

**Oral History Interview of
Marvin Clarke**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
September 21, 2017
Amarillo, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Sports Interviews***

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The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Marvin Clarke as he discusses his involvement in drag racing. In this interview, Clarke describes the drag racing events that he has attended over the years, the people that he's met, and working with cars.

Length of Interview: 04:09:46

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Keywords

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

Then I'll just say that we're going to transition over from the two engine car. My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is September the 21st, 2017, and I'm at the home of Marvin Clarke. This is interview number two with Marvin. Marvin and I had ended up the first interview with talking about the twin engine cars and the transition away from them so I'll let Marvin pick up right there.

Marvin Clarke (MC):

Well, after the dragster class ended up with only five cars nationwide that were competitive and they were all two engine cars, which are stupidly expensive to build, and due to the fact that I did all my own work, except for a basic chassis, why I could barely afford to do it even then. If a person had to hire one of those cars built. It'd probably cost fifty thousand dollars and so anyway, they were going to do away with that and I told my partner, Roger Allred, that I was not going to pursue that last season that they were still legal, and he wanted to. And I told him, I said, "There's no way." I said, "This is done. We'll have to just piece this car or whatever." He said, "I'll buy your half and I'll go ahead and run it one more year. All it needs to be more competitive is a slipper clutch. Adjustable slipper clutch." I said, "I'm aware of that, but I'm not going to fight that because that's a whole can of worms there." So he bought my half of the car and decided he'd take it and the deal was he didn't do that much work on the car as such, and he did not realize how much work I was putting in because I had the car right there at my place of business and I worked on a lot that he didn't even know about. So anyway, he took the car, got a slipper clutch for it, and of course, the clutch can is an explosion proof unit, and in order to adjust that clutch, you have to have an access hole in it. Well, when you cut a hole in that certified explosion proof clutch can, then it has to be recertified to pass the inspection where you cut the hole. So he had to get all that done. He had to take the thing down to Dallas to get it certified at a chassis shop down there. And got all that done and the first clutch they sent him wasn't near enough clutch because the people building the clutches. When he told them he had two Rambler sixes, they gave him, basically, a piece of junk and he was whining to me about it and I told him, I said, "Send it back and tell him to send you the same one they would behind a 426 Hemi Chrysler because we've got the same number of cubic inches at 424." I said, "This thing makes within fifty horsepower of what a Hemi Chrysler does, so that's what you need." Well, he got the clutch. Got it in and tried to run it. No luck at all. The guys that we raced against down at Lubbock told me later on, they said, when we saw Roger Allred drive up with that car and you're not with him anymore, we just quit worrying about having to outrun that car. [DS laughs] So anyway, I told him, I said, "I'm going to build a single engine car with a V8 and it's going to be just a basic, decent car," because I'd rather have some fun racing rather than working on it all the time. And as soon as I got him off on that car, I started building a rear engine dragster, which rear engine dragster is not actually the correct term. That's what everybody calls them. It's actually a front driver dragster, because the engine location in relation to the rear end is the same place it was with the driver in the back, but all you did was move the driver up in

front of the engines, which is a lot safer and the visibility's better. And so I had a guy that works at Pantex that was renting part of my shop building because he wanted a place to work part time on weekends and evenings and he was going to do some chassis building for racecar stuff so he had bought a heliarc machine and he built himself a dragster. And I told him when he was working on it, I said, "When you get through with yours, I want to borrow your heliarc machine and I'll trade you out what you owe me on rent for using your machine." And so I had access to a heliarc so I ordered some chromolic tubing out of Dallas and a roll cage kit from Joe Schubeck back east that had a chassis operation and they made roll cage kits that you could cut to fit for any particular application. Kind of a universal. Got one of those, which was illegal by NHRA standards size and thickness for NHRA [**National Hot Rod Association**]. And I went ahead and put me together a rear engine dragster, and due to the fact that I had dealt with American motors on this twin engine car because they sent us a total of four brand new engines over the period of time we was racing that right off the assembly line, totally complete. And so I got a hold of the guy that was in charge of the high performance section, which his name escapes me at the time. Anyway, I called him and told him I was going to build a rear engine car with an AMC V8 in it. If they had any pads, blocks, or anything better than just what runs up and down the street. Of course, wagoneers are popular at that time and the 360, and 401's V8's that were in them were readily available in scrap yards, but he sent me what he called a "Daytona Block," which was the same block casting as a 401, but it was a lot thicker in the critical sections. Bigger, heavier main bearing webs. Gasket deck was thicker and all that. Sent me one of those and a couple of Nascar heads that they had made up for a team of masking encounters and also, Wally Booth, were running AMC's [**American Motors Corporation**] in pro stock drag racing and they had made up some stuff for them, and I managed to get some head castings and that sort of thing to work with. Anyway, I put the car together. Run C dragster with enderle injection on it and I got it running and was doing pretty good the first year against the C dragster class was all Chevrolets. Small block Chevy's. First year I was running right with all of them in this area, but the problem with running what I call a Brand X motor, every year, the speed equipment manufacturers will develop something new for the Chevy V8. Well that doesn't necessarily happen with an engine that nobody else uses in competition. So every year I got a little bit farther behind because I was holding my own with what I was doing, but I couldn't seem to improve on what I had because I didn't have new improved stuff available, so it was kind of going downhill. But anyway, the IHRA, International Hot Rod Association, they wanted to move west and they started moving into this area and Oklahoma City, Odessa, Lubbock, Amarillo, whoever else was in this area, had all switched from NHRA to IHRA and all of a sudden, my car fit the rules for IHRA better than it did for NHRA. And part of it was the cylinder head rule—and they were trying to make this for people where they could build a competitive engine without having to spend a lot of money. I had sweats to what they called economy dragster class in NHRA, which was one carburetor and an automatic transmission. The clutch flight that I had running C dragster. Clutch flight transformation was a torque flight without the torque convertor. IHRA said that was not an automatic—it was an automatic transmission. NHRA said it was not an automatic transmission

because it had a clutch instead of a torque convertor, but anyway, I was running this clutch flight and IHRA said that you had to have four venturies in your carburation system. NHRA said you had to have one four barrel. So I had two two-barrel carburetors on a pro stock tunnel ram with a clutch flight, and the big thing was that these Nascar heads that they had sent me, I had not used them. They were still just the way they came. Well IHRA rules said in an econo-rail dragster, if you ran ported, airflow heads the best you could make. You had to carry four pounds per cubic inch piston displacement. If you ran stock on ported heads, weren't polished or anything, three and a half pounds per cubic inch. Along a cubic inch limit was 366 so it'd take a half a pound. At 366 inches, you got over a hundred and eighty pounds lighter. In a car, that only weighs thirteen hundred pounds to start with, that gives you a big advantage. These heads that I had, I took them. I put some big valves in them just like I did on the ported heads and everything, but I did not port the runners and after I got through with them, I went to Carroll Caudle here in town. He's a race engine builder. Pretty well known over the country. He had an airflow bench. I told Carroll, I said, "I'd like to get you an airflow with these un-ported heads and compare them with some good ported heads for a V8 Chevy," so we did that. In fact, he told me just to take the flow bench and use it, which I did. When I got the numbers off of it, I had him—I said, "Look in your records there and see these flow figures, what they compare to as far as a Chevy head." So he looked through there and he said, "Those numbers are almost identical to a set of airflow research heads that I checked one time." I said, "And are they good heads?" He said, "They flow really, really good. You're un-ported heads just about match that." I said, "In other words, I'm going to be running against V8 Chevrolets with ported heads and I'm carrying a half pound per cubic inch less weight, and I've got just as good of heads as they've got." I said, "These people around here in this competition eliminator," which is what we ran in. All the little classes. I said, "They're going to hate me because I'm going to take a brand X motor and kick their butt." And the first major race I went to in IHRA was in Oklahoma City at the beginning of the season that next year. And went over there and not only won competition eliminator against some big block Chevys that had to spot me a little bit to reset—not only won the eliminator, I reset the mile per hour and the ET record for being econo-rail dragster that was held by a guy name of Bruce Geiger in Indiana. Held that record with a Chevy. I talked to a guy that knew him and came down from there, it was their Odessa race that I won. I ran him in the final round in Odessa and outran him, and he was down here because he wanted to accumulate points for the IHRA championship. He didn't get as many points as he wanted to because me and him got to the final round and met each other out there. As he was leaving, he whipped over by there and said, "Are you going to Darlington to the nationals?" IHRA nationals. I said, "Oh no. I can't afford to close my business and go that far." He said, "Well that's good. Anybody that's there in Odessa—anybody that could take a car like that and turn the times you're turning it in a—" I won't say the word, place like this. Said, "You'd really be bad news at Darlington." So anyway, I reset the IHRA record at both ends that first season, and then running IHRA—I went back to Oklahoma City the very next year to that same race and got a runner-up. I finished and went to the finals, but I had to run, of all things, a Camaro. A guy named Glenn Self from Ardmore had a Camaro

with a six cylinder Chevrolet in it like I used to run, and I had to spot him quite a long ways and he's no slouch. In fact, he probably builds the fastest six cylinder Chevrolets in the country and he had a Camaro that ran in a six cylinder class and he was plenty fast. I didn't do good against him, but I win one year and runner up the next and then we didn't get to go back to Oklahoma City again. Glenn made, I think, six hundred bucks for winning, and I got two hundred for runner-up. They gave us checks. Of course, when I got home, I run the check through the bank and it wasn't any good, and the next time I saw Glenn at a race, I asked him. I said, "Your check any good?" He said, "No." I said, "What'd you do about it?" He said, "I went to Oklahoma City and hunted the guy up." I said, "Well, you're a lot closer to Oklahoma City than I was. On top of that, it would've cost me more than I would've got out of it to go." You know, it just—all you can do is write it off. In fact, I have that check in here. So anyway, running IHRA with that rear engine car, I was having fun. Well, I don't see it. It's in here somewhere.

DS:

There it is.

MC:

There it is right there.

DS:

Wow.

MC:

Conservation plans [?][0:18:14]. This is in the newspaper here. Meet your neighbor. Anyway, running IHRA, I was doing good and then the ET [**Elapsed Time**] racing was covering the country mostly. Started in California and that was where you didn't worry about national records or anything like that. All that amounted to and I didn't like it. Actually, was you pick an elapsed time and that will be what you're spotted off of, and if your time is slower than the guy you're running, the difference between the two dial in's, they call them. The difference between the two dial in's how much handicap this lower car will get—or the faster car will get. Slower car gets to leave first and then you try to catch him, but you cannot run quicker than this elapsed time and it kind of comes down to who can leave the closest to a red light and not red light. The first one that I ran, first one I heard of or was close to, was right here in Amarillo. They advertise it pretty big. Ernie Walker, track owner, he made sure everybody anywhere around here or even far away knew about it. They had eight brackets set up and the brackets were like in one second intervals so if you're in between nine and ten seconds, you could pick a dial in somewhere in the nines. Nine flat. Between a nine flat and a ten flat and then an eight flat and a nine flat, which only had one car in it. The nine to ten bracket, which my car fell in had—I think it had thirty-two—thirty cars? Anyway, it was five eliminator rounds. Sixteen car field to be four rounds. Anything more than that, you'll have five rounds, but there'll be a by run or two that somebody gets to run

without running anybody. I wasn't even going to go because at that time, I was in my fifties, I guess. I thought, I've got to compete on reaction time with all these young guys. I just go out there and look stupid. So I decided I wasn't going to go and then I thought well, I'm going to go out there and watch and see what this is all about. If I'm going to, car's ready. I might as well just take it. I'll go there and see what happens. So I went ahead and entered. Made some time runs and picked me an ET that I thought I could do without running too quick. A lot of guys try to pick an ET slower than what they can run and then try to shut off to keep from running too quick. In other words, catch your opponent and then shut off. Well, that doesn't work real good. The odds are not good on that. But anyway, I picked whatever. I could run and picked a dial in that was a couple hundreds faster than that so I could run it just hard as it could go every time. And so we had five rounds in this second bracket. The top bracket was eight to nine seconds and there was an alcohol burning roadster from Seminole down the road here. I think he was from Seminole. All he had to do was make a single run and then park it. Well, the deal was that these eight brackets, you're going to have eight class winners. Well, that makes for three rounds of eliminations. So what they did, they said that the winner of each bracket will all get together and run king of the hill and that'll be eight cars. This was at the driver's meeting at the tower. I said, "I've got a question, Dale." Dale Hamm, our division director for NHRA. He was out there. I think it was Dale. Might've been the IHRA tech director and he lived right down here at Abernathy. Anyway, he announced that and I said, "The Christmas tree only had three digits in it." He said, "Yeah." I said, "The most you can dial in is a 9.99. What about the eighth bracket? If it has a seventeen second Volkswagon?" I forget the exact numbers, but anyway, I told him, there could be that the top bracket and the bottom bracket might meet and you can't dial it in on a Christmas tree because it'll be more than ten seconds spot. Well, that's what happened and I was involved in it because there was about thirty cars in the eight to nine second bracket because that fit all econo-rail dragsters. C dragsters. A whole bunch of cars. So that was actually the biggest. Most people in it. Bracket. And I ended up winning that. The guy that ran in the finals had a big block Chevy. He was from El Paso. He was president of their timing association down there. He was pitting right next to me and I was getting ready for this king of the hill run, and he come over and he said, "We got a guy in El Paso that runs an AMC engine and a dragstrip." I said, "Oh do you? Really?", "Yeah. His don't run like yours." I said, well, I said, "I'm glad to hear that sort of." Of course, he was the guy I ran for that class trophy. Between me and him. That big block. He had to let me go just about the blink of an eye early and he didn't—we just ran side by side all the way down and he was about the width of a front wheel behind all the way and he said, "I've never seen anyone run like that." Anyway, they got ready to run king of the hill. We started running them off and I went to—went through the first couple of rounds, got to the third round and a guy named Randy Pumphrey from Lubbock, had brought his dragstrip here and it broke during time trials. So then he decided that in the bottom bracket, he would just enter his suburban tow truck. And so he did that, and he had won that bottom bracket with his tow truck. When we got to the second round of king of the hill, it was me and him, and I was waiting for it. Was in the staging lanes and I said, "Randy, you realize what the dial in is, don't you?" He

said, "Yeah. You got to spot me 10.06." I said, "And a 9.99 is all they've got." He said, well. I said, "What do you reckon they're going to do?" He said, "Let's wait and see." Well, they called us to the tower. Went up there and they said, we got a problem. I said, "I think that came up before the race." They said, "Well we have this set up. We had to go ahead and hope it wouldn't happen," but it did. Anyway, Pumphrey being a pretty good guy and a diehard racer anyway, he said, "Well, if you can dial 9.99, just dial that in and we'll use that." I said, "Well, you're giving away seven hundreds." He said, "I already made money for the bracket. I'm way ahead. Let's just try and see what happened." Well of course, I could goof on driving. Red light, breakout. You know, whatever. And so we went up there and that was the longest wait. His side counted down and then I sat there and I waited and waited and waited and saw him disappear way down there. In fact, just as I got a green and took off, I saw his brake lights coming on and he was slowing down and he wanted to wait until just before I got there, and then run into the light beam so he was just kind of driving along. He was probably running maybe forty miles an hour. I thought, I'm going to be running over a hundred and fifty when I get there and he's running forty. I hope we both stay in our lane because there's going to be a real big crash if I should run into the back end of him. That didn't occur to me until I was coming up on him. I thought, I'm closing like nobody's business. He might as well just be standing still and somebody goes by at a hundred and twenty or thirty miles an hour. That's what it was between me and him. Anyway, I won that round and the eight to nine second with one car was an old style Hemi Chrysler with fuel injection and he's running alcohol. He was running probably eight seventies or eight eighties and he didn't have to outrun anybody to win the bracket. He was the only one in it. He managed to win two rounds against whoever he was running against to get to where me and him were in the finals for the money. They had a guy running the starting line. Turning the tree on and everything that was kind of a rookie. He was a friend of mine, as a matter of fact. But on that alcohol engine, they can run it a long time before it gets hot. Mine was—I pulled up there and did the pre stage and he didn't offer to come up there so I waited and waited and finally, I turned both lights on and he should only have a matter of seconds if he's not staged. They let me go. Little flagger wouldn't let me go. Had me sitting there. All of the spectators was yelling at him. "Turn him loose. Let him go. They're burning him down. You know, hold him." So the deal was when I run suburban in the round before that, I went by him and I ran too quick, but in order to make sure he got there ahead of me, he had to run quicker than what he had dialed in also, which he could do because he had not dialed it in where it could run all out. He was sand bagging. So he got there before I did and I ran too quick, but he ran too quick quicker. So he was disqualified. So this guy was messing with—had the engine—I could see the steam coming up around behind me out of the motor. It had water in it, but no circulation. No radiator. Finally, he let us go and I got to leave first against that alcohol burning Chrysler, of course. I went through down there and the only time I saw him was after I let off the accelerator, he went by. He come over and he said, "Boy I sure wish you'd broke out like you did on the run before." I said, "If you hadn't have burned me down on the line, I probably would've because I made a slow run and that was all it had in it." It cost me a set of piston rings, but the whole package for me winning the bracket and

the eliminators is \$1350. That's the most money I ever made before or since. I made some money up at Liberal. Used to go up there once a month and I went there because the liberal track's on an old World War II airbase and it's concrete. Up there is a bomber base. The concrete is like three or four feet deep, and then they laid asphalt over it for the track part. You had concrete forever just for pit area and then had asphalt for good traction. I liked running there. I ran good there. That's where we reset national record for D-dragster with a two engine car was at liberal. NHRA has a—and IHRA both, have an altitude correction factor. The higher altitude you're going, the thinner the air is, the slower your car gets. Well, you can't set a C level record at—it starts at two thousand feet and on up, so we reset the D-dragster record there with a twin car at Liberal. But then I went back there real regular with this rear engine car. There was one, I guess it was '78, 1978. I won—had eleven races and I won ten or nine. I think it was eleven races. I won nine of them and I had to run there where I won six in a row. The guys up there were threatening to—said they was going to dynamite the bridge over the Canadian River so I couldn't get to Liberal. [Laughter]

DS:

They really didn't like you coming up there.

MC:

Didn't like it at all. I made a total of probably—he paid four hundred a win. I think I probably made thirty-five hundred or between thirty-five hundred and four thousand. I think there was one weekend I was under the weather and didn't go. Somebody else got it. But anyway, I built the twin engine car and when I got to—when they outlawed it, it did me a favor because I was going to pursue it a little farther. Here's the receipt right here where they sent me a yellow engine block. Yellow left head. Yellow right head. A red label crank shaft. It's listed for 1973 90 V8. That's from American Motors Corporation. That's when I was building this one here. This was econo-rail. When I built it originally, this was under construction here, but you can see I've got fuel injection for it to run c-dragster, but econo-rail dragster hadn't been invented yet. But—I was trying to see if there was anything in here of worth. This was in a car show here at the civic center, where that was taken, or where that came from. That's where I won a drag championship in Liberal. In '79, they closed down in '79 and I won a drag championship here in '79. That was when they were still running IHRA rules.

DS:

Just to be sure, we're talking about Liberal, Kansas, right?

MC:

Yeah. Liberal, Kansas. It's a shame that Liberal track wasn't located at a good population center because that would've made a heck of a track for here or even Lubbock or any of the major cities. If they'd had that track at their location, it would've been great.

DS:

Yeah, because it's only a few thousand nowadays. How small was it then?

MC:

About the same.

DS:

About the same?

MC:

Yeah. I don't think it's changed much. This was a six cylinder I built for Bob Cody for his super modified—we put that on alcohol. He was racing against the V8s at the circle track. Yeah, that was a contender. Those V8 guys did not like finishing behind that car. It happened pretty regular. But anyway, I went ahead and ran Liberal. And then '79, I ran in Amarillo mostly. I did quite a bit of racing in Lubbock in '78, and '79. In '79, I could've probably have won the track championship in Lubbock, but I didn't go to all their races and there was—I remember one race in particular. The wind and dirt was blowing so bad there in Lubbock and they race on Saturday night. I went there Saturday evening. The wind and dirt was blowing so bad that I couldn't get down the track because they had bleachers on the west side right by the starting line, and when you left the starting line, those bleachers were kind of blocking the wind, but as soon as I ran out from behind the bleachers, the wind would just set me over. If I was in the right lane, it'd put me over the center line. If I was in the left lane, I'd head left because I'd hit the guard rail. I tried about three times to get down the track after we got there, and my wife and daughter were with me for my pit crew and all that. I just—after the third try—I just told them, I said, "Pull it up behind the trailer and let's go home." I said, "My car is so much faster than these others, they're not having the problem I'm having." The only ones that could make it down the track were the ones that didn't go very fast. It's kind of like trying to run Amarillo one time. I put—just for bracket racing and in '79, I guess it was '80, I decided to put my injectors back on it and run it on alcohol. The thing jumped from turning like 9.1, 9.2's on gas. The very first run I made on alcohol and I didn't even know how to tune it. I was just guessing at it. The very first pass, I left a line and it accelerated so hard I overwound the motor in first gear. I had—I was trying to remember. I had to power glide in it. Anyway, the RPM [**Revolutions Per Minute**] came up so fast, I shifted an 8500 and usually, I'd catch that just as I went past the Christmas tree and this thing was past 8500 before it even got to the tree. When I realized what it was doing and shifted and glanced down, I think it was past nine thousand somewhere, but I put it on alcohol and that was fun because I started running 8.70s. Not any faster, speed wise. Around 1.55 or 1.60. Speed was the same, but the elapsed time—especially when you shifted that power glide from low to high, the bottom end of high gear when and dropped back to about six thousand and started back up. I was running against big block Chevys. They couldn't believe that when I shifted gears, they just quit gaining on me. A real good one, they'd start picking it up again down at the far end, but

it was just an average big block. They wouldn't get back what I got. That was the main fun in running a Rambler was picking on the guys that were real proud of their Chevys. One guy—when I won that Oklahoma City meet, the guy I outran in the finals was a big block A econo-rail. He had to spot me about two tenths of a second, which put his front wheel about even with me where I could look over and see him. Just back past the center of my car. I left and then I saw him come up there where I could see him, just as I shifted and then he just stayed there all the way to the finish line. He followed me all the way back to the scales and watched while I got weighed. He checked—they checked my fuel to make sure it didn't have any nitro or something in it. Check that. And then they checked the cubic inches on the engine and I declared it 364 because there was 366 maximum in econo-rail. Okay. So I built the 364 inch motor and I declared 364 and they pumped the cylinder volume out where the piston operated deal that'll show you how much air moves in and out of that cylinder. They kept telling me my engine was 331 cubic inches. I kept telling them it's 364. Well, let's check it again. Every time they'd come up with 331. I told the tech guy that was checking it, I said, "If I'd known that was all that was going to check, I'd have took some weight out of it." He said, "What for? You outran everybody anyway." But that was a good car. The main thing that happened on the twin engine car, the guy that built the chassis. First place, he didn't finish it. Just turned it over to us and he didn't build it like we discussed. Told him how—some measurements of how I wanted it done. When we went to pick it up, I asked him, I said, "Is that our car?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "It don't look like I thought it was going to." But anyway, the driver's compartment, everybody built the dragsters. Usually seventeen inches inside. I told him, I said, "I want this one nineteen inches inside. I want it built for a grown up. A bunch of these dragster drivers are like jockeys." You know, they stick them down in there. At that time, the best fire suit, or legal fire suits were real heavy aluminum looking stuff. A lot of padding in them. I couldn't get in the driver's compartment. I could get in there, but I couldn't move with a fire suit on. I could—I drove a car a couple of times testing out the track without a fire suit, but I couldn't get in it with a fire suit on so Roger Allred got the job of driving the two engine car. So when I built this car, the rear engine car, I did everything the way I wanted it because I had the heliarc oiler and I had the stuff to do it with. When I built that, I built a damn good car. I drove it for maybe nine, ten years, in various configurations. With C-dragster injected gasoline and then econo-rail. IHRA with a couple of two-barrels. And then went back to NHRA. I went to one four-barrels, but I had to go to a power glide instead of the clutch flight so I'd have a torque convertor. So it was—then when they started ET racing, bracket racing, it didn't make any difference what you had. Safety equipment was all they was concerned about checking. As long as you had a legal roll bar and approved safety harness. You know, all that stuff. Fuel shut off valve you can shut off. Of course, nobody ever used it. That sort of thing. In 1980, I went out to track the first of the season. First race of the year. At that time, well my wife and my youngest daughter, they were working with me on the car, but the last run I'd made the season before was great. Whatever it was. There was no problems. I don't remember the exact car I was running against or whether I won or lost, but anyway, the season was over so I took it home and a week or two or three later, I run a check on the engine and it was still good

enough to run, but I was—bowel springs were good. Run cylinder leakage tests and the cylinder, range valves all holding good. I thought, well it'll make next season. I'll have to have a fresh set of tires. And then I went out there first race and cranked it up and was driving it around the pitch to warm everything up after we got there. Then I heard a noise I hadn't heard before and I checked, and rear end gears were out. There was a tooth broke off the rear end gear. It sat there all winter that way and I didn't know it because the last run I made and even towing it back to the pitch, I didn't hear anything that I remember, but anyway, the rear end gear was broke so I thought, Well I've got a spare third member with 480—456's and I was running 488's. That'll work for bracket racing, but then I got to thinking about it and I thought, I've run this engine for three years. Three full seasons. And have not pulled the heads or the pan off. I've just ran it. It didn't break. I ran it. Well, when you run aluminum rods, aluminum rod manufacturers tell the guys that are running the fuel cars to change rods after fifty runs. It said on the lower horsepower cars, to be safe you probably shouldn't run them past a hundred runs because the aluminum will fatigue and it will break. I thought, this set of rods was in one engine. Well, I was running this other one and I put these back on this engine here. I thought, Those rods probably—as a rough estimate—probably got three hundred passes. I thought, I really shouldn't run this until I—I really need to go through the whole engine and freshen it from end to end. Bowel springs.

Possibly cam shaft. Rods for sure. I added everything up and I thought, I'm on old tires. By the time I get that done, I'll have to have tires. The torque convertors. It was hard on torque convertors and they were about six hundred bucks a pop at that time. They went up after that. I thought this torque convertor is probably ready to quit and so in fact, it was showing signs because when it starts going bad, you make a run and everything seems to be just fine, sounds good, it's doing everything right. You get your ET slip and it's—maybe you lost ten hundreds on that run. That car would run within a hundredth every run. I mean, that's what made it a bracket racer. I can pick a dial in and just drop back a hundredth or so to a hundred lap. I could run right there just nudging that breakout. When the convertor started going bad, you make a run, they'd lose a tenth. Well you say, "I didn't hear or see anything." So you go back up and make a run and it loses another tenth. Well, before I got smart, I tried three times and found out it'd lose more than that. It may lose fifteen hundreds. It's just getting slower and slower. In fact, I got a runner up at liberal with a convertor going bad and the guys that I was racing against was watching my ET's and every run I made was slower and they thought I was shutting off early against my competition because I caught them because that's what you do if you—to keep from breaking out. As soon as you see you've got him covered and he can't make it up, then he's out of it. So everybody thought I was shutting off, but I wasn't. I was running it hard and the convertor was going out and the last run I made, I think I lost that race because the final round—I got runner up money. But the final round was against a full body car that I had to spot quite a little ways. I just couldn't catch him. The car was just kind of limping along by that time. But I was proud that day to get runner up money and go home. Anyway, I think that day that the rear end was broke, I got to thinking back on the last run or two that I made the season before and I thought, I believe that convertor was going bad because in the eliminator rounds I was slowing

up. I think I didn't win that race, I remember, but it was getting slower. I thought, better figure a convertor in on all this. Well, I came up with me doing all the work. About two thousand bucks. Put it back up in shape. And I had found by a guy in Maryland was making torque convertors and what goes wrong in them, there's a sprag clutch. What they call a sprag. And it'll slip one way, but it locks the other way. That's a bunch of rollers with little zig zag springs against them on kind of a slow beat race looking thing inside. It lets the roader—I forget what they call it. It lets it freewheel in one direction and locks back the other way. When it starts going bad instead of this locking, so the fluid can push against it, the fluid pushes it backwards slowly and that takes away the effect of what you want. This guy supposedly had developed a convertor that was spragless. He said it would last indefinitely and so I asked him, I said, "Can you—" he wanted nine hundred bucks, which the ones I was buying was around six, six-fifty. I said, "Can you rebuild mine?" He said, "I'll do yours for—" I think he told me five hundred or something. So I shipped it up there and he took it apart. This was one that I had taken out that had slowed down. It wasn't the one that was in the cart that time, but this was one of the earlier ones, and it was really in better shape than this one, but anyway, he called me when he got it. Said he cut it open and looked in it. He said, "There ain't anything in it I can use. I said, "Is it trash?" and he said, "Yeah. It's well used. Plum up." I said, well—he said, "Now, I'll send you a new one." I said, "No wait. Right now that nine hundred bucks is looking a little big. I'll get back in touch." That was about the time I started thinking about should I buy a nine hundred dollar convertor and put it on an engine with three hundred runs on it? So I just had it sitting there with the engine out of it. Beau and Brent Cowell. Beau had Alamo muffler out on eastern street there by the boulevard. We used to travel back and forth to Lubbock all the time. He was racing a Corvette, 427 Corvette that belonged to Alamo Mobile Homes. When he came by the shop one day and said, "When are you going to get your car running?" I said, "I think I'm through. I got to come up with about two thousand for the motor and nearly another thousand for a spragless convertor. Not counting the tires. We had to wait until the last minute to get them." He said, "Well you know, I told you if you ever sold that car I want it." I said, "How bad do you want it? The engine's already out. What'll you give for it?" He said, "You know me. I'd like to get three." I said, "About thirty-five firm." He said, "I'll take it. I said that includes the trailer," which it was an open trailer. I had an enclosed trailer for a long time, but it was a piece of junk that was falling apart. I had just built an open trailer again since I wasn't—I was down to where I wasn't doing that much highway travelling anymore anyway. Last two or three years. Can't believe I went that many places and did that much and not had any problems on the road with break downs with a tow vehicle or trailer problems. I just went and came back. Back in the sixties when Allred and I was running the Chevy six and was racing for division points. In '66, we started out the season with the points lead because that was the year that I put the Chevy six together and went to Oklahoma City and won that first divisional meet and reset the national record and then we started going to all the points meets. They have five points meets in a season where you can set records and get points and they're scattered around over—there's five state areas division four and it covered the Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. So you can have a points meet about

anywhere in that area. We've been to Opelousas, Louisiana, and where was the others? Down that way. I went to Victoria, Texas. Had a points meet there. I got a runner up to Gene Snow's funny car, which was—funny cars back then were just a class called A-factor experimental. They were scooting axels around on the Dodges and Chryslers. Chevelles, Camaros. They didn't have flip up bodies and all that. That was common, but it wasn't there yet. But Gene Snow's funny car was running on gasoline. Like when I went to Pomona to winter nationals, I had to run him in the finals and he was reigning B-altered class, but he took his funny car and took it off of nitromethane and put it on gasoline. That made him illegal altered. Me and him met in the finals at Pomona and you could run under your national record, but not more than a tenth of a second. I was there without Allred. He didn't come. I was doing driving, but anyway, I ran under the 9.90 record for D-dragster. With class run, I run a 9.86 and in eliminations, my first round was a 9.92 and then I ran two 9.88's back to back and that put me up against Gene Snow and he was plenty nervous. And I figured if I could stay beside that funny car for the first hundred feet because my record was 9.90 and the B-alter record was a 9.92, so basically, we were running side by side right from the get go. I thought, if I can stay with him on my gear change, which back then that Chevy six, we had set—left and second gear and put it in high. An '03 speed transmission. Gene's Hemi powered funny car had a racing torque flight in it, but anyway, I'm trying to—like I told people later, I was trying to outrun heads up. A key with a black Hemi was the irrigation engine because that's when we used to go down to Childress. They had drags back there back in the early sixties. Yeah, the mid-sixties. The fire department put on drag races at the old airbase at Childress, and we'd go down there with a Chevy six car and the guys at the fire department that was running it said, "We'd like for you guys to come down here. All these farmers around here come out to see the irrigation in that dragster." I think you're running an irrigation engine. I said, "Well, basically it is," because I think one of my blocks was an irrigation engine that I was working with, but anyway, I had run Gene Snow in the finals and you couldn't buy rollerized racing rocker arms and stuff like that back then for a Chevy six. Just who needs them? You know? Nobody's going to manufacture them. They did shortly after that, but I had bought a brand new set, and put on it while I was getting ready to go to Pomona just to make sure that I had covered all the bases and the ones that were on it had been on there ever since we'd started running that motor, which had been—it was '68. Been to two seasons or more. It did a lot of racing. Anyway, I was running Snow and we both left right together and I accelerated out there and when I shifted the high, neither one of us had gained an inch as near as I could tell. I thought, if he pulls out on me, I'm going to run either a 9.88 or I may run another 9.86 so I'm leaving him about six—five to six hundreds between outrunning me and going too fast. He's got that narrow margin to work with. And when I shifted to high gear, I saw raw fuel coming out of one of the injector tubes, and it didn't pull when I put it in high and he went on. In fact, he said he almost broke out anyway. He said, "I just figured you were right there. I was in high gear and when I finally looked over and didn't see you, I got on the brakes when I didn't see you hoping you weren't coming right back there where I can see you." I said, "No I was way back there." He said, "I was going to break out." I said, "That's what I was counting on. I wasn't going to leave

you any slack between getting ahead of me and breaking out.” Anyway, back in ’66, when we were racing for points, I wanted to be the division champion. Started in Oklahoma City there with a win and a new record. Then we held the points lead all the way through the season. Through four other—three other races and got to the fourth one or the final one after that one, which would be number five, actually. The final race of the season was right here at Amarillo and we were still in the lead and Gene Snow was in second place and the way it figured out—the only way we could miss being the division champion was we would have to not make any points at all, and Gene would have to win the meet. That’s what happened. I thought, Why me? But my partner, Roger, he was driving against—see that—the rules at that time, you had to outrun all the cars. You had to win your class. We had to outrun all the other d-dragsters there in order to run for competition eliminator. Well of course, Snow had to outrun all the b-alterers there to win his class, which I don’t know how many there were there, if there were any. But we had about four or five D-dragsters. In the very first round, we drew Jerry Green from Wichita Falls in a brand new car and Eddie Hill, a top fuel racer, built it for him. But anyway, the starting line lights at that time and they changed them not long after that, but the foul beam was kind of up high off the ground and it was out a little ways. When you stage, you’re in a light beam back here. Well then you can move that far before you hit the foul beam, which means that you can actually start moving just at the same instant that the Green comes on and not foul. But anyway, Green would come up there and new that he couldn’t outrun our car. Couldn’t even touch it. But when he left, I know—I was sitting right there watching both cars and Allred got a good safe light, but Green had already left. But a car of his raised the front wheels up and carried it over this light beam. It didn’t trigger the foul. By the time his light came on—

DS:

So Back tires they’d [?]

MC:

Yeah. In other words, he got a free red light, and so there was two greens and Allred was—I don’t how many cars. At least a full car of daylight behind him and Green ran eleven flat and Roger ran 10.32 or 3, which was about what the corrected record was at this altitude and didn’t catch him and then said, “Well the only hope we got now is somebody to take Gene Snow out.” And the deal is that if Snow got outrun in the final round, then we would be tied on points. In that situation, when we go to the world finals in Tulsa, we will have a one shot runoff to determine the division four champion, but Gene didn’t lose the final round. He won it too. That put him one round ahead of us on points, but we outran a whole bunch of cars to get these points. Gene, his funny car fit three classes. Whether you get points for resetting the national record for your class, ET only. But you can only do it once in a season. So Gene was going to points meets and he was entered at A-factor experimental. He held a record for that. The car was also legal for B-altered on gasoline and he held the record for that, and it was also legal as a C-fuel dragster, which is injected engine on fuel in a heavy car. It’d be like a 301 Chevy in a dragster or

something like that injected on fuel. He reset the national records for three different classes and got points for that, and we only did that once and then all our points come from outrunning people. I told people, "He might've won the championship, but we outran more cars than he did." But it seemed like every time something like that was on the line, just like running him in the finals out there at Pomona, you break a rock or arm. Well, I came back to Amarillo and started the season the next spring and went out to the track and broke two more and managed to get the race off without any trouble, but when I got back to the shop, I took all of them off. Took a big handful and went over and dumped them in the trash. They were TRW replacement rocker arms from the parts store. Well TRW is a big name. Makes good stuff, but they were faulty because the old half-worn rocker arms that I had on it never had broke, but they were ones that actually came off of—may have run on an irrigated engine. Yeah, that's like a—I was building a six cylinder or helping a guy build a six cylinder. A guy named Bill Johnson that worked at the Chevy house. He wanted to put a 292 in a six cylinder Camaro. I got him some flat top pistons and I got him a good cam shaft and a bunch of stuff like that, and was going to put his motor together for him and he come in carrying six brand new 292 Chevy connecting rods. Said, "Look what I've got." I said, "What?", "Brand new rods." I thought, yeah you conned the parts department out of them. I told him, I said, "I'm not going to use them.", "Why?" I said, "Well I'll use these that I've got laying here. The old ones." He said, "You can't do better than all new parts." I said, "Yeah you can. There's a spot on 292 Chevy six connecting rods that cracks in a radius right next to the rod bolt pad. You can see it or if it's invisible, you can magni-flux it, by check it, and see it. These new rods, these were all new, but they broke. These broken ones. Now, these new rods may break, but these right here, I want ones that have been a hundred thousand miles in a dump trunk and didn't break, and I'll use those. I don't want to use the new ones because that's an unknown quantity. They may break." I learned that the hard way. I built a Chevy six for the McClellan brothers down at Friona. They put one of them in a '48 Anglia Ford and just wanted—Joe McClellan wanted something to race on the weekends. He just wanted a car to take to Amarillo drag way, basically. And his brother, Ken, was running what he called a Cobra Stang and he was running super stock and had a little factory sponsorship. So Joe built up this '48 Anglia and I built him an intake system with carburetors that did about the same thing as my homemade injection did. And so they—I built an engine for them and they had a rod break and that's when I got to inquire around and I called Kay Sissle whose a six owner guy in California that I dealt with a lot. Asked him about that and he said, "Yeah I definitely want to magni-flux those where the right bolt head is." So start cracking. So I checked all of the other ones that was in their motor and there was one other one that had a crack, but hadn't broke. So that put a stop to that. I knew what to look for. Anyway, I told Bill Johnson, I said "I want a set of rods that got a hundred thousand miles in a gravel truck, and then we'll use those." I put that engine together for him and he put it in a little—I guess a '69 or a '70 Camaro that had a six in it to begin with. With a 400 hydromatic transmission. He was having fun. He was going around town picking on muscle cars, so called. He had to pause the traction in it where it wouldn't spin the right rear tire like a lot of them do. He went around looking for 442's and GTO's. Cut was as

anything—I had a Buick, had 455, which was pretty fast. But he's outrunning everything on that six. Kind of the same way with Cody's.

DS:

Let me ask you. You know, you mentioned sponsorship and so when you were running like against someone like Gene Snow, was he being sponsored and you were pretty much just a home guy?

MC:

No. I don't remember Gene being sponsored and he didn't really need to be. He inherited a company in Dallas that has to do with a whole lot of ranches and a whole lot of oil wells. Basically, all he had to do was just be who he was and he could buy anything he wanted, and when the guys started going to the flip up bodies and the blowers and all that, where they're really getting fast, he could afford to do that out of his pocket. I think, maybe, he ran Keith Black's name on his car, and I think maybe Keith Black was giving him a break on his engines because Keith was Mr. Hemi in the funny car business back in those years. He's since then died. But he was the guru on the Chrysler Hemis and if you had a Keith Black Hemi, as long as you didn't screw up the rest of the car, you were pretty well going to have a competitor. So Gene was not sponsored at all. Now, Kelley Chadwick, I knew him well. He came from Floydada originally. He was teaching school, I guess these towns around here in Floydada.

DS:

Was he the one that was also a basketball coach?

MC:

Yeah. He was. Women's basketball coach. Girls. He was sponsored by Emily Oil. But he still, like money, to do what Gene did. Gene didn't—I don't think Gene even worked on his own engines. He had some guys in Dallas when he was not out touring, he had some guys that would take care of it for him, but Kelley had to—he did his own stuff basically, and he ran Chevrolet because running a 426 engine was expensive and he liked to run the Chevrolets. But him and Gene Snow worked a deal where they would match race each other and they'd go back east to all these different dragstrips and set them up a tour by dates and they would go and they run each other two out of three for exhibition. Well in that situation, Kelley would win every once in a while, but Gene. The Hemis would pretty well dominate the Chevys and the Chevy funny cars kind of over the time, disappeared, but they would set it up where you win first round, I'll win the second round and then the third round, we'll run for real and see who can win. They'd get however much they got for match racing and they'd go onto the next racetrack. So you got to go fast and have somebody else pay for it. Of course, Kelley got some from Emily Oil and two or three other situations. Don Hardy in Floydada, built funny car chassis and pro-stock and all that sort of thing later on, but I think Don Hardy racecars was painted on Kelley's car, but I think it

was on Gene's car also. I think he built Gene's chastise. But Kelley and Don Hardy started out in the early years running a '32 Ford Coop. I was trying to think if I had a picture of it in here anywhere. I don't remember that I do. It was just a hot rod for the street, but it had BNMs. Four speed hydro transmission, instead of running a four speed like everybody else. Four speed hydro's were expensive, but a lot of the really good, like unblown gas, coop, and sedans and stuff like that back then. Running those and they were pretty quick. They had a—instead of having a torque converted, they had a fluid coupling, which didn't multiply with torque. It was just a way of making—turn this fast enough, it'll make this turn. The torque convertor actually when the stater is standing still, when the roller hits and it throws the fluid into it, it actually helps turn it in addition to just the fluid. They make the fluid move so fast, it actually has an inertia effect on it so it actually converts the torque and it improves the torque as much as fifteen to one, but as soon as that moves, it starts falling off so it's not as good as it sounds. But the fluid coupling, all it did was I could turn the roller fast enough, I had to make the stater turn. But to make up for that, it was four gears instead of three and the first gear was like 380 something to one. And it would not spin the tires. Those cars are like '32. It's sitting there and when he hit it, as soon as he floored the throttle, he put into third because as soon as it launched, then that first gear was done because it was nearly 4 to 1, 380 something to 1. So what it did was it threw a tremendous amount of torque to the rear tires, but not spinning them very fast and the guys that were running those BNM high drives, I guarantee you if you were running a four speed or any other kind of an automatic, you were going to be behind at the Christmas tree. You'll be behind that BNM. Then if they got an engine that works pretty good, they can carry it from there and you can't make it up so that first gear was what it was all about. Of course, the problem with them was they were big and very heavy, and they were hard to work on and they kind of fell by the wayside as time went on. The Lenco's came in, and they're just a bunch of planetary gears in a row with bands that clamp around the drum. They do that like four times. You see them in the pro stocks. When you look inside, they'll have four levers across there. A tall one up here and then you go this way and then pro stocks now are taking less than six seconds to make a quarter mile and in the first four seconds, you're through all these gears so a pro stock driver has got to get these gears, all four of them, in the first four seconds. And I think well, they claim that of all the professional classes, the pro stocks are the hardest to drive. They're harder than a top fuel dragster or a funny car. Probably out of the whole three groups that are in that, probably the top fuel dragster is the easiest to drive because if it leaves straight and everything's hooked up like it's supposed to be, you'll basically just sit there like this. In this car I had that I built, of course I was only running a hundred and fifty, sixty miles an hour, but that car would drive itself, and I found myself doing what I shouldn't be doing. As soon as I hit the finish line, you know, I just let off—I just coasted back off the accelerator and just let go of the steering wheel and started taking my seat belt loose. I was still running a hundred. Then get on the brake after it coasts down a little ways until you can turn off the last turn off. Use up all the shut off area so you don't wear your brakes out. But Brent, when I sold them the car, Beau said Brent'd to be doing the driving. Beau said, "I'm not driving that thing." I said, "You're driving that deathtrap Corvette.

Brent's driving the Camaro. I wouldn't drive either one of them." He said, well—I said, "Well Brent's going to do the driving." I said, "Brent. This car don't do anything wrong. I never tried it, but I think you could sit square on the starting line and hammer it and not touch the steering wheel and it would probably go to the other end or at least to halftrack before it drifted off one way or the other. You're going to be real bored if you've been driving that four speed Camaro. You got one gear change to do and that power glide and then you sit there and say, oh, um."

DS:

He enjoy the ride?

MC:

Yeah. And sure enough, that's what he told me later. He said it was like driving a Cadillac. I said, "These guys driving dragsters get a whole lot of credit for something that they're not. The only thing they're risking their lives about is if the engine blows up and they flip it or something like that." When my engine blow up, it don't do anything but just blow the engine up. Breaks the pieces is all.

DS:

So you mentioned that was 1980 when you sold it to them?

MC:

Yeah. Uh-huh. I think it was '80.

DS:

And so did you race after that or that was the end of the races?

MC:

That was all of it. I haven't even been back to a track. Well in the first place, that was the year that they started not really doing actual racing. They'd have what they call Friday Night Drags, where you run what you bring. A bunch of people just go out there with whatever they've got and look around and say, "You want to race?", "Yeah, I'll race you." All they're doing is seeing who's the fastest and just playing around. That's all they're doing. You know, there's no serious racing going on so I didn't—if I went to any of the—I went to some national meets. I went to the mile highs in Denver. I went a couple of times to the new Dallas track after they got it open. The times I went to Dallas to race with my car was the old Green Valley track, and it was kind of dangerous. Not for my car, but they run fuel cars down there and they had—at the end of the track, you went off, over or in the air above, I should say, a street or a road across the end of the track at the end of the shutoff area. And in the early years, there were some of those fuel cars that went through the—had a fence down there was all. They went through the fence and off out in the boonies and turned over and everything. But now with Green Valley track, I went down there

with this rear engine car and I think that was in '78. It was what you call bracket finals. It was nothing but bracket racing. Cars like mine and full body cars on down. The top bracket was under ten seconds. Or maybe it was under nine seconds was the fastest bracket. And went down there to the bracket finals just to see what it was about and found that seven hundred and some odd cars were there. All bracket cars. The top bracket that I was in had I think a hundred and twenty. I thought, my God. How does anybody win this? But one thing I was proud of was after everybody made their runs and qualified and picked the ET they were going to spot off of, I was the fastest car there out of seven hundred cars with a Rambler. I dialed a—I was on gasoline in a four barrel carburetor. Legal. NHRA B-econo-rail. Power glide and everything. I dialed that 8.50 dial in and the next closest thing was small block Chevy C-dragster or B-econo-rail. One or the other. He dialed 8.54 or 57 or something like that. The third fastest one was in the nines and from there on down. I thought, I got to spot every car here a head start, which is the way I like it. I wanted always to do that because if you leave first, you don't know what this guy's doing coming up behind you. You don't know if he's maybe broke back there and you're running hard and you break out from running too fast. I want to know—I want to be able to see the situation ahead of me when I race somebody. Know if I can let off or not let off. Want to know what he's doing and so I always tried and usually, very rarely I went to a track where there was anybody there that let me go first. You get into the later years when the A-econo-rails, most of them were running big block Chevys. They would let me go first, but a lot of them, that was a mistake because they didn't realize that ways ahead [?] [01:33:53] Rambler didn't lay down and quit pulling. What I liked about it was—I don't know. I did some stuff in my engines that most people don't do. They says it's the wrong thing to do. Whatever. But run offset wrist pins because years ago, I think, the boat racers found out where they had to run a bone stock engine. The wrist pins are not in the center of the piston. They're offset to one side. The factory knows that to keep the piston noise down. It loads the piston against the cylinder wall where it don't rattle under combustion and everything. It has a quieting affect. Well, the boat racers found out if you turn that piston around and move the pin offset to the other side, that way when the crack comes around, this pin is over here instead of over here and as the piston starts pushing, it has a more direct, straight down push on the crank. I've talked to Carroll Caudle that builds all kinds of race engines for everybody. He does—he runs a centered wrist band. That's what everybody does, but I ordered my pistons with offset pin and then turned them around backwards. I wasn't running a piston dome. I was just running flattops because it already determined that to get compression with a big dome on top of the piston, that hurts your horsepower and you probably—as much as you gained with the compression, you're probably hurt by having a flame travel from the spark plug having to go up over that dome and down the other side instead of flashing straight across. So even though you give away compression, you had a better flame travel. But anyway, I run my wrist pins off to one side and my engines seemed like with the power glide, I take it to 8500 and then shift it into high and right there, at the bottom end of high gear for about the first thousand to fifteen hundred RPM gain, that thing just pulled your head off and that's where the big blocks couldn't believe. Had one kid that followed me all the way back

to and had it pumped out and was 331 instead of 362 and all that. He followed me all the way. The guy at scales told him when he was looking over his shoulder, he said, "You don't need to worry about this car. He's right on his way. Every run, I've checked him." He said "There's something wrong. There ain't no way that a big block Chevrolet won't drive around that car. I couldn't pull him in high gear." He did a little bit, you know, I could see his front wheels just inching up, but we run out of track before he ever got anything back anywhere near winning it. He said, "Ain't no way a wedge had rambler is going to pull a big block Chevrolet." I said, "I didn't pull you man. He said, "Well, I wasn't gaining a whole lot." I said, "Well, you're not alone. Don't feel bad." Anyway, when I sold the car to Beau and Brent, they ran it for quite a while and I think they went to liberal quite a bit and then NHRA came out with some new rules. Before anybody that had a racecar that ran below eight and a half seconds or nine seconds or something like that, had to have a SEMA, which is specialty equipment manufacture's association. They had to have a SEMA tag on the chassis, which means it was either built by a SEMA chassis builder. Approved by a chassis builder or if it was not built by one, it had to be inspected and passed by a SEMA inspector. Well, Beau knew I built that car myself. It didn't leave my shop until it was ready to race. So when he found out he had to have a SEMA tag on the car, he sold it to guys at Pro One Automotive and they took it and was going to race it. But the deal was Beau didn't talk to me and let me know what was going on or I could've told him that I made the frame rails were sixty thousands in wall thickness. Most dragsters have 049 and some of the super light ones actually go to 035, which is not really stout enough to even hold the engine up, but some guys run them that way. But I had 060 and then I had this kit from Lakewood Industries by Joe Schubeck and if it's chrome molly, 90,000's and if it's mile steel, 125,000. The oil cage was all chrome molly. It was nine wall. Well these SEMA inspectors, they can measure wall thickness without drilling any holes or anything with kind of an x-ray machine. You can just put it on there and it'll tell you exactly what the wall thickness is and Beau figured that car would not pass SEMA inspection. When he sold it to Pro One and was laughing about, oh I suckered those guys in, well they strapped it to the bare frame, hauled it down to Dallas, and gave him a hundred dollars and the guy put a SEMA tag on it and brought it back home. I didn't get to rub that in on Beau, but I figured the only thing I would've been concerned about was that was that was first job I ever did with a heliarc and I did have a problem once when I went to Lawton, Oklahoma. They had a rain out date. They run an eighth mile over there and I'd never run an eighth mile. I always figured running an eighth mile's kind of like kissing your sister. You know? It's just not quite there, but anyway, they had a rain out date and they said that they were going to run Saturday and Sunday and pay top money both days, which meant you run Sunday and then you run on Saturday night and then you run Sunday day. So I thought, they're paying seven hundred to win. A guy was really lucky and really good, he might come home with fourteen hundred bucks. And I'd never run an eighth mile anyway so I think I'll go see what it does. So I went over there on Saturday and the first run I made in the left lane just as I hit the finish line, incidentally, the car ran right on five seconds flat at a hundred and thirty in the eighth mile, which is 660 feet. They ran a hundred and thirty in six hundred feet. I went across the

finish line and I mean, that car just BAM. I thought, God almighty. What did I run through? A ditch? Or what? It rattled my head on the rope bar. Kind of gave me a headache. It was kind bam, bam, bam. I got shut down and went back to the pits and went up there and looked at the finish line and there was—it didn't look as bad as it felt. When you're running that fast, it felt a lot worse. It was kind of a scoop out place. I thought, This place is not really—that lane, anyway, is not really good for an unspun car. Got no springs. You know, just axel bolted to the frame. So I thought—I went back and I made a couple of more runs on the other side. I thought, Maybe I'll get lane choice or something for the first round. We'll see what happens. I didn't much like it, but anyway, I drew that lane first round running a Camaro from Dumas. Belonged to Dickie Hass who got a body shop, but Dickie wasn't driving it. A friend of his brought it down there. I drew him first round. I had to run that left lane and I had to spot him, of course, and I didn't catch him. He turned the light on and he didn't break out, but when I hit the finish line, the thing bounced real hard then it got to bouncing from one slick to the other and it kept getting worse. I thought, I didn't know you was using a parachute. I ain't running fast enough to make that work. I never use them anyway, but it was getting to the point where it was just doing that and to that side and I thought, One more and it's going to turn over. And as it slid that last time, it went off the edge of the track and there was head high weeds all the way down the shutoff area. I went out in the weeds and when I hit the weeds, it slid sideways and come back and there was just barely enough light in the shutdown area where I could kind of see my front end wheels, but I was coasting through the weeds. And I remember once, I saw the right front wheel and it turned ninety degrees to this other one and I thought, I've lost my steering. Part of it. And it came back by itself and I thought, before I run out of inertia, I need to go back to the track wherever it is. I knew it was to my right, so I steered back out of the weeds and pulled back out on the track and right there was the last turn off so I thought, okay, is this going to work? So I went up there and as I turned the wheels, they just turned like they was supposed to. Went around the coast and stopped over there. I thought, I swear to God that wheel was unhooked when I saw it. So I went up there and looked, and it was. I had—I built this car like we did in the old days. The rack and pinion steering I had on the front, came off of a '59 Renault. As a result of that, it was kind of wide, so coming off of it, I had some fairly short tie rods. Maybe about that long that went out to the arm that turned the wheel, and the high mans, I had three eights high mans. The high man was bent to a point where it had broken off and unhooked that wheel and the other side, they were bent, but not enough to break it. But anyway, we hooked tow strap up and towed it back to the trailer, and I found out that going forward, that wheel would follow the other one. I was steering the left wheel and when I turned it, the right wheel was just like it was hooked up and it was just following this other one and I thought, for a homemade front axel and all this junk, I've got, the front spindles were cut down '48 Anglia spindles. I thought, The steering situation that I've got on this is perfect. It steers itself just like I said it did, and it'll do it even if the wheels are hooked up or not hooked up. If I can steer one, the other one will follow, and then I found out that when we pulled it up to put it in the trailer, we couldn't push it backwards, because as soon as you moved it, that wheel would go [sound] and turn sideways. We finally got it backed up and

got some help and got it loaded in the trailer. So we already had a hotel room for the night, so we spent the night and headed back to Amarillo in the morning on Sunday. Well when I got back, I got to looking at it and the frame was bent right where it went past the roll cage. The section between the roll cage and the front of the engine. These rails here were bent on both sides. Swayed down. So I—what I was getting at was I stripped the frame and got it sandblasted and I took it over to Duke Allen over at T-Bar Chassis Company. They built this car back here four or six years ago. I have to get that far back. Yeah, that car right there was built by T-Bar Chassis. That was taken at the world finals at Tulsa. They had built that car for us, and got rid of my exhaust pipe tubing car I set the record with. That one there I built myself. But anyway, took it over there and had—I made some reinforcing pieces to come off this top rail and go to the roll cage uprights, and that way we could pull these rails in where they belong and then weld these pieces in and hold it back in place. Kind of a crutch or splint or something, you might say. Anyway, I took it over there and told Duke, I said, I got this all jammed up here with a come along, where I could hold all these pieces on both sides where I wanted them. I said, “I need you to weld those up for me.” Of course, in the meantime as all of this is going on, the guy that had the heliarc had left my place and moved to Chicago. I didn’t have a heliarc anymore. I told Duke, I said, “As long as you’ve got the paint off of it and everything, if you see any of my welds that don’t look too good, feel free to do whatever they need.” He said, “I’ll check them.” He was a certified welder to the point to where he did pipeline welling for the natural gas company for years. he was a brother-in-law to Jack Moss who was my original hot rod boss. He knew all about the hot rod business. He worked with Jack on a lot of his cars, but anyway, when I went back to get it and I walked around looking at it and I think I found maybe two or three welds that he didn’t do over. I said, “Duke, was my welding that bad?” He said, “Well you did pretty good. I figured it wouldn’t hurt if it was a little stronger.” He was kind of a farmer type. A little stronger. I said, “Well I appreciate that.” So that was why when the A1 took that chassis down to get it certified, they x-rayed the welds and the tubing and everything, and it was a good, legal chassis. It might not have been legal with my welds.

DS:

That’s what I was going to ask you because you ran it for so many years from the time that you welded it up without redoing the welds, but you did redo the welds so that’s—

MC:

They were good enough, but there again, you get in the situation, that’s how good is good enough if you roll one over and the welds start coming apart just due to the extra stress? You know? That wouldn’t be good.

DS:

Yeah, because it’s all a system. If one thing fails, it all goes.

MC:

Right. But anyway, due to that deal at Lawton, there's a guy from here in Amarillo that was racing at that time, went over there too. He had a legal B-econo-rail with two fours on it. Yeah, it was originally a legal B-econo-rail. He had two fours on it and it was no longer a legal b, but it was a good bracket car. His times were just about identical to mine. I think he had a hundredth or two on there on ET, but us two were in a class by ourselves in the fives. Low fives. I think the next best car was like a six and a half salient car or something like that and there on down slower. Already found out that the trip was wasted because the run I made—what happened didn't have anything to do with the run. I just didn't win that first round. After that was when all this other happened, so I got it back. Got the chassis reinforced and got it back in shape. Went ahead racing after that, but I wasn't going to Lawton no more. Them Okies can have that. There was a lot of fast cars over there around Oklahoma City.

DS:

And you've kind of mentioned a little bit of this. You talked about how Liberal was a really good place to race. You talked about Lawton, not so much. Can you talk about some of the other tracks you raced at and how they were?

MC:

Oh. I raced at Lubbock quite a bit and it was what I'd call average. It was good enough, but it wasn't the best. The biggest problems we had in Lubbock usually was due to weather because it's out east of town and there's nothing around it but dry cotton fields. When the wind blows, the dirt blows over there. They had pretty good facilities and everything comparatively. The old Green Valley track, like I said, it was shut off early on. It was kind of short. It was a little dangerous for anything really fast. When they came up with this new dragstrip, whenever that was, that was after I quit racing. I never did go to the new strip. I went down there to watch a couple of races, but I ran that Green Valley track and I had no complaints about the traction or anything else, as far as just a hobby car goes. I know back in the sixties when Green Valley was running a lot of fast fuel cars, they had a couple of guys killed down there that I remember. I wasn't acquainted with them, but I knew them by reputation. The Sand Valley track in Oklahoma City was kind of down in a creek bed and it was—I'd say that the track was pretty decent. I ran some good times there. In fact, the only time I really ran down in the eight second bracket was when I was running alcohol, but going down to the lower altitude of Oklahoma City and then with the traction they had there at Sand Valley, I ran an eight—I think I ran an 8.78 at Sand Valley. The B-econo rail record. I didn't have any at that time. That was after I got the record and somebody else got it away from me. That run against this big block Chevy the guy's complaining about. Running as fast as his big block. On that particular run was when I ran an 8.78 and if I'd have ran an 8.77, I'd have been disqualified because that would've been—IHRA, you couldn't run under the record. NHRA, they gave you a tenth under. But what these associations want to do, is if you can run and set a record, go ahead and do it or they're going to

make you be disqualified for running too fast. They're trying to encourage people to set the record if the records capable of being reset. I run into that situation when I was running the two engine car. We went to Omaha, Nebraska. I was trying to figure out. I had to stop and think why did we go there? Well, I was running the two engine car, and we was trying to see if we could be high point division champion again. You're allowed—you can only run five points races, but you can run one points race outside of your division. So you run four in your division and you run one outside, so we decided that we had one points race left here in this division to go to and that was Houma, Louisiana. I told Allred, I said, "To hell with Louisiana. We haven't had any luck going down there anyway racing. Why don't we make Denver division 5 our outside record meet." So, okay. We'll do that. Well, the division director up there hated division 4 cars. Darryl Zimmerman. Reason was—and one of the division 5 guys told me when we set the record with a twin engine car at Liberal, that was a division 5 points meet. One of the division 5 guys said, "I don't go in division 4." I said, "Why not?" He said, "Hell, look at all the guys you got running competition eliminator. Every damn one of them nearly, including you, is the national record holder. I can't outrun nobody in division 4." Well Zimmerman was the other way. He didn't want us division 4 cars coming up in his division and outrunning his division 5 cars and getting points for it, you know? So he didn't like us to begin with, but we went to the points meet in Denver and took the twin car. It was running good. Wasn't giving any trouble. We were running good enough to possibly win eliminator, except for the double A alters. The roadsters with the blown Chryslers. Those guys, they had a bunch of those in division 5. About four that I know of. They were all capable of running a double A altered record. So we wasn't looking forward to the roadsters at all, but we got down to the semi-final round. And at Denver they had starting rollers and you come around here and you rolled your car up on it and put the rear wheels on the rollers, and then they stick a push bar thing in the ground behind your push bar because it's going to make it try to go backwards when they turn a roller to push it back against that. You start them on rollers, then you just pull straight up to the line, which was okay. It's good enough, but just as I was pushing him up there—and the guy's working the rollers that position the cars on them. I pushed him up there in my Suburban and all of a sudden, a big old raindrop about that big hit the windshield. It's going to rain? Well, these guys are starting their engines, and by the time he got started and rolled up to get ready to stage, the ground was totally wet. There was not a dry spot. It just—the whole bottom fell out. I thought, well, in that case the guy running the tower, they flipped the flashing amber lights on, on the top of the tree, and that means no go. Shut it off. Nothing's happening so they say altered—guy's name was Don Brown. Dan Brown. He starts pulling up to stage and Roger, he pulls up. Turns the pre stage on and they're both sitting there and I'm sitting there and I thought, They got to turn—they got to shut this down. You can't run on this. So Roger thought, Well let's do something. So he went ahead and staged. Got both lights on. Roadster. Got both lights on. And the tree comes down. I thought, I cannot believe this. Well, Roger had a little bit of a spot. The record for the roadster is about an 8.60. All those cars that were any good were running in the 8.40 to 8.50 range, but none of them would reset the record. They'd just leave it alone. They all got an agreement. They were all running double A altered on

8.60 record. Let's just leave it alone. That way we don't even have to—they can outrun us and not even make a hard pass, which turned out that's what he did. Anyway, pulled up and when Brown hit that altered and the wheel base is on, no longer from here to here, it just went whoop and he backed off and turned it this way and got on it again, it went the other way and got off of it. I could hear Roger working that twin car down through there, and he was just going woo. Just spinning the tires just a little bit and it was just barely moving around. Hell, he was down there shutting off by the time this other car got down there so we got back to the pits. Here comes Zimmerman. "Okay. We'll have to rerun that one at the next points meet." I said, "Rerun it? Why?" He said, "Well you saw what happened." I said, "Yeah. I saw that you turned the cars loose." He said, "I couldn't get to the tower in time to get them guys to stop running the clocks." I said, "Well." I said, "I remember distinctly at the driver's meeting, you said you didn't want any whining. No complaining. Said when both cars are staged, it's a race. No reruns. No nothing. Just settle for what you get. Said you told us that when both stage lights are on, when the cars leave a line, that's a race. Final." He said, "Yeah, but these are different circumstances." I said, "There was no different circumstances said about anything. You were real emphatic." He said, "God, deliver me from division 4. If Frank and Charlie Smith and Allred and Clarke would stay in division 4, it'd sure make me happy." I said, "Well we thought we'd come up here and grace your little track here with our presence." He said, "Well you know it's got to be run over again." I said, "Where's the next race?" He said, "Omaha." I said, "We got to tow from Amarillo to Omaha just to outrun somebody?" He said, "Well, either that or if you don't show, you forfeit your points." I told him, I said, "We might just be there." So we went. And that track was—I don't know about tracks—the shutoff area, paved part of it, was real short and then when you ran off of that, you ran into gravel. White gravel. Probably average about that big in diameter. Real jagged looking stuff. Of course, that twin car was slow. It was dragging the frame on the ground in that gravel. Of course, it drug a lot anyway. I had to reinforce the frame. The frame was so mis-engineered, I couldn't believe it. Anyway, we go to Omaha. Tow up there, and we've got four cars left in the Denver race. Guess what? There's three double A altered roadsters and us. All of these cars can run under their record for spot. And at that track, we were running good, but we were probably a tenth off of being able to run a record, which is a lot in drag racing. So anyway, we had to pair up against Dan Brown again. I don't know what happened to him, but Roger outran him and I thought, Hmm. I didn't go talk to him or anything. He must've had a problem of some kind. Anyway, the next two that was left was Tom Trish, and old Frank Smith. Down in Oak City, called him Tom Trash because his brother run altered class. But Tom Trish and the other guy was the record holder with 8.62 or something like that. But these cars were—both of those cars were kept running 840's. So we drew. Not Trish, but the other guy. He was the one that went to a funny car later. What tank was he on? Anyway, we drew him and Roger said that he got the spot in about three tenths of a second. He said, "And he just drove up beside me and was driving along there looking at me and he said down there about the finish line, he just stepped down on it and drove out about a car length and said that was the end of that." I said, "Yeah." I said, "We got 8.60 cars. 8.60 record and 8.40 cars. That's the reason there was three of

those and us. They'd already eliminated everybody but us." So it ended up in the final round, had Tom Trish and this other guy, and he's still racing or he was a year or two ago still racing funny cars from up in that area. But they ran each other. Well, in the event that two cars of the same class run in eliminations, there's no breakout. You can run as fast as you want to. In other words, they can run under an 8.60 and not be disqualified, and they both ran in the 8.40's and Tom Trish had the best looking car, but he got outrun. So anyway, we got to semifinal round points out of Omaha and we got points for winning the Denver race so we were I think second or third in division 5 in points when the season was over. That was better than we were in our own division. But the Omaha track was not real great and I went once to Sioux City with this car or one I'm running now with Gene Buchanan, one of my painters that did my paint job. No. We went to Omaha again with the rear engine car because they had a new track or they had redone it or something. I wanted to see what it looked like. When we got there Saturday afternoon it was rainy and so we went to the hotel. When we went to bed, it was raining. When we got up, it was raining, so we never even unloaded the car. We just made a u-turn and came home. That happened also at Sioux City. Doug Hutchens had this '57 Chevy that I built the engine for back in here somewhere. He was there with his '57. He went with Gary. I'm getting bad on the old guys' names. Gary Moore lives down outside of Tulia, farms outside of Tulia. He was running a Firebird in some kind of stop class. Doug Hutchens went with him to Sioux City. Doug said, "What do you think about that weather in Sioux City?" I said, "It was shits. It sucked. We didn't even unload." He said, "Yeah, they just announced over the PA that the pits were flooded so they wouldn't be racing that day." Doug said, "You know what it looked like? Like a movie or something. All these real dark clouds is up there just a twisting and turning and whirling around and dropping down and there's a bunch of lightning and thunder. I expect any minute for those clouds to open up and this voice is going to say you people down there have pissed me off." I thought, Yeah, all right. Anyway, I've been all over the world, I guess. Most of it, I guess, uncalled for, but this first dragster I built—there's Doug Hutchens' '57 that I built the engine for. Has my name on the fender. This first dragster I built to put the Flag Head Ford in. I wasn't really all that serious about it. Randy Willingham was working for me. He said, "I remember when John Blakely told you he wanted his '37 Coop back." I had my engine in John Blakely's Coop running H-gas Coop and Sedan. And anyway then I had a Chevy in it and I put the flat head in it with a four speed behind it. Run H-gas and did pretty good class wise, and he wanted it back so I pulled my flat head out and Randy said, "I remember you came from downtown in your truck with a bunch of exhaust pipe in the back and I asked, I said, 'what are you going to do with all that?' And you told me, said 'I'm going to build a dragster.' And you did." That one had the flat head Ford in it, but '65, when they changed the rules on the engine so I could run the late model Chevy six instead of the old style. I could see that was the way to go. I was about the first one to get one of those running. Of course, that was the first one I set the record with and then everybody got on the bandwagon, but most of them were running three side draft weber carburetors, was real popular. But those things were about four hundred bucks a piece at that time, when the dollar was worth more than it is now and I thought, I can take my flat head

injectors. I've got an injector pump and barrel valve and a set of nozzles. I just need to build some tools with butterflies in them and make it fuel injected. So I made my own fuel injection. This one right here was McClellan brothers that I built and put carburetors on it, but I had long runners like injectors, but I had them turned up because they had to go under the hood of that '48 Anglia. It had a lot of room this way, but not much sideways.

DS:

Well, you know, earlier we talked about the fatigue in your last dragster. How about that one that you built out of exhaust pipe? How did that stand up to the wear and tear of racing?

MC:

The roll cage wasn't—roll cage was a one-eighth wall mile of steel and complied with the rules, but there's no rules on the rest of the chassis. Just the part that protects the driver. The thing about it is, you can't make a long car with exhaust pipe. It has to be short and angled trust or it won't flex because when you flex exhaust pipe, it don't unflex. It stays that way.

DS:

Yeah, because it's so thin.

MC:

So other than that, strength wise with the ankle brace and everything. It wasn't a problem. The reason why I knew it would work, after I got out of the air force and spent a year and a half in California working for Comber, but when I came back and went to work for Jack Moss, he had built one of the first two engine dragsters. He had two supercharged Chevrolets side by side in a car and it was made out of exhaust pipe to me, except for the roll cage, and I wasn't going to put near that much strain on it, so I knew it'd work. Of course, that won't have much forgiveness if you wreck it or anything, but none of them do. Anyway, as soon as they let the late model Chevy six get in, I could see that there wasn't going to be much of anything else in the dragster to have because the guys that were running out the speed bowl, a lot of them were running early model coops. They had a class just for the old coops with the flat heads or sixes in them and a flat head out there couldn't touch that Chevy six, and they didn't even have to have a lot of hopping up done to them. Jack built two or three motors that ran out there and I saw him doing it and I was looking at that 292 and I thought, I know they're eating a flat head up out there with these engines and I could do that in a dragster too if they just let me. All of a sudden, they did. So actually, we reset the record in '66 and held the record in '66, '67, and '68. The only car that took it away from us was a two engine car and it was the two guys—Ringer and Suiters from Oregon and they had two four-cylinder Pontiac Tempas motors hooked together. Well, a Pontiac Tempas motor uses all of the eight parts. It's a 389 Pontiac in two pieces. That's why they called their car—lettered on it on it eight the hard way. Had two fours. So they—to give you an idea in '67, we went to the world finals and we didn't qualify that year to go. That's a whole other story.

In '66, we went to the final round and got outrun by B competition or A comp—I guess it was A competition roadster from Omaha. Terry Fritch. He had an injected Oldsmobile with an automatic transmission, but that car was quick. We went to final round and we had qualified fourth that year out of a sixteen car field, and got the final round and just—I drove final round and got off a good run. I got a good light. I just run a 10.06 and the best we'd run all weekend was a 10.04, but it would taken about a 9.95 to hold off that damn roadster. There's a picture in here of the national dragster of making that run, and I saw that run on wide world sports taken from up high. We're looking down at the starting line and then seeing them going through and I left and then he left and came after me. I saw him years later in Colorado. I said, "Did you see that run on wide world sports?" Said, "Yeah." I said, "It hurt my feelings. I thought you just barely caught me right at the finish line. Man you guys are my ass up in a hurry. I was way back there when you hit the finish line." He said, "I kind of noticed that too. I thought it was a lot closer race than that." I said, "Well, it kind of hurt my feelings, but I was glad I got to the finals." He said, "Well, you know what? I run a 9.13 on that run and the record was like an 9.11 or 9.12 for his class. Then the following year, we got rid of that Oldsmobile and bought a brand new 426 Hemi. Bought injectors for it and everything. You know what? We ran that car a whole year with that Hemi before we ever run another 9.13." I said, "Well why did you pick me to do it?" He said, "We liked to never got that Hemi—" and it was supposed to run circles around an Oldsmobile. You know, that was an old obsolete engine, but Terry Fritch was the guy, the kid, that was driving his dad. His dad was Oldsmobile man and he had been messing with hopped up Oldsmobile street rods and one thing or another for years and he was pretty good on Olds. And Joe Mondello on the west coast did his heads and Mondello ran Oldsmobile and dragsters back in early years and he was the fastest Oldsmobile out there, so they had a good Oldsmobile. But we qualified fourth and got to the final round that year and the next year, I was experimenting with cam shafts and one thing or another and we just flat goofed up and did away with a couple of points meets. Just didn't run good enough because I thought it was going to run better than what it did, and we ended up not in the top five cars. Was number six. Is it working?

DS:

I think so. Yeah. I was just trying to see what the battery power was because it might be—

MC:

Okay. Anyway, I'll try to wrap this up. Anyway, that was in '66 and then '67, we didn't qualify to go and so that was that. End up just maybe one round out of being in the top five and racer brown—a year before when we got runner up, racer brown had given away a roller cam shaft and kit to the runner up and competition eliminator. Well, I had him grind me a roller cam, which was kind of unheard of for a six cylinder and it put a real good grind on it. Something that worked. And I kept trying to make that cam work and finally, I just decided that it wasn't going to—I got to do something. We'd gone some rounds and done this and that. I don't know if we'd maybe want to meet too, but we got down to the last race of the year was here for points. I told

Roger, I said, "We just got to do something." So I put back the old flat top cam that I used to run and everything. Set everything back up like in the old days, and we went to the last points meet of the year out here and we won it. I thought, What a dumbass. God. So anyway, we weren't qualified to go. Well, a guy name of Jerry Morrison in Lawton called me and he said, "I'm Morrison. I got a C-dragster." I said, "Yeah I think I've heard of you." He said, "My car is down. I need a whole engine built and had got the money, but before that happened, I accumulated enough points to go to finals and I called Dale Hamm and asked him who's not going to the finals that would have a good car that I could borrow? And he said to talk to you." I said, "You're going to drive our car at the finals?" He said, "Well, it wouldn't be the first time I drove a six." You know there was a guy that was stationed at Clinton Sherman air force base in Oklahoma that was running a flat head dragster and he went to a 2.92 Chevy and he didn't travel much and then try to run the points and he wasn't running quite that good, but Jerry had driven his car for him. I said, "Yeah. I remember seeing you driving it. I don't know. The thing is sitting there after a hard year's use. I know it's got main bearing webs broke in it. It'll have to have a block and it'll have to have some valve springs. I just need to build a motor. And the world finals is this coming weekend?" This is like Friday, then I got Saturday and Sunday and then next weekend, we'd have to be there by Thursday. I said, "I'd have to see if I can round up a block. There's not many of them around." That's a tall order to build something that will run fast right off the – in other words, it's going to be a fresh motor. It won't even get a test run. It'll go straight to the start line. So I got a block board and a crank turn. See that Chevy six? The way I was running it with RPM, mine would turn as opposed to the one with the webers. Mine were bad about breaking crank shafts and I could only run four meets on a crank shaft and I'd have to put one in it. I found that out the hard way by running it until it came in two earlier and then found out where it broke at. And then I got to where every race, I'd pull a number six rod down, cap down, and then take a mirror and a flashlight and look up on the top side of that journal and there'd be a crack right in the radius. Right at the edge of the journal. Start cracking. Once it cracked all the way around and met at the bottom then it had to be changed because the next meet's going to break. So I knew the crank wasn't any good, so I'd have to get a crank clearanced. We don't have to balance them. A six cylinder balances itself. If you get all the rods and pistons the same weight, then it's balanced because a crank is balanced by itself. I don't put barb wires like they do on a V8, so we don't worry about balancing it, just—and if it's a high mileage crank, but it's got some ware, but it's still round, you don't even have to clearance it, just take a used crank and bolt it together. And so I went ahead and built an engine and met him at the gate on Thursday at Tulsa, and of course, Roy Rastetter from Hale center and Bob Brown was also from Hale center. Roy had that A-altered with a Hemi in it and Bob Brown had a B-dragster with a Chevy in it, and we bud heads all the time in division 4. Well, what a relief when Allred and Clarke didn't qualify to go to world finals and there we were. You look over and we're sitting there at the gate. They made a bee line over there. "What are you doing here? You're not qualified to run.", "We're not running." Said, "Jerry Morrison's running. He's just going to use our car." Of course, Roy Rastetter used our twin car later on in years and that's a

whole other story. But anyway, they decided it was all right. Said, "Does Dale Hamm know about this?" I said, "Dale told him that's what he could do and then recommended he talk to us." Bob Brown said, "We want to see Dale." [Laughter] So we showed up and I thought, God I hope we don't draw one of those guys and take them out during eliminations. We did. We took Rastetter out in the second round. Anyway, I had trouble getting us qualified because I had resurfaced the cylinder head, and it had been resurfaced once and had gotten kind of wavy and due to the fact of the way I built my ports and injectors that nobody else did was what made the difference and it made the head gasket hard to keep in them. It'd blow head gaskets if you stayed in it very long. If I used two steel gaskets and some sealer, it'd last two or three meets before it'd blow out. But anyway, after I mailed the head, I screwed the plugs in that I normally used and they were ____ [02:32:49] light with an extended tip, which I liked. My first qualified run, it didn't run worth a dang, and I got down there and Jerry said, "It sounds like it's missing." I said, "Okay." So the first thing I did when we got back to the pits, I pulled the plugs out. A couple of them had mashed the gap shut. The piston hit them. So the ones that were turned with the ground electrode up like this, it didn't hit. But the ones that were down this way, it closed them. I thought, I got to figure out a way to get them all in the up position, so I did that. I thought that was going to do it. Well, that didn't work so I went to the third round and I think I put an extra gasket on it or got some thicker gaskets off the auto light rep or something and still didn't qualify. So I got some model light—just plain old plugs that didn't have extended tip. We got one shot left to qualify, so I stuck the plugs in there. Jerry ran it through and it ran a 10.02, I think, which made us fourth qualifier out of sixteen cars. Okay. So we got in, and then he won three rounds and one of them was Roy Rastetter, took him out. He hadn't forgiven us to this day for showing up, I imagine. But got to the final round against a B-dragster from California and Chico Breschini—and I knew him because I'd talked to him at the world finals before a couple of times. He always qualified in California with his B-dragster and come to the finals, and I said, "How's your car running, Chico?" And he said, "Good enough to win." I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well the first car I ran red lighted. The second car—" what was it? First one red lighted. The second one broke on the starting line and the third car didn't show up when he was—Chico made a run by himself. I said, "In other words, you're in the finals and you haven't outrun anybody." He said, "My old car ain't running good." I said, "Really? Always does." He said, "No. You guys got this won." Well I pull up there and the six cylinder car had quite a head start on the B-dragster because that's a fairly fast class. A is the only faster one and it ain't that much faster. But he took off and then Chico took off after him, and I thought, Looking good. Allred was standing up in the back of the pickup looking out. He said, "He's coasting down there." I turn around and look and Chico's wind light came on. I thought, What has happened? And so we go down there and I ask Morrison, I said, "What happened to the car?" He said, "Nothing. I missed a gear change.", "Why?" He said, "Well you guys have got this three eighths rod sticking up out there with no nob on it or anything. When I pull down on it, my glove slipped off of it." I said, "Well you made three runs before that." He said, "It's my bad. I just flat out missed the gear change." I said, "Do you know your last run was—" on a 9.90 record, he ran

a 9.96, a 9.95, and a 9.94. So his worst run off of a 9.90 was 600 soft. I said, "Do you know the best run Chico has made all weekend? I just found out was 3400's off the record. You could've counted to ten changing gears and he wouldn't have caught you. He would've already given up, but there wasn't no way." He said, "Well—" I said, "My car can't win the world finals even when it ain't my car." [Laughter] So but the story on Rastetter He had a Bantam body altered altered with an injected 426 Hemi. It's called an A-altered. It's three and a half pounds per cubic inch just like D-dragster is. Well, we went to the New Mexico state championships in Roswell, which Roswell had the New Mexico state championship. It's kind of a joke. Anyway, we went over there with the twin car and was running pretty good and I figured that—

DS:

Can we take a quick break. [Pause in Recording] All right. Sorry for that interruption.

MC:

It's all right.

DS:

Okay. So are you ready to crank back up?

MC:

Yeah. The New Mexico state championships were at Roswell and we decided to go over there and take a twin engine car and so pretty well—it was pretty well down to looking at who was there. Bar and breakage and mistakes driving or whatever. It'd be pretty much between us and Rastetter's altered. So first round, and this was my fault, Roger rolled out of the light beam while the tree was coming down. That's when they had the full tree. Five lights. You know, it took a while. But the car normally, it had a hand brake in it and a foot clutch for the clutch flight, but pull a hand brake and then it had a push button shifter because the Chrysler torque flights, the cars use push buttons in the dash. That's what it—the valve body was calibrated for so I made a shifter with push buttons. So Roger pulled up there and held the brake and as the tree started down, he put his hand on the second gear change. It'd be ready so they wouldn't have to find it. It'd just push it when the RPM came up. So apparently, there was a little spot on the line or something, and as soon as I let go of the brake, the car just barely started moving, and I was watching. I saw it and I thought, I hope the green comes on before the red, but it didn't. Got red light first round. So he goes on through and go down at the other end and just getting ready to roll the car up on the trailer, and Roy went through—we went through the first pair and then he was possibly the last pair, but he went through, but it sounded like he was dragging a bucket of bolts behind him. So he'd come back to the pitch. "What happened?" He said, "The rear end's out. I said, "Oh great. Where's Dale at? We got a car, but we're out." And so he said—I stood there a minute and I said, "You don't suppose the track owner would let you drive our car as an A-altered? Because A-altered records are faster than D-dragster by quite a little bit. We'll just

pretend it's an A-altered. It'll just be kind of at a handicap because it don't have the power you got." It nearly did because if we ran him heads up, he couldn't put any daylight on that twin car with his Hemi, but it wasn't as fast as a Hemi. I told him, I said, "You think you can drive that car?" He said, "Yeah. Show me what needs to be done. Let's talk to the track owner." So we went down to where he was around the tower there and told him what we had in mind. I said, "No. He won't be spotting off the d-dragster record. He'll be spotting—we'll be running off the A-altered record. That A-altered record is—" I don't know. Our record was in like eight-nineties at that time. A-altered record was down around probably 8.60, 8.65. Something like that. So he said, "Well let's—we'll have to get with the guys that are still in the running about the second round if they want to allow that." So we had a driver's meeting and told them what we was thinking about. I don't think most of them didn't like it, but none of them wanted to be the one to say no because that'd make it look like you're unsportsmanlike or whatever. Nobody vetoed it. Billy Joe Taylor from Lubbock, I made the statement. I said "Well, we're going to be running under a handicap because it's running off the A-altered record." Billy Joe Taylor said, "That damn twin car ain't handicap no matter what it's running off of." I said, "Thanks Bill." But anyway, Roy got in it and we pushed him off and he said, "I'm going to stop as soon as I get it running. I want to stop and try to burn out, get the feel to the clutch. That sort of thing." The run Roger made was 9.24, I think it was, 9.27, somewhere in there, which the record was in the high eights, but on that track, nobody was running that well. It could be the track. It could be the timing equipment. It's not certified NHRA, you never know. But anyway, Roy stopped—made a burnout with it and he had it right on. He just made the prettiest black mark you ever saw. So he swung around down there and staged. I don't remember what he was running against. Something he had spotted out there quite a ways. He wrung around and run an 8.42 or .44. I said, "Well any problems?" He said, "No. It's a little different. I may be able to improve on that." So he won the second round with a round of 8.30 I say 8.30, 9.30 What am I talking about, 9.44, 9.30 The record was in the high eights, but anyway, got down the final round and he got quicker every round. And he ran an Austin car from I think from the Liberal area that had a big Chevy in it in the final round and caught him, and I think he put the ET down in the low 9.30's on that run and so we went back around there. His car was already loaded, of course. So we started. He said, "Get your car on the trailer. I'll go to tower and get the win money and we'll split it and get the hell out of here. If we get by with this, it's going to be better than a great train robbery." I think they was paying eight hundred to win or something like that. It was a lot for that track to pay. But anyway, we split the win money. Later on, I saw him in Odessa. Actually, years later because I was running my other car. I said, "You remember when you drove that twin car?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "How'd that compare to your Hemi? Both cars had the same cubic inches and about the same weight." He said, "It didn't do anything right. It didn't leave real hard. It didn't slam you in the back like my Hemi does. Didn't have a lot of midrange pull and it sure didn't have a top end charge through the lights, but it's only about fifteen hundreds slower than mine. I don't know where it does that." I said, "In other words, it's kind of like a locomotive?" He said, "Yeah. It just starts off and it just gets faster and faster and faster. It don't do anything

spectacular.” I said, “Well that’s the best I can get out of it.” But anyway, we won the New Mexico state championships. Roy did with our car. Jerry Morrison would’ve won world finals with our car if he’d of—the deal was Morrison had never had a really competitive car and I think that’s the first time he was ever associated with running a final round at a national event and I think he just—

DS:

Could’ve been nerves.

MC:

I think it was just nerves. I think he tried too hard. Of course, if you’ve driven racecars, you don’t pick on another guy about his driving because you god dang sure got plenty of your own to talk about.

DS:

Yeah. No one’s flawless out there.

MC:

No. Sometimes you think—these guys you’re running against they don’t ever do anything wrong, but you know better at some time or another you screwed up. What amazes me is the professional drivers. Nowadays, the times that they’re turning, and the fact that they can—see, back then, these guys, they’re racing on timing equipment that has reaction timers on them. And they can tell you how much time went by between the green came on and you broke the light beam and these guys are down in practically zero and doing it consistently. I saw one I thought I would never see on TV, was in pro stock, and there’s a girl that’s driving pro stock and the car she was up against in the final round was—[phone rings 02:49:51]. I don’t know who that is. I think it’s—I think it’s a telemarketer.

DS:

Want me to pause it? [Pause in Recording]

MC:

I put my thumb over the microphone and then turn it on and it’s a voice activated recording and if I don’t say anything, there’s nothing, and if you wait long enough, a busy signal comes on. And there’s some telemarketer around here, maybe more than one, but they’re using an 806 area code and a local number and they’ll even throw in a name every once in a while. I think it’s a carburetor customer because I do carburetor rebuilds, you know? And I think, well here’s some guy that needs a carburetor rebuilt, and it’s that same recording with this female on it. And I’ve got to where if I get an 806 and it says unknown or it’s got an odd name on it, I just don’t trigger it and then if I turn it on, I don’t say anything. If there’s anybody there, they’ll say, “Hello?”

Hello?" Oh okay. I'll talk to you.

DS:

Yeah. With so many scams out there, you just have to be careful.

MC:

So they've got to where I can't even tell by looking at it if that's what it is. [Pause in Recording]
Okay. What do we need to talk about now. You got any questions?

DS:

Well, we've talked a lot about the racetracks, building cars and all that, and very little about the people. Can you talk about some of the people that you've run across the way? What that has meant to you?

MC:

Overall?

DS:

Um-hm.

MC:

In drag racing, there's no bad people hardly ever. I can't say that I've seen over the years anybody that was actually obnoxious. There was one that I run into in Oklahoma City. He was an engine builder from out of Kansas. I out ran him in the semifinal round over there. He had a Corvette with a small block Chevy in it and ran some kind of altered class, I believe, but he's fast and he does engine building and he builds his own, of course. But it was one of the meets where I took my son with me instead of my wife and daughter. I took my son to Oklahoma City. The semifinal round, he just got off a bad run, according to what my boy told me. He said it kind of jerked the front wheels and bounced a little bit getting off the line. I said, well he just didn't quite catch me. I mean, he was right there, but I turned the wind light on. Well, when he got up and gone to the other end, he said, "We need to rerun that. They gave me the wrong spot. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah. We'll go up there and we'll rerun that." I said, "If you got the wrong spot, yeah. That'd work." So we went back to the pits and waited for the final round and as it was, if he'd won that, he'd been in the final round. So anyway, when we was getting ready to go up to the line, or pull back in the lane gassed up and everything, I went up to the guy, one of the tech guys that was in the staging lanes there and I said, "Can you talk to the guys in the tower on your radio? Ask them something?", "Yeah.", "That last run between me and that car over there, was that the wrong spot?" So he got on his radio and I could hear his radio. They said, "Let's look." They went back and checked it, I guess. Said, "That spot was correct. Tell Clarke that round is his." And so he come up there and he said, "We ready to rerun this?" I said, "Well, the

boss up there in the tower said that was a good run and the spot was correct. I don't see that I'm necessarily going to have to outrun you again." God almighty. He called me everything but a white man. Cussing me out. Told me I was a poor sport. I should do better for whatever. I don't remember everything he said. I just kind of ignored him and started buttoning up my fire suit because I was getting ready to run the final round. I know his son is still racing. I've seen his name. I can't recall his name, but he had an engine building shop in Wichita or—I believe it was Wichita. I don't think it was Topeka, but it was one of the major cities. I had seen some cars around over the years with a engine credit painted on them or decals on them with that shop. He was an engine builder. Boy of mine said his car just didn't launch. I said, "Well I kept waiting for him to come up behind me or something," because his record was actually pretty close to mine, even though it was a full body car, it was like a mid-nine or something like that. It was a fast damn car. It was a Corvette body, but I don't think there was much to it but the fiber glass. Tube frame, all that. Probably didn't weight fifteen hundred pounds. I forget. It was classed as some kind of an altered. Biggest shock I had one time was running IHRA and it was right out here. I pulled up the line against kind of a doggy looking Vega and I hadn't—I didn't know even who I was running against until I was in the car and was fired up and getting ready to go. I just looked over and saw this Vega and I thought, Okay. So I pulled up and staged and he staged and all of a sudden, my tree started counting down and then his started and I thought, I'm getting a head start. That's wrong. That's wrong. Oh shit, I better go. So I went ahead and caught a fairly good light, but it wasn't like it was if I was concentrating because I broke my concentration timing the lights down. I thought, he's going to let me go first? And it turned out it was an A gas car and a national record for a gas was faster than econo rail was. He didn't catch me. But that was a big shock. I thought, this is all wrong. That Vega is going to go and then I'm going to catch him. I thought, I got to go first.

DS:

[Laughs] But you overcame it.

MC:

At the other end, I looked at it. I thought, That's an A gas car. No telling what he's got in it. He's got way more motor than I've got.

DS:

How many years did you race before you stopped racing?

MC:

I didn't do any racing until they built the track out here because when they built that, the first race they had was in 1960. I got out of the air force in '57. And when I was in high school and going to AC, I had a street rod. A bunch of us guys would get together, maybe on a Friday night

or a Saturday night or somewhere out of town and race each other, but this '48 fleet line that I had. At the time, I built the Chevy six for it. It was the old model. Old style Chevy six with three intake ports, like 235's. Stuff like that. It had the original 216 in it and I had no idea that they would ever have anything like a handicap system and have classes for obsolete engines, where you could actually compete. I had no idea any of that was coming, but what I did, I'd gone to work for Jack Moss and I wanted a little more engine, but I couldn't afford it. I got a wife and two kids, and a ninety dollar a week job so I'm having to do what I can. But anyway, I decided that rather than put a V8 in it like everybody else was doing, I just stayed with a six. Wouldn't be as fast as a V8, but you do what you've got to do. So I decided that if I used a 261 truck engine, it was the same basic engine as a 235, like all Chevy cars had, except it was a longer stroke. No, it was a bigger boar, same stroke, same crane, but a bigger boar. I knew I could board a 125 thousands, which made two hundred and seventy-eight cubic inches. Well at that time, all Chevrolet had was 283 and they was just starting to come out with the 348's and 409's. I thought I'll build a 261. And I had an Iskenderian cam that I installed in my old 216 that was in there back when I was stationed out at Phoenix. Iskenderian advertised a dual pattern cam, which was a new deal and I ordered one and put it in out there while I was out at Phoenix. I liked the way it ran, so I had told Jack, I said, "Next time you talk to Red Wilson and Clay Smith, tell them I want a cam for a 261 and I want him to grind it to my specs." He was kind of like, your specs? Who am I? I'm a grease monkey in a garage. I said, "Yeah. I got an idea of what I want." So sure enough, Red Wilson married Clay Smith's widow after Clay Smith died. He took over Clay Smith cams and is married to Clay Smith's widow, who owned the place, and then he kind of married into it, but he originally had Will Cap Engineering and him and Wilson and Capano was where that came from. Him and Tony Capano was building clutches and fly wheels and stuff like that, which he still was in that, but he moved over and branched out into Clay Smith and Jack was using Clay Smith cams. So I told him the specs I wanted on it, intake open and close and exhaust and all that, and they ground one for me. And so the deal was that my Iskenderian two carburetor intake that fit the 216 would work on this and I had some little headers that I'd bought used, worth the money, and they would also fit it. Well, I really wanted to build a 302 GMC. You know, make a big motor. GMC was what you wanted if you were going to run a six, but I couldn't afford to buy all new stuff. Mani fold headers and distributors and all that stuff off of this engine would fit the one I'm building, so that cut my cost down a bunch. You know, ordered some flat top pistons, which were—the factory piston for the 261 had a dish in the top. I got flat tops which raised the compression, then I meld the head so I'm raising it some more. But I did some port work on the head and around the valves and one thing or another and put that thing together, and I hadn't any more than got it running than on the street and the track was getting ready to open and I was planning on running F gas or a V8, probably E gas or D. I'd have to run against the V8s with the same weight rate, but anyway, it turned out that that NHRA had come out with this new F gas class for pre-1960. In lines and V8s. The only V8 that qualified was a flat head. Not an overhead valve, but anyway, I had a class I could run in so I mounted me up some real small diameter slicks that were kind of narrow, but they bite better than a street car. Plus the

smaller diameter had the same effect as putting a lower gear in it, but I wouldn't have to change the gear, I could just change the tires. So I run my street tires all the time and when I got to the track, I'd slick them off and put these little bitty ones on and there's a picture in here of a car sitting in the staging lanes with those little tires on it. No hub caps and stuff like that. But anyway, I built that 261 and it turned out, for a street car, all of the muscle cars were coming out in the sixties. I went around town looking for them because if you only run that six for about two blocks, three blocks, with your 442 or your GTO or your big block 396 Chevelle, first thing I found out was that when I tried it after I got that engine running, it spun the right rear tire like nobody's business. Just turn it. Smoke. It didn't move much. I thought, you can't get a positraction rear end for a '48 Chevrolet. They just don't make them. So I thought, what can I do? Okay. Let's go circle tracking. So I took a lowering block about that tall and put on the left rear, which made the car sit low on that side. Then I went to the left front and took a couple of rubber blocks, spring spacers and I had a spring spreader I could pull. Put two of those in there and that raised the car back up level and I took it out in the street and tried it. Wound it up and dropped the clutch and left two black marks. Couldn't have been any better if it had a posi track. In between the low end torque to that six cylinder plus perfect traction on both tires, I'd go around town looking for these other cars because they couldn't figure out how by the time we got a car—street when the light changed, I'd have a half a car length on them already. And I found out how much that helped technically when I went and drove the car over to Roswell and raced it over there. It was running out at walker air force base. That's what it was at the time. The way they weighed the cars in if you was running gas coop and sedan was wheel scales. And you run your front wheels up on it and a guy on each side will write that down and then you'd run the back wheels up on it and write that down and then they'd add them all together and get the weight of the car. So he rolled the front wheels up on there. This one guy said, "What's yours got?" He told him, he said, "Mine's way off of that. At least a hundred and thirty pounds. What's the matter with the scales?" I'm standing back there listening to this and I said, "Hey, just write that down and then put the back ones up. So he looked at me kind of like—he rolled it up there and went up and looked and said, "Oh now it's the other way. Now it's heavy on the other side." I said, "Yeah." I think it was about 120, 130 pounds on the rear. It was heavier on the right rear and that was just enough that when it tried to raise that side up, it just about levelled out and made them both pull the same and so that car, for the street at that time, I didn't care what a guy was driving. I know I pulled up out here at Hughes and Amarillo Boulevard one evening and I had my kids in the backseat in their pajamas because we was going to go over to Twin's Drive-In over on the Canyon Highway, and we lived out in East Ridge. So I was going down the boulevard and I stopped there at Hughes and at that time, there was nothing out there. It was just a clean road all the way out past the Veteran's Hospital. No businesses or anything. A guy with out of state plates, Illinois or Ohio, was stopped there at the light and I pulled up behind him. When the light changed, he took off and he looked in his mirror. He was going through his four speed pretty good. It was about a '57 vet. Probably had 283 in. So I just pulled out and pulled up beside him and I looked over at him and I just kind of did the accelerator like that. So he looked

at me, so he just floored his vet and I had dropped back after I did that so I was about front bumper to rear bumper. He floored it and then I just started easing up on him. By the time we got around the curb up there and started running, catching up with the traffic, I was out ahead of him and both of us floor boarded, and so was running into traffic so I let off and dropped in behind him. How was it? It worked—he pulled over here and dropped back. He yelled at me, he said, “Bet you got a big old GMC in there.” I said, “No sir. It’s just a Chevrolet.” He just waved and went on. I thought that’s what makes that car fun. You can tell it’s not a V8 just by listening to it. He drives around his Corvette in high gear. I probably had more fun with that car than maybe any I had. The car I had in high school was that one there. That was a ’31 Chrysler. That was the only street rod in town that wasn’t a flathead Ford. That car was given to me with a hole in the block where a rod had come out through the side and my dad was a terminal manager at Ron Dyke transport. That’s kind of where I grew up so when I got ahold of that, I thought, I need to put an engine in this so I had a place to do it, and I went out to the wrecking yard. The terminal was on 287 over there by Graham Street [?] [3:12:13]. Went up the wrecking yard out there on 287. I found a transmission and engine out of 38th Plymouth. Put in, and it didn’t fit. I could’ve put anything else in the world in it just as easy, but anyway, it looked like kind of what came in it was looked like that. You know, so it made it look pretty much original, but I had to build motor mounts, and had to—there was something else I had to do. What was it? Motor mount? Oh. The original Chrysler engine had two big pieces coming out from the bell housing. Clutch bell housing to the frame. The clutch pedal and the brake pedal mounted on that. When I took the engine out, that went with it. The clutch pedal and brake pedal did not have any place to be. Just an open hole there and so I had put an angle iron cross member to hold the back end of the Plymouth engine down lower so I had to make me a dog leg piece of angle iron and went like this, went up, and then went like that. Bolt it to the cross member and then I bolted—the clutch and brake pedal were in one unit, so I bolted them on top of it. Now, I found out I had to angle brace it to the frame because when you push on both pedals at the same time this thing moved back and forth. But anyway, what it amounted to was the very first car I ever had, I had to do an engine swap. I guess it just went on from there.

DS:
Got you hooked, huh?

MC:
Well I built some weird stuff over the years just to drive on the street. Mazda pickup with a turbo charged V6 Buick in it. Love pickup with a turbo charged Burt cruiser [?] [3:14:10] four cylinder in it. A Gremlin with my supercharged small block V8. It came out of my Suburban that I towed my race car with. That turbo charged small block went in the Gremlin, which was kind of scary because they don’t have brakes worth a hoot. They got little nine inch drums.

DS:

They were small cars.

MC:

All you can do with one of those if you want to stop from a hundred is push on them real hard and then let off and then don't bother it any more because that's all you're going to get. And if you hold it any more than that, it just burns the brakes up and don't slow down at all. It get hot and fade away.

DS:

Well, you know, you talked about how in 1980, you got away from racing, what did you do after that?

MC:

Nothing much. Nothing much worth talking about.

DS:

Were you still building engines for others?

MC:

No. I was doing mainly tune up work. I ran a one man operation mainly because I couldn't find hired help that did what I do or I could say here do that. Most of them created more problems than I could fix, so I decided just do what I could do by myself and as a result of that, I got away from doing valve jobs, and engine over halls, and clutches. Stuff like that, I just got off. What I need to do is build a reputation for tune up work and get all of that I can get, and see if I can make it. Well, the government helped me out on that because about the time I was trying to do that was when that first gas currents come around in the seventies. I already knew the modifications I'd been doing on some of these muscle cars and street machines had to do with changing up the rate of a spark advance that's happening inside of the distributor. The factories are usually pretty conservative on that. Myself and Carroll Caudle and I don't remember who else, maybe somebody else at that time, savvied this kind of stuff. I was doing that to improve the performance, which it made a big difference, like on small blocks and Camaros, Corvettes, or street rods and works on about everything. Ford, Chrysler, Plymouth, GM. So I was doing that, but I noticed several times after I'd done that for somebody, they'd tell me about how much better it was running. He said, "You know what? It helped the gas mileage too?" I said, "Oh really? Wasn't even considering that." This is a hot rod. We're going to make it go fast. So I started—when people started asking me at that time, you know? "Is there anything you can do on this to help the gas mileage?", "Yeah, maybe." But not sure that I'm supposed to do this. At that time, there was no law against it. Of course, they came up with laws later that messing with smog equipment was illegal. At that time, it wasn't. So I did two or three cars and helped them

quite a bit. Word got out pretty fast. At one time, I had—I remember making a point to check, I had four or five cars a day booked in by appointment ahead. A month ahead of time. I thought, these guys won't even show up, but they did. I was turning them out as fast as I could and just had a waiting list. I made good money during that gas crunch. I could afford the gas and then some. So I kind of got a reputation for tune up work out of that. I had one guy come in and leave a vehicle with me to tune up. Told me what problems he had or whatever. He asked me, he said, "You the only tune up shop in town?" I said, "Oh hell no. There's one on every corner I think." He said, well, he said, "I just moved here. I asked at a parch store and two service stations about a tune up and every one of them said to see you and I thought maybe you was the only one." I said, "Well maybe I'm the only one that gets it right." I had to throw that in with it. I got to where I had enough tune up work that I was getting to the age where rolling around on one old creeper and that sort of stuff was getting a little bit—I could do it, but it wasn't as easy as it had been. Of course, now at age eighty-five, you can forget that. If I get down under a car, somebody's going to have to pull me out and help me up.

DS:

You have to make sure you're wearing your bracelet, right?

MC:

Yeah. So—

DS:

So another thing that you know, the reason that I came across you and in fact, everybody up here was because I'm doing motor sports and y'all have that Amarillo Motor Sports Hall of Fame. And you're in that and can you talk about, one, what it means for a group like that to come together and two, for them to honor you like that?

MC:

Well it's something I wouldn't have expected. It's a—I feel honored being recognized as somebody that was good at what I did. That's all anybody does anything for is to be good at it and impress other people with it. Of course, every time you go to a race, you want to be the fastest guy there and win it all, but that don't happen and sometimes you just settle. You go as fast as you can afford to go because the standard saying is speed costs money. How fast do you want to go? The reason I ended up in the garage business was when I was a kid growing up, teenager in school, if I couldn't fix it myself, I couldn't hire it done because I didn't have the money. My old man warned me one time. He said, "If you don't quit messing with them damn hot rods and get an education, you're going to grow up and that's the only thing you'll know how to do," and damn, if it wasn't. [Laughter]

DS:

But you did it better than most.

MC:

Yeah. I think I inherited that. My dad was—he was a terminal manager and started out as a truck driver in the thirties. Early thirties with Harold Groendyke. They come from the same part of Oklahoma Panhandle. He drove trucks during the Depression in the Dust Bowl days. He was right there where the Dust Bowl was too. Born in Beaver County up there. Beaver, Oklahoma. Groendyke took him off of driving and got him to—Groendyke was trying to build him a, I guess you call it a dynasty or something, but he was trying to put in truck terminals all over this part of the country, and so my dad's job was that when he picked the town, we had to move there. We was going to be there probably a year, maybe more. He'd pick out a service station for rent or for sale or maybe a station with a couple of bays on it or something, and bring some trucks in there and start working out of there and whatever repairs they did, they mostly did outside. And later on, these same towns got a new building eventually, but they worked in whatever they could find at the time, and so my dad would go in there and get everything set up and get some drivers living there and start hauling. They hauled fuel with a bunch of internationals. These guys nowadays talk about running down the highway, they run down a two lane road, which was the highway. Dad's talking about pulling some of the hills with a loaded trailer where you need to go to the bathroom, it was in first gear and the hand throttle pulled all the way out where it's got all it can take. Just open the door and step out, and take a leak, and then catch up with it, and get back in. Talk about going from Lamar, Colorado, to Denver, and back. Took twenty-four hours by the time they unloaded. He might have had to come down as far as Borger to load the trailer to go back that way. So as a result of that, we were in headquarters for Groendyke was Enid, Oklahoma, and then we was there in and out at least three times and then in between, we went Ardmore, Lamar, McPherson, Kansas. Where else? One more. Then he'd start and he'd go back to Enid again in between those. I think the only school I went to two times was the one in Enid, but up until I went to the eighth and ninth grades down here at Elizabeth Nixon on Pope Street. I went to the eighth and ninth. Was the first time I went to the same school two years in a row. That was probably the reason I grew up kind of dumb. I didn't dig that going to school with total strangers every time. We're going to move and we're going to go to school and I don't know anybody here.

DS:

Starting at ground zero every time.

MC:

Ground zero every time. Start trying to make friends. Some of them—I finally kind of got to the point where I just didn't bother anybody. Just going about my own business, and that wasn't the

way to go either. Finally when the terminal was going to be put in Amarillo. My dad told Groendyke, he said, this is where I'm stopping. Right here. I ain't going no place else. Take it or leave it. Well, they ended up making a deal where Groendyke had half acres in terminal and my dad owned the half interest in it, and we moved here when I started the seventh grade. I was thirteen, I guess. Lived at the duplex on the corner of Seventh and Adams and McKinley School was anniegoggly across the street over there. It's not there anymore. Neither is the duplex. But right down on Sixth street and around the corner there was a Cosden service station with a Quonset hut outside it and that's where the trucks were at when they first moved here and then they—right after that, they started on the building there at Tee Anchor Boulevard and Grand Street where that plaza is. Shopping plaza right now. It's right in that. That shop is right in there. Then we lived on 800 block of Spring, so it's bicycle riding distance down there. Had a bicycle then I worked for McCarth supermarket at 10th and Taylor when I was in junior high and got me enough money together to put a whizzer motor on my bicycle. Then I hopped it up. By then, I was reading a hot rod magazine.

DS:

Well were things like hot rod magazines just coming in at that time?

MC:

Yeah. I got—I saw the second issue. I didn't know about the first one. I just happened to be in a news stand or a store or something and here's this magazine says hot rod on it in big letters and got a race car on the front. Kind of a red paint color scheme to it. "What is this?" Got reading in it and I thought, Hey that's pretty neat. At that time, drag racing wasn't invented yet and it was mostly Bonoville Speed Trials. Circle track racing in mostly California. Right where they were at. Dirt track. Pave tracks and all that was covered and then they'd do an article on somebody's street rod of some kind. Nearly all flathead Fords, but there was still quite a few, at that time, quite a few street rods still running four cylinder stuff. You could buy overhead valve conversions for a model T and some for model A's. Guys would go out to dry lakes with their street rods and they'd cover the dry lakes time trials out there where if you had a 32 Ford roadster with a flathead Ford in it and it would run over a hundred miles an hour. That's pretty good. Cause a stock thirty-two probably wouldn't run about sixty-five. But the deal was that hot rod magazine had a technical article every month, and it was just like how does a carburetor work or what makes a generator work or starter, explains ignition systems and you read that stuff and pretty soon you get an idea of how all this stuff percolating here. And I got an idea what to look for and it just, that particular magazine with the technical articles and then, of course, when I went in the service, air force liked wore me out in tech schools.

DS:

Yeah. We talked about that at length.

MC:

So I didn't pick up a lot as far as cars went, but a lot on how a lot of stuff works like what makes a hydraulic system do what it does and all that sort of stuff. I was I guess pretty interested in that because I was top of the class in just about every one of them. I got the papers to show it.

DS:

Yeah. You got a nice little notebook there. Little scrapbook there.

MC:

Yeah. I got where it says I was number one in scholastic average for whatever course it was I was in and I got a—I asked for it, but he was glad to give it to me—was a letter of recommendation when I got out from the engineering officer of the squadron I was in. I told him, I said, "I might try to get into some aircraft work and possibly, if I had a recommendation," and he wrote it, it's in here if you wanted to read it. Right in here. This was the actual aircraft that I was on sitting in the snow. That's me in that wing right there. We had to replace a fuel cell. Yeah. Name on the side. This was the 43151. Let's see. This is where—doesn't say what base it is does it? Shepherd. Yeah. It's at Wichita Falls. That's the general A&E course. Yeah, it's right there. That was another one from Shepherd. That would be at Chinook, Illinois. This one, I think, is at Chinook.

DS:

So is this one.

MC:

Yeah. See, they had me going—after they did all that I never worked on another engine. This will be forty-five familiarization is after I got over there. They had to take the new guys to one side. There's that one from—Is that the one?

DS:

Yeah. It seems like a recognition.

MC:

That's a classic shepherd. That's not the one I'm thinking of. Yeah, here it is. David Wilbie. Told him, I said, "I'd like to have a letter of recommendation so that if I tell them I know what I'm doing on the airplane, I can lie and they'll believe me."

DS:

Let me paraphrase it. It says, "I would like to highly recommend Sergeant Marvin Clarke as an

aircraft mechanic.” I’m going to leave out your rank and serial number on it. So you’ve been under his supervision for over three years?

MC:

Yeah. I spent three over there. Only had two to go when I went, but I got married when I was over there. Normal tour of duty is three years and so I extended my enlistment one year without having to reenlist just so I could get married. That was her right there.

DS:

So is that that motorcycle you had bought?

MC:

This is Jim Holloway. This right here, this guy was named Gene Bookout. He was from St. Louis and his dad owned a whole bunch of warehouse property in St. Louis, so when he got over here he just had his dad buy him an Austin Heely to run around in and he decided he wanted to hype it up and we were out at the flight line on duty hours and this kit came with pistons. High compression pistons. A cam. Some different carburetors and a lumbered hood. We put everything on it except we didn’t tear it down and change the pistons, but that’s what we were doing was hopping up an Austin Heely on company time. Government time. This right here was—this bike and this bike were the ones that I had. This was a 350 BSA single. This was a tiger hunter vertical twin. That one right there, I think that was my bike or maybe it wasn’t. Jim Holloway, this guy here, he bought that tiger 1-10 new through the PX. It was tribe’s first six fifty and it had the first one I ever saw with two carburetors on it so it was hopped up tight. He bought it through the PX for six hundred dollars, brand new. It was about a twelve to fifteen hundred dollar bike. He took it back home with him. There was no—they sold, I think, cars and bikes through the PX at a cost. There’s no tax at all. In fact, there was no tax like on cigarettes. I didn’t smoke, but a carton of American cigarettes in PX was a dollar and forty cents a carton.

DS:

A carton.

MC:

And I’d buy them and take them into town and sell them to the limeys for one pound, which was equal to two dollars and eighty cents. So I could double my money just carrying them into town, but you had to be real careful because the Air Force kind of frowned on that if they found out about it, but most of the guys that didn’t smoke did it because it seemed like apparently English cigarettes weren’t much because all the English wanted American cigarettes.

DS:

We made a better [inaudible, 03:38:45]. Well what time is it?

MC:

2:20.

DS:

2:20. Well we've already gone at least what? Three hours or so?

MC:

Probably.

DS:

Probably. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to get on the record?

MC:

I can't—No, I can't really think of anything other than when I came back from the service I went to May Call [?] [03:39:27] out at the Convair and my brother was on the West Coast. He's three and a half years younger than I am, and I graduated in '50 and then he graduated in '54. As soon as he graduated, he went to Northrop Aeronautical Institute in Inglewood California and he was going to be an engineer, but Northrop can make you engineer, but they'll do it in two years, and he said that he couldn't handle it. He said, "When I was trying to work days to—go to school days and work nights to make some spending money and then stay awake. When I got to differential calculus, I just had to give it up." I said, "I can't even spell that." So my brother was out there, but he had managed to talk his way into a job with Convair and their wind tunnel where they test aircraft parts and wings and stuff like that. He said that they advertised for a graduate engineer with seven years experience in wind tunnel work. He said, I went over there with an aircraft mechanics license and a big line of bull and I got hired on as a wind tunnel guy. He said, they didn't call me an engineer, but they put me to work. So he was already out there and he was working for Convair, so I called Convair and they said, yeah. They could put me to work to report to Convair at Palmdale, which is out on the desert. North of LA. The high desert, they call it, because it's about twenty-five hundred feet above sea level. You come out of LA, you go up through the San Gabriel Mountains, back then wind around through a two lane road and all of a sudden, you just peak out up here and everything's flat and you look back this way and it's all down there. And so they said to check in at Palmdale Facility so I did and they gave me a job on a flight line and there wasn't anything to do. They were building F102 is what they called a Delta Dagger because it had Delta wings. And they would put them together and put some primer on them at San Diego and then they would fly them up to Palmdale and then they would go through there and get a whole lot of extra equipment installed and get them painted and decaled. Well they had to be test flown by Convair's test pilots and when they're okayed by them, then the air force test pilots have to fly it and put their okay on it and all they do is they fly in and out of this runway there at Palmdale and there's actually three companies using that runway. You got Convair and you got Northrop, which was doing reworking on their old night

fighters, and you also had lock head across on the other side and they were building the F104's, which is fun to watch because they call that the missile with the man in it because they weren't good for anything. They didn't carry much fuel in the F104. When it left the ground, it could go straight up to forty, fifty thousand feet just in no time. It was an interceptor and all it had was that Gatling gun in the nose. Cannon. Fires a cannon shell, but it's six thousand rounds a minute or something like that, about a one or two second burst from that will just cut an airplane in two. But anyway, those three were there and so I was working basically outside and they would leave from up around the main hanger up there and fly out and then when they come back, they'd come to where we were and park the planes and go back to the hanger. Well, this airplane then was checked over to see if it had anything that could be done right there where it could go out again or if not, just refuel it and wait for somebody to come and either take it to the hanger for something else or come back and get in it and fly off again. But basically what it amounted to, there's about five us out there and two guys could've done it and all we was doing was putting the gas in and cleaning the wind shield. After about a year and a half, or almost, of that, the word was that 104 contracts are running out and they're going to start laying people off. I'd only been there a short time anyway, so they already started laying off people that came after I did. So I come home on leave or on vacation and go over to visit with Jack because when I was running my '31 Chrysler, I knew Jack Moss. He was Mr. Hot Rod around here and if I need to know something, needed something done, I couldn't do it, that's where I went, and I think Jack pretty much thought a lot of me, but I don't know. Anyway, I went by to visit with him. Told him I was getting ready to get laid off and I said, "Last word I had, there's thirty thousand air craft workers out of work in Southern California. I'm going to make it thirty thousand and one." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I have no idea.", "You going to come back here? I'll put you to work." I said, "Really? Jack, I ain't never worked on people's cars for a living. I just did my own stuff." He said, "I know your own stuff. I watched you all the way through high school and college. You can make a living doing this. You're probably better than half the guys I know that do this right now." Considering the alternative of sitting in Southern California and hoping I could draw in employment, I think I'll come home. I said, "I'm not that sold on that place anyway, especially out there on the desert." It may be California, but I spent a winter on that desert out there working outdoors and it does snow there. It got down to the low twenties with snow on the ground and that's not much fun working outside when you got that to put up with. I thought, No, I don't want to spend another winter out there. The guys that have been there the longest get their choice of whether they're going to work the day shift or the night shift. Well, you get like thirty or forty cents an hour more if you work the night shift, but nobody wants it except that everybody wants to be on a night shift in the summer and they want to be on the day shift in the winter and if you're a low man on the totem pole, which ones do you think you get? You work nights in winter and daytimes in the summer. So I left and come back and went to work for Jack and worked there five years for him and then one day, he says, "I want you to take over this place." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I want to lease it to you. It's yours. He I'm going to work on my hot rods." He was running a circle track car at the time with a Sid Stout

Ford for a sponsor, and he was also drag racing with that two engine dragster and he kind of had his hands full. He didn't have time to do much car work and what he did, I always got the dirty work and he would take all the carburetor overhauls and spark plug changes and, "We need a clutch put in that. That one's got a transmission out see if—tear it down and see what it looks like." Not really. Now I got to be the boss and I still did the same stuff because like I told him when he was telling me that, I said, "Jack, there's one thing wrong with this picture. It's showing me how much money you made at certain times. Last two or three years, you had this much coming in. One thing wrong with this picture." He said "What?", I said, "You had me and I don't have me. How do I get one like me?" And he said, "That is a problem isn't it?", "Yeah." So he called me up. He said, "You know what? As a young kid that works in the pits out at the dirt track with Gregg Lee helping him. He is real conscientious. He does what he needs to do and knows what needs to be done. He's real handy with tools. He's quick and accurate. You might look into that.", "What's his name?", "I don't know. I'll find out." So he said, later on, he told me, he said, "He works for Hap Dolton," and Dolton Auto Supply was down here about the one or two hundred block pole at that time. He said, "He works for Hap Dolton in his radiator shop." Dolton had a wrecking yard out on 287. It was combined with a radiator shop and he had sent Randy to school. Radiator School so he could do radiator repairs. So that's where he was at was out there on 287 highway. The other side of Grand, I think, just a little ways. Anyway, I went out there and went in and said, "You Randy?", "Yeah." I said, "Well I'm leasing Jack Moss' shop. I need a mechanic." And looked at him and I said, "You want to go to work for me at Jack's place." He said, "I'll need to buy me some tools. I haven't got much of anything." I said, "That's no problem. We'll handle that if you want to go to work." He said, "Hell yeah." So he had a '57 Ford. He just loaded what tools he had and came over to my place. Well, I was buying parts off and on off of Hap Dalton. I thought, I think maybe I might've made a problem there. Hap's going to get even with me for stealing his iron. When I buy parts, I may not know what they're supposed to cost. I don't think it worked out that way. He chewed me out for stealing his hired help, but other than that, it was all right. Randy had not mechanic-ed for—well he was only eighteen. He worked for me for a while and probably the only good hired hand I ever had. He learned fast and when he didn't know, he'd ask rather than stumbling through it and getting it wrong. I told him, I said, "You don't know what you're doing, just tell me and we'll figure it out. I may not know either, but we'll put our heads together." So anyway, he worked for me and then he went and got drafted. Went in the military. Spent some time in Vietnam, I guess. The early years of Vietnam and went to work for me when he got back. By then, I had moved from Jack's place and was over on canyon E-way there in the 2200 block. It's not there anymore. There's no cinder block building. It belonged to Pop Kelley. He was Jack B. Kelley's dad. Randy ended up running his own circle track car and was sponsored by Jack B. Kelley. All that kind of makes a circle there. I knew Jack B. real well. I was just walking distance in American Drive In right down there on 24th, I think it was, and then the frontage road out there by where the overpass goes under to go east. American Drive-In was there, I used to walk down there and eat. Every once and a while, I'd see Jack Kelley in there having a hamburger. Probably drinking a beer. He

was worth—god knows how many millions. Wore khaki pants. Some run down brown shoes. Work shirt. Just like he did when he was driving the truck. The only helium transporter in the world at that time. He was building helium trailers at something—something sales and testing out there on the south side of town. Standard sales and testing or something. They build trailers there. Randy said he was there visiting with him one day at his office. The phone rang and Jack talked to somebody long distance and they settled on the fact that Jack said, “I’ll build you two of those trailers to those specifications and get them to you as soon as I can. We’ll get started on it right away. I’ll start on them. You go ahead and deposit a million in my account and we’ll settle up on the balance when we get through,” and he hung up and went back to talking to Randy about his circle drag car. “Just deposit a million in my account.” Randy said, “I found out later he was talking to somebody in South America.”

DS:

Those are the kind of calls I need.

MC:

He was just as down to earth as anybody you ever met. He started out young just being a truck driver. He was quite a character, but his dad owned that building I was renting when I did all this stuff and then next door to it was auctioneers. Two guys in the building next to my shop. Web and Walker. Walter and Web. Something. Anyway, he came over there one day and said, “I bought this building,” and I said, “Oh you have?” He said, “Yeah.” When Jack Kelley died, his son, Ken Kelley, was the owner of that building and he came by and talked to me and he let me stay there under the same rent and everything and I was—I couldn’t believe that because I was renting it so cheap. I couldn’t believe it. When I went in there and rented the place from Pop Kelley, the rent on that building was a hundred and fifty dollars and he paid the water bill because there was a rent house next door and they were both on the same meter. He said, I’m collecting for the water bill off the rent house. He said so you don’t have to pay a water bill. So a hundred and fifty a month for that. That’s about the only way I had enough money to do any hot rodding was I didn’t have that much overhead. I was there until Williams and Web bought it. Williams and Web. That’s What it was. Orville Williams. They put in that giant building that’s on that spot now, and I think Williams and Web built that building and it was going to be a hospital type thing or something. But anyway, it didn’t go over like it should’ve been. I think it went and changed hands two or three times in the bankrupt deal or whatever. When he bought it then I moved over on the Wilson Street just behind Harbor freight on the other side of the street, that building belonged to Jake—I missed his name. What’s Jake’s last name? It’s trouble getting to be as old as I am. Somebody I’ve known all my life and all of a sudden, I can’t recall his name. anyway, the body shop is right there and this building is next to it. Neil Ware of the national bank Wares—him and his brother had a couple of race cars and was renting that building and his brother had a funny car. Charles. But he couldn’t stay off the dope and he ended up having to sell it, and his family they pretty much disowned him and Neil, he was straight. He

had a dragster, but he wanted to race it, but he didn't want to and didn't know how to do all the stuff it takes to do one of those, you know, by yourself, more or less. Charles, with his funny car, he hired some guy out of Oklahoma to come over here and live and take care of his funny car until his family cut off his money. Then he didn't do that anymore. But anyway, I was in that building for—I don't know, fifteen years maybe. I don't remember what year it was when I moved over there. I still got my sign off of it in the garage up against the wall. I moved out and decided to close up, I didn't know what to do with the sign. Riggs. Jake Riggs. He owned the place. Riggs body shop was next door. I told Jake, I said, "Can I just leave my sign up there?" He said, "No, you have to take it with you." I went up there and got it and what are we going to do with it? I hate to throw it away because it was only about three years old because at the time I had it made I wasn't planning on going anywhere, but Jake asked me if I was planning on retiring or anything. I told him, I said, "Might as well. No more businesses I got anymore since the computers run the cars. Making expenses, but that's about all." He said, "Well we could use this building if you want to leave. You don't have to go. I'm just kind of curious." And so I thought about it for a couple of days. I went over there and, "Jake, I think I'll get out of here. I think I can transfer my carburetor overhaul to my house," and the exact same time I moved here because that's when my dad passed away and I inherited this after both my parents were gone. So I said, "I think I can set up a carburetor rebuilding business in the garage where I'm moving to. Other than that, I'm not interested in doing anything anyway." There's—you know, you cultivate a tune up business and get it going real good and all of a sudden, the cars that are coming out don't do tune ups anymore. They just drive them until something goes wrong and when it goes wrong, it turns the red light on and then you got to figure out what the computer's trying to tell you went wrong. I learned that a lot of it in the process of trying to, but the big drawback is that the mechanics that work in dealerships are large garages. The company will pay to send them to school in Dallas or Oklahoma City and teach them—like Chevrolet house sends them and they learn General Motors Computers. I'm in the situation where I don't get to go to any of those schools and I work on every American car, and every Jap car, and every European car that goes down the street and they're all different, and they weren't that different until I put the computers in. Basically, back then, a car had a coil, and a set of points, and a condenser, and plugs, and a carburetor, and it all basically worked the same. Now, I look at stuff and say, "What the hell does that do?" So I thought well where I'm at right now is not going to get any better. I can't see it working too good, and I'm reaching a point where leaning over fenders and stuff like that, my body is not liking that. I ended up starting going to my wife's chiropractor because I was getting some back pains and he did some x-rays and everything. Said, "What you got you're spinal column down low in your back there has got bone degeneration and the bones are just basically disappearing. It's a slow process, and we'll see if we can pull everything back in line, we'll work on that about every other day for a week or so. As soon as we get everything straightened up. You'll come in about every four days and then in a little while we'll move that to once a week and then once every two weeks. Eventually, hopefully, we can just stretch you back into place about once a month." I get along good in between. I can make my back ache, but

I'm generally doing something I shouldn't be doing. My wife's about to disown me because she wants me to hire somebody to mow my yard and I mow it myself. I said, "Just because I'm eighty-five don't mean I can't mow the yard."

DS:

There's something to be said about staying active, you know?

MC:

That's what I told her. I said, it's not that I like mowing the yard and I'd tickle me to death to have somebody else do it, but I need the exercise. The only thing that's keeping me from—you can't just sit down because you'll be permanently sitting down if you do that. I've got to keep moving. That's why this is here.

DS:

That's a good thing to have.

MC:

For a long time I was doing lots of walking, which the doctor recommended, but to walk in this neighborhood, I'd just about have to go down to bridge and go across and go out into the park over there across the street. I got to where I wasn't liking doing that. My daughter had this, my youngest daughter, and I didn't know she had it, but her mom had it after we split up. Her mom was living out on the west side of town with a new guy. She'd finally found her true love. Laid in the bed at the house they just bought and never got up again. He died. And then she developed a real bad situation in the arteries or something in her heart. Around her heart. There was nobody around here that would fix it. I asked the doctor and he said, "I'm not doing it. That's way too touchy. That's got about a 25 percent chance of success." Well knowing her like I did that was good enough, she was going to have it done. They found a doctor in Dallas that would do it and she died while she was being operated on. Anyway, before all that, she had this and my daughter had it. She said something about she had gotten her a treadmill and was using it. She said, "I need to get rid of that stationary bike." I said, "You got a stationary bike?", "Yeah. Mom had it." I said, "Oh.", "You want it?" I said, "Yeah. I've been thinking about getting one, but I just hadn't bothered yet." I had a treadmill for a while, but it was a cheap one and it was one that you moved with your feet. It didn't have a motor on it and it didn't last very long before it got too hard to move. Too much drag on it. According the instructions that came with it, it says you need to raise the mat up and lubricate it underneath with a dry lubricant, but it didn't tell you what. What do you lose for a dry lubricant? Somebody said corn starch. I didn't try that. I did put some graphite like you use in door locks. I had some of that. Had a tube of it. Pretty good size tube, but I never used it and I sprayed a bunch of that under there and got on it. This is great. That was the end of it, and it was worse than it was. This is done. This needs to go to the ally. Next to the dumpster. So I've been walking quite a bit. So I walk over to the park and back. It kind of makes

you nervous when you're over there and there ain't nobody around during week except you and this other guy that's walking towards you and you think, Wonder who he is and why he's here.

DS:

And why he's walking towards me.

MC:

Yeah.

DS:

Well and nowadays, you can't be too careful. The security that gives you inside also, you can do that whether it's rain or snowing outside. You can get on that.

MC:

I had some cold weather gear that I could go for a walk and stay pretty comfortable, but the fact of going out and walking in the snow or somewhere where it's slick and then you get over there where there's nobody around and fall down and can't get up and break a leg or something. I thought I just need this right here and that's fine. I can hop on it right there and it's right in front of the air conditioner.

DS:

Yeah. I don't want anybody falling. I think we've gone quite a bit, and I really appreciate you sharing your story with us. And if you ever think of anything you want to tell me, just call me and I'll be right back this way.

MC:

Well, I hope covered everything. I think I covered a whole lot more than what was necessary.

[End of Recording]