

BowmanBill_19920311

RICHARD SHARPLESS: [00:00:00] This is an interview with Bill Bowman of 40 Raubsville Road, Raubsville, Easton, PA. It's March 11, 1992 and this is 9:00 in the morning, 9 A.M., we're speaking in the kitchen of his house in Raubsville. Okay Bill. Where are you from originally?

BILL BOWMAN: Bridgewater, New Jersey.

RS: Bridgewater, New Jersey? Okay. And you were born and raised there?

BB: Yes. Well, I was born in Middlesex, New Jersey.

RS: Okay.

BB: Up at James National.

RS: And you went to school there and everything?

BB: Mhm.

RS: How old are you?

BB: Thirty-four.

RS: Thirty-four? So where did you originally learn machinist trade?

BB: [00:01:00] Somerset County Vo Tech.

RS: Somerset County Vo Tech, and you started working right after school then? [Baby crying]

BB: Yeah, the last year of schooling, they put you out in a program to go to half a day school, half a day work.

RS: Okay. Where did you work for your first?

BB: An electronics microwave place and [baby crying] a garage-sized type place, like a machine shop.

RS: And was that your first regular job?

BB: Oh yeah, yeah.

RS: How long were you there?

BB: I was there for four years. [Baby crying] Shh.

RS: We'll wait a minute. You left there in what year? Do you remember?

BB: Seventy-six? [00:02:00] I would have to say '79 or '80.

RS: Seventy-nine or eighty? Uh-huh. Where did you go then?

BB: I couldn't remember the name of the place. I couldn't remember the name of it, but it was in the same county maybe a few miles away from the first place I worked. It was just a little machine shop.

RS: A little machine shop?

BB: I'd go in there maybe a month.

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: Things would fall apart and stuff. You know, then I found a better job.

RS: Found a better job.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Or better pay, etc. Where was that at?

BB: That was over at Rainville. Rainville Corporation,
Middlesex.

RS: How do you spell that, Rainville?

BB: R-A-I-N, and ville.

RS: And ville, okay. What do they do?

BB: They make plastic-injection mold machines.

RS: Okay, okay, and what was your job in particular?

BB: Making the parts.

RS: Making the parts? [00:03:00] Did you work on any one
particular part, or you did it all?

BB: A whole bunch of the parts, yeah. Some of the molds, some
of the frameworks and stuff for a couple of them.

RS: Uh-huh, and you were there how long?

BB: I was there I believe two years. [Baby crying]

RS: Yeah. What happened? Why did you leave there?

BB: Well, I had kids to look after in Florida. I lived down
there for a while.

RS: Uh-huh. What did you do in Florida?

BB: The very first job, I was low on cash a little bit, so I
took a temporary agency job.

RS: Right.

BB: They set me up in this -- a furniture type store --

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: -- doing different things, cleaning up. Sort of like odd jobs in there.

RS: Right, right.

BB: Stuff in there, but that was only like three weeks or something like that. You know? I did eventually get a machine shop job down there. I believe the place was called -- [00:04:00] it was two companies in one building. One was like Metal Fab and Dynasty, something like that. Small places, but they paid you stuff, so I went to work.

RS: Mm-hmm.

BB: But it was a machine shop job.

RS: Machine shop job, okay, and then you came back.

BB: No, I had one other job. I was down there for a little over a year. A year and a couple months.

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: So another machine shop type job is silver industry type, yeah.

RS: Did you find these kinds of jobs fairly available?

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: And you were, of course, experienced by now.

BB: Mm-hmm, and the pay was [inaudible]. Yeah, I filled out an application, just [like that?]. And they'd say "Okay we'll give you a call."

RS: Uh-huh. Why did you come back up north?

BB: One of my old girlfriends. Well, I was after her, so I figure I'd come back up here.

RS: Uh-huh, okay.

BB: Not for the work or nothing. (laughs) [00:05:00] But you know.

RS: When you got back to the north, about what year was that? Do you recall?

BB: It had to be around '82, I'd have to say.

RS: Okay, and what did you do here then, where did you go to work in New Jersey?

BB: I found a job through the paper again, up in North Jersey. The name of that place? I can't really think of it. It was a decent-sized place, and I can't think of the name of it at all.

RS: Okay.

BB: They paid really well and stuff, so I thought. I only worked there too, only maybe nine months, I guess.

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: Or something.

MRS. BOWMAN: The one in Dover?

BB: No. Well, it was just out of Dover, a little bit. Over,
[unintelligible] Park area.

RS: Were they a machine shop?

BB: Uh-huh.

RS: [00:06:00] And you left there then, huh?

BB: Uh-huh.

RS: Okay.

BB: I got a job down here, Coilhose Pneumatics, here in
Middlesex.

RS: Okay, okay.

BB: I spent four years with them people.

RS: In Middlesex?

BB: Back there again.

RS: And again, what were you doing?

BB: Machine shop work again.

RS: Just machine shop work?

BB: Uh-huh.

RS: Okay, okay.

BB: Most of the story will be machine shop work.

MARTIN DESHT: That's what everything is.

RS: In Middlesex, okay. You just described going through about
five or six different jobs. Did you get any sense that

this was not very permanent? That these jobs seemed to be coming and going, or what?

BB: At that time there, they were starting to come out with those CNC machines, the computer machines.

RS: Computer operated?

BB: Yeah.

RS: Alright.

BB: I had an interest for that.

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: [00:07:00] I looked into it a little bit. More and more places were getting those machines, so I thought I was going to do that. I was working at Coilhose, I went to school and stuff to learn that.

RS: Did the company send you to school?

BB: No.

RS: You went on your own?

BB: Yeah.

RS: Okay.

BB: Because they didn't have any there.

RS: Okay.

BB: So I went there and did it.

RS: Where were these machines made?

BB: Mostly Japan.

RS: Mostly Japan? All right.

BB: There, or Taiwan, or something.

RS: Did you have any feelings about that at the time?

BB: Yeah. Yep.

RS: All right.

BB: If they making something good and stuff, you know --

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: The American companies were buying them and stuff.

RS: Right, right. Okay. And you said you were making good money there. Do you have any idea what your annual income was at that time with these companies, or this company?

BB: Well, with the CNC it was like for \$30,000 a year.

RS: It was?

MD: What year was that?

BB: That had to be 1985.

RS: [00:08:00] Eighty-five?

BB: No, wait a minute. Wait, no, I'm sorry. Eighty-nine is with that, yeah. That's more like it.

RS: All right, okay. And what happened to that job?

BB: Laid off.

RS: Okay, what was the reason?

BB: They said orders just fell. I don't know if it was from outside competition like the Japanese competition, I don't know about that.

RS: What was the -- did the company explain why they were -- ?

BB: They just said they got slow, I guess. They had two shifts and they had to cancel out one shift. I happened to be on it.

RS: Because you were there less than a year?

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: Okay, okay. Were you a member of a trade union at that time?

BB: Yes, yep.

RS: What union was that?

BB: Machinist. Something like the Federal Electrical Workers, machinist type.

RS: Right.

BB: Not one of the big ones, but, you know, machinist.

RS: [00:09:00] Okay, and the company didn't really explain why?

BB: Well, they just said, "Slow." That's all they had to say, I guess. They didn't have the work so they couldn't have people standing around.

RS: Sure, okay. What did you do then?

BB: Unemployment for two months with that. And [unintelligible] again. Yeah, you had twins just before I got laid off.

RS: Just before you got laid off, there were twins?

BB: Two months before, or something like that.

RS: Oh, jeez. Okay. Did the union at all help you, try to help you get another job?

BB: No, no.

RS: They didn't do that?

BB: I didn't stick with them. It wasn't a very good union. I'm not even sure where the union hall is, I believe, I'm not even sure where that is.

RS: Okay, so that was '89.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: And then what? Where did you go then?

BB: Well, unemployment a little bit, and then looking through the paper again. I found a job up in Pittstown. [00:10:00] It was like a garage-type --

RS: Machine manufacturing job?

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: A little machine shop, and what did they do?

MRS. BOWMAN: They paid good.

BB: Yea, they paid really well.

RS: What do you mean by paid good?

BB: Money. Paid the book, for us. That was \$33,000, \$34,000 a year. More than that.

RS: Right, so it was a fairly good hourly wage.

BB: Yeah.

RS: What about benefits? Did they provide -- ?

BB: I didn't last there too long to find out about them, but they had --

RS: Medical?

BB: Yeah, the basics.

MRS. BOWMAN: The basics.

BB: The basic type of stuff. You know?

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: Nothing extraordinary.

MB: That's when we looked for a place to live around here.

BB: And you weren't working. Were you working at the time?

MB: No, I was still with the babies.

BB: Yeah, okay. She was working back when I was working in --

MB: [00:11:00] Weldotron?.

BB: -- Weldotron she was working too. She had a good healthcare plan, that 401. What the heck was it?

MB: US Healthcare.

BB: US Healthcare.

MB: But you were paying for my use of that healthcare when I got laid off, to continue the health benefits.

RS: What happened? You said that job only lasted a short period of time.

BB: Yeah, they got slow too. The president was working up there at the company, and two of his good friends were working with him and stuff. It was me and a couple of secretaries like that. They got rid of like, three of us, like that, yeah.

RS: How many people were working all together there?

BB: Yeah, there were only, like, six or seven altogether there anyway, so they got rid of us.

RS: Again, did they explain why?

BB: Well, just slow. Let me think, what year was it? I don't think that had anything to do with it.

MB: They weren't really slow, were they?

BB: [00:12:00] Yeah.

MB: They couldn't make the [furnishings?] and they made some stuff.

BB: Well, yeah, they couldn't make the stuff fast enough, because it was a small place. They were overbooked. They were stuck or whatever. And then they needed out.

RS: What were they making there? Do you remember?

BB: They were doing jobs for this aerospace company up in Whippany, most of this stuff.

RS: Defense agency type stuff.

BB: Most of it.

RS: Uh-huh. Okay. So you got laid off there, and then what happened?

BB: I was on unemployment for a while. We bought this house.

MB: Yeah, and we were really scared. (laughs)

BB: It was just the wrong time.

RS: yeah, that was 1990, right?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Yeah, it's about eight months ago.

BB: At the time, we bought the house and, again, through the paper up here in Allentown, I found a job working at the Whitehall.

RS: Do you remember the name of that company?

BB: APG Machine.

RS: Okay, and what did they do?

BB: [00:13:00] It was another job shop. It was a medium-sized place. Stuff, they were doing stuff. There was CNC work now which was good too. The pay wasn't very well though. That was my problem there. It was only, like, \$20,000 a year or something like that.

MB: It cost you more to get in the door.

BB: Right, and they had three shifts of people working there, in the shop. It had to be, altogether, 45 people I guess in the shop. We were split to three shifts. What was that? About four months, five months I was there? I'll say five. Then they got slow? Something like that. They wanted me to program their machine which I was not sure what to do with. [00:14:00] I wasn't experienced at that point --

RS: Right.

BB: -- with that machine stuff. They were a little mad about that, and they didn't have much work for that shift anyway, so they collapsed that shift and stuff and they laid people off over there too.

RS: Right.

MB: I don't like the way they do that. They wrote curse words on --

RS: What do you mean?

MB: -- people's timecards and who did it and stuff, and it was really bad.

BB: Well, yeah.

MB: Well, it was bad.

BB: I had a timecard kind of a deal. When she told me I was laid off, I threw my suit on a workbench out in the shop, and stuff like that, and a couple of weeks later, one of my last paychecks, they sent it back in the mail and somebody on the second or third shift put in there like (inaudible).

[INTERRUPTION]

BB: A third one wrote on there, "Nice job, Bill. Really good job." [00:15:00] That kind of stuff. That kind of stuff. I was mad. I probably would have punched a guy out, if I could get away with that. (laughs)

RS: Okay.

BB: I'm just fooling around.

RS: Again, it was a lack of work. Okay.

BB: It wasn't because of that, but that was something.

RS: Since that time, have you got work?

BB: Okay, laid off again, got on unemployment for a little while --

RS: Okay.

BB: -- and stuff like that. Then, the job service. I went to a jobs service in Easton and they didn't really have

nothing. I went to a job service in Phillipsburg. You have to do that for unemployment.

RS: Right.

BB: They sent me up to a place over in Lebanon.

RS: New Jersey?

BB: Yeah, which was Keystone Fabricating. That was the last job I had there.

RS: Okay, what do they do?

BB: That was a sheet metal job shop.

RS: Okay.

BB: I was running CNC stuff again, which was good.

MB: Oh, that was a good job. Except the pay was lousy.

BB: [00:16:00] They had me in the office programming stuff, which was really nice.

RS: Uh-huh.

BB: I learned a lot with that. I didn't make a lot of money there.

RS: Okay, so what are you talking about? You didn't make a lot of money?

MB: Nine dollars an hour, just enough to live on.

RS: Nineteen, twenty thousand. Something like that.

MB: He used to make 14 at one place. That was good. You know, when we bought this house -- Then he went down to 10, then he went down to 9 again.

RS: Right.

MB: And then, it went down to 9 then.

RS: These last few shops you worked at, did they have unions or not?

BB: No, no.

RS: These were non-union shops?

BB: One place, Weldotron, way back when I first started the CNC type work, that was the first place with a union, and that was the only place.

RS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So, the last three places you worked had no unions?

BB: Yep.

RS: All right, and what happened with that job?

BB: They got slower too with this recession and stuff at the end of the year. They held everybody as long as they could. They had us sweeping up for like two weeks straight, just sweeping up, and cleaning machines, and things like that. [00:17:00] And they finally just had to lay people off. There was six of us got the axe like on Friday. I don't know if anybody more. I haven't kept in

touch with them after that, but I believe that they are still open. You know?

RS: And it was because of the recession?

BB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

RS: Lack of orders.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: Okay, okay. So you've described now about at least half-a-dozen different jobs, and all of them lost primarily because of the lack of business.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Okay, and hopefully -- Yeah, go on.

BB: The ups and downs of working. The people buying in or selling it.

RS: When you were starting out, did you have any idea it was going to be this way?

BB: No.

RS: Would you have continued to do this kind of work if you had known this?

BB: That's a hard question. I don't know. I enjoyed it way back then, and stuff. [00:18:00] If you know the future like that, if you know it's going to be bad, of course you wouldn't do it.

RS: Sure, sure. Yeah, what were your expectations when you started out?

BB: Tool and die maker kind of thing, back then, you didn't know about those computer machines. It was machines that they had, and you had to go to the top of the class in that.

RS: Right, right.

BB: That's what I was thinking, something like that, maybe running that type of shop or managing a shop, something like that.

RS: All of a sudden, computers get introduced as a new technology, but you tried to learn them.

BB: Yeah, oh yeah.

RS: And you learned them. Uh-huh, uh-huh. How did you feel about that? Did you feel this was something you wanted to do, or did you feel, "Oh my God, I've got to learn something new now?"

BB: I put it off for a while. At first, I thought it really wasn't really going to pan out or whatever. It was too advanced or whatever like that, but you know.

RS: Right.

BB: A lot of companies weren't going to buy it, but a lot of companies did buy it, and stuff, so I thought, "Well, okay.

I'll go to school and then learn it." And once I learned it, it was great.

RS: [00:19:00] Uh-huh, okay. Now, obviously those machines increase productivity, right?

BB: Yes.

RS: But they also cut down on the room for workers required to machines, right?

BB: Hm, yeah, yeah. You still need setup men and stuff like that, operators and programmers.

RS: Yeah, you need programmers all right.

BB: Yeah, so they're cutting down a little bit.

RS: Uh-huh.

MB: They cut down on hours, mostly.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Now, you also described a situation where your income was fairly high eight, nine years ago, and it's steadily declined. Obviously, I'm not going to ask you what you think of that. You know what I mean? That's pretty obvious.

BB: Yeah, yeah. (laughs)

RS: I can figure it out, but is this pattern typical?

BB: Well, I don't know if it's typical.

RS: Uh-huh. You're not sure whether this is a pattern that seems to be happening everywhere else?

BB: No, you know.

RS: Uh-huh. Why do you think that's happening?

BB: Hm, I don't know. You know? The economy is some of it. [00:20:00] You know, there's more workers out there and more shops that have this stuff. What's a good word for that -- there's more people available to do it.

RS: Right, okay.

BB: They get paid --

RS: less?

BB: Yeah.

RS: In other words, you think there's simply more workers out there?

BB: yeah, yeah.

RS: And they can get away with paying less.

BB: Mm-hmm.

RS: Uh-huh, okay. When you were working, were you aware that this situation was happening? There were large, large -- more and more machinists looking for work?

BB: I don't think I was aware of it, no.

RS: Okay. But you definitely think the fact there's more available --

BB: It had something to do with it, yes.

RS: Something to do with it, right. How about foreign competition? You mentioned the Japanese.

BB: As far as the workers you mean? Mexican workers and stuff like that?

RS: Yeah, as far as the work is concerned.

BB: It kind of depends on the company, you know? [00:21:00]
One of the companies, they hired a lot of Chinese people. They got a couple Spanish people and stuff.

RS: Right.

BB: Black people, too. White people and stuff, so it's a pretty good mix there. Everybody is the same because of the union.

RS: Sure, you're talking about the --

BB: Union place.

RS: Okay. In Middlesex, okay.

BB: But the other places, they're family-owned companies' type. They're just going to hire people in daylight. Slightly prejudiced, you know, in the wrong way. They open up, they stay around, and they actually do something in the place.

RS: Well, they can't do that anymore.

BB: Right now, of course. You know, but that basically is what it is. Sure.

RS: Sure, sure. Having gone through this experience which is, jeez, that's quite an experience. Move from place to place to place. [00:22:00] What effect do you think it has had on you personally?

BB: It drove me nuts, but that's nothing new. I've been heading into that anyway. As far as the serious stuff, you know, I don't know.

RS: Well, let me ask the question this way. What are your expectations down the road about the future?

BB: Hm.

MB: We've talked about Billy changing up careers because we don't know what's going on anymore.

BB: Anymore, anymore it's possible, but if I suffered for a change of career, I would do it.

RS: Have you ever looked into retraining or anything?

BB: A little bit, yeah. We're just ready to do that now. It's prolonged and there's machine shop jobs out there we've been looking out for that just started. We don't feel ready to [lift off on that?].

RS: [We missed that part?].

BB: Yeah, I've got a lot of experience behind me and stuff, which is good.

RS: Yeah, yeah. You've got what? About 10, 12 years' experience now.

BB: [00:23:00] Fourteen or so now.

RS: Fourteen years' experience, yeah.

BB: Somewhere in there.

RS: You're obviously looking for a machinist job now.

BB: Yeah.

RS: What's going on out there?

BB: Well, I just had an interview on Monday in a place in Weymouth, New Jersey. It's kind of far away. I think it would pay pretty good. But they have fairly new machines there. They talk a slightly different language. They're kind of looking for someone who they're walking off the street to speak the language of that machine, but, you know, I can't say that I can do that. I know a different language. Okay, that's technical, it's just a matter of learning, but they weren't impressed with that at all. They were saying, "Oh, we'll give you this or that." All right. Then, this afternoon I have an interview at a screw machine place down here, down by Doylestown and stuff like that. [00:24:00] It wouldn't be CNC work though. It will be regular machine-type work and stuff, but if they pay

halfway decent and whatever, then I think I'm gonna, I'll probably take it.

RS: What would you consider halfway decent now? In 1992?

BB: Ten bucks an hour would be halfway.

RS: Ten bucks an hour, okay.

MB: [That's why you want to make more, if you know what I mean?].

RS: That's actually lowering your expectations, really.

BB: Well, going to a place whatever --

MB: Well, but, you know, you were thinking about, you know, you could make it \$14 to come up here. You would go up more, you know?

BB: Well, yeah..

MB: You know? But then you dropped down again.

RS: Yeah.

BB: I knew moving around here, there'd be a little bit less around here. Not like, \$5 less. I didn't know that.

RS: Well, what are your overall feelings then about this situation in general?

BB: The situation? It sucks.

RS: Yeah, this. Okay, okay. That's fair.

BB: (laughs) You know?

MD: That's what it is.

BB: [00:25:00] It's not fair to the American worker, you know, with the timing and stuff like that, I mean, it's -- can't really blame it on nobody I guess. Some of it's my blame that they cut to foreign stuff. And the government too, I guess. You know, they're behind all this stuff too, which, you know --

RS: How about the managers at your various places you've worked? How great have they been?

BB: Oh, they're downright rotten, almost like a brother.

RS: Okay.

BB: You know?

RS: Describe that a little bit. You say, "downright rotten." What do you mean?

BB: They could give you jobs or whatever, but not even listen to you, stuff like that, and then bend over backwards to help. Give you time off of work or something.

RS: Right.

BB: [00:26:00] When she was having a baby, the one guy, I asked him if I could take that off.

MB: A little leave, when I was in the hospital.

BB: Just in my lunch, like, maybe you know, a half hour. He says, "Go." And he didn't expect me to come back, he said. He would have paid me for it anyway.

RS: Okay.

BB: Very nice.

RS: As the situation got worse, did the attitudes of management get worse, you think?

BB: No.

RS: In other words, what I'm asking is do you feel that they're taking advantage of workers at all, or willing to try to do that?

BB: Not as hard. I don't think so. I think they're pressed against the wall though, too, if their bosses are saying other companies in the -- if people are saying, "Where's the money? Where is the work?" and stuff --

RS: Right.

BB: -- they're going to get a little aggravated, and they'll take it out on the employee too a little bit. Sure.

[00:27:00] You know?

RS: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BB: They sold us downstream, as they say.

RS: Yeah, yeah. Have these companies you worked for tried to keep up with new technology and new methods?

BB: Some of them, yeah. Mm-hmm. There's more of us have a harder time, of course --

RS: Right.

BB: -- because they don't have the money or they can't get the money.

MB: (inaudible)

BB: Yeah, yeah. They bought a, I don't know, \$70,000 machine or something like that, to try to keep up with, you know, everybody.

RS: They bought it from Japan? [Baby crying]

BB: They bought it from Japan, yeah.

RS: Uh-huh. You were talking about more and more machine shop equipment coming from Japan.

BB: Mostly. As far as the worker stuff, it's very limited. I'm not even sure which [springs?] can do that.

RS: [00:28:00] Why do you think that was the case? Why do you think the Japanese were managing to move in like that?

BB: Well, the computer stuff. They were really good with the servers and stuff a long time ago. They advanced with that. They could go places with -- what the hell do they call it? Transistor type stuff.

RS: Okay.

BB: They were the first ones to really get into that, to break into that stuff, and they just advanced from there.

RS: This started to happen when? Do you recall?

BB: Oh, I don't know. The '70s, I guess.

RS: The American companies weren't doing this?

BB: No, they were working back in the '50s, you know?

RS: Uh-huh. When you were at Vo Tech, did your instructors have any idea this was happening, this was going on?

BB: No, I don't think so. No. There wasn't much mention about that at all.

RS: [00:29:00] How do you feel about this?

BB: Well, which part of it? My situation?

RS: The situation. Yeah, no. The fact that Americans haven't kept up on any --

BB: Well, they're starting to do it now a little bit, even with the cars. Yeah, they're upgrading the cars --

RS: Right.

BB: -- the motorcycles and stuff, just to keep up with Japan.

RS: In other words, the Americans are getting more interested in [technology?].

BB: Yeah. They should have did that before, I think, too. I'm not sure what happened to make the downfall like that, or what made Japan more superior.

RS: Right.

BB: You know?

RS: Lack of investment, (laughs) research.

BB: Right, but how could they do it though? You know, they're just [a thing?].

RS: Well, they put more money into research than us.

BB: Oh yeah.

RS: Their companies.

BB: We had all the money over here supposedly.

RS: Right, right.

BB: This was the land of opportunity and stuff like that.

[00:30:00] All that kind of stuff.

RS: Right. You think the government should do more to help the American worker?

BB: I think they waste a lot.

RS: Okay, what do you mean by that?

BB: They spend it on [soap?], stuff like that. Little lights around the city.

RS: Do you think the government should get involved in retraining programs?

BB: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, all kind of stuff like that.

RS: Reinvestment? Research?

BB: Secure the American worker a little bit more, but the union stuff is good. Do more with it. If it's no good, get rid of it. You know?

RS: Do other people you work with feel this way?

BB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. They're a little hostile about the Japanese people coming into stuff. Yet, they will drive the Japanese cars and stuff, and not say too much about it. They're mixed pretty much about it, sure.

RS: But that's the only choice you have.

BB: Yeah, yeah. [00:31:00] You blame it on one, but you have to blame it on us too. It's not just them doing it to us.

RS: Right.

BB: You know?

RS: There's been a lot of talk or a lot of things written over the last decade about, of course, the Japanese now are saying the same thing with the lack of the work ethic, the productivity of the American worker.

BB: Mm-hmm.

RS: What is your attitude about that, considering your experience?

BB: [sighs] Well, yeah, that's true. It depends now, on the companies. If the company will take care of you, stuff like that, treat you good, you will do good for the company, you know? It's just the way it is, but if they shit on you so to speak, I don't want to use that language.

RS: That's all right. No problem.

BB: They try to do that to you and you're not going to care about anything with the company, you know?

RS: What was your experience with the companies you worked for?

BB: It's...yeah.

RS: It's bad?

BB: You know, there's some real good ones, some really bad ones.

RS: [00:32:00] Yeah, and the workers responded.

BB: Yeah, oh yeah. Everybody was getting over on them or, you know, really doing good with them. You know, they were depending on what the management was doing.

RS: Right. Definitely feel if management treated the workers fairly, they'd work better. What do you think of the idea the American worker is lazy?

BB: Nope, no. I think not.

RS: Okay, why do you say that?

BB: Well, because we get things done, and if we're motivated to do things, we're going to do it.

RS: You don't see that in your 14 years' experience?

BB: No.

MB: I think about going back to work and him staying here and having him with the kids.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MB: He wouldn't mind it.

BB: It would be harder than going to work probably. (laughs)

RS: Probably, you're right. I'd rather go to work, right?

There's that. [00:33:00] How is this situation? It's a very difficult situation you've been in. How has this affected your own family?

MB: [I'm pretty worried?].

BB: Yeah.

MB: I don't know what's going to happen to them, the kids, without insurance, you know?

BB: Yeah, the health insurance now, [Baby crying] I think we're covered through the end of the month I believe, but that's..

MB: But when you get another job, you have to wait 90 days for insurance to pop up.

BB: Yeah, yeah, there you go again.

MB: And just buying the house, I'm afraid we're going to lose it. We didn't let them take all our money, so we have about a year. If you don't get a new job and the money runs out, if anything happens to the house like we need a new roof, or a new septic system or something, or anything like that, we'll leave the house. [Baby crying]

RS: So it's really bad or (inaudible)?

BB: Yeah. [00:34:00] Yeah, yeah. Did he play with the camera or something?

MB: Yeah, no. You can't do that. Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Obviously, your material, circumstances have changed over the last decade too, right? (inaudible).

BB: Yeah, yeah. It's growing up too because we got married and stuff and had kids you know?

RS: That's really hard.

BB: You know, they grow up, stuff like that.

RS: Yeah, yeah, right.

BB: You know?

RS: How long have you been married now?

BB: We're married two and a half years.

RS: Two and a half years?

BB: Yeah, two and a half years, honey? I lost count. She's like, "Yeah, yeah." Too long, no.

MB: No.

RS: What did you do when you were working?

MB: I worked at a software company, Peter Associates, and I worked in the warehouse. [00:35:00] And I thought I would never buy the software, the booklets on how to run the machines and then stock them in the warehouse. Well, that

job had two turnovers, but we stayed it through, and I would still be there if I didn't have twins. If I only had one, (laughs) I would still be there.

RS: That's right, wow. So actually, you also began to experience this.

MB: Yeah, we had two takeovers.

RS: Oh, you mean the company was taken over?

MB: Yeah, twice.

BB: Twice.

RS: Twice? Okay.

MB: It was a little company when I started called ADR, and then a marriage happened.

BB: (inaudible)

MB: Telephone company took it over. They couldn't make it a go of it. It was too diverse from what they were used to with telephones. So, they sold it out to Computer Associates.

[00:36:00] Computer Associates is a very strange company.

They make money by buying out little companies.

RS: Right.

MB: They bought out all of them, about six already.

RS: And what do they do with them when they buy them out?

MB: They lay off half the people. (laughs) They make it into their own, but somehow, they make money. I don't know how

it works by taking over these companies. I heard they just bought another one.

RS: They strip the companies, in other words?

MB: Yeah. Because I was in the bottom end, you know, the shipping there receiving in the warehouse, we were allowed to stay, but all the programmers, all the, you know, the smart people, you know, they just did away with them.

RS: Really?

MB: Guy threw a shoe, says, "That's the last time that the shoe's going to fall," but after, he was laid off.

(laughs)

RS: Obviously, leaving there had an impact on you too. It had an impact on you for sure.

MB: Uh-huh. [00:37:00] I was starting to make good money in the first six years. Great benefits. I wonder if I even went back, if they gave me a little bit more time. They wanted me to come back five weeks after the kids were born.

RS: With twins?

BB: Yeah.

MB: Yeah.

RS: Five weeks. They had no maternity leave, right?

MB: Well, I had to take it beforehand, but I took three months, you know? And if you only gave me a couple weeks off,

because my body wasn't willing to go back to work and do things in labor. But sometimes, I wish I would have stayed. At least we'd have benefits.

BB: Yeah.

RS: This is obviously a big worry, lack of healthcare with three kids.

MB: Yeah, you know what could happen if something bad happens.

BB: Yeah, they could --

MB: They'll take the house. They'll take everything we own.

RS: Obviously, we didn't expect this situation 10, five years ago.

MB: I was kind of happy [only then there?]. [00:38:00] I kind of, like, pushed him to take and take to better himself because he's, with the shop that he was in for so many years, it was paying so good to support a family, so I said, "Go ahead, Bill. Go to school, you know?"

RS: Right.

MB: And I was so happy when he started working with the computers before.

BB: I know.

RS: Even that didn't help.

BB: You know, for a while, but they started laying off and stuff like that. The economy or whatever was going on. Something was turning.

MB: Yeah, and we were staying with my mom, and it was a one-bedroom apartment on top of her house, with three kids and a husband.

RS: Oh boy, oh boy.

MB: We needed to get out, but we were low on rent, so we were looking for a house, and I knew it was a gamble with that.

RS: Do you see any real future in the industry of this country?
[00:39:00] How do you feel about that?

BB: Industry in general, or?

RS: Well, your business here.

BB: My business? Yeah, yeah. People need machine parts for stuff for cars, or houses or whatever. You know.

RS: Let me go back a bit. The one company you worked for was making parts for defenses.

BB: Mm-hmm.

RS: Was that one or several companies you worked with, did that?

BB: Just the one.

RS: Just the one, so most of the companies, almost all of the companies then were making for the commercial market?

BB: Yeah, with everybody else, yeah.

RS: Right.

MB: Meat packaging and stuff (inaudible).

RS: Yeah, you talked about retraining, something like that, or going back. What were you thinking about doing?

BB: No, we just got into it. I'm not really sure.

MB: You were talking about being an industrial engineer.

BB: Yeah.

MB: I don't know if there's jobs back there for that too.

BB: [00:40:00] The paper is full of them, but that might be a fly-by-night thing too. The paper is full of them. Where did all of those jobs --

RS: Right.

BB: -- there you know now, where would they go, things like that? How many engineers can you have? People have to make the parts too.

RS: Right, right. Are there many jobs available now?

BB: Machine shop jobs? No, they're slim.

MB: There was one in the paper last night.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Is this true for the last year or so?

BB: It's been getting less and less, you know, with the economy thing now because lately, it's really terrible, you know?

But a year ago, there were probably still some in the paper.

MB: I saw four or five in the paper.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: You're 34 you said?

BB: Yes, sir.

RS: Is your age having any impact on that?

MB: That might even be better.

BB: Not that I know of.

RS: You've got 14 years' experience.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Experience is key, but no.

RS: [00:41:00] Those are the basics you're getting.

BB: Yeah. It shouldn't go any lower. It won't go any lower because they'll get high school kids to work. They won't even work for \$3 an hour, you know, or something.

MB: There's a [guide gift?] at our [inaudible].

BB: Yeah, you know.

RS: You think the government could do more? We said this before, but --

BB: Yeah, but in part of the range. They can't focus just on one.

RS: Not on one industry, but for the economy it shall.

BB: The people, the manufacturing end of it, the engineering end of it, it's everything, you know? The housing part of it.

RS: You think the government should develop programs?

BB: They take enough taxes out of us to take care of everybody --

RS: Right.

BB: -- really good. You know, it's ridiculous.

RS: Okay. [00:42:00] I'm not going to ask you any big questions about the local community here if you happen to hear that, go on.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Let me ask about some of the people you work with, as this decline occurred, I'm sure there are people you know that experienced the same sort of situation.

BB: Laid off too.

RS: Laid off too? How did they go about that? What did they say?

BB: Believe it or not, a couple people were happy about it to take a little time off of work and do some other stuff, you know? Mostly the single people.

RS: The (inaudible)?

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, the married-and-kids people. They'd go right down to unemployment and stuff, and sign up for the jobs, and you know, go right back to work, as soon as possible anyway.

RS: Were people generally angry about this?

BB: Worried, yeah. I don't know about angry, but worried, yeah. You can't do much about it. If you get laid off --

RS: Right.

BB: -- your anger is not going to solve any problems, you know? You have to go out and do something about it.

RS: [00:43:00] I imagine most of the people you work with are men, they're machinists.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: Do their wives work too?

BB: I'd have to say at least half, yeah. At least half.

RS: They felt compelled to do that?

BB: The wives?

MB: Uh-huh, yeah.

BB: Yeah.

RS: You, of course, you're thinking about going back to work, but it's different.

MB: I'm a little scared now.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: It's difficult.

MB: If he doesn't get a steady job soon, I'm going to have to go back. First off, childcare would be \$285 for us. This will be like my whole salary. I'd be working for benefits mostly.

RS: Yeah, working for benefits. When you both got married, did you count on, or figure on this situation?

BB: When we got married, no. When we bought the house, we did.

MB: No. When we got married, I thought everything was going great.

RS: [00:44:00] In other words, you felt that Bill would work and supply.

MB: No, I wanted to work too.

BB: Yeah.

MB: I thought it would be a joint effort. I wasn't counting on the kids, but, you know, as long as I can stay home with the kids, you know, it's nice now. I missed this with my older daughter.

RS: Okay. Well, Martin, you have any questions?

MD: No, no, no.

MB: I'm also afraid about, you know, about retirement. Like, everybody said, "Put money away for retirement."

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MB: There's no way we could do that.

BB: Oh no.

MB: Yeah, I guess we'd sell the house and buy a small trailer or something.

BB: Yeah. Something like that.

MB: That's our only hope for when we get retired, maybe.

BB: We can't even think about that right now.

RS: No.

BB: I can't think about it.

RS: No.

MB: Usually, you think about it from the beginning to put money in your retirement and your pension, but there's not going to be no pension.

RS: [00:45:00] Social Security.

MB: That's it.

BB: That's it.

MB: If they don't do away with that.

RS: Yeah.

BB: That's a government thing too, though.

MB: We're scared about that, too.

BB: Put all kinds of money into that. Where is this money going? You know, come on.

MD: In the last two years, how many jobs have you had?

BB: Oh, in the last two years? Oh, I'd say four, or five.

MD: Did you get laid off at each job?

BB: Yeah.

M: Did you have health benefits at the time you were laid off?

BB: Yes.

MB: Yes, we did.

BB: Yeah. I can deal with three months, six months, nine months.

RS: So you will be there just long enough almost for the benefits to kick in.

BB: Yeah.

MB: As a matter of fact, two days before you got laid off this time, you got that pack.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

RS: And there's no carry-over is there on any of this?

MB: Two months.

BB: They extended it two months for me, they said.

RS: Did they?

BB: Yeah, just to jump on that. They did it for everybody though, all six of us, which was nice of them.

MB: It's usually a 90-day wait when you don't have a job to get insurance, and when you're laid off, you can't afford it.

RS: [00:46:00] Right.

MB: So we don't know what's going on.

RS: You feel there should be a government program for public health?

MB: It's got to be easier. It's got to be cheaper.

BB: Well, they're addicted to that. It would be so lame, you know? Doctors are making millions as it is, driving around in Mercedes and stuff.

MB: They probably could do, for minor health.

BB: Yeah, some of the stuff, yep.

MB: You know, if you have a cold and stuff, but if they get sick with cancer and stuff, they're not going to have a thing.

BB: Things like brain surgery or heart surgery stuff, of course. That's going to cost money, come on, but I mean, just going to the doctor because you broke your arm, or you're not feeling good and stuff, they charge up the amount of money for that kind of stuff. It's ridiculous, you know?

MB: Mm-hmm.

RS: Yeah. Would you support a program of public health?

BB: We do. We do right now with our taxes, the different things. You know.

RS: The candidates were talking about a national healthcare system.

MB: [00:47:00] For me, it's got to be a compromise because I heard in Canada, they put you on a waiting list when you're really sick to treat you. Well, that's what they said. Well, that's what the government is telling us. (laughs)

BB: Dr. Scholl never [broke his back?], you know? Where is the really good money now? They're not going to give that up.

MB: Yeah, they make the money now, right.

BB: The doctors.

MB: (inaudible)

BB: There's too much money being-- I don't like to say wasted or whatever, but okay. This is going off the beaten path a little bit, but the sports people make a million dollars a year, to do that, and that's ridiculous.

RS: Right, same with baseball money.

BB: Yeah, the guys are good. The guys are pros, okay.

MB: They don't deserve millions of dollars.

BB: Come on.

RS: How about business executives and their salaries? Guys like Iacocca.

BB: Well, if he made it with the profits, then he earned it, pretty much, you know?

RS: It's a failing company.

BB: Yeah. No, that's good. [00:48:00] That's a good thing, yeah. That's a good thing, yeah. The players earned it too, that's true.

RS: (inaudible)

BB: (laughs)

RS: By 9:00 in the morning, I'm floating on it. Yeah, okay. Good, I think. Are you done with your work there?

MD: No, I have it done.

RS: Good. All right, is there anything you want to add there?

BB: I'm going to find a job soon.

RS: Going to find a job soon, all right. Okay, okay, because you're on unemployment now, right?

BB: Yeah. With this trade here, I'd like to stay with it. You know? If I could service computers and advance in that part of it, yeah.

RS: But if this business keeps going like it sounds?

BB: Well, I think the work is going to be out there because people need those parts, you know? [I suppose with that?].

RS: My grandson is always saying, "Uh-oh," too. [00:49:00] He upset the garbage last night, he said, "Uh-oh." Yeah.

(laughs) Okay, good. Well, thanks, Bill. I appreciate it. There is one thing --

END OF AUDIO FILE