

1 **Dorothy Stevens discusses her pioneering career as a production worker and member**
2 **of the UAW Bargaining Committee at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**
3
4

5 Linda Johnson: This is the Fisher Body Historical Team. We're at the Local 602 Union
6 Hall. It is Tuesday, September 6, 2005. This is Linda Johnson speaking,
7 and we are interviewing Dorothy Stevens today. And who's present in this
8 room today?
9

10 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.

11
12 Kathryn Berry: Kathy Berry.

13
14 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.

15
16 Josie Martinez: Josephine Martinez.

17
18 Michael Fleming: Michael Fleming.

19
20 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.

21
22 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.

23
24 Linda Johnson: Dorothy.

25
26 Dorothy Stevens: Dorothy is stupid. [laughter]

27
28 Linda Johnson: How do you spell Dorothy Stevens?

29
30 Dorothy Stevens: D-o-r-o-t-h-y- with Stevens with a V.

31
32 Linda Johnson: [0:41] Thank you. Dorothy, can you tell me what your seniority date was
33 when you were...

34
35 Dorothy Stevens: 12/30/52.

36
37 Linda Johnson: [0:48] '52. And how long did you work for Fisher Body?

38
39 Dorothy Stevens: Till '84. Um, actually, I went out in April when they went on layoffs, but
40 they put us on layoff until contract, and I think it was October of '84 ended
41 up.
42

43 Linda Johnson: You had a long and ex-, exciting career with General Motors.

44
45 Dorothy Stevens: [Different 1:11].
46

1 Linda Johnson: You've done a lot...
2
3 Dorothy Stevens: [laughter]
4
5 Linda Johnson: [1:15] ...for women in the plant, and I would like you to tell us what it was
6 like, where you hired in at, where you went to work at, and what it was
7 like for women in the plant at that time, in the beginning.
8
9 Dorothy Stevens: Well, when we walked through the double doors, they called the Cushion
10 Room Little Siberia back then. We were separate, there was an alley
11 between us and the Body Shop and the rest of the plant. Um, we used air
12 guns, and back then you had springs in your seats, and we called'm the S
13 springs, and we called it Zig Zag. And these big air guns and you clip the
14 springs together, making the springs, you know? We used to cut off socks,
15 cut the toes and the heels off'n'm and put'm up our arms to keep our arms
16 from getting cut and scratched and...
17
18 Linda Johnson: Wow.
19
20 Dorothy Stevens: ...oh yeah. Plus our gloves we wore. Um, it was oily 'cause those springs
21 were all o-, greasy. Uh, women didn't do pad-up then. Pad-up paid a little
22 bit more an hour; the men had those jobs as they did all the trim jobs back
23 then. Women just had Zig Zag.
24
25 Linda Johnson: [2:22] Did you make as much as men back then?
26
27 Dorothy Stevens: Nope. We were on Zig Zag. That was low pay. And then when they got 63
28 A and B in the contract, guess who fought? I had begged'm to go with me,
29 but I was the rotten apple in the basket, but I got on trim job and I built
30 center arms. But that wasn't even fair because I was on front seat center
31 arms, and there were about 4 or 5 on rear – all alone. And there were 4 or
32 5 men on rear seat center arms, and those guys were tradin' off and
33 clockin' each other out and goin' home at noon and here I am [laughter]
34 slavin' away with the [inaudible 3:05]. I mean, that's women. Uh, then
35 women got to go on trim later on. There again, I fought that. They weren't
36 gonna let me have it, and then they put me on the worst job there was.
37 Took away the stuffin' iron 'cause there was leather covers. The guys had
38 stuffin' irons, you know, and they could stuff'm out the corners.
39
40 Linda Johnson: [3:31] So you're stuffing the arm...
41
42 Dorothy Stevens: No. I had to pull that baby down for all it was worth because I couldn't
43 have a stuffing iron.
44
45 Linda Johnson: Hm.
46

1Dorothy Stevens: They were gonna shot be again that I had taken a man's job. And from
2 then on, I went on committee, took another man's job.
3
4Linda Johnson: [3:48] What year did you go on committee?
5
6Dorothy Stevens: [sighing] Um, I'm trying to think – '57 maybe.
7
8Linda Johnson: So that was pretty gutsy. Only 5 years into the plant and you're...
9
10Dorothy Stevens: Going on pretty close to 6, yeah.
11
12Linda Johnson: Wow. Mm-hm.
13
14Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. Um, in fact, the guy that I took out said, "Well, in 6 months you'll
15 have everything such a mess, you'll be glad to have me back." I got
16 reelected. [laughter] No [inaudible 4:15]. He quit. Um, I'm trying to think
17 [Killinger. Roy Killinger, that was the 4:20] name. Anyways, girls didn't
18 have it too good. We had to go clear upstairs to the restrooms. The men
19 were right down off the Cushion Room.
20
21Linda Johnson: Uh-huh.
22
23Dorothy Stevens: Not ours though. We had to go clear upstairs. We were not allowed any
24 more time than they were, if as much, and a course, back in early days,
25 you weren't given a specific time. You called. Sometimes you got a relief,
26 sometimes you didn't. Oh no. You didn't always get a relief back then.
27 You asked for a relief, and you got put on a list maybe. Maybe you got
28 one, and maybe you didn't.
29
30Linda Johnson: [5:04] Were there a lotta women in the Cushion Room?
31
32Dorothy Stevens: It was most predominantly
33
34Linda Johnson: Mostly women?
35
36Dorothy Stevens: Well, you know, we had men on trim jobs, but it was predominantly
37 women, all women on Zig Zag.
38
39Linda Johnson: [5:14] And your supervisors, were they women also?
40
41Dorothy Stevens: No, we didn't have any women supervisors. [laughter] Not such a thing
42 was heard of. Me bein' a committee person was a women, not heard of.
43 Mm-hm.
44
45Linda Johnson: [5:29] And so how long were you on committee [inaudible 5:30]?
46

1Dorothy Stevens: I put one term on, I finished out a term, and I did one term, then I went off.
2 And then I went back on. [laughter] I didn't want to, but then they begged
3 me and so I said okay. But I was workin' for [Charlie Sosher 5:47], and
4 most people know Charlie Sosher that was ever in that plant very long.
5 Even Supervision didn't like him. [laughter] He was a wicked man.
6

7Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
8

9Dorothy Stevens: Uh, and the guys come up to me and I just said, "Hey, you guys'll have to
10 do it for me 'cause he's not gonna give me any time." But when I come
11 through and won, he came up and asked me if I wanted the night off. And
12 I told him, "No thank you. I'll keep workin'."
13

14Interviewer: [6:19] What years were your terms in, Dorothy?
15

16Dorothy Stevens: They were 3-year terms back then, but I – see, [Fletcher 6:22] went on a
17 sick leave, so it was partial term, and then I did a 3-year term.
18

19Interviewer: [6:29] What, what year, what timeframe are we talkin' about? About, just
20 around about?
21

22Dorothy Stevens: I'm sayin' '57.
23

24Interviewer: Okay. That's when you first [inaudible 6:37].
25

26Dorothy Stevens: Right.
27

28Interviewer: Because we know when you talk about, uh, no women, uh, as supervisors
29 and...
30

31Dorothy Stevens: Oh no.
32

33Interviewer: Uh, certainly no women as, as committee people.
34

35Dorothy Stevens: Well they took me in the office, you know, [laughter] ask me did I – they
36 were thinking about putting women on. Johnny Walker come and got me,
37 took me down. And here was all the big stuffed shirts sittin' around. I
38 walked in, I thought, "Well, what'd I do now?" [laughter] They asked me
39 would I consider that they were considering puttin' some women on. You
40 don't wanna know what I told'm.
41

42Interviewer: [Yeah 7:12].
43

44Interviewer: [laughter]
45

46Dorothy Stevens: I mean you don't want it on record.

1
2Interviewer: Oh. Okay. [laughter]
3
4Dorothy Stevens: I'll tell ya what I said. "I fought you bastards all these years, there ain't no
5 damn way I'd join ya now."
6
7Interviewer: [laughter]
8
9Dorothy Stevens: [laughter] They said, "Go on back to work."
10
11Interviewer: [7:25] Dor-, Dorothy, around what year did they start getting women
12 supervisors on the line?
13
14Dorothy Stevens: I'm gonna say the 60s, early 60s they would put'm on, but, you know, they
15 didn't last.
16
17Interviewer: Huh.
18
19Dorothy Stevens: I remember [Anna May McDonald 7:36], was that her name? McDonald?
20 Anna May, she didn't last long. It was too strenuous. I mean if you were a
21 worker, you had the union to back you. But if you were management, you
22 had nobody to back you. The upper management gave the orders, and you
23 took it. So you were catching it from both ends. It was very stressful for
24 those women.
25
26Interviewer: [7:58] Th-, I, I just gotta go back to when you said they didn't get breaks,
27 when did you guys start getting breaks? When did we start getting breaks
28 in the plant?
29
30Interviewer: [8:06] And what were the consequences for those that you said that didn't
31 get breaks?
32
33Dorothy Stevens: We did not have a closed plant when I hired in. Not everybody had to join
34 the union.
35
36Interviewer: [Inaudible 8:16].
37
38Interviewer: Okay.
39
40Dorothy Stevens: And you had 90 days to join it. Well, I joined mine Day 1, but I worked
41 with people who did not. Once they put that in, and I'm gonna say it was
42 the next negotiations I believe, but we had what you called, if they
43 [pushed] 8:32] the line up 1 job an hour or 3 jobs an hour, they had to add
44 so much manpower. We had that wh-, agreement on that. Okay? But when
45 they went in for a closed shop, they gave that away. So, and I can't tell you

1 [sighing] I'm gonna say, roughly speaking, '55 before we had regular relief
2 periods.
3
4 Interviewer: [8:58] What was the consequence, Dorothy, for those that just didn't get
5 their break and just had to go, and they went ahead [inaudible 9:05]?
6
7 Dorothy Stevens: Three days off.
8
9 Interviewer: Yeah. And so they had to suffer [inaudible 9:08].
10
11 Dorothy Stevens: Out the door. That's right. Out the door.
12
13 Interviewer: [9:13] Have you seen very many people get 3 days off, Dorothy?
14
15 Dorothy Stevens: [Fight it. 9:18]
16
17 Interviewer: Pardon?
18
19 Dorothy Stevens: Well in the Cushion Room, we took care of each other.
20
21 Interviewer: Okay.
22
23 Dorothy Stevens: If they picked on this guy here, let me tell ya, that foreman, he might just
24 as well hang it up 'cause nothin' went down, off that line that didn't have to
25 go in the scrap pile. Nothing. But you don't have that today 'cause it's each
26 man for themselves. But I can remember – we, now we had to work half a
27 day before Christmas on Christmas Eve and a half a day New Year's. And
28 they let us come in New Year's Day – I'll never forget it – we could come
29 in and work our 4 hours and they'd [laughter] in the morning and nobody'd
30 been to bed the night before. Now why, ac-, that was the contract. We
31 hadda high old time. Now, but it was just the idea that we were spose to
32 come in and come to work. And if you didn't show for work, you were not
33 paid for the holiday. Mm-hm.
34
35 Interviewer: [10:15] Talk about your subculture, Dorothy, that, uh, what, the people
36 that you worked around as well as the [inaudible 10:23] close to you and,
37 and your holidays and your parties and your get togethers and those types
38 of things.
39
40 Dorothy Stevens: We did not have get togethers. Um, well, at that time, we worked 3 weeks
41 days, 3 weeks nights, [inaudible 10:40] swing shift. You kind of ate your
42 lunch with somebody and that was about as good as you got 'cause most of
43 us had families. Um, no, there wasn't much outside activities.
44
45 Interviewer: [10:57] How long did it take before that subculture built where you began
46 to have those types of things and see those things in the plant?

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Oh I think Bob Somers was president. We had a picnic. We had it in this
3 parkin' lot. Um...
4
5Interviewer: [11:19] Like a union picnic, Bob Somer union picnic?
6
7Dorothy Stevens: Yep. Yep. First one was right here in this parking lot. Uh, we had corn on
8 the cob and [laughter] chicken and kegs a beer.
9
10Interviewer: Mm-hm.
11
12Dorothy Stevens: In fact, R. T. can probably tell ya how I, we ran outta beer and I ran down
13 to the Quality Dairy and got another keg and was driving down Saginaw
14 with no lights on. [laughter] Hurryin' back to get the beer for the people.
15
16Interviewer: [11:52] That'd be in the 70s, right?
17
18Dorothy Stevens: Yeah, it was in the 70s.
19
20Interviewer: 'Cause I remember...
21
22Dorothy Stevens: Ralph Morrison I think had charge of the, yeah, so it went, we went a lotta
23 years.
24
25Interviewer: That's a long time.
26
27Dorothy Stevens: Yes it was.
28
29Interviewer: [Inaudible 12:06].
30
31Dorothy Stevens: A long time. Uh, when they started, actually when Cushion Room, we
32 were very close in that, all of us, like I said. When they took the Cushion
33 Room out and moved part of it over to the Olds, now that was in the 80s,
34 that latter part of 70s. And that's where we all separated and then it was
35 never the same. It was – [watch yourself. 12:34]
36
37Interviewer: [12:36] So where did you go after you got the Cushion Room again?
38
39Dorothy Stevens: Where did I go? [laughter] I was on committee.
40
41Interviewer: [12:42] And you worked. And so when you were on committee, you
42 represented what group?
43
44Dorothy Stevens: Cushion Room, and then when I went on top committee, I was on Zone.
45
46Interviewer: [12:49] Okay, so when they went...?

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Well part of'm stayed and they were upstairs in what I believe was
3 Hardware then.
4
5Interviewer: Mm-hm. [Car Trim 12:59]?
6
7Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm. I don't remember. Been a long time.
8
9 [laughter]
10
11Dorothy Stevens: But it was upstairs [inaudible 13:10]. Part of the Cushion stayed over at
12 Fisher but then the rest went to the Olds.
13
14Interviewer: [13:17] So you represented the people that stayed?
15
16Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. While I was on top committee...
17
18Interviewer: [Inaudible 13:20].
19
20Dorothy Stevens: ...I was on top committee when they went. So that was in the 80s.
21
22Interviewer: [13:26] Outside of yourself, was there any other women who worked on
23 committee?
24
25Dorothy Stevens: [Inaudible 13:30] Rose was an alternate committee person for one term.
26
27Interviewer: Mm-hm. But outside of that, it was you.
28
29Dorothy Stevens: Just me that I know of. Well didn't [Georgia Yonke 13:43] in Paint go on
30 committee at a later date? I think at a later...
31
32Interviewer: At a later time, it was you [inaudible 13:49].
33
34Dorothy Stevens: It was what?
35
36Interviewer: During your time when you served [inaudible 13:54].
37
38Dorothy Stevens: I was on Zone I think when Georgia went on committee in the Paint
39 department. Georgia Yonke. Other than that, I know of no woman on
40 committee other than...
41
42Interviewer: [14:09] How was that bein' the woman with, with the union leadership
43 position?
44
45Dorothy Stevens: It wasn't bad when you're on committee. You proved yourself to your
46 general foreman and that. But when you went on Zone, you didn't only

1 fight management, you fought your c-, union for si-, for 6 months. I had
2 invaded what was predominantly a man's job. And I got phone calls.
3
4 Interviewer: Really?
5
6 Dorothy Stevens: Oh yes. And then, of course, they took me and said, "Oh we want you," –
7 they wanted me to run for financial secretary. Said I was the only one that
8 could take it away from Ron Davis. Well that's not what I wanted. "Well,
9 we're gonna get you [on bargaining, well come on 14:44]." [laughter] No.
10 Financial secretary does not get in bargaining. Um, I just wanted, I used to
11 tell Management you give'm everythin' they got and that much more, and
12 I'm not gonna bother ya. And I member Rocky Wright said, "Dorothy, if I
13 give you that much, you're gonna want that much," and I said, "I promise
14 you, Rocky, everythin' they got comin' everything, that much more, and I
15 won't bother."
16
17 Interviewer: [15:13] So [inaudible] give an inch more, but he didn't even want
18 [inaudible] more, huh? [laughter]
19
20 Dorothy Stevens: No. No. I was fair with him.
21
22 Interviewer: [15:23] What things did you bargain for, Dorothy, that you're most proud
23 of, uh, accomplishing?
24
25 Dorothy Stevens: Number one, the truck drivers out there is Plant 40. Now, when they were
26 driving their trucks over to the Olds, the day shift, that sun glared right off
27 their, their hoods, okay? Well, we got'm this non-glare paint for on the
28 hoods. They got Bostrom seats. Then also, Al Moon out in, out in, um, by-
29 er, uh, in [Recover House 15:46], water, whatever, had to go up those
30 steps to get that stuff and dump it in those tanks. He worked the third shift.
31 In the wintertime, it was icy, whatever. So they got a lift that carried that
32 up so he didn't have ta. Nobody was out there. The man had fallen,
33 nobody'd know till the next morning. Those things I really was, went hard
34 for.
35
36 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
37
38 Dorothy Stevens: And I guess I'd give my right arm to give'm to'm. They needed'm.
39
40 Interviewer: Yep.
41
42 Dorothy Stevens: And I rode with those truck drivers back and forth over at the Olds. Now
43 on the night shift, it was comin' back to Fisher that it glared. Mm-hm.
44
45 Interviewer: Yep.
46

1Interviewer: You, you, you mentioned 63 A and B...
2
3Dorothy Stevens: Yes.
4
5Interviewer: [16:31] You had your hand in that. Would you talk about that please?
6
7Dorothy Stevens: Well that's where they give people the right to transfer, and I was the first
8 woman to take it. [laughter] I begged some a the others, but it made me
9 the rotten apple in the basket. I had to go it alone, but then I had a lotta
10 followers that wanted my job afterwards.
11
12Interviewer: The PPE. We call it Personal Pre-, Protected Equipment. You mention that
13 you cut socks off...
14
15Dorothy Stevens: Yes.
16
17Interviewer: [16:59] ...and – to use around your arms. How long did it take you before
18 you all were issued personal protection?
19
20Dorothy Stevens: We were not. In fact, we hadda strike because they weren't givin' us gloves
21 over there. We hadda strike. Uh, [Palkey 17:11] laid down in front a the
22 truck and, oh yes. Truck drivers drove right over us.
23
24Interviewer: Wow.
25
26Dorothy Stevens: That's right. They weren't Cushion Room.
27
28Interviewer: [17:20] So this, was this a wildcat strike or was it, uh, sanctioned?
29
30Dorothy Stevens: It kinda was. It was kinda was. I was in 2 of'm. One was because they
31 didn't furnish us gloves in the old Cushion Room. We were cutting our
32 hands. We were, oh, we were a mess. And it is bad enough to get a hog
33 ring run through ya, I've got scars where I've been clipped with the hog
34 ring. The glove didn't protect that, but all the cuts and everything. So we
35 were [inaudible] 17:47 okay, uh, tryin' to think of the guy's name that
36 came out and he said, "If you ask me at 5:00 tonight if the Cushion Room
37 had any problems," he said, "I'da said no." And that's because I just looked
38 at him and said, "That's because you won't know. You're in your ivory
39 tower." [laughter] And then [Lloyd Kane] and all of'm had to call us over to
40 the union hall. And this is what upset – now this is before I went on
41 committee and Lloyd Kane made a statement. "Well I make a motion to
42 put Dorothy Stevens on the bargaining committee," and everybody said,
43 "Yeah, yeah, yeah!"
44
45 [laughter]
46

1Dorothy Stevens: Lloyd apologized to me later. I went on committee after that. Okay? Now
2the next wildcat we had was, they moved us into the new building. We had
3no drinking fountains. No restroom. We had to go clear to Building 5 for
4the restrooms. Hot. Oh, it was so hot. [laughter] And so we had a Blue
5Monday.
6
7Interviewer: [18:50] What was a Blue Monday?
8
9Dorothy Stevens: That was a Blue Monday. We all got time off.
10
11Interviewer: [18:56] What's a Blue Monday? Tell'er.
12
13Dorothy Stevens: We all stayed home.
14
15Interviewers: Oh.
16
17Dorothy Stevens: We called it Blue Monday. Now we had enough in there, in fact, those that
18had anything on their record...
19
20Interviewer: Stayed.
21
22Dorothy Stevens: ...you stay. You stay. Tell us what goes on. Management ran the Cushion
23Room that night, what little bit it did. Okay? And the sad part is they never
24could figure out how, because there was part of the Cushion Room that
25was still over in the [laughter] old building and part of us in the new, and
26the old building went with us too.
27
28[laughter]
29
30Dorothy Stevens: And they never could figure out. Gene O'Connor came in from Detroit. I
31got the third degree. They took me down first day I walked in and they
32interviewed a couple people after me, took me back, and for one solid
33week, every day, I spent my time in the office. And then they brought
34Gene O'Connor. I'll never forget when they [laughter] brought Gene from
35Detroit, and he says to me, "Dorothy, I know damn good and well you're
36the one that set it up, but I can't prove it." I said, "I don't know what you're
37talkin' about."
38
39[laughter]
40
41Dorothy Stevens: We got fans, we got a restroom. [laughter] Took time, but we got'm. So
42they were not fair to us. And when we had the walk out, I tell ya what, on
43the gloves, there were people, well, standing at the Body Shop door and
44they had a chain that they were all gonna go out with us, you know, in
45sympathy. Well my 90 days was on condition. There were no further
46demonstrations in this plant or you're fired. Okay. So when I walked out,

1 I'll never forget. Taylor Adams was one of'm. And I can't tell ya who the
2 other plant [inaudible 20:49] was, but I said, "Please, can I – keep me on
3 the outside aisle." And the other said, "No, we gotta take ya up the
4 middle." And I said, "[Tate 20:57], please take me over to the outside
5 aisle." [laughter] And so he got him to take me over, and I said, "Ninety
6 days, no further demonstrations. Call it off." [laughter] And away I went
7 up the aisle with'm. One on each side.
8
9 [laughter]
10
11 Dorothy Stevens: And then they took up collections. They were bringin' me a paycheck that
12 was more than if I'da stayed in there and worked. Every week, those
13 people that was in the plant was takin' up a collection. Alice Brown
14 brought it to me.
15
16 Interviewer: Awww.
17
18 Dorothy Stevens: And it made [Dyer 21:24] so made he said, "Bring her back to work. She's
19 makin' more money out there than she is in here."
20
21 [laughter]
22
23 Dorothy Stevens: And he did, he brought me back to work. But I went out Halloween...
24
25 Interviewer: Uh-huh.
26
27 Dorothy Stevens: I'll never forget. And I was back November. [laughter]
28
29 Interviewer: Oh wow.
30
31 Dorothy Stevens: Couldn't stand it. But we stuck up for each other.
32
33 Interviewer: Yeah.
34
35 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
36
37 Dorothy Stevens: Everybody stood up for each other back then, and you don't have that
38 today.
39
40 Interviewer: No.
41
42 Dorothy Stevens: And when we split the Cushion Room and part went to the Olds and it
43 started, that's when you lost it, it started going.
44
45 Interviewer: [21:57] What about your first day of work, Dorothy? What'd you do?
46

1Dorothy Stevens: My first day a work? I walked through those double doors. Now I was out
2 of an office. Ugh. It stunk. It was dirty. It was noisy. And I [laughter] I
3 looked up and I said, "Well I'm only gonna be here a couple years, I'll tell
4 ya that." Thirty-two years later. [laughter] No. It was, um, well I'd never
5 been in a factory. You know, I worked for State Highway Department, and
6 we kinda had it made. It was not too long after that that that guy messed
7 up the state building, the old state building, but I worked up there for
8 [Therma Dig 22:40] and, and highway commissioner, [Harry T. Coons]
9 and Ziegler.
10
11Interviewer: [22:47] So what was your very first job, what did you do, what did they
12 have you do?
13
14Dorothy Stevens: Zig Zag [inaudible 22:50] a [laughter] those things that I couldn't get my
15 hand around it. And it was a air gun, and you got clips and you hadda put
16 the springs together, clip it then [inaudible 22:58] bend it.
17
18Interviewer: [23:00] So did you make a better wage here than you did at the [inaudible]
19 on the...
20
21Dorothy Stevens: Not...
22
23Interviewer: [23:04] ...workin' on the hi...why did you come here?
24
25Dorothy Stevens: Because it cost everything I had to dress there, and I had 3 kids. And here
26 you went in jeans and a little Dan River blouse. Blue jeans and a River.
27 Plus – now we paid part of our, uh, Blue Cross insurance back then. Mm-
28 hm.
29
30Interviewer: [23:25] Here? Or there?
31
32Dorothy Stevens: Fisher, yes we did.
33
34 Interviewer: Fisher?
35
36Dorothy Stevens: Yes we, well you didn't have that...
37
38Interviewer: Mm-hm.
39
40Dorothy Stevens: ...at State. No, we had to pay. I think it was...I was lookin' for one a the
41 older paychecks, but I think it was like 3, almost \$4 a month that we had to
42 pay for our Blue Cross, and we paid part of it. And we didn't have 40-hour
43 week. I can remember when the F85 line went down, we worked many 4-
44 hour days, got 20 hours pay at the end a the week. Back then, also, if you
45 missed a day in the week and didn't have your 40 hours, you worked
46 Saturday for [straight 24:03] time.

1
2Interviewer: Oh brother.
3
4Dorothy Stevens: Yes, ma'am.
5
6Interviewer: So you're time and a half was all over 40.
7
8Dorothy Stevens: You had to work – no.
9
10Interviewer: [Inaudible 24:12].
11
12Dorothy Stevens: You had to work your 5 days. There was something in there that if they
13 sent ya home, line time or whatever, 8 or less than your 8 hours 1 day of
14 the week, you come in on Saturday, still got time and a half. But they used
15 to bring us in time and time again for 4 stinkin' hours on Saturday 'cause
16 they'd work us 10 hours a day, and women couldn't go 54 hours a week.
17
18Interviewer: The men though...
19
20Dorothy Stevens: The men could, yes. But...[laughter]
21
22Interviewer: [24:46] They were 7, they were doin' 7 days were they?
23
24Dorothy Stevens: No, but they worked from, say the night shift would go in at 5 and they'd
25 still be there 5 in the mornin' lotsa times...
26
27Interviewer: Oh.
28
29Dorothy Stevens: ...repairmen especially. Mm-hm.
30
31Interviewer: So they're doin' 6 days, 12 hours a day.
32
33Dorothy Stevens: Well, then you'd have to work your half day on Saturday.
34
35Interviewer: [25:06] How many, do you know how many people worked in the plant
36 back then?
37
38Dorothy Stevens: Back then? Oh, there was over 5,000.
39
40Interviewer: [25:13] Back in the 50s and 60s?
41
42Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. We had about 5,200, didn't we? I'm thinkin' it was around 5,200
43 people.
44
45Interviewer: [25:23] You had more jobs that required more people.
46

1Dorothy Stevens: Well it was all, nothing was robot, you know, the Body Shop didn't have
2 robots, it was all, everything was done by person.
3

4Interviewer: [25:32] When did they bring in like material trucks instead of pushing?
5

6Dorothy Stevens: Oh that was late. I don't really know. Kenny Williams could probly tell ya
7 what time they brought those in 'cause he had Material.
8

9Interviewer: [25:55] Do you recall how you punched in to come to work in the morning
10 or in the evening when you...?
11

12Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. You had a card and a clock.
13

14Interviewer: Clock.
15

16Dorothy Stevens: Yep. On the wall. [laughter] Got your card outta the rack and put it over
17 here.
18

19Interviewer: [26:10] Did you have the badges too?
20

21Dorothy Stevens: Yes we did. I got a little round one that was given to me. We had to turn'm
22 in when we retired, but – and I made the mistake of turnin' mine in, but I
23 was given a badge. It's got the coach on it and [surrounding 26:22] Fisher
24 Body. That tells what my number was. It was 348, on my check. I think.
25 Yep. 348 My badge number.
26

27Interviewer: [26:34] Do you recall what you started out at?
28

29Dorothy Stevens: Yes. [laughter] \$1.72 an hour.
30

31Interviewer: [26:42] When you retired, what was, what was your wage?
32

33Dorothy Stevens: That was in '84 - 10 something.
34

35Interviewer: That's a long ways, isn't it?
36

37Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm. Ten something. But we had paid absence [inaudible 26:54].
38

39Interviewer: [26:54] And that was what?
40

41Dorothy Stevens: Forty hours a week. You people don't have that. But we didn't have the
42 buy-in on the stock that you have. Uh, 'course, we did get dental and
43 eyeglass later on but not for many years. And when my children were
44 goin' to the dentist, I didn't have dental.
45

46Interviewer: [27:20] Do you have a favorite memory from the plant?

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. When we built Annie Oakley's Chevrolet convertible. It was
3 powder blue and white leather seats.
4
5Interviewer: [27:38] That's neat. What year was that? Do you remember?
6
7Dorothy Stevens: Oh my gosh – '53, '54. We had Chevys then.
8
9Interviewer: [27:44] So that's the Annie Oakley [inaudible].
10
11Dorothy Stevens: Annie Oakley. We built a car for her, and it was powder blue. It was a
12 Chevrolet convertible.
13
14Interviewer: [27:51] Was that a special color then?
15
16Dorothy Stevens: Yes. No. No other car come down...
17
18Interviewer: [27:53] No other car came down?
19
20Dorothy Stevens: No. But we put first the bodies and then we had white leather seats in that,
21 and that was Annie Oakley's and I thought, "Wow!" [laughter]
22
23Interviewer: Oh yeah.
24
25Dorothy Stevens: Other than that, you know, it's just everyday, run a the mill.
26
27Interviewer: [28:09] What types of vehicles did you drive back then, Dorothy?
28
29Dorothy Stevens: '98 Olds. Well I started out with Pontiac. I'll take that back. I started out
30 with a Pontiac. Uh, but we built Chevys. We lost Chevys and they lost the
31 Pontiac and we had the F85 and that went down to one shift. And then it
32 was the Olds that didn't, I'm not sure, but I don't think we got back. I know
33 we didn't get back the Chevy. But the '98 Olds was always our bread and
34 butter.
35
36Interviewer: [28:41] Now when you first started here, we shipped cars other places than
37 over to our sister plant at Oldsmobile, didn't we? We sent cars ta...
38
39Dorothy Stevens: I don't know.
40
41Interviewer: ...Flint?
42
43Dorothy Stevens: I don't know.
44
45Interviewer: [Inaudible 28:55]. You don't know.
46

1Dorothy Stevens: Uh-uh. All I know is we built Annie Oakley's car. [laughter]
2
3 [laughter]
4
5Dorothy Stevens: Everybody wanted ta have their picture taken. Here it is just the body and
6 the seats and, you know, before it went [laughter] to the Olds, and they
7 wouldn't let us. But everybody wanted their picture taken in'm. [laughter]
8
9Interviewer: [29:15] And do you have a favorite Local memory? Was the Local always
10 here or did you have a different...?
11
12Dorothy Stevens: Oh it was down in a house down on Olds Avenue before we built this.
13
14Interviewer: Okay.
15
16Dorothy Stevens: And then they sold bricks. We paid \$5 for a brick, which back then \$5 was
17 a lotta money. I mean a lot more than, well, like you said, when I retired.
18 [laughter] It was \$4.79 an hour. I mean no, this back in '72 was \$4.79. But,
19 [sighing] I'm trying to think of his name that started our credit union too.
20 That was in a house down there on Olds Avenue. Tome.
21
22Interviewer: Tome.
23
24Dorothy Stevens: Tome, um, he's passed on now. Oh. But he started our credit union, and
25 that was out of a house down there. Now we used to go to union meeting
26 in a house off Olds Avenue there.
27
28Interviewer: Okay.
29
30Interviewer: [30:08] So this was built around...
31
32Interviewer: [30:08] [Inaudible].
33
34Interviewer: We're gonna take a break right now?
35
36Interviewer: [Inaudible 30:13].
37
38Interviewer: You can leave, Cheryl.
39
40
41Interviewer: [30:19] Now tell us about the first un-, paying for the new union hall and
42 your, um, payin' union dues.
43
44Dorothy Stevens: Well they took union dues out of our pay, and in fact, it shows ya in '72,
45 but when we were without a contract, they didn't take our union dues. So
46 they had appointed people, and that was committee man, and I think I was

1 on Trustee then, that went around and collected people dues. And then we
2 had ta turn them in here to the hall. Um, now the hall was built '55?
3
4Interviewer: Okay.
5
6Dorothy Stevens: '54? I don't know. Early anyways. But it was so nice to have this hall other
7 than that post over there. [laughter] But we bought bricks, and they were
8 \$5.
9
10Interviewer: [31:18] Mm-hm. So did we...
11
12 [laughter]
13
14Interviewer: ...hire somebody to build this, or did we do it ourselves? [Inaudible 31:24].
15
16Dorothy Stevens: I don't know. I think, I was pretty new then. I would imagine they hired
17 somebody. I do know that this is the only union hall in Lansing that's
18 owned, that we own our own hall.
19
20Interviewer: Hm.
21
22Dorothy Stevens: All other union halls are owned by the International. And we wanna do the
23 same on the new one.
24
25Interviewer: [31:54] The, uh, credit union you said the guy started the credit union...
26
27Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm.
28
29Interviewer: ...right there at the old union hall? He was right over there by there? What
30 was his name and what was the credit union?
31
32Dorothy Stevens: Tome. His name was Tome, um, that we called him, and his wife. I can
33 see her. She wore her hair pulled back in a bun in the back.
34
35Interviewer: [32:12] What was the name of the credit union?
36
37Dorothy Stevens: What was the name of what?
38
39Interviewer: [32:16] The credit union. What was the name of that?
40
41Dorothy Stevens: Just Fisher Body's Credit Union...
42
43Interviewer: Fisher Body Credit Union?
44
45Dorothy Stevens: ...is all we ever knew. But, you know, you started out, and I started out
46 having \$5 a week taken out. Well then every time I got a raise, my raise

1 went into it. I don't know as I, credit union, oh, \$50 was goin' in it there.
2 Yeah. Bonds \$7.50 clear back when I'm making \$4.79 an hour and I was
3 puttin' \$7.50 a week in bonds and charity 92 cents and credit union 50.
4 Anyways, did you see how much I took home? [laughter] For a 49-hour
5 week with 12 and 3/10 overtime. I took home \$153. Well see these people
6 today, because you're guaranteed 40 hours, we didn't have that.
7
8 [throat clearing]
9
10 Dorothy Stevens: When the F85 line went down ta 1 shift, we only worked 4 hours a day.
11 We came in every day and worked 4 hours, and we got a whole \$20, 20
12 hours pay at the end of the week.
13
14 Interviewer: [33:40] So I guess being union active and – now, did we at Fisher Body
15 have like a woman's auxiliary that you were involved in or just...
16
17 Dorothy Stevens: There was a women's...
18
19 Interviewer: ...or when did [inaudible 33:50] came about?
20
21 Dorothy Stevens:there was a women's committee that the International said ya had to
22 have, and [Dale Anemouth 33:56] was, um, active. She was the chair of
23 that. And we met at each other's houses or sometimes we had the hall here
24 on Sunday once a month. Uh, we raised money. We used ta buy items
25 when [Weyland's 34:12] was over here and then we'd raffle'm off to earn
26 money. Um...
27
28 Interviewer: [34:20] What impact did the women's committee have on Lansing,
29 General Motors, and [inaudible]?
30
31 Dorothy Stevens: Well it was PR. Number one, we bought TVs for the Glass House for
32 Women. One year – there's a place over on Willard that children would –
33 gave money and bought some beds and some blankets or something for
34 them.
35
36 Interviewer: On Willow? Say, say, say [inaudible 34:44]?
37
38 Dorothy Stevens: Yeah. Willard.
39
40 Interviewer: On Willard?
41
42 Dorothy Stevens: Isn't that a detention home for kids or used to be?
43
44 Interviewer: I know they got St. Vincent's Home on Willow Street.
45
46 Dorothy Stevens: No, this was a detention home for kids that got in trouble.

1
2 [throat clearing]
3
4 Dorothy Stevens: It was on Willard Avenue over by, uh, [Inaudible 35:00] Medical Hospital.
5 Anyways, we bought blankets and some beds for them one year. Another
6 year we took and bought fruit baskets for, uh, shut-ins, older shut-ins, but
7 it was just a PR thing.
8
9 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
10
11 Dorothy Stevens: As far as, um, being funded, no. It was never funded. I don't think it is
12 today either.
13
14 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
15
16 Interviewer: So...
17
18 Dorothy Stevens: It was just a few, a handful a girls. There was about 6 of us.
19
20 Interviewer: [35:34] What do you think – bein' that you came in in 1952 and left in '84
21 – what do you think made Lansing Fisher Body special apart from other
22 plants? What's, what...
23
24 Dorothy Stevens: Dedication to their job.
25
26 Interviewer: Dedication.
27
28 Dorothy Stevens: Yes. We were the – quality. In fact, we carried that – member how – what
29 was it? The saying? Uh...
30
31 Interviewer: Capital of Quality.
32
33 Dorothy Stevens: Capital of Quality and we've had that for years.
34
35 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
36
37 Dorothy Stevens: And that was something that most employees looked up to.
38
39 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
40
41 Dorothy Stevens: It was drilled in them though, and Don Brown can tell ya, we all did it. We
42 were told, committee man, you tell your people out there that I got Capital
43 of Quality is what keeps'm workin', and we believed it.
44

1Interviewer: And that's probably, that's why no matter what, because we often changed
2 different body styles and different body types, yet we still continued to be
3 put out a Capital of Quality job.
4

5Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm.
6

7Interviewer: Okay.
8

9Dorothy Stevens: Well, it's, a-, you know, stop and think. If we hadn't have had Fisher Body
10 and, you know, where would this town be? MSU can't run it. The state
11 workers couldn't a run it. Where would we be?
12

13Interviewer: That's a good question.
14

15Dorothy Stevens: Well you saw Motor Wheel go. Those places. We had a lot, lotta drop
16 forges went, and we still went. And quality's the name of the game. The
17 one thing that didn't pan out, and that was that Quality Worklife, but that
18 was a good concept had it been properly implemented, but it was not
19 properly implemented. You had, um, people that wanted to be controlled,
20 take control of it is why – and you probly remember that, don't ya?
21

22Interviewer: Mm-hm. Yes.
23
24 [throat clearing]
25

26Interviewer: [37:30] Can you explain what the Quality of Worklife program is?
27

28Dorothy Stevens: [laughter]
29

30Interviewer: Do you have any ideas...
31

32Interviewer: I don't know. Yeah, what [inaudible 37:39].
33

34Dorothy Stevens: What's the Quality of Worklife? Well how to make it better for each and
35 everybody. And number one, they stressed absenteeism. That was their big
36 goal was cuttin' out absenteeism. And yet they didn't wanna reward the
37 man back then that came to work every day. And they kep' pushin' at you
38 that we got this percentage that blah, blah, blah and then they'd condemn
39 the union for representing these people. But we took an oath that we
40 represented all.
41

42Interviewer: Mm-hm.
43

44Dorothy Stevens: And I know McPher-, McPherson and...
45

46Interviewer: [38:16] Russ McPherson?

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Russ McPherson.
3
4 [laughter]
5
6Dorothy Stevens: I gotta go pay a penance now. [laughter]
7
8 [laughter]
9
10Interviewer: [38:30] When we come to work, did you have friends that you met here
11 that became lifelong friends?
12
13Dorothy Stevens: Yes. Yes. Certainly. Well we spent more hours with them than we did at
14 home that we weren't, you know, sleeping. Yes, we did.
15
16Interviewer: [38:48] And today you are the chairman of the retirees?
17
18Dorothy Stevens: Yes.
19
20Interviewer: So you have had an active life for the past 20 years since you retired...
21
22Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm.
23
24Interviewer: ...with the union...
25
26Dorothy Stevens: Mm-hm.
27
28Linda Johnson: [39:00] ...still. Can you tell us about your commitment to unionism and
29 your activism in politics?
30
31Dorothy Stevens: Well Linda, everything I have I owe to my union. And so, once you retire,
32 I said I retired by I didn't quit. I need to give back. I mean, this my feeling,
33 you give back. And they'd a fired me. They'd a loved to fire me 'cause I
34 was verbal. I mean, it didn't matter if it was me. It's that guy out there on
35 the line and they're not treatin' him right, then I had to have my mouth
36 goin' too, and we all come together. Give it all, way down the line. Sorry
37 for the poor foreman, but that's his tough luck.
38
39Interviewer: Mm-hm.
40
41Dorothy Stevens: Get off that man's back and [you'll get 39:41] the jobs. [laughter] That's
42 exactly the way it was. I mean, we had little codes that we used to
43 [laughter] send each other across the line and that. We knew when [you
44 39:53], okay. Or if somebody that you didn't trust, everybody, then you
45 didn't talk to'm.
46

1Interviewer: Mm-hm.
2

3Interviewer: [40:03] If there's one message that you wanted to send to young workers
4 of today, what would that, what would that message be?
5

6Dorothy Stevens: Work as a team, work together. Look out for your neighbor. Mm-hm. It's
7 not only because, you know, you can't have all chiefs and no Indians. It's
8 the Indians that do the work. Mm-hm. Hang together, close. Together
9 you'll stand.
10

11Interviewer: And I know as a retirees' chair, you've often [throat clearing] been
12 strongly...
13
14 [coughing]
15

16Interviewer: [40:48] ...involved. Have you always been involved in politics, and what
17 part has politics played in your life here?
18

19Dorothy Stevens: I was not as strong in politics until I retired, until I saw what it did with
20 retirees' pensions, this sort of thing. What they could lose or what they
21 could gain. Yes. I really became strongly involved once I retired. Well just
22 before I retired, but I got into it more once I retired. I had more time to get
23 into it.
24

25Interviewer: Hm.
26

27Dorothy Stevens: And I still, right now, I protect my retirees. [laughter] You know that. And
28 I go to bat for them. Um...I guess, well, I wish they didn't think I walked
29 on water so much 'cause I'd like to set back and relax. But I can't get
30 nobody to take the job.
31
32 [laughter]
33

34Interviewer: Um...
35

36Dorothy Stevens: Even my vice, he, oh no, oh no. I'll stay with you as long as your on but
37 uh-uh. 'Cause I thought Mike is younger and, you know, Mike could take
38 on. Uh-uh. Uh-uh, and he told Kathy, uh-uh, I won't do what Dorothy
39 does. [laughter] But if you do it, well, some a them can irritate ya, believe
40 me but then there's other sweethearts that, God love'm, 'cause I've had
41 times I would get frustrated and I'd think, "I don't need this." But then you
42 have some sweetheart come up and say, "Well, well if you go we'll use our
43 chapter. We need ya." So...hug'm and say I'll be here. [laughter] Well, you
44 know I've got Edna [Neil 42:35] 94 years old that just retired from
45 deliverin' Meals on Wheels.
46

1Interviewer: You better interview her, uh? [laughter]
2
3Dorothy Stevens: Well she never worked at the plant, her husband did.
4
5Interviewer: Okay.
6
7Dorothy Stevens: But Edna's, well, whenever you were sick, she made her chicken noodle
8 soup and took to ya. She worked for Personal Needs at the church, and she
9 just stopped deliverin' Meals on Wheels.
10
11Interviewer: [43:00] Now, did your husband work here?
12
13Dorothy Stevens: Yes, he did.
14
15Interviewer: [43:02] Now did you meet your husband here?
16
17Dorothy Stevens: Yes.
18
19Interviewer: Oh.
20
21Dorothy Stevens: Yeah, I did.
22
23Interviewer: [43:08] Well how did that happen?
24
25Dorothy Stevens: Through a friend. Um...
26
27Interviewer: [43:16] So it was a blind date?
28
29Dorothy Stevens: No. No. We went as a group, which I might just as well tell ya, after work
30 – I'll turn that off. We all went together and had a few drinks to calm
31 down.
32
33Interviewer: [43:30] So you did socialize after work.
34
35Dorothy Stevens: With our own little packs.
36
37Interviewer: With your own little groupies.
38
39Dorothy Stevens: Yeah.
40
41Interviewer: Mm-hm.
42
43Dorothy Stevens: And, of course, Betty's gone now. She passed away. Russ Slack called me,
44 he couldn't believe it. He stops over to the house every so often.
45
46Interviewer: That's nice, yep.

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Uh, just different ones we see.
3
4Interviewer: Mm-hm.
5
6Dorothy Stevens: George Courtney and his wife, Dorothy, and I are good friends, close
7 friends.
8
9Interviewer: [43:59] So was it love at first sight?
10
11Dorothy Stevens: No.
12
13Interviewer: No.
14
15 [laughter]
16
17Dorothy Stevens: No. Do you know I went with him almost 6 years? [laughter] And then
18 when he, I, ewww, I don't know. Because I had my boy and I just said
19 well I gotta think about this because as long as he, until he's on his own,
20 you know, he'll only come first. And Mark said, "Well that's the only way
21 [inaudible 44:24]," then eww. He didn't help me any. [laughter] But then
22 he waited another 6 months. But he's been good. In fact, my son today, 40
23 years old, he's first. Yeah, I mean...
24
25Interviewer: [43:00] Now with your husband, now was your husband as active in the
26 union as you are?
27
28Dorothy Stevens: No, but he was a very union-minded person. He was on Repair and, um, as
29 far as, no – he's never been back in the plant nor would he ever go. And
30 when they used to hand out the little, uh, things for 5 years or 10 years or
31 whatever, well then when it was time for his watch, they wanted him to go
32 in the office, and he refused. And Jerry Rosenkranz was his foreman,
33 finally brought him down a pen. No sir, he did not. He was very union
34 minded. But as far as bein' an activist – Mark is a quiet person. You'd have
35 to be to be with me.
36
37 [laughter]
38
39Interviewer: [Inaudible 45:30].
40
41Dorothy Stevens: No, he supports me all the way. And it's just like me going, and I'm gone
42 all the time. He's says, "Oh, it's good for ya," just as long as he's got clean
43 clothes and food in the freezer.
44
45 [laughter]
46

1Interviewer: [45:46] So, so, now at the time when you were a Zone and they had the
2 outside stuff like that, were there many, were you like special for our
3 community or were there other females all throughout the nation? Or you
4 were like, when you went to the offsite [inaudible 46:02]?
5

6Dorothy Stevens: When I went to the subcouncil?
7

8Interviewer: Yes. Subcouncils. Exactly.
9

10Doreen Howard: I remember we were at Lordstown, Ohio, and here I am settin' in there,
11 and some guys, big, burly guys walked in and said, "What the hell is she
12 doin' here? Women aren't allowed." And Brown spoke up and said, "She's
13 one a my boys."
14

15 [laughter]
16

17Dorothy Stevens: And everybody looked. And then Red was the president a that, and he
18 said, "Now, everybody watch your language here." And I said, "Hey, I ask
19 no privileges." And I didn't. And I remember John Jensen and them when
20 we were in negotiations and Mary, uh, McPherson was in there. "Now you
21 guys gotta watch your language here. We got a couple women," and outta
22 whose mouth first came? John Jensen's. [laughter]
23

24 [laughter]
25

26Dorothy Stevens: And we laughed.
27

28Interviewer: Uh-huh.
29

30Dorothy Stevens: We still laughed about it.
31

32Interviewer: [46:58] So that was, um...
33

34Dorothy Stevens: Yeah I was the only women. And when I first would go to these
35 subcouncil meetings, you know, I mean there is 5, 6, 7 guys and me, I
36 stayed in my room afterwards and I'd order in. They'd always call and say,
37 "Dorothy, do you wanna – we're goin' to dinner," and I'd say, "No." Well
38 somebody, or I was talkin' to my sister one day and I said, "I stayed in,"
39 'cause it just didn't look right for one woman with all those men to go out
40 to dinner. She said, "What do you care, you don't know nobody. They
41 don't know you." So I started goin' out with them, and it just got so that it
42 was one a the boys. [laughter]
43

44Interviewer: [47:38] How did, um, the communities treat you being that way? The, I
45 mean, that be the Fisher Body community, treat you? I mean the UAW

1 community within the plant treat you bein' the only female out there? Did
2 you get equal...
3
4 Dorothy Stevens: Good.
5
6 Interviewer: ...respect?
7
8 Dorothy Stevens: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. But you have to earn that respect.
9
10 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
11
12 Dorothy Stevens: You have to earn it. It's not just handed to ya.
13
14 Interviewer: So [inaudible 47:58]...
15
16 Dorothy Stevens: This is what I tried to portray to – do you remember Debbie McNichols?
17 She went on committee and she was gonna be out with the truck drivers in
18 Plant 40. And this is what – Debbie came to me and asked me, and this is
19 what I said to Debbie. She had spaghetti straps on, and I said, "Number
20 one, put somethin' on, cover yourself up 'cause that don't [inaudible
21 48:23]." To flaunt yourself like that does not do bargaining. No way. But
22 she never learned.
23
24 Interviewer: [48:35] So basically for all women just be sure you bring your, bring,
25 bring your brain [inaudible 48:40].
26
27 Dorothy Stevens: Well, look at me today. I still, you've never seen me wearin', no, never
28 will. Better to keep'm guessin' than let'm know.
29
30 [laughter]
31
32 [throat clearing]
33
34 Interviewer: [48:59] As a union official, do you have any words for young people and
35 people that are – participate in unions?
36
37 Dorothy Stevens: Well don't, uh, what do I wanna say? Respect'm for what they're doin'.
38 They're tryin to do you a job and represent you, and you, you know,
39 yourself, you're not always right. But they'll do their best. And give'm, you
40 always put the light at the end of the tunnel. I did that for all of my, when
41 [inaudible 49:30] get caught, you know, drinking. We sent'm out. Let's put
42 the light at the end a the tunnel. If they take it, then boy, we feel good. If
43 they don't, we gave'm that opportunity.
44

1Interviewer: I, I, I have another question. [laughter] Dorothy, given the fact that when
2 you first initially started at one time there was a split shop and everybody
3 wasn't unionized...
4

5Dorothy Stevens: Right.
6

7Interviewer: [49:48] ...and at a time when, you know, we're finding ourself having to
8 start go out and re-recruit, what do you think is one of the best things to
9 try to use, a tool to try to get people when it comes back to organizing and
10 joining unions again?
11

12Dorothy Stevens: The benefits that they're going to derive from this. It's long term. Not just
13 today – future. Their children is gonna depend on it. Their grandchildren. I
14 started out, I came from State Highway Department, okay? I had 3
15 children. I was alone in the world with 3 children. Well, it cost you
16 everything you earned, and back then I used to spend noon hours to stand
17 in line for a pair of nylons. I mean, in the highway department, you didn't
18 wear bobby socks. Up in conservation, you could, but not on our floor.
19 Okay? Back then you had, um, gabardine and you had to wear a jacket
20 suits, not just sweaters, skirts, suits. Well you're sitting and the shirt would
21 get shiny. Can't send the skirt without the jacket to the cleaners, and back
22 then my paycheck went for dry cleaning, nylons, and what else. So I came
23 to Fisher Body. Do you know, if I'da stayed at State, I wouldn't have what
24 I have today. I mean, we came in here, we wore penny loafers, we wore
25 blue jeans, and little ol' Dan River blouse.
26

27 Um, there were benefits. We had to pay part of our benefits, yeah. I think
28 it was for our hospitalization, which meant a lot to me for my children. We
29 did not have dental then when I started nor eyeglasses nor hearing, but
30 those came later. And look at the benefits that they, as a parent, can pass
31 on down to their children that their grandparents weren't able to pass on to
32 them. And if they looked at all of it, you know, also tell – look at these
33 poor little independent plants. It still costs the same amount a money for a
34 gallon a gas or a quart of milk or a loaf a bread, and yet, you know, their
35 top pay is what – \$10 or \$11 an hour. Those are the hurtin' people I see.
36 And I mean, I think about'm. Very fortunate to have a job at Fisher Body
37 or – even though...well, I can tell you that RSDC or whatever it is at Steel,
38 my son works there. They're UAW, but top pay is \$12. So you see, not all
39 UAW is the same as you have it here at General Motors.
40

41Interviewer: Good point. Uh, my last question...
42
43 [throat clearing]
44

45Interviewer: [52:40] How do you feel about this plant closing here and us gettin' ready
46 to open [inaudible]?

1
2Dorothy Stevens: Oh, it was heartbreaking to see it go. It was part of our life. It had been
3 here. And the first thing I asked about was the coach. Well I guess they
4 have that 'cause that's the first thing. I have a, um, medallion thing with the
5 coach on it, the stem. I'm gonna get a – it was on a, um, charm bracelet,
6 but I'm gonna get a bale put on it so I can wear it as...
7
8Interviewer: Oh cool.
9
10Dorothy Stevens: ...a necklace. Um, that's the first thing I asked for. Oh, what did they do
11 with the coach 'cause that was always a landmark at Fisher Body here.
12 That coach. It was out there on that front on Verlinden. That was sad when
13 they took that down.
14
15Interviewer: Yes.
16
17Dorothy Stevens: And now they're gonna crumple the, I understand bulldoze this building.
18 Well I don't know if Art – if it can be possible, but Art and I have talked
19 and said something about getting bricks, doing something with'm, and
20 that'd help build a new building.
21
22Interviewer: Mm-hm.
23
24Dorothy Stevens: You know, buyin' those bricks.
25
26Interviewer: That's a great idea.
27
28Dorothy Stevens: And have a brick a the old...like havin' a brick a your old homestead, ya
29 know?
30
31Interviewer: That's true.
32
33Dorothy Stevens: It was. It was kinda sad, um, when they were on TV and closin' it down
34 and, well, you hated to see it go. Even though you know it's old and the
35 new one'll be much nicer, but it won't be the same. It won't be the same.
36 There will not be the camadrie. Um, well, let's just hope that the products
37 sell.
38
39Interviewer: Thank you.
40
41
42/kj