound like Dave Wallace. Dave Wallace [manager of market research] was sharper than that. Emmett Judge, of course, was [marketing director]. So, Krafve, apparently, pretty much called the

shots?

A: He did. Yeah, everything he did. Of course, Emmett had built a house up in Harbor Springs. I used to see him there, and we used to kid about it. He said, "I was the only one that wasn't fired."

Q: Pardon?

A: He was the only one that wasn't fired.

Q: That's right. Gayle Warnock is out here in Arizona.

A: Gayle is up near Phoenix.

Q: Do you see him, occasionally?

A: No.

Q: Well, it was a mistake all around, wasn't it? The Edsel just really didn't come off. Badly engineered

A: about a quarter of a billion dollars just went out the window. He didn't get a bonus that year.

Q: Badly engineered. The dealer organization was ramshackle….

A: Very, very bad. All the way through. Every single thing was not predicated on good, common sense.

Q: [J. C. "Larry"] Doyle, who handled the dealerships, and that was bad?

A: That was bad. He was so bad that they threw him out of Ford. Then they took on—well, even—with Warnock, he was good—very good. But, his hands were tied by one guy—Krafve. Everything they did, Krafve had to do it, and he was kind of a...too. It's too bad.

Q: What's more important in these years, you were having tremendous success with the Thunderbird. Can you tell us a bit about how the Thunderbird came to be?

A: Well, the story was we saw this sketch—a sketch—and it was one just like Oros' and one just like—what's his name?—from Benton Harbor.

A: young fellow—he was a blackboard man. He wasn't a designer—a blackboard man.

Q: Not Boyer?

A: No, not Boyer. I'll think of it. So, we saw these sketches, and we liked them, and then what Oros did is to take the body and made a different body out of it, and lot of the details different than in the sketch, but there was a similarity—a similarity to the average guy. To a guy that was trained, no. They'd say, "That was that one, that was the other one." So, Oros then took it, and then I gave Oros the go-ahead to make that car. That was my job. So, Henry and I were over in Europe looking at the—I have to say, though, because—looking at the Automobile Show. Then, on the way back to the Place Athenee, he said, "George, why don't you—why don't we have a sports car?" And, I said, "You have." " Where?" He said, "When you get back, let's see it." He said, "I didn't know anything about this." I said, "We didn't want you to." So, I got back to the Place and called Joe Oros. I told him to get that car ready—all slicked and want it the best you can.

Q: Was it to be a eighth size or a quarter size?

A: This is full size.

Q: Full size! Full-size clay, okay.

A: So, when Henry got back, first day of his duties, he came over to styling and see that car*. He fell in love with it right away. So,

* Editor's Note: Walker is referring to the 1958 four-passenger Thunderbird.

that's it. And, that was the way they did the Continental. Not our Continental, but the Continental that was done in 1968 with the square radiator. See, the [1961] Continental, all told, was Elwood's car to a point, and then there were a few appointments that distinguished it to somebody else. So, when they in 1970….

Q: The Thunderbird—do you remember some of the people who—the ones who came up with the name or...?

A: No. That's been told too many times, but they haven't been very straight—people who take credit for it. No, I can't. There were a lot of people—wrote in and said they—and we heard this that Breech was joining the Thunderbird Club out in Palm Springs to play golf. He came back one day and said to Henry, "If you can't think of a name, why don't you call it the Thunderbird?"

Q: This is Ernie Breech?

A: Yeah. Henry said, "That's it." Then, they gave the credit to somebody else because inter-department he would be getting $500 or something.

Q: And he did a little design, and I think he won a contest. Was this contest that Crusoe had—a suit of clothes or something like that? [Alden R. "Gib" Giberson].

A: Yeah, that's it. That's about all.

Q: Well, it was an incredibly successful car. Structurally, you had a really good….

A: Yes. Very, very good and very, very good detail work on it. Oros did that detail beautifully.

Q: Pretty much Oros' work?

A: Yup. And, Elwood helped. Elwood helped but not fully. Elwood was charged more with the Lincoln stuff, and Oros was in charge of the Thunderbird, so we certainly give Oros the credit. And, then, of course, [Lee] Iacocca picks it up and says it's his.*

Q: What was your contact with Iacocca at this point?

A: Well, he was sales manager during that time.

Q: Ford Division?

A: Yeah, Ford Division, and we didn't have much contact with him.

Q: Not much contact. Because he wasn't a designer.

A: Oh, no, no. He certainly keeps taking credit for the Mustang, and he didn't do the Mustang—Oros did the Mustang.

Q: Now, do you remember a gentleman named Tom Case at this point?

A: Yes, yes. Tom Case became the liaison between marketing. Tom then wrote an article, and he takes credit for it. I read that article. Somebody sent it to me.

Q: A recent book by someone who says that Boyer is the architect—the design architect. That's why I wanted to get the full story from you.

A: It's like any other design—we had, we'll say, fifty clay modelers—fifty clay modelers designed it. That's what we say. They can't—none of them could draw, but they were clay modelers. They worked on it, and each day that they did anything—did clay modeling, they said, "This is mine, this is mine." They go home at night to their family, and they have their hamburgers, and "How did you do today, Joe?" "Well, I did this, and I did that, and some sons-of-bitches are trying to take credit for it. The creativity of man is that they want what's theirs and don't take it away from them.

*Editor's Note: Walker is again referring, apparently, to the 1958 four-passenger Thunderbird on which Iacocca had no direct influence.

Q: Of course, you can't fault that instinct.

A: Oh sure.

Q: But, under your direction it was pretty much Joe Oros' [vehicle].

A: Yup.

Q: What other models in the mid-Fifties were you—that you're especially proud of that you can tell us?

A: Well, I should say all of them because they all made money for the company. That was my story for time and time again. If I can make money for the people who pay me, then I'm satisfied with what I did. That's all my industrial design [career] throughout, just like the clock business. If we can make money by designing a new clock, that was fine. That was for the company, not for us. And, refrigerators the same way. There are over 3,000 products that we've done. To a woman's point of view, and we did the best to cater to her—because it was her vote that's most influential on any home product.

Q: And this was the Grunow refrigerator or the Admiral?

A: The Admiral, Grunow, Detrola, Apex, and before that the Apex in Cleveland, and we did all of their washing machines, and then Electromaster for all stoves. There's an awful lot of them. I could say I have to go through—even time I go through the alphabet, I can think of two or three more designs.

Q: Or you could safely say that you had a lot to do with the design of a lot of household products from the late Thirties to the mid-Forties?

A: Very much so, very much so. Yup, and nearly everything a woman touched, we did. We told that story.

Q: The automobile business was about this time becoming very conscious of the woman's place in ordering and buying the automobile.

A: It used to be that the man would put his thumb through his suspenders and look around and kick the tires, and say, "Well, I guess I'll get that." Didn't even ask the old lady. Then, it got to the point where the woman came in and said she liked the color, she liked the fabric, and she liked the steering wheel, she liked to sit in it. She became a factor, and then the salesman glued himself to the woman. She was very instrumental. It was 82% of all merchandise purchased are purchased by women. The car is fundamental to women.

Q: What were the relations at this point with William Clay Ford? He had come up with a proposal to make a new Continental.

A: That is very good. He and Reinhart.

Q: He and John Reinhart.

A: Johnny Reinhart, and they did a nice car—too much money, and they lost about a $1000 a day.

Q: This was the Mark II?

A: Yup, Mark II.

Q: Now, they did get it into production.

A: Yes, they did. I had one. I had two of them.

Q: Did you? And, was it was well engineered?

A: Well, no.

Q: It wasn't?

A: No. Some parts of it was, and some parts weren't. It had a heater right underneath the seat, and my ass was so big when I sat down on it, and it squashed that heater, and it burned the seat, and it burned my

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clothes. It was a winter day. It was awful bad.

Q: What was it doing under the seat?

A: That's the only way they put the heater in. See, down below, couldn't have room for it, so they put it right underneath the seat. It was very bad engineering. Oh, there was a lot wrong with it, but I liked it. It had style—first one of them with style.

Q: That was probably John Reinhart's doing.

A: Yeah. John had a lot to do with it.

Q: But you had Harley Copp and Gordon Buehrig—two of the well-known body engineers?

A: Well, Gordon was a good Gordon was also a blackboard man. At Auburn. That's when he did the Cord. But, he had a lot of ingenuity to him. He liked it, and his liking for it was, he became a very good designer. They did a good job. Gordon did a very good job.

Q: And, Harley Copp—what was his contribution?

A: Harley Copp is an engineer. Only an engineer. Harley is mouthy guy. He's….

Q: He's still going strong.

A: He probably is.

Q: But, apparently, the decision was made that it was too expensive. They were losing too much money.

A: Yeah. Breech closed it up. The staff was mad. Bill [Ford] had hired all his old Yale guys. Put them all in big, top jobs—including Krafve, and he hired Krafve and Krafve helped him—whatever he did. That's what happened, but the car was a nice car.

Q: But it was just too expensive.

-60-

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it $10,000?

A: Yeah. I don't remember what it was.

Q: I guess Mr. Breech was instrumental in closing, as you say….

A: Yeah, closed it down. They had a fight with Henry—quite a fight—because that was an Edsel Ford. That was before the Edsel car came out, and that was Edsel Ford's baby. He started it. Bill then picked it up, and he had appointed Bill the head of it—new products.

Q: Special Products?

A: Special Products, and Krafve got on the bandwagon, and then all the Yale guys were all sitting around on desks with their feet up—talking about the old days—old days! Go in there, and it's the same, old story.

Q: Well, Bill was pretty disheartened when they closed it down.

A: Yes, he was. He didn't have a job.

Q: He didn't have a job, so what did he do?

A: Well, I was in White Sulphur Springs, and that's when I was still vice president.

Q: In the late Fifties?

A: In the late 'Fifties, yup. So, he said to me, "George, we're going to do a new thing. We're going to appoint Bill [William Clay Ford] as chief stylist for the Company. He has the job, and this is what I'd like to have you do but report to me every time he doesn't show up. I said, "Henry, how could I could do that? He's your brother." I said, "How the hell could I do that?" I said, "I'd have to spend more time with " He said, "Yeah, you'd have to spend more time over a martini." I just couldn't do that. I said, "I couldn't do that." But, that was what he

needed. He'd just come in at 9 o'clock/10 o'clock in the morning and wouldn't pay any attention to styling or any else. He would sit down and I start talking on the telephone for football players—Eddie Anderson.

Q: By then he was heavily involved with the Detroit Lions. He had a couple of men that you remember—Dick Morris and George Haviland.

A: Dick Morris was the guy I was trying to think of who was over in Europe. Breech sent him this—toilet paper And, Dick was a tough guy that just dedicated himself to Bill.

Q: And, I think George, too.

A: And George, too. But, he took George from my end of it and put him on his staff.

Q: He was yours?

A: He was my guy.

Q: In the styling end?

A: Yeah. He was very good.

Q: George retired about….

A: Did he?

Q: Oh, he retired in—a year ago last January, and he says, "It's the greatest thing since sliced bread." It's his favorite expression at that time.

A: Yeah, I know. He had always [something]—frivolous. Yeah, I liked George very well.

Q: So, Bill was given sort of an honorary title, but you were still vice president of design?

A: Yeah. And, Bill never paid any attention to his title. He didn't know. But, he should have known because he worked with Reinhart, and he

wanted me to hire Reinhart, and I said, "We couldn't hire Reinhart." John was a good boy. I knew him way, way before he went to Ford, and he came and did special work for me. When I had my own office. But, John would say, "Would you like a stick of gum," and laugh and kid all about a stick of gum instead of what he was doing. You know, he was like a kid that never grew up.

Q: He went with U.S. Steel at this point?

A: Yes. Bill got him that job. Very good—very good job.

Q: And, it worked out fairly well for him.

A: Very well, and I don't know what he does now.

Q: He's retired. So, but even though the Continental was axed you and Mr. Engel still had the Lincoln going very strongly.

A: Yes, we did. And, when they appointed Ben Mills as manager….

Q: Tell us about Ben.

A: Well, Ben was a nice guy, personally. He was a real big golfer and former "Whiz Kid," but he didn't know too much about automobiles. He knew his finances, and Breech never did care too much for him, which I understand, as well as Crusoe, and when Crusoe got the heart attack, but just before was going to change Ben Mills to—let's see, who else would there be? Well, they were going to bring a guy that worked for me at one time.

Q: Who was that?

A: Oh, gosh! He went out to school teaching. He was a school teacher.

Q: But, he was with you in the styling end?

A: Yup. He was our manager when I first got in there. Breech brought

him in because he was so smart, and I was not smart. I could run a small business but never to that kind of an organization, and he knew it. That was where Breech was smart to know how to pick people. So, he appointed this guy as my manager*. Very good, very good, yes.

Q: He was your administrative manager.

A: Administrative manager, and then he wanted to be the manager of Lincoln, and he tried to get that job, and then they appointed Ben Mills for it. Then, they wanted to bring him back—Crusoe was going, and then he had a heart attack, and then that was the end of it.

Q: The Lincolns were going fairly well. Was Elwood Engel heading that up?

A: Yes, he was. And, what we did was when—with Engel—won a lot of honors for that car. It was a very well styled car, and still is. Not like the one I've got out there. I don't like that styling. It's kind of crappy. They can do so much more with it. I don't know what the hell's the matter with them.

Q: You did still keep, though—maybe it wasn't your idea—the sales people—did keep the Mark designation, though, for '58, '59 and '60, did they not, and the Mark III, IV and V?

A: The Mark III was the best balanced car they'd ever put out—the Mark III. That's the first one.

Q: 1958?

A: Yeah. Very well balanced. When you see a car, you can tell by the wheels—the way it is is so—we can, because that's our job of that kind of a car it is, and it's a wonderful car. And, then they changed it, and instead of making a Thunderbird out of it—they could have very well—

*Editor's Note: Walker may be referring to Victor Z. Brink who was his administrative manager in the styling department at Ford.

they could call it the Thunderbird—changed a little bit here and there and had another wonderful car, but they took the Thunderbird, and they spoiled it. They made a mess of it, and then the next one they made a mess of. Now, today, it's like a Mark—which is like a Mark—which is not good because the Mark it looks like Thunderbird, and I don't know what the hell they're thinking of. Of course, I can't criticize too much because they would take the car away from me. They give us a new car every year. It's their car, not mine.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about Bob McNamara? Did you come in contact with him when he was with Ford relations?

A: Very well. Bob was a very nice guy—very smart—too smart.

Q: What input did he have into design—any...?

A: No. He wasn't a designer, so he….

Q: You would ask him come down to the presentations?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Did he and young Henry get along good?

A: To a point, to a point. Seemed like one day he was—it was in the paper where Bob McNamara so and so was on the Democratic side with Kennedy, and a big headline. Henry got up at a management meeting and said, "I am so surprised to see two of our top executives talking and acting to try to " No, I have to arrange it. "To where, the Republicans, are making the country safe," and so on and so on, "and they're trying to just do the opposite."

Q: Who was the other one?

A: An engineer. I forget what his name was. Bob and this guy got right up out of there and walked out and started packing their stuff.

Henry had to go up there and plead with them not to quit. Told them how bad he was, how sorry he was, and then Bob came back for just a short time, and then went with Kennedy.

Q: MacPherson had come in as engineer. How did he work out?

A: Well, he was just an engineer—typical. Battled everybody….

Q: Did you have any battles with him?

A: Yeah. A lot of them, a lot of them.

Q: Who won them?

A: That I don't know, but a lot of the things he—oh, he was talking to Donovan. Do you know Donovan? Leo Donovan.

Q: Yes.

A: He was talking to Leo Donovan, which was a friend of mine—standing there one day, and he [MacPherson] said, "You know what I think of these God damn designers? They're a bunch of fairies." I said [later], "If I ever hear you say that, I'm going to knock you right on your ass." He was vice president, and I was, too. His face turned purple. I said, "Don't get in my way, ever. Don't you ever get in my way." Breech asked what happened between me and MacPherson. I said, "Well, it was a remark he made in front of Leo Donovan." I said, "As if we were a bunch of fairies." I told him, "I'll knock him right on his ass for " So, he stayed out of my way for a long time, but he bucked us every time he could, yup. Every time he could.

Q: It was a continuing battle?

A: Yup. That's a big organization. Breech said that. He said, "You got to be able to take it."

Q: And, he would often pit two against each other, I guess. On the whole, the Fifties was very good for Ford. You had some very successful automobiles.

A: Yes, yes. Then, we had pretty good sledding all the way through, because we did our thing, did it good, and Elwood did his work very good. Well, he got off base a couple of times. Not with me, but with the Company, and you've probably heard that story.

Q: No, no.

A: Well, he had a group of people working for him to hurry up and finish a job at night, and they did what Walker—he said that—"What Walker would do." Get candy, get new slippers for these guys. Sneakers, so they can hurry up and get their work done and get them [a] radio, get two radios—one over here and one over there. So, he went out and bought that stuff. He had the guys do it for him. And, they overloaded it, and somebody squealed on them and told them what he'd done. One of the guys supposed to of—they told him that, "Who's going to pay for this?" He said, "Put it on [your timecard], if you worked overtime." That was bad. That was the bad thing. So, from then on Breech told me, "Elwood did a bad thing. Very bad." He liked Elwood but—so he was on the verge of quitting, and then Tex Colbert wanted to know who our men were that

was leaving Ford after I left to retire. And, I told him that number one was Elwood. He contacted Elwood and hired him. Made Elwood four million dollars.
Q: Yes. Well, I guess, it was on the strength of your's and his 1961 Continental—Lincoln?

A: I don't know what it was, but he wanted—He wanted somebody to head

it up. But, I didn't do it. He did it. I told him he was leaving, but they thought I did it. So, that went around. Anything that Walker [did] was bad. So, I went to Surf Club one day in Palm Beach, and when I got back the telegram [had arrived], and Henry said, "Under our contract we have the privilege of using your services or discontinuing [them] at thirty days notice." That's all, that's all.

Q: What had happened? Did you ever find out?

A: Nope, I never did. I never did.

Q: Now Breech….

A: Breech told me, he said, "The only thing is that happened that I know, we were in a director's meeting, and a director that is also a director of Chrysler (wasn't our director) had said that you had called Tex Colbert and told Tex to hire Elwood Engel."

Q: It was just the opposite.

A: It wasn't so, but then he said, "If that's not so, you go and call Henry and sit down with Henry and iron that one out." But, I said, "There's no use doing it. That's not so, because I know. But, I'm never gonna do it because," I said, "Henry kept telling everybody he thought more of me than his own two brothers all these years and had confidence in me making him millions of dollars." I said, "If he doesn't have any better sense than that, the hell with him." So [after my retirement], when Bunkie Knudsen had a party at his house in Bloomfield [Hills], Henry was there. [It was] the first time I'd seen Henry for a long time.

Q: This was years later?

A: Yeah. And, he came over and put his arm around me, and "I miss you." I said, "I miss you, too," and I walked away from him.

Q: That was it, huh?

A: Yeah. And, Breech said, "You shouldn't have done that." He was there. I said, "Well, I don't operate that way." He said, "I know you don't." I said, "That was that. If he doesn't want my services, [to] hell with him." I didn't need his money, he didn't need mine. But that story is

running around. After you leave an organization, they've got you pinned One of the stories was—oh, I went out there to see Bill Ford, and two guards grabbed me by the arm and took me outside. That never happened. Well, Bill Ford called me one day and said, "Let's have lunch together." So, we had lunch together. That's all after this had all happened. I'd come up from Florida—I'd come up 'cause I was still living in Bloomfield [Hills], and we had lunch, and that was all there was to it. No guards around or anything.

Q: You kept up your relationship with.…?

A: Bill was very good, yeah. Bill was very nice.

Q: Basically, a nice guy.

A: Yeah. Stupid but nice.

Q: Ben had a lot of problems too, didn't he?

A: Yeah, very much. Ben would come by my house in Florida and toot every time he did and wave and wave. We'd see each other in Key Largo—own in Key Largo.

Q: They had a boat too, didn't they?

A: Yeah. They had a nice boat, and we had dinner together many times. Oh, we had a good relationship, and Edie his wife.

Q: Well, it was a good association, wasn't it? And, it went on for a good….

A: Where do you want to go now?

Q: Well, I would like you in the time remaining, which we have about five minutes, I'd like to discuss your design philosophy. The principles that have guided you all through your career as an industrial designer.

A: Well, I'll say this. For 65 years I've seen this styling, nowadays, coming closer and closer to the thing that really counts and that's a well-designed product that millions of hands will stretch out to buy because it says something to them that they cannot resist, and the stylists—professional stylists—realize it. When the right lines and contours are applied to a product, they must evoke that particular emotion in that buyer, so a new designer is desired by a manufacturer and dealer. In this regard, there's a mysterious, indefinable something which is an attribute to good sales appeal. Then, a good stylist does not give a pretty picture to a manufacturer and say, "That's yours—make it." If he wants to earn his money, he's got to research, sales, research manufacturer, research the product, order materials and put them all together and create a desire to make it, and that is, fundamentally, my basic principle of styling. Research it and give it to the manufacturer the best you know how, and it's a job of selling. It's a job of good experience, good

knowledge of what you're doing. You cannot take a product and just immediately start telling [him] that that's it. You got to foresee it, and you've got to research it. That's about all there is to it. A good philosophy and don't let them tell you [otherwise] because too many get overzealous and want to be the boss. Every guy that has a couple dollars in the company wants to be the boss. Like Jim Nance used to. Jim Nance called me one day in Chicago and said, "Laura (his wife's

name was Laura), George, Laura's gots a new designer over here that she's hired for us for our interiors." I said, "Well, do it, but not for Ford Motor Company." "Jim," I said, "I'm the boss. She hasn't come to me about it." I said, "We've got a whole organization to do that. Not [from] the outside." "Well, Laura is a good " I said, "That doesn't make any difference, Jim. I know, I like Laura very well, but he can't do that." So, I told that to Henry. He said, "Did that son of a bitch do that?"

Q: Was this when he was head of the MEL division—Jim Nance. They brought him in after Krafve was out?

A: Yeah. But Laura was—overstepped herself a little bit.

Q: Well, your career is really sort of a marvelous example of taking men, accounts and putting the right men on the right accounts and giving them their head and telling them what to—design what they felt.

A: Yeah, and what we did is to pick out the brains of a good designer and make them do that job. And, always, fundamentally, in their mind, make the money for the guy that hired you. Do the best you can and don't do anything that is going to disturb that because you've got to have—your contract will be up, and they can say how many dollars have we made.

Q: What's impressed me as I look over your extensive portfolio and the marvelous things that you turned out, is that you're always about a decade ahead of everybody. How did that happen?

A: We don't know. Just like I said about our schooling. I draw every day, and it's like this. If there's a piece of paper around, I'll draw on it, but that's exercise. I do it automatically, and the reason for it

is that's my job. There's something inherent in me: all styling, all times morning, noon and night, even my clothes—I'm not dressed [best] now, but I wouldn't go out without a tie. They kid me about it all the time.

Q: But the drawings you did back in the late Thirties and the early Forties and the marvelous service organization that you set up for the U.S. Armed Forces, all this was way ahead of everybody.

A: I know.

Q: How do you...?

A: We were always thinking ahead. That was our job, and the creativity in ourselves.

Q: Here you are, in 1941, advocating plastics, which is just in its infancy. Advocating light metals like aluminum, and all of this way ahead. The designs and the complete designs.

A: Well, we got into more than that. When we did the tires for Goodyear, they used to make a complete mould of about 1/8th size of a tire, and then they would do the...you know the design I'm talking about. Well, when we did that, we said we got something better than that. We did a tire for Goodyear [on] which they saved money but not to try to do what they did before, because we had another idea, and it's proved very, very good for them. So, they made money on it. That, again, it made money for the company. That saved our job, and each year they'd turn around and make a new contract.

Q: Well, that's interesting, but I still don't find the reasons why your designs were so forward looking, so…

A: If it's to toot our own horn, it's just the old creativity and the

creating [process] all of our lives. Try to create something to make it beautiful.

Q: You never stood still. You were always looking ahead.

A: Just like we don't now, my paintings show that. They say—everybody who has seen the paintings—professionals have seen the paintings say, "How can you still do pretty girls? How can you still—at your age?" I say, "Well, that doesn't mean a damn. If you got that instinct in you, you should do it." Because, it goes through one arm and out the other, that's all.

Q: Well, you were never—you never looked backward. You were the modern designer, personified.

A: Well, Harley Earl, Raymond Loewy and myself, I think, we have done more for the industry than anybody could of done. We have, because we feel our way. In our own minds, now that we're out of the picture, we feel that what we have done was to satisfy our own self, and, I think, Harley would have felt the same way if he were alive, and Raymond Loewy, I know, feels that way, and I feel that way.

Q: Mr. Lowey is still near the Place Athanee. He's not too far from there [in Paris].

A: Is he?

Q: You should get in touch with him.

A: I would if I was over there. I've been over 26 times. We used to go to automobile shows. I used to see him every time we were there.

Q: So, you see yourself as a triumvirate with Loewy, Earl and Walker—the modern, industrial designers.

A: That's what—Norman Bel Geddes was one of the beginners of

industrial design from Cleveland. A very good man and a very theatrical man, and then Henry Dreyfuss was, I'd say, number two on that same [level].

END