

MACE: No, sir, I went to two 500's and saw a man killed, and that was enough. I didn't go to any more. I think it's done a lot of good because they have tested out new ideas and new things in order to make the cars better. A lot of the things we need on the cars we use now were first used in the 500.

EH: In the, I guess, the 'thirties, was it . . . they had a number of race tracks in this area, didn't they? Jungle Park . . .

MACE: They did, yes.

EH: Did you ever go to them?

MACE: I went to one and they threw dirt all over me so I didn't go to any more. I went to one at Jungle Park -- that's up on Racoon Creek. Mr. Cole was up there one time -- Harry Cole, the pioneer auto dealer in Terre Haute. A wheel came off of somebody's car and hit him, and it could have killed him, but he wasn't seriously injured.

EH: You have seen changes over the years in two areas that I'd like to ask you about. One is quality and the other is safety. Let me take the quality first. What has happened, let us say, since 1946 in your experience in the cars coming out of Detroit? How do they compare over the years?

MACE: Well, a few things in the old days were better on account of cost. Henry Ford used to use bonderized steel which wouldn't rust, and now we have to under-seal them in order to prevent the rust from working from the inside out.

But now most things are much better. You can drive the car longer with less expense if you look at the much longer lasting cars bought by the modern dollars which are many times smaller in purchasing power. Of course, so far as the money now compared to back then, I think the quality is much better than it used to be. To me, quality means comfort, convenience, and adaptability, maneuverability, and a lot of things. It's just like this: the tires are much improved, the brakes stop the wheels, and the tires stop your car. The other parts . . . it is due to the advancement in technology; the quality is much better.

MACE: Technology is moving ahead all of the time [and] it has been. It's hard to imagine what they are going to discover. I think you and I'd be lucky if we were born just as far as possible in the future, because you can't imagine what hasn't been learned yet and every generation has got all their parents gave them for nothing when they start out.

Speaking of safety, it has moved forward just as fast as the quality due to the same reasons, I think.

EH: Thinking of your Hudson, for example, or thinking of the 1947 Mercury, thinking of the Lincoln that you drive today, the car you have today then is much safer?

MACE: Yes, take, for example, the springs on the 1928 or '29 Hudson. If I would go down the road and wouldn't see a chuckhole, it would bang down on the axle. I would put an extra leaf in and it would still do it. They didn't know how to design a modern automobile then; they did the best they could. They evolved into what they are now like everything else. I used to go up north fishing in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Most of the roads were not paved there then, and I got used to jumping the bumps. I'd go down the road too fast. I'd see a chuckhole and I'd put the brakes on. It would make the front end rear up and the back end would go down, and then it would go the other way, and I'd get over that bump pretty well without hitting the axle on my weak spring. You don't have to jump the bumps any more with a car. It can take them. Go over a railroad crossing too fast and you don't notice it.

EH: There was an attempt to have a mandatory seat-belt lock that unless you have your seatbelt fastened, you couldn't turn on the ignition. What did you think of that?

MACE: Well, I think it was a good thing if a person would train himself to remember to do it. Because if you drive at the legal speed limits, you're not going to get hurt if you have a collision as likely as if you don't have your belt buckled. If you don't have your doors locked and you get hit sideways, your car often spins and your doors come out and you fall out and get run over. I think seatbelts are a good thing. I used to lock them every time, but I've gotten out of the habit now because I don't drive very much. But a person should use them.

MACE: I don't know about the airbag. I don't know, but I doubt if it is worth it. It makes the car cost several hundred dollars more, and I doubt if the consumer would be benefitted by that extra expense to have that added. They aren't tested very much for very long, and I don't think anybody knows much about them.

EH: In 1946-47, did they have the same kind of insurance coverages available for a car that they have now?

MACE: Yes, I think you could buy full coverage, PL and PD, and liability but it didn't cost near so much. One reason it didn't, we didn't have so much of these trial lawyers active then and now they -- the insurance companies -- have a hard time making money on that kind of insurance on account of the inflation and the rapid increase of cost of repairs and parts and lawsuits.

EH: I think we're about to wrap up unless there are some things that come to your mind. What was your favorite car? I think of some of the beautiful Lincolns, for example. What was your favorite car? Year? Model?

MACE: That I don't remember. I liked them all. I would have been glad to have any car when I was a boy and when I was young. I remember making a hard decision. Harry Lang tried to sell me a Lincoln before he went out of business. I wanted the car but I refrained. The tape contains another sentence which Mr. Mace later realized was erroneous, so it is omitted from the transcript.

EH: What year Lincoln would that have been?

MACE: Oh, I don't know, early 'thirties. I forget what year. At that time, the Lincoln was between \$4,000 and \$5,000. I remember several people around town had one. One was a man named McGinty on the west side. I was airing his tires one day. He was proud of this old car (it wasn't an old car), and he said, "She weighs 4,000 pounds and she cost me a dollar a pound!" Laughs I remember that. Mr. Hampton had one. Guy Jackson had one. McGinty had one. Quite a few people that traded with me had a Lincoln. That was after Ford bought them out.

EH: There have apparently been some gangsters . . .

MACE: I might have made a mistake then. It probably wasn't before [/Ford bought Lincoln/], but I said that. Go ahead.

EH: Apparently, according to what we read and hear, there have been some gangsters or people like that in Terre Haute from time to time; and when you see movies, you see that they have a big car. Were you aware of any of the gangsters and did they have big cars?

MACE: Yes, the Traum gang had big cars and the highjackers that followed them had big cars. I remember one good customer I had named Highfield, and he was killed not long after that. He was what you call a highjacker. In prohibition, you know, there was a lot of dealing and stealing in bootlegging. It was hauled in from out of the United States. I didn't know much about it, but they would come here for a good place for service.

This Highfield that I mentioned had a Stutz. It was one of the most valuable cars; one of the greatest valued ones now for collectors' items.

EH: It was very fast . . .

MACE: A lot of the cars were made in Indianapolis. The Cole was, the Stutz, the Mormon, and many different makes. [/They were nearly all fast./]

EH: Did they have a lot of trouble with blowouts then

MACE: [/Sam's tire shop had a slogan for them!/] Yes, tires were a big problem. They were small diameter high pressure tires, and they didn't leave much distance between the ground and the rim. When they would run over a bump or a hard object, that would jam the rim down against the road and pinch the tire and they'd call that a stone bruise. In the old days the cars all used fabric tires, and the fabric didn't have much resilience -- much give. And then add high pressure and the air didn't have much give. You see a tire is a rolling cushion. The tire does the job. It provides traction and cushion and mileage. Nowadays, there is a lot of rim clearance and a bigger tire size which gives more carrying capacity. You could carry the whole world on a single tire on two pounds of air if

MACE: you had a big enough tire. The bigger the tire the more carrying capacity.

There were all kinds of trouble on the road. I remember when I was a farmhand in 1914, a man took me with him from Clay county, west of Poland two miles or three miles, to Terre Haute and to Mecca and back. We didn't get home 'til late at night, because we changed between six and fifteen tires -- fixed punctures and leaks in the tubes. We used to pump them all up by hand and I helped pump up several that day. I used to carry a hand pump in the car on trips in case I needed it.

EH: You mentioned Mr. Highfield?

MACE: He was a character in those days. He was killed in one of those He was murdered. He lived on one of the avenues -- on Third or Fourth Avenue off of 13th Street. But he used to buy tires and get service from me. I knew what kind of car he drove. I was told that that was what his occupation was. He never told me that. There was one bootlegger here in town that lived to be a ripe old age, and he was never arrested that I knew of.

EH: You mentioned that Traum gang.

MACE: T-r-a-u-m. Traum. Joe Traum. He was head of a gang here in the 'thirties. He later built the Manor House, a restaurant. His son operated it later. After he left Terre Haute, he went down to the Miami area. He had a nice restaurant on the beach there. In the early 'fifties when I took Joe Higgins with me on a golfing trip to Florida, we went and had a meal there. That was the last time I saw Joe, Senior. He had a famous pianist, Jose Melis. He was later Johnny Carson's pianist. Jack Paar's musical director, a musician on the Tonight Show. Maybe I misquoted Jose Melis. I think that's right. Carson dropped Melis from the show when he took over Tonight. I get my names mixed up, like Mel Tillis, you know . . .

EH: Um hm. Did Mr. Highfield Where was he murdered? In town here?

MACE: I forget. That was in the days of Al Capone of Chicago and others. There were a lot of underworld murders then and are yet -- an illegal business.

EH: [Are there] other people that are of interest or personalities and the like that you have served over the years, either before this building or after . . . well-known people or interesting people who have been your customers?

MACE: Well, I've always liked to be a franchisee of popular brands, and actually I met a great many of them. These older people that were leading businessmen here in the 'twenties and 'thirties were nearly all nice to me.

I remember with pleasure how Tony Hulman's dad used to treat me. He'd come down to get his tires aired, and I always carry gauges as I do now (tire gauges) and I'd air his tires. If he needed one, I'd say so and he'd say, "Put it on." He had a basement full of tires, but he was kind enough to buy one from me, and I liked him for that.

Mr. Ely was a nice old man. He was the guy that used to be the owner of the Highland Iron and Steel and he helped to start the Wabash Fibre Box factory. [He gave \$500 a year to our Y.M.C.A.] And Mr. Topping used to be president of the stamping mill. [He gave me some lasting advice. He said, "Young man, you will have good times and bad times. You must make enough in good times to carry you across the bad times."]

Not all of them, but many of those people used to be my friends. Mr. Cox used to be the head of this bank over here. Mr. Myers, Mr. Filbeck [and many others gave me good advice and wished me well]. See, I'm old enough that people born since the Civil War were still living then.

EH: Did you know Max Ehrmann?

MACE: Yes, I knew him pretty well. He always walked and he was active around town. In 1938 I wrote a little poem, a prayer in verse, and I had him look at it, and he thought it was all right.

EH: Do you remember it?

MACE: Yes, I can quote it for you.

EH: Would you please?

MACE: "Each day, dear Friend, let's pray to
Thee above,
That wars may end and time will
merge with love.
Then when I am dead and from this
world have gone,
I would it said he was a friend
of everyone."

EH: And Max Ehrmann said that he liked that?

MACE: He said that it was iambic or some kind of style.
I didn't know enough about poetry to classify it. I
think it is hillbilly, personally. [I am a non-
conformist.]

EH: Did you talk to him much? Was he interesting?

MACE: Well, I never had spare time. I was so busy then.
I didn't visit much with people unless they were here
on business. But he walked past often.

His brother, Albert, was my friend. I met him
at meals at the old Y.W.C.A. restaurant, and he had
an apartment over here on Walnut [Street] where they
rented apartments. He lived in one of them and he
invited me there as his guest. I went there one time
and he entertained me with a meal. He told me about
the years he spent in Paris. He was the acting head
of the Ehrmann Manufacturing Company, which the
brothers owned -- Emil, Albert, and Max (Max wasn't
very active). They were prominent people here then
and before then. Mr. Albert built a building that
they tore down [in 1979] at 6th and Main [Streets].
He built it and rented it to Montgomery Ward in the
'thirties when he tore down the old Kleeman Building
that used to be a Kleeman department store there.
Recently, they tore that down. At last count it [the
tenant] was Poise-N-Ivy [women's fashions].

EH: I know what you mean, of course. It seems strange
to hear some say at 6th and Main

MACE: It was on this corner

EH: Um hm.

MACE: Southeast corner.

EH: Did you know Eugene Debs?

MACE: I saw him sitting on the porch, but I never spoke to him. But his brother, Theodore, was a pretty good acquaintance of mine. He drove for his brother, Eugene. He bought his tires from me, and I aired them for him. He was a nice, well-mannered, pleasant man. After Gene got out of the prison, he'd sit on the porch there and people would visit. I roomed up the street, 808 North 8th, and I saw him several times there at his home 451 North 8th Street.

EH: You'd say hello to him?

MACE: No, sir! I never did speak to him. I heard a lot about him, but, you know, I read that book about deputy Debs or something. I forget most of that novel they wrote about him but I read that. He worked hard for his ideals.

EH: What about the Dreiser family? Did you know any of them?

MACE: No, sir. My son-in-law wrote his master's thesis on Theodore Dreiser. He could tell you a great deal about him. His name is Richard Dowell. He teaches English up at Indiana State.

EH: I know him well. Is there anything else that comes to your mind that you'd like to . . .

MACE: No, I can't recall unless associated with things. It's hard to recall unless you have a reminder, you know. I remember pretty well in associated circumstances. I read an article which stated, "You remember according to frequency and recency and intensity . . ." But I think association helps more than that! (Laughs) I'm sorry that I didn't have more information to give you.

EH: Oh, you have had plenty! I'll turn this off now then.

END OF TAPE