

JIM GRAYSON

A predominantly black suburb, on the outskirts of Chicago. He lives in a one-family dwelling with his wife and five-year-old son, whose finger paintings decorate a wall.

He is a spot-welder, working the third shift. His station is adjacent to Phil Stallings'.

He is also a part-time student at Roosevelt University, majoring in Business Administration. "If I had been white, I wouldn't be doing this job. It's very depressing. I can look around me and see whites with far less education who have better paying jobs with status.

"My alarm clock goes off in the mornings when I go to school. I come back home, take my shirt and tie off, put my brief case down, put on some other suitable clothing. (Laughs.) I go to Ford and spend the night there . . ."

(Laughs.)

As, on this late Sunday afternoon, he half-watches the ball game on TV, turned down low, his tone is one of an amused detachment. His phrases, at times, trail off . . .

Oh, anything away from the plant is good. Being on the assembly line, my leisure time is very precious. It's something to be treasured. I don't have much time to talk to the family. I have to be a father, a student, and an assembly line worker. It's just good to get away.

On our shift we have lunch about seven thirty. A lot of times I just read. Sometimes I just go outside to get away from . . . I don't know if you've heard of plant pollution. It's really terrible. Especially where I work, you have the sparks and smoke. You have these fans blowing on us. If you don't turn the fans down, the smoke'll come right up.

They don't use battery trucks. They should. They use gasoline. Lots of times during lunch I never stay on the floor. I usually go outside to get a breath of fresh air. The further you are from the front door, the worse it is. You can cut the heat with a knife, especially when it gets up in the nineties. You get them carbon monoxide fumes, it's just hell.

Ford keeps its overhead down. If I had to go a few feet to get some stock, that would be the time I'm not working. So Ford has everything set up. If you run out, the truck'll come blowin' carbon monoxide all over your face. But it's making sure you'll never run out of work. I mean you're really tied down to the job. (Laughs.) You stand on your feet and you run on your feet. (Laughs.)

We get forty-eight minutes of break—thirty minutes in the morning and the other eighteen in the evening. You always go to the bathroom first.

(Laughs.) It's three flights up. You come down, you walk to another part of the plant, and you walk up another three flights to get a bite to eat. On the line, you don't go to the washroom when you have to go. You learn to adjust your physical . . . (Laughs.) For new workers this is quite hard. I haven't gotten used to it yet. I've been here since 1968.

The part of the automobile I work on is before it gets all the pretties. There's no paint. The basic car. There's a conveyorlike . . . Mr. Ford's given credit for inventing this little . . . (Laughs.) There is no letup, the line is always running. It's not like . . . if you lift something, carry it for a little while, lay it down, and go back—while you're going back, you're actually catching a breather. Ford has a better idea. (Laughs.) You hear the slogan: They have a better idea. They have better ideas of getting all the work possible out of your worn body for eight hours.

You can work next to a guy for months without even knowing his name. One thing, you're too busy to talk. Can't hear. (Laughs.) You have to holler in his ear. They got these little guys comin' around in white shirts and if they see you runnin' your mouth, they say, "This guy needs more work." Man, he's got no time to talk.

A lot of guys who've been in jail, they say you don't work as hard in jail. (Laughs.) They say, "Man, jail ain't never been this bad." (Laughs.) That's the way I feel. I'm serving a sentence till I graduate from college. So I got six more months in jail. Then I'll do something else, probably at a reduction in pay.

If it was up to these ignorant foremen, they'd never get a car out. But they have these professional people, engineering time study. They're always sneakin' around with their little cameras. I can smell 'em a mile away. These people stay awake nights thinking of ways to get more work out of you.

Last night I heard one of the guys say we did 391 cars. How many welds are we supposed to put in a car? They have governmental regulations for consumer protection. We just put what we think ought to be in there and then let it go. (Laughs.) There are specifications, which we pay very little attention to.

You have inspectors who are supposed to check every kind of defect. All of us know these things don't get corrected. I was saying about buying a car, not too long ago. "I hope this buggy lasts till I get out of college." I can just look at a car and see all kinds of things wrong with it. You can't do that because you didn't see how it was made. I can look at a car underneath the paint. It's like x-ray vision. They put that trim in, they call it. The paint and all those little pretties that you pay for. Whenever we make a mistake, we always say, "Don't worry about it, some dingaling'll buy it." (Laughs.)

Everyone has a station. You're supposed to get your work completed within a certain area, usually around ten, maybe fifteen feet. If you get

behind, you're in the hole. When you get in the hole, you're bumping into the next worker. Man, sometimes you get in the hole and you run down. The next worker up from you, he can't do his job until you get finished. If you're slowin' up, that starts a chain reaction all the way up the line.

Ford is a great believer in the specialization of labor, brings about more efficiency. Actually, I can be thinking about economics, politics, anything while I'm doing this work. Lotta times my mind is on schoolwork. There's no way I could do that job and think about what I'm doin', 'cause it's just impossible for me. The work is just too boring. Especially someone like myself, who is going to school and has a lot of other things on my mind.

"I get pretty peeved off lots of times, because I know I can do other work. They have their quota of blacks and they have just enough so you can't say they're prejudiced. I'm trying to graduate from college and I'd like to go into industry, where the money is."

"I have all sorts of qualifications for the kind of work I want, but none has been offered to me. In 1969 they ran an ad in the paper wanting a junior accountant. I have a minor in accounting, so I applied. They wanted a person with good aptitude in mathematics and a high-school graduate. I had an associate arts degree from junior college and two years of accounting. They took me to the head of the department. He asked, 'What makes you want this type of work?' (Laughs.)"

You can compare the plant to a miniature United States. You have people from all backgrounds, all cultures. But most of your foremen are white. It seems a lot of 'em are from Alabama, Arkansas, a large percentage Southern white. They don't hide their opinions. They don't confront me, but I've seen it happen in a lot of cases. Oh sure, they holler at people. They don't curse, cursing is not permitted.

They'll do anything to get production. Foremen aren't supposed to work on the line. If he works, he's taking away a job from a union man. The union tries to enforce it, but they do anything they want. Then they complain, "Why didn't you get your people to come to work every day?"

There's quite a bit of absentees, especially on Mondays. Some guys just can't do that type of work every day. They bring phony doctors' excuses. A lot of time, they get the wife or girlfriend to call in: "Junior just broke his leg." (Laughs.) "Your mother-in-law's cousin died and you have to rush home." They don't send you home unless it's an emergency. So lotta guys, they make up their own lies. Monday's the biggest day. You'll have three days off right in a row.

The company is always hiring. They have a huge turnover. I worked at Harvester for five years before I started college. You would find guys there, fifteen years service, twenty, twenty-five. You meet an old-timer here, you

ask, "How long you been here?" "About three years." (Laughs.) I'm twenty-nine and one of the oldest guys around here. (Laughs.)

Auto workers are becoming increasingly young and increasingly black. Most of the older workers are a lot more—shall we say, conservative. Most of the older men have seniority, so they don't have to do the work I do. They put 'em on something easy. Old men can't do the work I do. They had one about a year ago, and he had three heart attacks. And they finally gave him a broom. He was about forty. Yeah, forty, that's an old man around here.

I read how bad things were before the union. I was telling some of our officials, don't become complacent. There's much more work to be done, believe me. One night a guy hit his head on a welding gun. He went to his knees. He was bleeding like a pig, blood was oozing out. So I stopped the line for a second and ran over to help him. The foreman turned the line on again, he almost stepped on the guy. That's the first thing they always do. They didn't even call an ambulance. The guy walked to the medic department—that's about half a mile—he had about five stitches put in his head. The foreman didn't say anything. He just turned the line on. You're nothing to any of them. That's why I hate the place. (Laughs.)

The Green House, that's where the difference of opinion is aired out. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the company comes out winning. If I have a problem, I go to the Green House about it. They might decide against me. They say, "This is it, period." I have to take the time off. Then I can write a grievance. It could be three weeks, three months, three years from now, they could say, "Back in 1971 you were right." So if a union doesn't want to push your particular grievance, you're at the mercy of the company.

They had a wildcat, a sit-down related to me. This particular foreman . . . I think it's jealousy more than anything. They don't like to see, you know—I'm going to school every day. I would bring my books and I'd read during the break. They'd sneak around to see what I'm reading. I seldom miss a day's work and I do my work well. But this guy's been riding me about any little thing. One night he said the wrong thing.

I was going on my break. You're supposed to wear your safety glasses all the time. They don't enforce these things. I took mine off just to wipe my forehead. He said, "Get your glasses on!" It's these nagging little things building up all the time. Always on my back. So I grabbed him, shook him up a little bit. And I went on to lunch. I came back and they were waiting for me. I was supposed to have been fired. I got the rest of the night and two days off.

These guys that worked with me, they didn't like it. So they sat down for a while. I'd already gone. They refused to work for about twenty minutes or so. Now this takes a lot of nerve for the guys to . . . good guys. But oh, I definitely have to get away from this. (Chuckles, suddenly remembering.) One night, there was something wrong with the merry-go-round. We call it

that 'cause it goes round and round. They had to call maintenance right away. About six guys came, white shirt, tie, everything. You shoulda seen these guys. On their hands and knees, crawling all over this line, trying to straighten it out. They wouldn't stop it.

Now I couldn't see myself—what kind of status would I have, with my white shirt and tie, crawling on my hands and knees with a crowbar, with grease all over . . . ? It was pretty funny. Some of these guys who've been on a farm all their life, they say, "This is great, the best thing ever happened to me."

Phil Stallings said his ambition is to be a utility man. More variation to the job.

Well, that's a hell of an ambition. That's like the difference between the gravedigger and the one who brings the coffin down. So (laughs), he can have it. My ambition is higher than Phil's.

There's no time for the human side in this work. I have other aims. It would be different in an office, in a bank. Any type of job where people would proceed at their own pace.

Once I get into industrial relations—I got corporate law planned—then it won't be a job any more 'cause I will enjoy what I'm doing. It's the difference between a job and a career. This is not a career.

HOBART FOOTE

It's a trailer, off the highway along the Illinois-Indiana border. The quarters are cramped. He lives with his wife and two children: a boy fourteen and a girl thirteen. The dog wanders in and out aimlessly. The Holy Bible, old and scuffed, on a shelf, is the one visible book.

The clangor of trains, Gary-to-Chicago-bound, freights off the sidings of the nearby steel mills, switching and coupling cars; it's pervasive, it trembles the trailer.

He is a utility man at the auto plant on the day shift. He has been there seventeen years. He is thirty-seven and looks older.

"I'm from Alabama, my wife and kids are Hoosiers. I was gonna work a few years and buy me a new car and head back south. Well, I met the wife now and that kinda changed my plans.

"I might've been working in some small factory down south or I might have gone to Detroit where I worked before or I might have gone to Kalamazoo where I worked before. Or else I mighta stuck on a farm somewhere, just grubbing off a farm somewhere. You never know what you

woulda did. You can't plan too far in advance, 'cause there's always a stumblin' block."

From the word go, the clock radio goes off. About four thirty. First thing comes to my mind is shut my eyes just a few minutes. Yet I know I can't shut 'em for too long, I know I gotta get up. I hate that clock. We lay there and maybe listen to them play a few records. And she gets up about five minutes till. Of course, I say, "Get up! Get up! It's day, get up!" I tell you, after goin' on seventeen years, I don't want to be late. You're one minute late clockin' in, they dock you six.

I get up when the news comes on. Sometimes it's five to five, sometimes it's five o'clock. The assembly line starts at six. I go to the washroom, comb my hair. That's routine with me. I have to get every hair in place. Drink maybe a cup of coffee or half a cup of coffee. Maybe a whole piece of toast and sometimes I might eat two pieces of toast—depends on how I feel. In the meantime, I'm watchin' that clock. I say, "I gotta go, it's eight minutes after, it's nine minutes after. At twelve minutes after, I gotta leave here." You get in the car. You tell your wife, of course, you'll see her to-night. It's routine.

We do have a train problem, goin' from here to the assembly plant. I cross one set of tracks twice, then two other sets of tracks once each. Long freight trains, going from Chicago to Gary. I have waited as high as ten, twelve minutes. Then you're late.

If I see a train crossing, I keep going. It's a game you're playing. Watch the stop light, catch this light at a certain time and you got the next light. But if there's a train there, I take off down Cicero Avenue, watching the crossings. Then if I make her okay, you got a train just over at Burnham line, you got a train there you gotta watch for. But it's generally fast. (Takes a deep breath.) Well, these tensions . . . It don't bother me, really. It's routine.

So we enter the plant. I generally clock in about five twenty-eight to five thirty. You start seeing people you know. Pay starts at five thirty, but my boss don't say anything. Then I walk up the line and I got a bad habit of checking the log book. That's what the night foreman left for the day foreman: what happened the night before. I check what job is in the hole, what small part has to be put on. We work those jobs out of the hole. Maybe we put in a master cylinder or a headlight. If it needs any small parts, screws, clips, bolts—you know, routine.

Then I go into the locker room. Pull off my shoes, pull my pants and shirt off, put on my coveralls. Put my tools in: pliers, screw driver, trim knife. Then I come back up the line, routine every morning. Then I start checking the jobs. I'm what you call a trouble shooter in the crash pad area. Your general utility, which I am, get \$4.49½. We got seventeen operations in the section and I can do all of it.

My routine in the morning's the same. I clean up cardboard. I tag up defective stock, put the damaged in the vendor. If my foreman tells me to take it over there, I take it over there. Of course, I don't take no hurry. After seventeen years, you learn to sort of pace yourself.

I like to work. Now two days this week have been kinda rough on me. I guess I come home grouchy. Absenteeism. When the men don't come to work, the utility men get stuck. One of us has got to cover his job until they bring a new man in there. Then we've got to show him the job.

I think one reason for our absenteeism over here right now is the second shift. We got this young generation in here. Lot of 'em single, and a lot of 'em . . . They're not settled yet, and they just live from day to day. When they settle down, they do like myself. They get up and they have a routine. They go to work every day. I go to work here and I didn't feel like going to work, I shoulda stayed home. But I felt if I go to work, I'll feel better after a while. And I do.

I think a lot of it is in your mind. You get like what's his name that works in the body shop—Phil Stallings. He's grown to hate the company. Not me. The company puts bread and butter on the table. I feed the family and with two teen-aged kids, there's a lot of wants. And we're payin' for two cars. And I have brought home a forty-hour paycheck for Lord knows how long.

And that's why I work. And those other people when they settle down one of these days, they'll be what we call old-timers. He'll want to work. Number one: the pay's good. Number two: the benefits are good. When I'm off work I draw \$105 a week. And you don't get that everywhere.

The more settled a fellow gets, he quiets down. He'll set a pace. See, I set a pace. You just work so fast and you do just so much work. Because the more you do, the more they'll want you to do. If you start running, they'd expect you to do a little bit more. If they catch you readin' the paper or some kind of old book or if he picks up some kind of wild magazine he comes into, they'll figure out how to break up this man's operation.

You get used to a job and you take short cuts. When you learn these short cuts, all of a sudden time standards: he's gonna come around and he's gonna time your job. They'll say you're working fifty six minutes out of the hour. I told foremen I won't do it all day and keep it up, 'cause it's too much of a strain. I mean, it's hard on a man, but the company says the man has time to do it.

"When I first started work, I was hangin' doors. That's the first time I got cut at the plant. I would say a man average gettin' cut, a minor cut, twice a week. At '54, I went over to drillin' doors for chrome. They have air drills now. Back then it was the big electric drills. Your hand swell up from holdin' the big drill."

"Then I got laid off. So I took off back south. I was called back to work at Ford's. I got a telegram. I worked ten nights puttin' off cars in boxcars

and then they said you're laid off again. So it was a bunch of us came up here five and six hundred miles, just to work ten nights. So we went in to talk to the man from labor relations and the union rep, and I was put on the assembly line."

"We had the Depression in '58, I was laid off again. I got a job in a warehouse liftin' bags from sixty to a hundred pounds. Me and my partner were working at liftin' from twenty-two hundred to twenty-four hundred bags a day. I lost twenty-five pounds in two weeks. Then I got my second call back to the Ford Motor Company."

I refused to do a job one time and I was fired. The window riser was in two pieces. You had to take a piece in each hand and stick it in the two holes in the door and hook it up inside. When you wasn't used to the job, you was cut in the arms. So I just told the foreman I wasn't gonna do it and I cussed him a little bit.

They took me up and said, "We don't need you any more." They say, "You're fired." Make you feel like you're through. Then the union rep, he starts talkin'. "What about this man's family? He's a good worker." And the foreman says, "Yeah, he's a good worker." They talk backwards and forward. Then they said, "We're gonna give you another chance." They tear a man down and threaten 'im and then they're gonna give him another chance. I guess they just want to make you feel bad.

I had a record, of different little things I'd done. You get disgusted, you get a little bored, you want to do somethin'. It was what you call horse-play. Or maybe you come in late. You build a record up. And when they take you in there for something, they pull this record out.

They felt I was gonna beg for my job. To which there has been people who have cried in labor relation. The company's gonna put 'em back to work, after they give 'em the day off. They dock you, what they call R and W, a reminder and warning. There's been people, they just sit there and they just fall apart—rather than fly back and cuss the foreman out.

I don't get mad like I used to. I used to call 'im, "Buddy, you SOB," in no uncertain terms. But now I'm settled down. After a long time, you learn to calm yourself down. My wife's shakin' her head. I do come home grouchy sometimes. But when you get mad, you only hurt yourself, you excite yourself. In the long run, you may say something the company may use against you.

My day goes pretty good on the average. Used to they didn't, but now I have a pace. Who I joke with, who I tease about did they have to sleep in a car that night. Just something to keep your day going. I'm always jokin'. We even go so far as to throw water on the fan. Something to break the monotony. Of course, you know who to do it to.

It's the same routine. But I can rotate mine just a little bit, just enough to break the monotony. But when it catches up with ya and all of a sudden it's real quiet, nobody says nothing—that makes the day go real long. I'll

look at the watch pin on my coverall and see what time . . . you would look at your watch and it would be nine twenty. And you look at your watch again and it's twenty-five minutes of ten. It seems like you worked forever. And it's been only roughly fifteen minutes. You want quitin' time so bad.

I can be off a day and the colored guy that works here, he'll say to this one lady works over there, "Millie, sure was quiet over here." 'Cause I'm always teasin', keeping something goin'. We're teasin' one guy 'cause he's real short and his wife let him. And then they'll get off on the way some guy looks. Some guy looks a little funny and they'll wonder what happened to him. How did the other guy look? Maybe they'll tease 'im just because his nose is crooked. Or else the way he got his hair cut. It's just routine.

They have had no black and white fighting on the day shift. On the night shift they used to have it. I passed words with one not too long ago. It got pretty wild. I told him just what I thought. We kinda had to get something straightened out pretty fast. But there's no contact being made, because men's too smart for that. As they get older, they don't want no physical contacts. Because it's too easy to fall off the shelf, you could get hurt pretty bad.

What's most of the talk about?

Somebody's old lady. I'll be real honest about it, they're teasin' this guy about his old lady. All of a sudden, they're on you about your old lady. And the routine. Nothing serious. We make jokes with different black people. Like Jesse Jackson this, Jesse Jackson that. The black man makes jokes about George Wallace. But any other time, there's baseball, it's hockey, it's football.

We got drugs in the plant real bad. Specially on the night shift. They're smokin' or they're poppin' pills. When they're high, they got their sunglasses on. We been havin' a candy sale for Little League. One colored guy was buyin' a lot of candy from me. When they need all that dope, they can take somethin' sweet and it'll hold them over. This guy was buyin' that big eight-ounce milk chocolate bar from me.

He is active in the Little League activities of the trailer community. He is president, and "this crossbreed here, my wife, is president of the women's auxiliary. We're tied up six days a week at the ball park."

"When I first startin' umpirin', they would get on me. I even told one manager if he didn't shut his wife up, I was gonna send her out of the park. I did have that authority."

Used to daydream on the job, now I don't. My mind would be a long ways off. I just really was not conscious of what I was doin'. Like I been goin' to work in the mornin', when I go through the light, sometime I know

it and sometime I don't. I don't know whether that light is red or green. I went through it. I had driven and yet my mind was somewhere else. Now it's jokin'. It used to be daydreamin'.

Comin' outa the plant when the sun's shinin', you kinda squint your eye. A lotta 'em wear sunglasses and I wondered why. Now I know. Because you got your fluorescent lights in there, and you open the door and there's the real bright light. You get used to it. It's that same routine. You speak to some of the guards, make a wisecrack about one of the guys, about his hair or mustache or he had himself taken care of so there'll be no more kids. I crack jokes about that. And then you come across the same set of tracks you cross in the morning. Get in the car, roll your window down, and you're not in a hurry to get home, because you're not timed to go home. If you get caught by a train, occasionally I'll stop for a milk shake or a cup of coffee.

I'm proud of what my job gives me. Not the job. I couldn't say I'm proud of workin' for the Ford Motor Car Company, but what makes it good is what the union and the company have negotiated over these period of years.

If a man's due any respect, he'll get respect. Got foremen in here I have no respect for whatsoever. Everyone is passing the buck. Management and they've got groups under them and it spreads out just like a tree. Some foremen is trying to make it big, want to go to the top, and they don't last too long. Respect . . .

You couldn't guess what I'd like to do. I'd like to farm. But there is not a decent living unless you're a big-time farmer. Because you got these different companies like Libby's, they have these big farms now. Yeah, I would just like to farm. You set your own pace, you're your own boss. When it comes a little cloud and it comes a little rain, you quit. Wait till the sun comes out before you do the work. But here it's different. (He's intense; he feverishly acts out his job, moving his arms in the manner of a robot.) Lightning can strike and it can rain or be eighteen degrees below zero, and you're still in there, grindin'.

Suppose a car could be made by robots, and all the people were free to do what they most wanted for a living . . .

The land's runnin' out. Maybe they would like to have a service station or a grocery store or sit on the creek bank and fish or be a loafer or turn hippies or whatever or nothin'. I'd say it'd be thirty percent hippies in the country. They'd just give up.

It wouldn't be safe for you to walk out of your front door, because you'd have too many people with unoccupied minds. They got the money and that's all they care. They'll either have a gun, they'll either have dope, they'd be hot rodding. They'd be occupied with trouble. Because someone has got to work.

Thirteen more years with the company, it'll be thirty and out. When I retire, I'm gonna have me a little garden. A place down South. Do a little fishin', huntin'. Sit back, watch the sun come up, the sun go down. Keep my mind occupied.

NED WILLIAMS

I done the same job twenty-two years, twenty-three years. Everybody else on that job is dead.

He has worked for the Ford Motor Company from 1946 to now. His wife is a seamstress. They have six children. In the parlor of his two-story frame house he acts out his life, his work. He cannot sit still. He moves about the room, demonstrates, jabs at the air in the manner of an old-time boxer. He has a quickness about him—for a moment, in the guest's mind, is the portrait of the agile little forward who led Wendell Phillips High School's basketball team to triumphs in the late twenties.

I started out on truck tires. I made sixty to eighty jobs a day, and this is all times six. We put in six days a week. A job's a whole truck. And six tires to a truck, plus spare. There was a trick to putting the rim in, so that it had a little click. You had to be very fine to know. So you would put this clip around and then you stand over it, and I would just kick it over—boom!—in there. This I had to learn on my own. Didn't nobody teach me this. I'd take this tire, roll it up, I'll lay it right beside. I'd come back, get another tire, put it on, get another tire, put it on...

He indicates a photograph on the end table. It is a young Ned Williams, smiling, surrounded by a whole wall of tires. He is wearing gloves.

After you mount it, you just don't leave them there on the floor. We had to put air in 'em, and then roll 'em on to little stalls. And these tires come on racks. I'd go get 'em, and you can't reach in the rack and grab any tire. You got 7/15s, you got 6/15s, you got 7/18s, you got 10/20s.

I could knock down five tires like that. Just take my left hand, guide 'em with my right. If you don't get production, you're out of there. I got my skill playin' basketball. Gotta speed it up. You had a quota, startin' time in the morning and another in the afternoon. At that time there was two of us, then they put it down to one.

Bend and reach—like a giraffe. I had to jump all the time. Sometime I had to climb. I continually told 'em to lower the racks. They wasn't sup-

posed to put but seventy-five on the racks. But they put 125, 140, 150. And it's up as high as you could get up on a ladder. A lot of times you pull a tire around like that (feverishly he relives the moment in pantomime)—it might go around your glasses, around your head. Some got hurt.

I wish I had a penny for every time I jumped. You really don't have time to feel tired. I'm tired, yeah, but I got a job to do. I had to do it. I had no time to think or daydream. I woulda quit. (Laughs.) Worked on the line till about two years ago.

I'm arrogant. Not too much now. Before I was. The only way I could object is—don't do it. When I get tired, I come in there with one of my mean days . . . I didn't care if they let me go and they knew it. I was proud of my work. Just don't push me. I was born here.

For the first four hours I worked there I was gonna quit. I had been addressed just the wrong way. I just came out of service. This foreman, he walked around like a little guard. Shoot me in the back, I was doin' the best I could. I had never been on an assembly line in my life. This thing's moving, going. You gotta pick it up, baby. You gotta be fast on that. He was like a little shotgun. Go to the washroom, he's looking for you, and right back.

He was pushing. Somebody's pushing him, right? After I went and ate, I felt pretty good. I said, "I'm gonna defeat him." I worked under him for ten years. That man sent me a Christmas card every Christmas. We had a certain layoff in 1946. He said, "I'm gonna get some job for you here." That's when I got into tires. See, I been here four hours now and he's on my back. I came back in the afternoon, after that he was love and kisses. I wanted to do a job really.

I had a sense of responsibility. I been to the Green House many times, though, man. That's for a reprimand. You goofed. How I goofed? Say I'm runnin' 400 jobs, 450. I can look at that sheet, and after you look at that paper so long you may read the same thing twice, right? I'd be reprimanded. It's fast work, but they didn't see it. You can do twenty years of right and one hour of wrong and they'd string you.

If somebody else is treated bad, I'll talk for him. Maybe he don't have sense enough. They say, "Tend to your own business." My business is his business. He's just like me. When a foreman says to me it's none of my business I say, "If I was in the same shoe, you'd try to do that to me, but you better not. No, they ain't never gonna get me till I'm down and dead."

Sometimes I felt like I was just a robot. You push a button and you go this way. You become a mechanical nut. You get a couple of beers and go to sleep at night. Maybe one, two o'clock in the morning, my wife is saying, "Come on, come on, leave it." I'm still workin' that line. Three o'clock in the morning, five o'clock. Tired. I have worked that job all night. Saturday, Sunday, still working. It's just ground into you. My wife tap me on the shoulder. Tappin' me didn't mean nothin'. (Laughs.)

Sometimes I got up on my elbows. I woke up on a Sunday goin' to work. We were working six days a week then. I still thought it was another workday. My wife, she sees me go in the bathroom. "Where you goin'? Come back." I got washed up, everything. "Where you goin'? You got a girl this time of the morning?" I said, "What? What girl? I'm just goin' to work." She says, "On Sunday?" I said, "Today's Sunday? Jesus Christ!" A mechanical nut. Yet, honest to God, I done that more than once. Nineteen fifty-four, I know I done it twice.

I was sleeping in front of an American Legion post. I had more than a few drinks. This was Sunday. Somebody says, "Go home." I thought they said, "Go to work." Whoosh! I had a brand-new 1955 Montclair Merc and I whoosh! I cut out of there. I went out to the plant and drove all the way to the gate and got there, and I don't see no cars. I don't know what, baby.

It just affected all the parts of my life as far as that go. I'm looking at the fellas been here longer than me. They the same way, worse. I talk to 'em every day, and I hear fellas that got forty-two years, thirty-seven years, thirty-five years. Mechanical nuts.

The union does the best they can. But if the man has a record, there's nothin' union can do. They put the book on the table and he gets his time off, maybe a week, maybe three days, maybe three weeks. It's no paid vacation.

Some of the younger guys are objectin', oh yeah. They got nothin' to lose. Just like my boy I got hired out there. Some of 'em are twenty, twenty-two, ain't got no wife, so they don't worry about it. They don't show up on Monday, they don't show up on Tuesday. Take 'em to the Green House. Give 'em a week off, they don't care. If I could figure 'em out, I could be a millionaire and just sit on the porch out here. I could retire right now if I could figure 'em out.

If I had my life to live over again, it would be the first thirty-five years of my life. I didn't do nothin'. I don't like work, I never did like work. There's some elderly people here right now who looked at my mother and said, "I never thought that boy would work." My hands were so soft, like a sponge. Went to a manicurist twice a week. I always wore gloves at work. I didn't want to get my hands messed up.

I am a stock chaser now for the audit area. I get all the small parts you need, that I carry on a bicycle—like a mirror or chrome or door panels. I get 'em as quickies, 'cause I'm on the sell floor. This job is ready to go. Been doin' this last two years. Up front. There's hardly anybody there that's under twenty years' service. That's old folks home.

It's a cut in pay. I have what you call a nonpromotion job. It's easier work. I don't have to bend down now. It ain't right, but this is what you live under. I was a good worker, but I suffered that for this. Say you lose \$1.20 a day. I come home and I can still play volleyball.

I don't feel tired, just older. I haven't talked in my sleep since I got off that job. I don't bring nothin' home now. I got the keys to the bicycle and that's it. (Laughs.) I don't worry about it till I get there.

Is the automobile worth it?

What it drains out of a human being, the car ain't worth it. But I think of a certain area of pride. You see them on that highway, you don't look and see what model it is or whose car it is. I put my labor in it. And somebody just like me put their area of work in it. It's got to be an area of pride.

TOM BRAND

He is plant manager at the Ford Assembly Division in Chicago. He has been with the company thirty years, aside from service in the Navy during World War II. At forty-eight, he exudes an air of casual confidence, ebullient, informal....

He came up from the ranks. "I was in the apprentice school in Detroit. Then I moved over to the Highland Park plant and was a leader in the milling department. I was eighteen. They were all women and they gave me a fit. All had kids older than me. 'Hey Whitey, come over here.' They kidded the life out of me." (Laughs.)

After the war he attended the University of Michigan and earned a degree in engineering. "Went to work for Ford Research." Various moves—test engineer into quality control, processing... five moves around the country: St. Louis, Twin Cities, back to Detroit, Chicago. "I've been here three years."

There's a plaque on the desk: Ford, Limited Edition. "That was our five millionth car. There are about forty-five hundred people working here. That's about 3,998 hourly and about 468 salaried." Management and office employees are salaried.

You're responsible to make sure the car is built and built correctly. I rely on my quality control manager. Any defects, anything's wrong, we make sure it's repaired before it leaves the plant. Production manager takes care of the men on the line, makes sure they're doing their job, have the proper tools and the space and time to do it in. But the quality control manager is really our policeman. Quality control doesn't look at every item on the car. Some by surveillance. You take a sample of five an hour. Some, we look in every car. They make sure we're doing what we say we're doing. Okay, we've got to build forty-seven an hour. Vega, down in Lordstown,

had a hundred an hour. They got trapped with too much automation. If you're going to automate, you always leave yourself a loophole. I haven't seen their picture. I want to show it to all my managers. Okay, we build 760 big Fords a day.

These things go out the door to the customer. The customer, he comes back to the dealer. The dealer comes back to us and the warranty on the policy. That's the money the Ford company puts out to the dealer to fix any defects. We listen better. If the customer comes in and says, "I have a water leak," the dealer'll write-up an 1863 and the company pays for that repair. Everybody's real interested in keeping this down. We've been very fortunate. It's been progressively getting better and better and better. In December, we beat \$1.91. It's unheard of for a two-shift plant to beat \$1.91 in the warranty.

I'm usually here at seven o'clock. The first thing in the morning we have a night letter—it's from the production manager of the night shift. He tells us everything's fine or we had a breakdown. If it was a major problem, a fire, I'd be called at home. It's a log of events. If there's any problem, I get the fellas, "What can we do about this? Is it fixed?" It's eight o'clock in Detroit. I might get an early call.

Then I go out on the floor, tour the plant. We've got a million and a half square feet under the roof. I'll change my tour—so they can't tell every day I'm going to be in the same place at the same time. The worst thing I could do is set a pattern, where they'll always know where I'll be. I'm always stopping to talk to foremen or hourly fellas. Or somebody'll stop me, "I got a suggestion." I may see a water leak, I say to the foreman, "Did you call maintenance?" Not do it myself, let him go do it. By the time I get back in the office, I have three or four calls, "Can you help me on this?" This is how you keep in contact.

Usually about nine thirty I've looked at our audit cars. We take eight cars, drive 'em, rewater 'em, test 'em put 'em on a hoist, check all the torque, take a visual check. We look over the complete car for eight of 'em. Then there's forty more each day that we go and convoy and take an expanded audit look.

We usually have a manpower meeting, we'll go over our requirements for next week. In our cost meeting every Thursday afternoon, we have both shifts together. The operating committee meets usually every other day: my assistant plant manager; an operations manager, he has two production managers; a controller; an engineering manager; a quality control manager; and a materials manager. That's the eight key figures in the plant.

We have a doctor. We like him here at ten o'clock in the morning, so he overlaps into the night shift. There are four nurses and one standby. If there's an accident, they're the first one to go down. Is it carelessness? Is it our fault? Was there oil on the floor? Did they slip? Make sure everybody wears safety glasses. We provide them prescription lenses free—and safety

shoes at a real good discount. If I went into the store to buy these, they'd probably run around \$30. Here they're only \$11.50. And we bought 257 earmuffs in the body shop where we do a lot of welding and in various areas where we have compressed air. Or big blowoff stations. The federal government says you must provide ear protection for anybody in a high noise level area. We baffled all those. Some of the fellas said, "I'm not gonna wear 'em." We said, "Either you wear 'em or you're not gonna work here." We've never had a hard of hearing comp case in all the years I've been with Ford.

We have a big project now on the spot-weld guns and manifold of all our guns. The company's paid a lot of money. Earplugs and earmuffs. A fella wears 'em and if it's ninety degree temperature, okay, they get warm. I can appreciate that. I wouldn't like to wear 'em all day myself. So what we've done on the big blowers is put insulation that thick. You can stand right next to it. We're well within the noise level requirement. In the summertime, we have big 440 fans. They really move the air. It's much cooler in the plant than it is on a ninety degree day outside.

We had an accident about two years ago, a fella on the trim line. He slipped and he hit his head and he was laying on the conveyor. They shut the line down. It didn't start up again until the ambulance took him to the hospital. There isn't any car worth a human arm or leg. We can always make a car. But if anybody's hurt, an act of God—a human eye—my brother's got only one eye. That's why I'm a bug on safety glasses.

Three years ago, I had plenty of grievances. We had a lot of turnover, a lot of new employees. As many as 125 people would be replaced each week. Now with the economic situation, our last raises, and the seven days' holiday between Christmas and New Year's, this just changed the whole attitude. They found out it's a real good place to work. They're getting top dollar. Twelve paid vacation days a year, and they like the atmosphere. There was a lot of fellas would go in the construction industry about this time of the year. Less now.

I've had fellas come in to me and say, "I'm not satisfied. Can I talk to you about it?" I say, "Sure, come on in." You can't run a business sitting in the office 'cause you get divorced too much from the people. The people are the key to the whole thing. If you aren't in touch with the people they think, He's too far aloof, he's distant. It doesn't work. If I walk down the line, there'll be a guy fifty feet away from me. I'd wave, he'd wave back. Many of 'em I know by name. I don't know everyone by name, but I know their faces. If I'm in the area, I'll know who's strange. I'll kid with one of 'em...

(Indicates identification tag on his shirt) These are a real asset because we have a lot of visits from Detroit. They come in and somebody says, "Go see George Schnessler; he's the chassis superintendent." He may kind of forget. So he'll look and see the name. We have a lot of new managers in the turnover. When they brought me in from Twin City, this was a real

assist for me to have them walk in and say; "Good morning, Tom, how are you?" I've had a lot of 'em call me Mr. Brand—men I've known before in the other places. I said, "Look, has it changed since I moved from that office to this office?" So it's worked. All the salaried people have tags, not the girls.

Not guys on the line?

We were thinkin' about it, but too many of 'em leave 'em home. It was a job gettin' 'em to bring their glasses every day and the key to their locker. Some are forgetful, some have a real good sense of responsibility. Others do a good job, but don't want the responsibility. We've asked some of 'em, "How would you like to be a foreman?" "Naw, I don't want any part of being a foreman. I want to be one of the boys."

We've got about forty-five percent black in the plant. I would say about twenty-five percent of the salaried are black. We've got some wonderful ones, some real good ones. A lot of 'em were very militant about three years ago—the first anniversary of Martin Luther King's—about the year I got here. Since that time we haven't had any problem. Those that may be militant are very quiet about it. They were very outspoken before. I think it's more calmed down. Even the younger kids, black and white, are getting away from real long hair. They're getting into the shaped and tailored look. I think they're accepting work better, more so than in years previous, where everything was no good. Every manufacturer was a pol-lutant, whether it be water, the air, or anything, "The Establishment's doing it." I don't hear that any more.

"My dad worked for Ford when they started in 1908. He got to be a super-intendent in the stock department. They called 'em star badges in those days. One day jokingly I took his badge with the star on it and lett him mine. I almost got shot. (Laughs.) My brother worked for Ford. My son works at the Twin City plant. He's the mail boy. In the last two summers he's been working in the maintenance department, cleaning the paint ovens and all the sludge out of the pits. He said, 'You got the best job in Chicago and I got the worst job in Twin City.' (Laughs.) He was hourly then, dirty work. Mail boy, well, that's salaried. He's going to school nights. He's learning a lot."

On Tuesdays at two thirty is the 1973 launch meetings, new models. It's March and the merry-go-round conveyers are already in. It's a new type of fixture. This is where we build all the front ends of the car. Between Christmas and New Year's we put in the foundation under the floor. Usually every other year there's a model change. Next year everything goes. Sixty-eight hundred parts change.

"My boss is the regional manager in Detroit. He has seven assembly plants. Over him is the assistant general manager. Over him is our vice president

and general manager. Assembly is one division. There's the Glass Division, Transportation Division, Metal-stamping Division...."

Assembly's the biggest division. We're the cash register ringers. The company is predicated on the profit coming off this line. Knock on wood, our plant maintenance people do a remarkable job. When we get 'em off the line they go to the dealer and to the customer. And that's where the profit is.

When I'm away I'm able to leave my work behind. Not all the time. (Indicates the page boy on his belt) Some nights I forget and I suddenly discover at home I've got the darn thing on my belt. (Laughs.) We just took a fourteen-day Caribbean cruise. They sent me a telegram: "Our warranty for December, \$1.91. Enjoy yourselves." That's better than some single-shift plants in quality.

I don't think I'll retire at fifty. I'm not the type to sit around. Maybe if my health is good I'll go to fifty-seven, fifty-nine. I enjoy this work very much. You're with people. I like people. Guys who really do the job can spot a phony. When I walk out there and say good morning, you watch the fellas. There's a world of difference if they really know you mean it.

Doing my job is part salesmanship. I guess you can term it human engineering. My boss, so many years past, used to be a real bull of the woods. Tough guy. I don't believe in that. I never was raised that way. I never met a guy you couldn't talk to. I never met a man who didn't put his pants on the same way I do it in the morning. I met an awful lot of 'em that think they do. It doesn't work. The old days of hit 'em with a baseball bat to get their attention—they're gone.

If I could get everybody at the plant to look at everything through my eyeballs, we'd have a lot of the problems licked. If we have one standard to go by, it's easy to swing it around because then you've got everybody thinking the same way. This is the biggest problem of people—communication.

It's a tough situation because everybody doesn't feel the same every day. Some mornings somebody wakes up with a hangover, stayed up late, watched a late, late movie, missed the ride, and they're mad when they get to work. It's just human nature. If we could get everybody to feel great...

WHEELER STANLEY

"I'm probably the youngest general foreman in the plant, yes, sir." He was invited to sit in the chair of the plant manager as Tom Brand went about his work. "I'm in the chassis line right now. There's 372 people working for us, hourly. And thirteen foremen. I'm the lead general foreman."