

VOICES OF LANSING: AN ORAL HISTORY

LANSING PUBLIC LIBRARY

Lansing, Michigan

Robert Huxtable

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Robert Huxtable

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of an interview conducted August 11, 1988, for the Lansing Public Library Oral History Project, by Helen Jones Earley and James Walkinshaw.

Signed, dated agreements of release and biographical information accompany the original cassette.

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers
Lansing, Michigan

July 31, 1990

VOICES OF LANSING
Oral History Project

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Robert Huxtable

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This is a recording made by Jim Walkinshaw and Helen Earley, of Robert Huxtable, 2220 Raymond Street, Lansing, Michigan 48906, telephone number (517) 374-8007 or 9. Bob was born on June 26, 1897. Bob maintains a D.P.E. after his name. This means Degrees Personal Experience.

This recording was made at the Oldsmobile Education and Development Center, North, at 4000 North Grand River in Lansing, on August 11, 1988. The recording was made in the Oldsmobile History Center.

HE: Which address do you want us to use?

RH: All my mail comes here. All my mail comes to one place. Once a week they throw it in a box and UPS brings it down.

HE: 2220 Raymond Street?

RH: Yes, that's where my office is. That's where they tolerate me. The zip code is 48906, and the phone is 374-8009. Well, there's two phones in there; it's 8007.

JW: 8007 and 9.

RH: Yes, most of them use 009. It's easier to remember.
32 < Laughter > There's times when both phones are
ringing. Sometimes they're awfully busy; they get
34 long distance phones. They've got machines out that
they have to have service, and the fellows go out to
36 Detroit area and all over Michigan. They've got some
machines in Oregon, some in New York City and Boston,
38 but the service is pretty much confined to Michigan;
got two boys on the road. The machine has a computer
40 on it. I think they got the bugs all out of it, but
< laughter > anything that moves has to have trouble.
42 It's like this State of Michigan with the
Lottery. I know a chap that's a mechanical genius.
44 He traveled all over the United States shooting
trouble on lottery machines. He's retired now. He's
46 only fifty. He went with the state when he was right
out of high school. He's a smart cookie.

48 HE: Did you graduate from Michigan State? What did you
major in?

50 RH: Yes, I was an Ag student, and I branched off the last
two years in horticulture.

52 HE: What year was that, that you graduated?

RH: 1919. I went to school there during the war. Well,
54 the last part of it was during the war. I was pretty
much alone on the campus, because there was a lot of

56 dropouts. They used to have a plaque there in the
Union Building and as I recall, it was eighty-four
58 fellows that lost their lives in the first world war.
Some of them were flyers. I used to walk in the
60 Union Building back in the thirties, and there was
this plaque on the wall. I knew every one of them.
62 When they changed the building over back here twenty,
twenty-five years ago, that plaque disappeared.
64 Nobody knows where it is.

JW: Were you born and raised in Lansing, Bob?

66 RH: I was born out here on a farm west of Lansing at
Delta Mills.

68 HE: What year was that?

RH: 1897. I'm older than the Oldsmobile.

70 HE: When is your birthday? Before August 21?

RH: Oh yes, my birthday's the 26th of June.

72 I can just barely remember my father. He died
in 1900. I can JUST remember my father.

74 HE: You were just a little fellow.

JW: How long did you stay on the farm then?

76 RH: I worked on the farm until summer of 1912. In the
summer of 1913 I came to Lansing. I got a job as a
78 clerk in the shipping room of Reo Motor Car Company,
punching a typewriter.

- 80 I graduated in 1914, and got a job as a
messenger in a bank for \$10 a week. I quit that job
82 and went back to the Reo, and they gave me a job as
clerk in the Purchasing Department for \$12 a week.
84 Of course, I had a brother down there. He had come
back from the West and he was down there.
- 86 HE: Was he older than you?
- RH: Yes, he was four years older than I was. There was
88 four of us boys. I was the youngest. Now I'm the
only one. They're all gone. My sister still lives
90 in Florida and she's younger than I am. She was
thirteen months old when my father died.
- 92 HE: How did he die?
- RH: He had pneumonia. In those days there was nothing to
94 do for it. He was only sick five days. My father
and mother died just ten years apart, to the very
96 day.
- HE: Bob, did your mother then raise the five of you
98 children by herself?
- RH: Yes. When my father died, in 1900, she took us to
100 live with my grandpa.
- HE: Was that her father?
- 102 RH: No, that was my father's father. My father was
farming a hundred acres out there for my grandfather.
104 My grandfather came from England, and he was a

"joiner." We call them carpenters. He built all the
106 houses out there in Delta, and he paid for his farm
that way. He came to this country in 18--. He came
108 first to Rockport, New York where my father, the
youngest of the family, was born. Then he came into
110 Delta down here, and he paid for that farm by
building houses and barns.

112 HE: Why did he decide to land in this area, particularly?
Was there some reason?

114 RH: I don't remember. I remember my grandfather outlived
my mother, too. He didn't pass away till 1911. I
116 used to ride with him in his horse and cart; but I
don't remember. I know the farm was paid for when my
118 father passed away. Then the grandfather took us
kids and my mother and went over to his place. We
120 stayed there until 1906. I went to school there. I
was nine years old then. I went to school in the old
122 schoolhouse down there.

In the meantime, she still owned sixty-four
124 acres next to where my grandfather's farm was. She
went over there and built a little house and took us
126 kids over there. There were six of us kids.

Then she passed away. We moved over on the big
128 farm in 1909, and she passed away in 1910. Three of
us kids were under twenty-one, and we were farmed out

130 then to other people. We were lucky. One of my
 sisters took us in; my kid sister and I.

132 JW: After you worked at Reo for a little bit -- ?

 RH: I worked at the Reo in 1913, and then I went back
134 there in 1914, after I got done with the bank and
 worked at Reo for a year.

136 HE: Then you decided to enroll at MSU?

 RH: Well, I had a friend out in the country, a kid that I
138 knew in high school. He'd gone to college one year,
 and he said to me one day, "Why don't you go on to
140 college?" I said, "I haven't got any money." He
 said, "Well, you could start." I said, "Well, I've
142 got \$90." "Well," he said, "why don't you start?"
 So I started, and did everything there was to be done
144 out there.

 HE: You graduated in 1919, you said? And you majored in
146 horticulture. Then what did you do?

 RH: I went on the ocean. No, I went down to Lawton, near
148 Grapeville; worked for a big New York brokerage firm
 that summer. They were sales agents for these grape
150 co-ops. They were the sales marketing branch, but
 they were privately owned. They sent a man out to
152 New York. There was a head man and three or four of
 us fellows in that. When the grape was over, then we
154 were supposed to be transferred to Florida.

I got a job through the college with a banana
156 trust, The United Fruit Company. I reported to New
York City, and I rode the boats for a year. I've
158 been in every port in the Caribbean Sea, except
Havana; seventeen trips. I got good money and I
160 saved it. First time out -- Well, we were college.
There was six of us fellows. We were troubleshooters
162 on the boat. That was a long story.

They was having trouble with the bananas pre-
164 ripening, and we was shooting trouble to find out
what was the trouble of it. They was running us
166 fellows on every boat. We worked for the Fruit
Dispatch Company, which was the sales organization of
168 the United Fruit Company. The United Fruit Company
was the old, old banana trust started by a man by the
170 name of Preston, a Boston man. He was in the States
in 1895, in sailboats.

I worked for a little Scotsman, who was a
172 chemist. It was interesting. First trip out I took,
174 I made \$150 a month with all expenses. It was a
pretty good job. First month I took my money with me
176 and lost it all in a poker game. Second month out I
took half my pay, and I lost that in a poker game.
178 So the third month I took \$20 with me, sent the rest
back here. I didn't lose the \$20 because I said I

180 had to keep that, so I quit playing poker.

< Laughter >

182 HE: Bob, you said that you were trying to determine what caused the bananas to ripen quickly.

184 RH: We ran experiments on the various ways of packing the bananas on the boat. That's a long story.

186 HE: Did you arrive at some degree of — ?

RH: Oh, yes. We had instruments that took the
188 temperatures. You took the percentage of CO₂ gas; when the bananas ripened. Each hold was sealed off
190 so we'd know. I worked every four hours, after they loaded the bananas in. I was signed on as a member
192 of the crew. It was interesting work, because we unconsciously -- In our reports, we were reporting
194 on the engineers (refrigeration engineers). Some of those fellows lost their jobs after we had --

196 HE: Did they determine that the refrigeration on some wasn't good enough?

198 Well, they weren't doing their work right. They were faking it. It goes back to the fact that back
200 in those days the bananas were brought on the boat at temperatures in the eighties, and they brought them
202 down to 53 and kept them at 53 to bring them up north. Of course the freezing engineer that brought
204 in the boat with the smallest percentage of ripes,

why he was top guy, see? If he didn't keep his
206 temperatures at 53, something would happen: They'd
ripen. If he didn't check his fans and his
208 temperatures every four hours, and it got away from
him, he'd get some ripe bananas. Instead of him
210 going down and checking his cargo and his
temperatures at 53, maybe he got down there and his
212 machinery had gone bad and he found them at 55, but
he'd always put it in the book at 53. So his book,
214 the report he handed in to the boss was perfect, but
the bananas was trouble. So we weeded out
216 refrigeration engineers who were less than perfect.

First two or three trips that we all took, we
218 were enemies. We were hated, see, because we were
working for the New York office. Those little seamen
220 were, you know -- seamen, but about the fourth trip
then the skipper was asking for us boys to be on the
222 boat because he said, "O.K., it's your trouble." But
we checked temperatures and fan speeds and the CO₂
224 every four hours. (Every eight hours, but it was
every four hours because we dovetailed ours in
226 between the other engineer. If we found something
wrong, we'd go to the engineer and tell him about
228 it.) We worked ourselves out of a job. In three
years we was all gone.

230 HE: Then where did you move on to? Where did you move on
to after that?

232 RH: I came back here and went back to Reo in Export
Sales.

234 HE: How long were you there?

RH: Three years.

236 HE: Always in the Export Sales Department?

RH: I started in the testing the engine room. I lasted a
238 couple of weeks and they put me upstairs in the
Export Sales. I lasted there three years; long
240 story. I'd rather not talk about it. The fellow I
was working for walked in one morning and said:
242 "You're fired. Clean out your desk." So that was
the end of that. Then I went to work for a big
244 construction company. I was the head timekeeper.

HE: What construction company?

246 RH: Reniger Construction. I was the head timekeeper for
about six years, 1924 till 1930, I think it was. I
248 had charge of all the timekeeping, made out all the
paychecks, balanced the books.

250 HE: Bob, then you moved from Reniger to where? What did
you do next?

252 RH: Then I went to work for Weissinger Paper Company. It
was a wholesale paper jobber's house in 1929, just
254 before the break, just before the bust. This fellow

256 founded a new company, and the stockholders were all
 people that I knew at that time, and I was the first
 man that he hired.

258 HE: You were a salesman, you said?

260 RH: It all goes back to the fact that (maybe I shouldn't
 say that) at that particular time I was a Knight
262 Templar. I'd gone up in the Masonry. I joined the
 Masons the day I was twenty-one years old. In fact,
 I've got a seventy year pin coming next week
264 sometime. Then all these boys I worked for, the
 Renigers, were all Knight Templars.

266 Then the fellow that started the paper company
 was a friend of mine, a Knight Templar. He started a
268 paper company, and I went to work as a salesman.
 Then the Depression came on, and everything went to
270 pot.

HE: Were you out of a job then?

272 RH: No, I stayed on. I had a little Chevrolet car and
 traveled to Charlotte, Grand Ledge, half of Lansing.

274 HE: When did you go into business for yourself?

276 RH: In 1932. I had a sister who had a farm out here, and
 she was making maple syrup. She wanted some labels
 for her cans. I got an artist and we made a little
278 label. I started that little business on the side on
 Saturdays and Sundays. I had an uncle that used to

280 keep the shop for me; he was retired. If somebody
called and wanted some things, he'd take care of
282 them, and I would see him at night. We started from
scratch.

284 HE: Now, was that always on the same location?

RH: No, I started at Farm Bureau. That's the reason I
286 got into Farm Bureau. I started in the Farm Bureau
Building over on East Shiawassee Street. Then I went
288 into a little building next to the Farm Bureau on
North Cedar. The Farm Bureau there was in the old
290 National Call Building. Then I was selling paper,
and of course, this man who was with me in college
292 was the head of the print shop and right next to the
Farm Bureau. Naturally, I got all the business
294 there. That wasn't through friendship, but he was a
good friend of mine through school. He's gone now.

296 But I had a little building next it. A fellow
was a pattern maker and inventor. He built the first
298 steamboat that was on the Grand River up here. He
had a little pattern shop there. His name was --
300 well, his brother's got a building on South
Washington Avenue, and the name's on the building.
302 He was an old bachelor and he lived upstairs. He was
good to me, so I rented the front room. In fact, he

304 passed away up there. Then they tore the building
down. Then I moved out of there.

306 This sideline; that was always a thorn in the
flesh with my boss. He didn't like that.

308 HE: You mean your Sugar Bush Supply business?

RH: Yes. I made that name up.

310 He always was kind of jealous. He didn't like
us fellows to make too much money because we took it
312 away from him. < Laughter > That's a long story
too. I could tell you things, but I hadn't better.

314 HE: Then you left the Weissinger Paper Company?

RH: No, I worked for them till the boss died. He died of
316 cancer. The fellow that they put in, he didn't agree
with me, and he threw me out one day.

318 HE: When was that?

RH: That was in 1953, I think it was. Then I went to
320 work for a paper company in Grand Rapids for about a
year. They got to "changing money on the temple
322 steps," and we disagreed, or agreed to disagree.

 Meantime my business was growing that was
324 started in '49, and I spent all my time with my
business. When I ended up in '76, I had the largest
326 and most successful wholesale house in the world.
Maple syrup and equipment; supplies and equipment.

328 HE: And you did sell syrup, too.

RH: Well, I used to sell some, but the equipment I was
330 all alone. The company now is out on Okemos Road.
He does very well with it.

332 JW: Is that where you ended up, Bob? On Okemos Road?

RH: That's where my company ended up.

334 JW: But when you were running it, where was it?

RH: I sold it out on West Saginaw Street.

336 JW: On West Saginaw; whereabouts?

RH: 4107 -- The second one next to Dexter Hardware. I
338 was the first one who went out there. I paid \$950
for a hundred feet. In '49 I put an old building on
340 it and 1976, I sold it for \$65,000.

JW: What was Saginaw Street like then?

342 RH: Oh, it was just a dirt road. Well, it was two line
cement. When I used to drive a horse and buggy back
344 in 1910, '11, and '12, that was just a dirt road.

HE: Where did the pavement end on Saginaw?

346 RH: They paved it to Grand Ledge first.

HE: When was that?

348 RH: That must have been somewhere in the twenties,
because that was one of the first roads. Between
350 Lansing and Charlotte was a two line pavement. They
put that in about 1920, and the Grand Ledge road was
352 after that.

HE: That was a two lane paved highway from Lansing to
354 Grand Ledge. Bob, prior to that where did the paving
end in Lansing? Can you remember? Was it as far out
356 as Waverly?

JW: Did it quit at the railroad track?

358 RH: Oh, in Lansing; in Lansing the pavement ended
somewhere out there where the St. Lawrence Hospital
360 is now. There used to be a watering trough there at
the end of the pavement. We used to water our horse
362 there. < Laughter > It's all changed; it's all
changed.

364 JW: Then it was just an old dirt road all the way to
Grand Ledge.

366 RH: And it was dirty too, boy! I remember one winter the
Oldsmobile people always tested their cars, and the
368 chassis. They'd put two seats on them, and they'd
run around out in the country. They used to drive
370 out on Saginaw Street. I remember one morning we
were driving east on Saginaw Street, and here's a
372 couple these testers coming west. I think we [were]
driving a cutter, which is narrow; but they were way
374 out here like this, see, and they were throwing the
dirt and everything else, like that. We got away
376 from them.

378 About fifteen - twenty years ago, Helen, we was
having a meet down in the city on Washington Avenue.
An elderly gentleman came up to me, and we got to
380 talking, and I told him that story about these
testers. He looked kind of funny, and he looked at
382 me and he said: "You know what? My job over at the
Olds was to clean up those cars after those drivers
384 got them all dirty."

I got his name; he'd retired from the Olds.
386 This was way back in the sixties. Of course he's
gone now, but I had his name: I was going to suggest
388 that he be honorary member of the club, but something
happened. But he said, "That was the first job I had
390 there at the Olds was to clean those dumb cars up."
He said, "Boy, did they get dirty!"

392 HE: Bob, when did you first become interested in
automobiles?

394 RH: When my mother moved over on the farm and built this
little house for us kids in 1906, she had a cousin
396 who was the neighborhood thresher. He'd lost his
wife, and he was living with his daughter. He was
398 "Uncle Charlie" Mossier. He had the first little
Curved Dash Olds in the neighborhood. He lived
400 around the corner and if we wanted to use a

402 telephone, we had to go over to Uncle Charlie's. He
lived with his daughter on a little farm over there.

404 About 1908, he bought this little one-cylinder
Olds, and I think it was a 1904. In the summertime
he'd come over to my mother's, because my mother was
406 a widow woman. He'd take her to the cinema. She'd
ride with him, and they would come to Lansing to the
408 movies, after dark. He would start out before dark,
but when he got home it was dark.

410 He had a little dickey seat on the back, and he
would take my kid sister -- because we were all alone
412 then with my mother. The rest of the family had gone
away. My older brothers were working. We used to
414 work for \$10 a month on the farms. My sisters used
to work for \$2.50 a week on the farms, in the
416 kitchen.

418 Anyway, Uncle Charlie would put my sister and
myself on this little dickey seat and take us up to
the neighbors, and we stayed there until they came
420 home. Of course, it would be probably ten, eleven
o'clock at night. The house is still out there. The
422 house was back from the road, and I remember I'd hear
that bang, bang, bang, coming into the driveway and
424 there was little lights on [the front]. We'd be
sleeping on the couch. We called her "Aunt Emma".

426 She lived there; she took us kids; that was
babysitting.

428 Uncle Charlie would come in and pick up my
sister, Ruth, and put her in his arms. He'd carry
430 her out and put her on this seat, because she was
sleeping. I'd walk out. He'd put Ruthie on the seat
432 and he'd say, "Now, Bobby, you hold on to Ruthie
because she isn't awake yet and she'll fall off of
434 the seat." So I held on to Ruthie, and he'd take us
home. I can remember him going out and picking up
436 Ruthie. She was only about eight years old then.
That was about 1907, 1908. Anyway, that's the first
438 time I ever rode in [a car].

JW: How did he see where he was going at night like that?

440 RH: Well, there wasn't anybody on the road at that time.
It didn't make any difference. He just followed the
442 ruts to Lansing. I think he took my mother three or
four times that summer.

444 He afterwards had a two-cylinder Reo. I've got
a picture of it, and his daughter and his
446 grandchildren, on the farm there.

He was the thresher. He passed away when I was
448 in college. His grandchildren, his two grand-
daughters, are still alive: One's in Florida and
450 one's down in Indiana.

JW: You didn't see very many cars, then, in that time
452 period?

RH: No, no. When we was in school there at Delta Mills,
454 the schoolhouse was up on a bank. We had recess
between morning and noon, a fifteen minute recess.
456 When we'd hear a car coming down the road, we'd run
down the bank and stand right there by the road when
458 they went by. Maybe once a week somebody would come
by, I guess. No one else in the neighborhood had any
460 cars.

JW: How did you get to school then, walk?

462 RH: Well, the country school -- we walked over to Delta.
That's about a mile and a half. Once in a while when
464 it was snowing, they'd come get you, pick you up and
bring you home; but you walked. I had a dinner pail,
466 and I had a slice of bread and some jelly and an
apple.

468 JW: Where did you get groceries in those days?

RH: Delta Mills had a little store over there. Then in
470 1910 (the store was still there) we used to come to
Lansing with a horse and buggy.

472 JW: How often would you do that?

RH: I don't remember now. I know being the youngest of
474 three brothers, and through necessity, I wore out
their clothes. My mother made them over for me. The

476 only thing I ever had new was my shoes. My mother
 would always bring me to Lansing, (that was one trip
478 in the summertime) and get me a pair of shoes so I
 could go back to school in the fall.

480 She went into the store; I remember just as
 though it was yesterday. Woodworth's was the shoe
482 store then, and Bob was the youngest man. He was a
 clerk. I remember he got some shoes, put them on my
484 feet, and he said to my mother, "They'll be two
 dollars." She pret-near fainted away because she'd
486 never paid over a dollar and a half for my shoes, and
 fifty cents was a lot of money.

488 Back in those days, if I had a penny to spend
 for candy at the store, I was lucky. The old store
490 always used to give us kids two pieces of candy for a
 penny. I used to go to that little store. I had a
492 little cart and I'd take the eggs over there, and I'd
 swap them for some sugar and some flour and a can of
494 kerosine. I had to be careful to keep the kerosine
 in the back of the little cart to keep it away from
496 the food. < Laugh >

 JW: So it didn't slop on it! So there was a lot of
498 bartering, then?

 RH: Well, I traded the eggs with everybody else, because
500 you didn't have money. We got through, with my

502 mother, but she died of appendicitis in 1910. She
was only sick five days. In 1910, I think she was
only forty-five or fifty.

504 JW: When you were out to the college, Bob, did you see
any cars or those kinds of things at that time?

506 RH: Oh, yes, during the war. One of the fellows down the
street belonged to another fraternity, and he had a
508 car. He had a Hudson. He was Jimmy Rasbeck. He was
a smart fellow. He was smart. He married the best-
510 looking gal on the campus. I lost track of Jimmy
afterwards. He belonged to the Olympics, and I was
512 living in Eunomian House up the street; and
afterwards went into Sigma Nu.

514 Jimmy had a Super Six Hudson. He came from some
very nice family in Detroit. That's the only car
516 that I ever knew that anybody ever had. Once in a
while one of the profs on the campus would have a
518 car.

JW: How did you get around then?

520 RH: At the campus? You walked; damn right you walked.

JW: Did you come into Lansing at all?

522 RH: A streetcar came down there. Oh, yes, you'd come to
Lansing. I worked my way through school. I didn't
524 have any money. The last year or so, I borrowed

money and then paid it back. One summer I worked for
526 fifteen cents an hour, on the campus.

JW: What were you doing there, out on the campus?

528 RH: That time, fifteen cents? I ran an experimental
power lawn mower one summer with a man that had
530 charge of the campus.

JW: What kind of a lawn mower was it?

532 RH: It was just a handmower with a little engine down in
front, and a loose belt; had one speed. Old Tommy
534 Gunson was the caretaker of the campus. He was an
old Scotsman, and he was brilliant, a very fine old
536 gentleman.

At that time they cut the grass on the campus
538 with a one-horse mower. It had three sections. A
man rode up here, and you had one horse up front. Of
540 course, he couldn't get up next to the trees. I had
a handmower, and I would take everything around that
542 the big mowers didn't do; pick up the leaves and the
chips and what there was left there too. I had a
544 couple bushel baskets. He came out one day, and he
said: "I've got a power mower. I want you to use
546 this."

I used it for a week or so, but it only had one
548 speed. It was pretty fast. One day it got away from
me, and I ran right into a big oak tree. About two

550 o'clock in the afternoon; I remember just as though
it was yesterday. I said, "Oh, oh! there goes my
552 job."

I walked over to the greenhouse; the tree was
554 quite close to the greenhouse. It's gone now. I
walked in the back in the greenhouse and Tommy Gunson
556 was standing there (he was working I guess) in the
greenhouse. I walked in the back door, and he looked
558 up at me and he said, "Oh, what happened to you?" I
said, "Mr. Gunson, I broke the mower." I was
560 trembling like that, see? "Well," he said, "what's
wrong with the mower?" I said, "It's geared up too
562 fast." He said, "Yes, I've been watching you." He
said: "Bring it over here. I'll call up the Ideal
564 Power Lawn Mower down in Lansing, and tell them to
come get that. That's an experimental mower." He
566 said, "You go get your handmower and go back to
work." I still had my job.

568 JW: Was that the first time you saw a power lawn mower?

RH: That was the first time. I think that's the first
570 time they ever had one on the campus. That same
summer I went over to the Military Department. The
572 fellow that was the United States Army man was in
charge of the students there. Those they chose, we
574 drilled one hour three times a week. They'd give us

576 \$8 a month and we got our uniform, and we'd wear
those uniforms because < unclear >.

578 I went over to a Sergeant Cross. He was in the
old Post Office building. I said: "Sarge, I've got
to get a job. You got a job?" He said: "I've got a
580 job for you; pay you fifteen cents an hour. I want
you to clean guns." I said, "O.K., I'll take it."
582 So he said: "Here's a screwdriver. You go over to
the armory, and there's a bunch of boxes over there
584 about six or eight feet long, tops all screwed on
them. I want you to take those guns all out and
586 clean them."

I took the screwdriver and went over, and I took
588 the top off of two or three boxes. I looked down and
took the rifles out. They were the rifles that we'd
590 practice with (the students), and they were all
clean. I couldn't do anything to them. I said
592 there's something wrong here. I went back over to
Sergeant Cross, and I walked in the room and I said:
594 "Sergeant Cross, those guns are clean. They don't
need cleaning." He looked up at me, and he looked up
596 to me, and he said, "Sonny, I told you to clean the
guns." I said, "Yes, Sir." I walked out and went
598 back to the armory, and I took every gun out of every
box, (he'd given me some cloths) and wiped it all

600 off. A couple weeks later I went back over to the
office, and I said "I've got a finished job." He
602 said: "That's fine. You finished the job. I want
you to sign this paper." "Now," he said, "I'll tell
604 you what happened. I had \$50 left in my budget over
to the Accounting Office, and I had to spend it by
606 the first of September or I would lose it. You got
most of that \$50." I took the slip over to the
608 Accounting Office, and they paid me cash. I was a
guard at his funeral; at his casket.

610 I used to carry mail on the campus: That was
the best job there was.

612 JW: Working for the Post Office?

RH: We picked up the mail over to the secretary's office.
614 Then I'd take it to the dormitories, because they had
the numbers on. We got so much a week for pay. We
616 worked for the secretary. That was when I was a
junior and senior. Of course, as a freshman you
618 didn't get a very good job.

There was nothing out there that I didn't do. I
620 used to represent a firm in Chicago. A man came
along and he sold party programs. Every time we had
622 a dance on the campus we had a little program, and
we'd change dances. I was his representative, and

624 I'd get so much money for every one of those deals
that we worked out.

626 HE: Bob, let me ask you something: How many cars do you
own now, and what are they?

628 RH: Today? I've got a 1980 2-door Delta out here with an
experimental wheelchair in it. I own the patent;
630 came out of New Zealand.

HE: Is that your own patent?

632 RH: No, no. That's Lynn Southworth's patent.

HE: Then, you've got your 1980 --

634 RH: That's my 1980 2-door. It's got 48,000 miles on it.

HE: And that's a Delta.

636 RH: That's the one I'm going to send to California.

HE: What other ones do you own?

638 RH: I've got a '77 big wagon Vista Cruiser that I bought
from a friend. I used to buy all my cars from the

640 Experimental Engineering Department. They all had
4,000 miles on them over there. That's a long story.

642 Perhaps I hadn't better go into detail with that.
That's probably best not to put that on record.

644 HE: O.K.

RH: I had a certain car come down and a certain engineer
646 would drive it 4,000 miles, and then when he had
4,000 miles, he'd say "Bob, the car's over there."

648 I had a friend here that wanted to get a car so
I called up over there, and there was two '77 wagons
650 in Engineering. See a certain man, he said, and he'd
take me out and show them to me. One had 4,000 miles
652 on and the other had 4,300 miles on it. One had a
dent in the back. (They were engineers' cars.) That
654 was back in 1976-77. This fellow was a very personal
friend of mine. He said, "I'll take that one." So
656 you bought those through the dealers. That car went
through this fellow down in the little town of
658 Springfield, Ohio; the Amish fellow -- you know him.

HE: Oh, Russ Yoder?

660 RH: Yes, I called Russ up. I said, "Russ, we've got one
car over here." He said, "O.K., Bob, I'll call them
662 up and tell them to release it to him." Then he
said, "No, I'll call you back and tell him how much
664 money it is." That friend of mine took that car and
drove it back to Tucson three or four years. It had
666 3,300 [sic] miles on it. He passed away with a heart
attack, so I got his car, and I got his trailer down
668 there. Very, very close friend of mine.

HE: Now you've got a '77 --

670 RH: A '77 wagon that's got 120,000 miles on it.

HE: Now, what's your other cars?

672 RH: I've got this 1904.

HE: 1904, and that's a Curved Dash that you want to sell
674 for \$20,000?

RH: Well, I told a fellow in England yesterday that I
676 would consider \$20,000 (He called me on the phone),
but I said "I reserve the right to back out of it."
678 That was two days ago. Yesterday I got a letter from
a friend of mine down in Illinois. He said, "I want
680 that car." So I wrote him a letter, and I bumped the
price up because he was going to get the trailer. I
682 told him, "I don't care whether you take the car or
not, because it'll break my heart when it goes
684 anyway." But the kids don't want it, and we can't
use three. I've got the '29 Hutmobil Roadster.

686 HE: A 1929 Hutmobil.

RH: Six-cylinder Roadster with six wire wheels; what we
688 call "Deluxe." I bought it in San Antonio, Texas, in
1968.

690 JW: When did you get the Curved Dash?

RH: A fellow walked in my shop in 1968, from Akron, Ohio,
692 and he said, "Bob, I've got two basket cases, Curved
Dash Olds' -- 1904's." He said, "I was going to put
694 them together, but I've changed my plans and now
they're for sale." I said, "Well, what have you
696 got?" He told me what he had, and I said "How much
do you want for them?" He said, "\$1,250." I said,

696 "O.K., bring them in." He brought them in the next
week and dumped them in the warehouse. We had axles,
700 engines, and some springs, and that's about all.

Meantime, Bill Gebhard had been coming in. He
702 was my neighbor in Westmoreland, and he'd become a
friend of mine. I said to Bill, "You put the two
704 cars together; I'll furnish everything; I'll get one
car, and you'll get one car." So Bill put those two
706 cars together, and I got my Curved Dash Olds in '78
and Bill got his in '79. Of course, he made some
708 mistakes, because we had to rebuild. I've added to
it: I've got Frank Smith's pressure oiler on mine,
710 and I've got my own carburetor which I bring out from
Australia. It's a duplicate of a 1904 carburetor.
712 That's another story.

I've got carburetors in South Africa, Italy,
714 Norway, Sweden, Arleman, England; practically every
state in the Union. I've got three carburetors on
716 three Curved Dash Olds' in Australia. I think I've
got one in New Zealand, several in Florida. In fact,
718 I've got a back-order on them right now. That's
another story.

720 Frank Smith was a collector in England. He had
two Curved Dashes. He's got carburetors on both of
722 them. There's another chap in South Africa, and his

724 car's got one on. Frank Smith used to come to
Hershey, to the meets. He passed away three or four
years ago; wonderful fellow.

726 HE: Bob, are you a distributor for this special
carburetor?

728 RH: No, that's my bobby business. That's a long story.
I got acquainted with a top mechanic in Maryborough,
730 Queensland, by the name of Peter Olds, through
antiques. That was back in about '74.

732

< Side 2 >

734 -- invented it, but Olds put it in production.

736 He's got over 800 beds in one state in
Australia. He's got a bed that's just out of this
world; it's so simple. The health industry here,
738 well, I'd better not say anything about it. It's a
problem to break in, but if you've got someone that
740 gets a terminal illness in your home and you've got
to take care of them yourself, we've got the answer.
742 The bed's on test now in northern Minnesota. In
fact, I'm due up there for a tour up there. I'm
744 trying to get out of that tour.

You know what happened to that tour? Gary
746 Hoosbeen, you know what he did? He called up Bill
Gebhard and he said: "Listen, we're going to send a

748 driver down and going to drive Bob back with his
Curved Dash Olds, and he's going to go on the tour.
750 When the tour's over we're going to drive him back to
Lansing, and we're going to fly this fellow back
752 < unclear >. I wrote to Gary and I said: "Gary, I
can't stand that. Don't send him down." I'm
754 expecting a letter today, and Gary's going to say
"We've already hired him." I'm going to say I'd
756 rather not.

HE: I'm kind of glad that you're telling me this, Bob,
758 because I'm not going to be able to get up to
Minnesota like I'd thought. I know you had planned
760 to ride back with us after our invitation.

RH: That's O.K. There's three or four planes coming
762 back. I've got a Visa Card. < Laughter >

HE: Well, when is Gary going to send this man down for
764 you?

RH: I'm going to have an argument with Gary, because he
766 planned this whole thing, see? I'm going to back out
on it. I'm going to fly up there and fly back.

768 HE: Where are you staying while you're up there?

RH: I don't know; wherever they tell me. Neighborhood
770 motel or something, maybe. I don't care. I may not
even go yet. I think I'm going to go, because I've

772 got that business call up there in Rochester. The
 bed's on test up there.

774 JW: The car -- the wheelchair that you were talking
 about?

776 RH: No, no, that's a different deal.

 JW: No, but I was curious about that; the wheelchair in
778 the car.

 RH: That's a 1980, out here now.

780 JW: Who developed that?

 RH: A self-made inventor and millionaire in New Zealand.
782 He made one for his friend. Ben Southworth has the
 largest and most complete antique automobile museum
784 in the Southern Hemisphere. Self-made man, and in
 New Zealand, he's been knighted by the
786 British/English government; he and his wife, his
 "lady." He has one of the 1896 Benz cars. On the
788 hundredth anniversary of the Mercedes-Benz, they flew
 him back to the factory with his car, (he and his
790 wife) as guests of the Mercedes people. I've met
 him. I've been in Australia seven times and on tours
792 of New Zealand five or six times. In fact, I've
 already registered for 1992.

794 He made this wheelchair, improved on his first
 one, sent it out to me and said, "Bob, it's yours."
796 See if you can put it across there. I dealt with

798 General Motors' "new devices" for eighteen months
down here in Detroit. I have a card that I can go
anywhere, and show them this; but they didn't get
800 anywhere with it. They call it the aftermarket. In
fact, they got behind on it. In the meantime, an
802 Englishman designed one, and that's being sold in the
country. But that's my problem.

804 JW: Bob, back to Curved Dashes, have you done a
significant amount of looking at early Curved Dash
806 time frames, and understand the -- perhaps, when cars
were made and what was made where? Have you done
808 much of that looking?

RH: No, because Bill Gebhard restored the cars. He
810 restored his car and mine at the same time, and I
didn't pay any attention to it. Gary Hoosbeen, and
812 (who's that other fellow up there?) Roy Bernick?;
he's an excellent mechanic. He comes from a very
814 successful company. He can do anything he wants to.
I have two carburetors short on him right now. He
816 wants to put them in stock. He won't do any work
outside, but his company has four hundred trucks on
818 the road.

HE: What type of company is he in?

820 RH: He's a distributor of one of the soft drinks and one
of two of the largest distributors in probably, eight

822 counties up there. Old, old, very successful
 colleague.

824 HE: Then he must have this side business where he needs
 carburetors from you?

826 RH: Maybe he's just playing with it; I don't know. He's
 a very fine chap. He came across the country in one
828 of these three times. He's different. (Dare to be
 different.) I rode with him. I went down to Fort
830 Wayne with him; (very fine chap). He's a little
 different from the rest of the boys; but then, that's
832 O.K. I'm different too.

 jw: Bob, do you have any opinion on whether the volumes,
834 the numbers of cars that were made that are
 advertised are right, wrong, or indifferent?

836 RH: Well, I saw a Curved Dash Olds this summer advertised
 for \$32,000.

838 JW: No, no, I don't mean that. I mean the numbers of
 cars that were made back like in 1901.

840 RH: Well, they started out -- I think they made 400 at
 first, and in 1904 they made 4,500, and in 1905 they
842 made 5,500.

 JW: Do you think those are right, or wrong?

844 RH: I have no way of knowing that. I can't tell you
 that. They came to me way back in the sixties and
846 wanted me to start a Curved Dash Olds club, when I

was still in business. I didn't have time to do it.
848 I shoved it off and Gary picked it up, up there.
He's doing an excellent job, although he has his own
850 electronic business today, and sometimes I think he's
spending too much money or too much time on Curved
852 Dash Olds'. I get the impression that business is
first. It is quite a responsibility.

854 He's got members all over the world, and another
fellow helps him. Gary used to work for a big
856 electronic firm up there, and he traveled the
Southwest. Every time he'd come to Tucson, he'd
858 stop. That was before he went into business for
himself, so I got very well acquainted with him down
860 in Tucson. He'd stop off for a couple hours, ready
to call a couple customers there.

862 I have that reproduction of that 1907 book, you
know. I have the original book. I understand
864 there's another one out. It has one more page in it.
They're for sale down there at the museum. I put
866 them through when I was still in business.

They've never found a 1906 yet. I look back and
868 see the ones I passed up. I was on a tour in
southern California in May, before I came back this
870 time. Out east of San Diego; one- and two-cylinder
cars, and there was seven or eight Curved Dashes

872 there. No, three Curved Dashes and four others of
 the M car. That's with the tonneau on the back, and
874 that's with the bigger engine. They were all owned
 in San Diego, and those fellows that owned those cars
876 -- Those are good cars. They can put a couple
 people in the back, and there's a longer wheelbase
878 and the engine sets different; got a more powerful
 engine. Those are nice automobiles. I think there's
880 one of them down at the museum. You know, Russ
 Yoder's. It hasn't got a tonneau on.

882 JW: Yes, right, it does not. Well, no, there's a Reo and
 an Olds down there. It's a 1906, is that? The one
884 down at the museum is Russ Yoder's old car.

 RH: He bought it in Louisiana. Russ told me about the
886 history of it. I think it needs a little attention
 but that's O.K., because it doesn't have the tonneau
888 on the back.

 JW: Right, it just has a box, like.

890 RH: But those boys out there on the tour; there was three
 or four of those. I didn't get a chance to ride with
892 them because they had other people.

 There was one of them owned right there in Santa
894 Barbara; an ex-General Motors man, Cliff Sponsel, up
 on the hill -- a very good friend of mine. He's got
896 one of the first autocars. He's got quite a

collection up there. He's a tremendous mechanic.
898 He's a General Motors mechanic. He had one of the
General Motors' class down there, used to -- very
900 fine chap, and very knowledgeable guy.

JW: Bob, go back to the farm for a minute, will you? Go
902 back to the farm with us again. How did you get
water?

904 RH: Oh, we had a well.

JW: Handpump?

906 RH: Yes, it had a handpump on it.

JW: Did you ever get to a point where you had a gas
908 engine running anything?

RH: Yes. In the twenties my older brother took the farm
910 over, during the war. [He] worked in those plants
down here: My brother's old farm, and lived in my
912 mother's old home. He came back from the West about
1915 and was a part-time farmer. That was a put-put
914 engine.

HE: Was it an Olds engine?

916 RH: I don't remember. On my uncle's farm out this side
of Williamston -- He had a big farm out there.
918 You see, my mother was a Turner. I trace my mother's
ancestry back to the Mayflower. There is only one
920 descendant/ancestor I can't prove. If I can prove
that, I can be a member of the Mayflower Descendants.

922 My daughter asked my mother; and my grandfather came
to this country from England.

924 About four or five years ago my daughter went to
Condom [sic]. She came back through Barnstaple, and
926 she took a picture of the church where my grandfather
went to church and where he was married before he
928 came to this country. She has a picture there of a
marker, a slab about eighteen inches wide and five
930 feet high sticking out of the ground. Everyone back
in those days was buried in a churchyard cemetery
932 right next to the church. That's got "Huxtable" on
it, and it's got 1717. That goes back to Cornwall's
934 time.

I still have some distant relatives who are
936 farmers in England. I was supposed to go back and
see them. They're second cousins. I don't know as
938 I'll ever get there. The name came from people who
were hucksters, who were basically [vendors] to the
940 nobility, and they claim that's how the name
originated.

942 I was coming out of Adelaide, Australia, on one
of my trips. I was coming out of Adelaide north to a
944 little town out there about ten miles. One of the
fellows who was riding with me said: "Bob, watch
946 down the road; I'm going to show you something."

When he stopped the car, here was the name on the
948 street, "Huxtable."

My grandfather had six brothers. One of them
950 went to Australia and they never heard from him.
When I went to Australia in '68, I started thinking
952 I'd find him. I kept writing, writing, back then;
and on one of my trips in the seventies, I found a
954 fellow over there. He said, "Without a doubt, my
grandfather was your grandfather's long lost
956 brother." "Because," he said: "I went to the
archives, and when those people came to Australia
958 back then they had a complete family history. It's
all on file." He said: "I traced it back, and my
960 grandfather was your grandfather's brother."

There was four of those men left down there.
962 That was about 1970-72. They were in their
seventies, all retired. I think they've all passed
964 away. I know one of them is gone. One of them
worked for Gulf Oil: He was the top man with Gulf
966 Oil in Adelaide. Adelaide is a cultural city in
South Australia. I lost track of him. One was an
968 engineer. His wife and his boy's still alive. I
still write to them.

970 Peter Olds took me out of -- I couldn't find
 anybody named Huxtable in Maryborough, but Peter says
972 I'm still looking. < Laughter >

HE: You mentioned that your mother was a Turner?

974 RH: That's right.

HE: Is that any relation to the Turner associated with
976 the Turner-Dodge?

RH: Oh, yes. My mother was Jim Turner's ... niece, or
978 twice over. The Turners were railroad people here,
 you know, one of the well-known railroad people.
980 Turner Street down here was named after them. I can
 go over here on Willow Street right now, and the
982 house my mother was born in is right over on Willow
 Street, just west of Logan. It's an old house up
984 there, and it's still there. I should go over and
 take a picture of it. That's where my mother was
986 born, but she was out to Livingston as a school
 teacher in the country schools.

988 That family -- my Uncle John was a big farmer
 out there. He had a little engine, and that was a
990 little Olds engine. He pumped water with it. He had
 a wellhouse out back there. I used to go out there
992 in 1910, -'11, -'12, and spend a week out there on
 the farm.

994 Uncle John, on Sundays -- There was a big hill
 just east of the Red Cedar River with sand at the
996 bottom. The cars would get stuck down there. He'd
 have two teams and a hired man in the barn. They'd
998 come up and want him to pull cars up to the top of
 the hill. I remember he used to take the team down
1000 there and haul them up there, and they'd pay him a
 dollar. The hired man would make five or six dollars
1002 on Sunday afternoon. That was just two Sundays that
 I was there. That was quite a lot of money back in
1004 1910 -- or could have been in 1909, because Mother
 was still alive when I went out there; 1908, 1910,
1006 1911.

JW: Did folks have electricity in those times?

1008 RH: No, no, electricity came out to the farm where my
 brother lived out on West Willow, in 1921.

1010 JW: What did you use for light?

RH: Just kerosine lamps.

1012 JW: Candles? Anybody use candles?

RH: No, we never had any candles. Only candles I ever
1014 saw was on a Christmas tree, and we had to watch
 them.

1016 HE: You probably had those old fashioned lamps that had
 the mantle, the little white wicks that you weren't
1018 supposed to touch or they would disintegrate?

- JW: Those would be gas.
- 1020 HE: No, these were kerosine.
- JW: Kerosine lamps, with a little mantle?
- 1022 RH: That was the main thing to get at the grocery store
was a little can of kerosine. Of course, in the
1024 winter time we had one of these old great big, hard
coal stoves.
- 1026 JW: Potbellied stove?
- RH: No, no, it was a hard coal with isinglass around it,
1028 and that sat in the middle of the -- We had this
chestnut-hard coal, and the fire never went out.
- 1030 JW: That was the only heat in the whole house?
- RH: Well, it was the only heat we had.
- 1032 HE: Didn't you have a cook stove in the kitchen?
- RH: Yes, my mother had a cook stove and I helped saw up
1034 the rails, fences, and lengths like that, and the
cook stove would boil and heat the water.
- 1036 JW: How'd everybody take a bath?
- RH: Well, do you want to hear that story?
- 1038 JW: Sure.
- RH: O.K. I can remember in 1907, or '06, when my mother
1040 first moved over there. I want to tell you
something: On Saturday night we took a bath! Mother
1042 would heat the water on the stove, and we had a
galvanized tub. She would put it in the middle of

1044 the kitchen floor, and she'd put my kid sister in
 that tub and she'd scrub us, on Saturday night. We
1046 had to be clean when we went to Sunday School the
 next day.

1048 We went to Sunday School in the morning and
 church at night; walked over to the village. The
1050 church is still over there. Anyway, I can remember
 my kid sister and I sat there in that tub, and my
1052 mother would wash my back and wash us. We had to
 have a bath; it was Saturday night. Don't kid
1054 yourself! My sister's still alive, in Florida, and
 in very poor health.

1056 HE: Bob, did your mother make her own soap?

 RH: I don't remember Mother ever making soap. No, she
1058 might have, but I don't remember. I don't think so.

 HE: But she baked her own bread.

1060 RH: Oh, yes. She had a schedule. I can't remember what
 it was, but Sunday was the Sabbath and boy, you
1062 didn't do anything on Sunday because that was Sunday.
 Monday was wash day, and Tuesday was ironing day, and
1064 Wednesday was mending day. I think Thursday was the
 baking day, when Mother baked the bread in the cook
1066 stove. I don't know what she did Friday. If we had
 to do any shopping, Saturday was the day we did it.

1068 HE: Where did you go to do your shopping?

RH: We went to Delta Mills, a little country store until
1070 about 1909 or 1910, when we came to the city, into
Lansing. It was about five miles out there. See,
1072 the farm where the Bible School is out there on
Willow Street -- That was part of the old farm. My
1074 brother sold that to the Bible School when he got
through and before he retired. He always said that
1076 he wanted something there that would keep; either a
golf course, or a college, or a school.

1078 My next older brother lived across the street,
on the twenty-four acres. Of course, that got away
1080 from us, so we don't own the property up there
anymore (any Huxtables).

1082 Before my brother passed away (my next older
brother) about five years ago, he had the old farm
1084 dinner bell they used to have over on the old farm.
He gave that to the Bible School and they've got it
1086 in storage. We're trying to build a monument and put
a piece about it, where it came from. That's being
1088 discussed now.

The progress on the project is not on the back
1090 burner, but it's being discussed. I think it's going
to end up with Bobby paying money, because my brother
1092 left it to the Bible School: They always had to keep
it; they couldn't get rid of it. They can't even

1094 give it to his sons. They'd like it. I'd like it
 myself, but we're going to build a place out there so
1096 it will be there as long as the Bible School is
 there. That was the forty acres my mother had. The
1098 Bible School is right there, right where my mother
 built us kids' house there.

1100 Now my other brother; twenty-five years ago he
 went across from part of the old farm and built a
1102 house over there, beautiful home. He passed away
 about five years ago. He was ninety-two when he
1104 passed away. He was still [active].

 JW: Bob, when you came into town to get groceries and
1106 supplies, did you have to go downtown to have that
 happen?

1108 RH: Oh, yes. There was some stores down in North
 Lansing. It was grocery stores, and butcher shops,
1110 and the old mills; two gristmills down in North
 Lansing. One was Madison Mill, and one was Chris
1112 Price's.

 JW: Were those still in operation?

1114 RH: Madison Mill was at the east end of the dam up there.
 I can remember in 1910, taking wheat down there with
1116 wagons and the horses, and taking the flour back to
 the country. Chris Price's Mill was over on the

1118 corner of Turner and Grand River on the northwest
corner.

1120 JW: Were those water powered still?

RH: Oh, yes, they were all water powered. I remember Mr.
1122 Madison. He ran the Madison Mill. That one had been
there for a long, long time. See, North Lansing was
1124 first, before they went uptown. Florence, my wife,
was born in North Lansing. Her father was a retail
1126 meat man down there for years.

HE: When were you married?

1128 RH: 1923, as I recall. I lived in the same house on
Westmoreland for fifty-three years. I lived on
1130 Westmoreland when there was just a few houses out
there, 1923. Used to be, that was where we went to
1132 the circus. That was the old Osborn Park. Chase
Osborn, Governor of the State of Michigan; he had a
1134 dairy farm there, and then they subdivided it. The
persons that followed subdivided it. That was one of
1136 the first subdivisions in Lansing. I was the oldest
one there, when I sold out in '77. I understand the
1138 value of the property has doubled.

HE: Like everything else.

1140 RH: Well, everything in Tucson has tripled.

HE: Bob, you're going on this Lansing-to-Dearborn Run,
1142 aren't you?

RH: I sent them my money the other day. I have a driver,
1144 David Leonard. He's a nephew of George Vogel, that
bought my business. David's a fine chap. He's the
1146 manager of one of the financial businesses downtown;
graduated oh, Kalamazoo College or something like
1148 that. He's a smart kid. He likes to go. He drives
the cars.

1150 I just built a flashing -- See, Last year a
lady came up over a little hill and pret-near ran
1152 into the fellow ahead of me. She was driving too
fast and caught up with him. Then she hit this
1154 double line. She had to stay back of him for about
four or five miles. She was very irritated, so when
1156 she went by him she had words to say that I won't
repeat. He said he didn't like that. So, at the
1158 one- and two-cylinder meet down in Lexington,
Kentucky --

1160 A very good friend of mine down in Chicago had a
flashing light, on the road, so I built myself a
1162 flashing light and fixed it -- six volts. I'm going
to put it up on the back of my car, strap it up
1164 there, and that's going to flash all the time I'm on
the road.

1166 HE: Oh, that's a good safety device, isn't it?

RH: Curved Dash fellows should have done it years ago. I
1168 built my own. I built it right at the show. In
fact, I've got some special straps coming in from the
1170 saddle man, to strap it on the car. [It will]
probably go with the car if I sell the car. It's
1172 safety. Even on the back roads, you should be
protected.

1174 HE: Oh, certainly, especially at night. You don't drive
at night, do you?

1176 JW: Not with that, much.

RH: There's a lot of things on my little car that are not
1178 standard, not original. That pressure oiler --
Frank Smith was a very fine engineer; had an
1180 engineering company. He had two Olds' in England --
Manchester. (I was supposed to ride with him on one
1182 of the London to Brighton tours and never got to it.)

The drip oiler (which is original), which a big
1184 oiler like that, it dripped it -- one drop every six
counts. You see, that don't make any difference
1186 whether your engine just turned over, parked, or
whether you're going down the road twenty miles an
1188 hour. You're still getting six drops, so I burnt the
bearings out on my car. About that time Frank said,
1190 "Well, I'm going to make some pressure oilers," so he
sent me a pressure oiler. The pressure oiler works

1192 on a cam and the faster the engine goes, the more oil
 you get.

1194 JW: Right, the way it should be.

 RH: If you just turn it over like this, you still get
1196 enough, so you don't worry. In fact, you've got
 excess oil. You've got to draw some of it off.

1198 Frank sent ten of those oilers to this country.
 I got one of the last ones. They're all down in
1200 Pennsylvania; most of them. There's one in
 California. But boy, you get oil. You get oil.

1202 JW: Shall we stop for just a second?

 RB: No, let him talk for awhile.

1204 JW: Do you know Roger? [Roger Boettcher, Leavenworth
 Photographics]

1206 RH: I've known him for about thirty-five years, I guess.

 RB: About that long, something like that.

1208 RH: Anyway, I think my car's a little better than some of
 them. I've got a transmission that was built by

1210 Cadillac; a one-cylinder Cadillac man in Canada.

 He'd restored his Cadillac, and he built a
1212 transmission for me. Don't ask me how I got it here.

 He delivered it in Detroit, and I picked it up in
1214 Detroit, and we didn't have any trouble. He built

 two transmissions. In fact, he built three: He
1216 built a spare one -- very fine chap.

JW: Bob, do you remember when the forge plant was built?

1218 RH: Oh, yes. The forge, out on West Saginaw Street.

JW: Right. What was that for, originally?

1220 RH: I think it was drop forging. It used to make a lot
of racket out there. Of course the Durant Plant was
1222 just up there on Westmoreland.

JW: Do you remember when that was built?

1224 RH: Oh, yes. That was built, I think, before World
War I. Durant built that and started making cars.

1226 RB: 1921. That's what I show on our negatives. Maybe
that'll help you remember something.

1228 RH: Twenty-one, Roger? 1921. That was a beautiful plant
up there that Durant built. He built a Durant car
1230 there, and afterward he built that little Star car.
I found one of those Star cars in Australia, still in
1232 this fellow's garage, out on a ranch. He bought it
new and imported it: The family did it. He's a
1234 relative of Peter Olds. He's way up north, way up by
Cairns. I tried to talk him out of it, but it was
1236 back in there and he said, "Oh, no, that was my dad's
car." It was a little Star Sedan, and it sat there.
1238 He's a big rancher. Probably right there now.

JW: Did you see a lot of Durants and Stars in those days
1240 here in Lansing?

RH: Yes. Of course, there was people that said the
1242 Durant was a [motor], and the poor fellow died
employed with a bowling alley over in Flint. You
1244 know, ninety percent of life is luck and the other
ten percent is being there when they pass out that
1246 ten percent. He didn't. He went up and down, and
the last time he went down he never went back up. He
1248 was a brilliant man in his day. I never met him.
They named the park over here: He bought that and
1250 gave it to the City of Lansing. I don't think
they've even got a recognized monument there for him.

1252 HE: Well, it says "Durant Park."

JW: But that's all.

1254 RH: Sometimes I wonder if these cities appreciate what's
done for them. I don't think they do; some of them
1256 don't. I could say some other things, but -- In
fact, I would say this: When they dedicated the
1258 R. E. Olds Museum, as I recall it, one alderman
showed up. The mayor wasn't there.

1260 HE: Who was the alderman?

RH: I don't remember. I met him. That was back when
1262 they opened the new museum. I'd better not say what
I -- Well, it goes back to the fact that they can
1264 put you in jail for what you say and what you do, but
they can't do anything to you for what you're

1266 thinking about. I've been paying fines over to
 Lansing for some minor traffic things that I would
1268 say that the last time I'm in Lansing, I'm going to
 get a ticket, and when they send it to me in Tucson
1270 I'll say: "He moved to Australia, and his address is
 45 King Street. Send him a bill."

1272 I'm kind of bitter about this traffic business
 in Lansing, very bitter. I could draw you pictures
1274 of things that's happened to me in the traffic that
 cost me \$25 that's just silly, silly. They used to
1276 have a parking lot down there by the old -- next to
 the one on Allegan Street. Up there in a little
1278 bitty place up there, "Put your money in the one on
 the left hand side." Must have meant the parking
1280 meters, but you've got to look up there, see; you've
 got to look for it.

1282 I've got a lot of stories to tell. Let's just
 say that I just don't agree with traffic regulations.
1284 For instance, when we had that General Motors meet
 down here two years ago, they were supposed to come
1286 down and put hoods on the meters down there to the
 swap meet. We parked our cars there, and we got two
1288 tickets every day -- our cars. It cost me a letter
 and sending it back as a traffic problem. I told
1290 them if they had known what was going on (what they

promised), why didn't they come down there? Why was
1292 it necessary for me to write back and tell them that
I wasn't going to pay a ticket? Sometimes I wonder
1294 if they just organize the confusion.

HE: Did you get out of paying that ticket?

1296 RH: Oh, yes. I sent the tickets back and said, "I refuse
to pay it." It's a good thing I didn't, because I
1298 would have blown my stack. I could tell you other
things that happened in the city, but I won't.

1300 JW: Bob, do you remember the Inter-Urban?

RH: Yes, I used to ride the Inter-Urban out to Waverly
1302 Park. It went up over the Grand Trunk Railroad
tracks, and the Inter-Urban went out to Pine Lake.

1304 JW: What was out at Waverly Park?

RH: It was a dance floor and a roller rink. There was
1306 two fellows in my class in high school, the Roscoe
boys. One of them was Ronnie. Their father had a
1308 paddle wheel at the Waverly Park. You bought two
paddles for a quarter, and he sold all the paddles he
1310 had when he was up on a stand. He had a big wheel up
there. Every time he would run the wheel somebody
1312 got a box of chocolates. Well, you stayed right
there until you got a box of chocolates for your
1314 girlfriend, see?

1316 He had two boys in high school with me. Roscoe;
he ended up working for Oldsmobile after he got back,
1318 in the twenties. He had a good job out in
California. It was Ernie and Lester. Lester was the
1320 oldest one. Their dad, I can remember him standing
out there and we'd buy two paddles. When he'd sold
1322 all the numbers and all the paddles was out, then
he'd give it a whirl. Somebody got a box of
chocolates.

1324 I designed a wheel like that down in the
woodshop in Tucson, with the cooperation of a very
1326 fine friend of mine over in Canada, who'd made one of
those wheels. I was going to have it to take to the
1328 meets. It was going to have paddles, and the cars'
names would be on the paddles. We'd start it going
1330 in the parking lot, and you'd get prizes. You know,
something for your car or something like that. Of
1332 course, the money would go to -- maybe in the
treasury. I got that fellow all lined up, but that's
1334 one of those jobs that I'd better leave alone.

HE: Do you have any patents to your name? What was the
1336 year of your first patent?

RH: Patents: I had patents. I patented a power tapper
1338 in 19___. It's probably run out now. It was built
for me by a chap down in a little town outside of

1340 Boston who was a mechanic out of Maine. I had a
patent: I've still got it in my file. Let's see,
1342 that patent went out in 1917. That date was in the
sixties. No, that would be gone now. Anyway, a chap
1344 in Australia picked up the patent, changed it, and
put it on the market. It wasn't successful. I had
1346 the best one, but I never put it into production.

HE: Do you have other patents?

1348 RH: Oh, yes.

HE: Any dealing with the automobile?

1350 RH: Patents? No, I don't think so. I ended up as the
largest distributor of maple syrup equipment items in
1352 the state. In fact, my company out here is the
largest -- the one I sold out is the largest --
1354 George Vogel's president of the company down in
Charlotte. It's over a hundred years old. I sold
1356 him my stock when I moved out over there. He's been
very successful. He has plenty of help and a nice
1358 place, and well financed; that's important.

HE: What would you have done different in your life, Bob?

1360 RH: Well, I'd like to go around a second time, but I
won't get the chance.

1362 HE: We all would that. < Laughter >

RH: I lived with a lot of things. I used to tell my
1364 brother about it. He'd say, "Well, it's too bad, too
bad."

1366 When the war came on I saw men who went into
private industry, did things that was very successful
1368 because in the war back there -- "Win the War!"
regardless of cost. I observed a lot of things back
1370 there that I'd rather not talk about.

I had five nephews in Europe, and they all came
1372 back satisfactory. They all had some pretty close
calls. I'd rather not talk about it, this war
1374 business.

The day the Armistice was signed, in 1918, I was
1376 put on the train over here to go in the Army. The
train never pulled out. There was thirty-seven of us
1378 fellows, draftees. The man that was running the
draft said: "You fellows come with me. We're going
1380 to march back downtown. He didn't hear a squawk;
thirty-seven of us; the day the Armistice was signed.

I had orders in my pocket for appointment in
1382 Officers Training School. Camp Fremont, California.
1384 I've still got that little postcard that says "Report
for duty."

1386 I had a brother in France in the first world
war. He wasn't treated too good, but he came back

1388 alright. I had a roommate in France in the first
 world war. He talked more than me.

1390 HE: Bob, we appreciate the time you took to come down
 here today.

1392 RH: Unfortunately, necessity is that I sell my car, my
 Olds. I wrote a fellow yesterday down in Illinois, a
1394 friend of mine. I said, "I don't care whether you
 take it or not." I said, "I'd rather leave it every
1396 summer, and if it's still here next summer, that's
 something else again." It's going to be a sad time.

1398 HE: Of course; you've had it so long, you feel very close
 to it. Did you ever name your cars?

1400 RH: No, that came up, but Bill and I never -- I know we
 discussed it. There was another thing Bill came up
1402 with, with our two cars. We put these rear trussrods
 on them. We made them and put them on ourselves
1404 because the 1904, when you back up, the brakes lock.
 You just stop like that, see? So some fellow
1406 somewhere designed these trussrods. Bill had them
 made and put a set on his car and a set on mine.
1408 Boy, I'm telling you it makes all the difference in
 the world. In fact, Bill gave me one that I was
1410 supposed to put into production and I lost it. Bill
 don't like me anymore. I don't blame him. That's
1412 the best one of the improvements we put on.

1414 Bill's son has got a '05, and that brakeroom
back there is all one piece, beautiful job, put on
at the factory.

1416 I always wanted to build a dickey seat. Helen,
you got me that black and white picture over at the
1418 Olds, with the seat on the back: I was going to
build that down in the park in the woodshop. I've
1420 got plans down there, but too much to do; so little
time.

1422 HE: That's the way Jim and I feel here on this job, too:
Too much to do; too little time.

1424 RH: I'm putting together now a soft drink dispenser. I
want it to dispense orange juice and grape juice,
1426 maybe Coca Cola and Sarsaparilla, through kegs. I've
got antique wine glass faucets. I had one up at a
1428 museum in Burbank. My son-in-law is in France, and
he'll pick up some of those faucets.

1430 We aren't going to have the wine in the kegs.
We're going to have tanks back of them, covered up.
1432 This is a backyard dispenser. I'll make one, see?
Then I'll take it down to the rec-room in the park
1434 down there, put it over in the corner, put some paper
cups over there, and put a box up there and donate to
1436 some charity; because they haven't got one down
there.

1438 HE: That would be nice, Bob.

RH: I'd have to keep it clean. I designed it so I can
1440 wash it myself. I'm going to run the tubes through
the kegs, and the stainless steel tanks are back of
1442 the kegs.

HE: Rather clever idea.

1444 RH: Keeps me busy; keeps me busy. Anyway, I'll have one.

HE: Well, yes.

1446

1448 < End of Interview >

1450

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

1452

Lansing, Michigan