

1 **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY – SHAWN NICHOLSON**
2 **RENIDA (R.T.) TAYLOR DISCUSSES HER CAREER AS A PRODUCTION WORKER**
3 **AND MEMBER OF THE UAW BARGAINING COMMITTEE**
4 **AT THE FISHER BODY PLANT IN LANSING, MI**
5
6

7 [recorder clicking]
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: [Go 0:00]. [thumping] [knocking]
10

11 Cheryl McQuaid: This is Cheryl McQuaid with Lansing [tapping] Fisher Body Historical
12 Team. It's January 6, 2006. It's approximately 8:30 a.m. We're at the
13 Greenhouse preparing to interview Renida [tapping] Taylor. First, we'll
14 [papers rustling] identify everybody else in the room.
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
17

18 Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.
19

20 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
21

22 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
23

24 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:21] Renida, would you please state your name and spell your last name
25 for us?
26

27 Renida Taylor: Renida Taylor, T-A-Y-L-O-R. [tapping]
28

29 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:27] And what is your address?
30

31 Renida Taylor: I live at 16916 Ingersoll [tapping] Road, Lansing, Michigan.
32

33 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:34] Um, are you married?
34

35 Renida Taylor: No. Divorced. [papers rustling]
36

37 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:37] Any children?
38

39 Renida Taylor: One daughter, one stepson.
40

41 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:42] Um, [clicking] what did your parents [papers rustling] do?
42

43 Renida Taylor: My father was butcher by trade and [clanking] my mother, uh, did Stanley
44 Home Products and [papers rustling] worked in a little PennyWise, which
45 is similar to a Woolworth's, back in Endicott, New York.
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:57] And so you were born in New York?
2

3 Renida Taylor: I was born and raised, graduated from high school in, uh, Endicott, New
4 York. Uh, came out here in 1972, January of '72, uh, because my new
5 husband, who I married in '71 had an older brother already established out
6 here, so came out here so he'd have a job.
7

8 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:18] And could you give is a little bit on your educational background?
9

10 Renida Taylor: Uh, yeah. I graduated from Union-Endicott High School in Endicott, New
11 York, and I have taken numerous college credit courses. I should really,
12 uh, get together with somebody and figure out where I'm at as far as a
13 degree goes 'cause over the years, I've taken an awful lot.
14

15 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:37] And any military background?
16

17 Renida Taylor: No.
18

19 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:44] Why did you come to Fisher Body [background noise] for
20 employment? [throat clearing]
21

22 Renida Taylor: In November of 1980, I was laid off from my then job, Cook Herman
23 Volkswagen-Volvo-Mazda and [knocking] in – on February 21st of 1981,
24 after having been laid off for 3 months, my, uh, neighbor called me on a
25 Sunday morning and she had already been employed at Fisher Body for
26 [thumping] 10 years or so and said she knew that I was looking for a job
27 and that they were hiring. So I gathered up my sister and the 2 of us went
28 and stood in the line at the South Lot for about 6 hours in the freezing,
29 sleety rain and we both got hired. Started March 27, 1981.
30

31 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:29] Do you remember that first day?
32

33 Renida Taylor: I certainly do. There was about 200 of us that hired in to populate the
34 nightshift, second shift out in C Trim. And, uh, the thing that impressed
35 me [engine humming throughout audio] the most was how huge [clinking]
36 the building was. Seeing trains inside of the building just – I was in awe. It
37 was remarkable. [thumping]
38

39 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:50] And you hired in on second shift?
40

41 Renida Taylor: On the second shift.
42

43 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:53] What department?
44

45 Renida Taylor: Trim – C Trim.
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:56] Do you remember the job that they put you on?
2
3 Renida Taylor: Yeah. I was hired in on Utility.
4
5 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:01] What is Utility?
6
7 Renida Taylor: Which is absentee replacement. Uh, I was told to learn all the jobs in the
8 supervisor's area. And at that time, it was actually 2 supervisor's areas. It
9 was anything that included [thumping] the urethane jobs, which was back
10 glass, [throat clearing] uh, front windshields, some – and, and the line
11 came outta Paint. The first part was a urethane area. Eh, then it went down
12 and swept w-, around and they put vinyl tops in. So some back glass
13 couldn't be put in till after the vinyl tops were on. So once you got back
14 down to the other end towards the Paint shoot, that was considered
15 [thumping] urethane again and they put some back glass in back there.
16 And that's what I hired in on.
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:42] So you had a large area...
19
20 Renida Taylor: Yeah.
21
22 Cheryl McQuaid: ...of jobs to learn?
23
24 Renida Taylor: Right. [thumping]
25
26 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:46] How many jobs?
27
28 Renida Taylor: Oh, God. I couldn't tell ya for sure. I'd have to think about all the jobs that
29 were in those 2 areas. Uh, but what was funny was that I was told I had to
30 learn all the jobs except urethane by George Burdette because I was left-
31 handed and all the guns that you used to put the urethane on the glass were
32 right-handed. [clanking] Well in those days, they did swap and after about,
33 I don't know, a month, [Verlin Ward 4:13] came to the nightshift and said
34 how many jobs ya know. I said all of'm. He says all of'm. Well except
35 urethane. And he says go learn it. I said well [George 4:22] told me I
36 didn't have to learn it 'cause all the guns are right-handed. Go learn it.
37 [laughter] So it took me about a month [coughing] and I learned it. I was
38 covered from head to foot in urethane [thumping] for a while but
39 [clicking] I got it. [rattling]
40
41 Cheryl McQuaid: [4:35] What did you think of the supervisors then?
42
43 Renida Taylor: Oh, they were a different crew back then. [rattling] Uh, there was a lot
44 more power on the floor. If they gave you a decision, it stood. None of
45 what goes on now that the first line supervisors – they don't give you an
46 answer. They have to go check with their boss or, eh, eh, you know, you

1 can't even give, eh – there's no use even presenting a grievance at the first
2 step to a supervisor today because they won't answer it. They have to get a
3 – an answer from their boss. Back then the supervisors, even though they
4 were, eh, you know, the old school where they might wanna burn ya just
5 for, eh, looking crosswise at'm, they, [throat clearing] they, they had some
6 integrity. They said what they meant and they meant what they said.
7
8Female: [Mm-hm 5:16].
9
10Cheryl McQuaid: [5:17] Do you remember any of the people that you hired in around?
11
12Renida Taylor: Oh, yeah. Sure. [Kendra Bailey 5:21] hired in the same day as I did. [Jean
13 Wicker 5:23], [Shannon Cole 5:24], uh, eh, and I can tell ya the people
14 almost out of the shoot everybody that was in that area. Uh, Wayne
15 Duncan [throat clearing] and uh, uh, the windshield guys were [Jimmy
16 Lock 5:37] and Gail Crandall who doesn't work there any longer, Uh,
17 [tsk] oh, who else was it? Oh, what was her name? [Tina Snyder 5:46].
18 Um, there was [Diane Spekene 5:52] and Donna Holbrook, Linda
19 Johnson. Uh, let's see who else. Oh, [Marty 6:00], um, [Plowman 6:01],
20 [tsk] Doug Young, uh, [Georgia Yallis 6:05], Animal, which is [Jim
21 Skazawak 6:09], was our pickup man, which is equivalent today to a
22 coordinator. Um, there was a ton a people. It was a big area. [tapping]
23
24Cheryl McQuaid: [6:19] What did you think about the people you worked around?
25
26Renida Taylor: Well I immediately liked'm, eh, everybody. Uh, uh, I'm kind of a social
27 person anyways but just having that common thread, which, uh – the sense
28 of equality that you only find in a unionized shop. It's not like where I had
29 worked previously. Somebody had status, if you will, if they were,
30 [thumping] you know, the parts manager or the service manager versus a
31 common mechanic or the office manager versus a receptionist. Everybody
32 was the same.
33
34Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
35
36Marilyn Coulter: That was, um, s-, part of my question. [6:56] Uh, since you – as you just
37 got through telling us what the, uh, [sighing] management was like at the
38 previous plant that you were in, how were [coughing] the people different
39 from your coworkers in the Mazda facility and also, um, what were, um –
40 yeah – what type – what did you know the difference about the 2 cultures?
41
42Renida Taylor: Well, eh, it wasn't a Mazda facility. It was Cook Herman Volkswagen-
43 Volvo-Mazda dealership.
44
45Marilyn Coulter: Oh, okay.
46

1Renida Taylor: And I hired [throat clearing] in there as a receptionist...
2
3Marilyn Coulter: Oh, I see.
4
5Renida Taylor: ..and then I was a, a service writer and then one day [tapping] the owner
6 walked up to me and said go back and run the body shop. [thumping] Uh,
7 he was the boss. You did what he told ya. Uh, I worked in the office.
8 There as, as I said, the structure was a little different. If you were the
9 office manager, although you might've been my friend, there was a status
10 thing.
11
12Female: Mm-hm.
13
14Renida Taylor: Uh, if you were a mechanic versus the service manager. Service writers
15 were considered a little bit above the, uh, uh, say the, the oil change boy.
16 But when you walked in the doors at Fisher Body, everybody was the
17 same.
18
19Marilyn Coulter: [8:10] How did it work for you going from being like an office manager to
20 working [rattling] on the assembly line? [8:16] What was it like for you to
21 work on an [rattling] assembly line?
22
23Renida Taylor: Uh, it didn't really bother me in any way [throat clearing] other than
24 eventually any job gets boring. I, eh – for me, it's always been the social –
25 the people, meeting new people and exchanging ideas. So, eh, eh, actually
26 I, I really thought for the amount of money we made, which was \$9.32 an
27 hour when I hired in, uh, it was great. I couldn't believe it. I had been
28 doing what I had been doing [clanking] [thumping] and being required to
29 work on Saturdays when the salespeople were the, uh, just an awful lotta
30 responsibility without the pay at my former place [throat clearing]
31 [inaudible 8:57] place of employment. So I was tickled pink to get hired
32 in.
33
34Female: [Mm-hm 9:01].
35
36Marilyn Coulter: [9:02] So what was it like to work on the nightshift inside Fisher Body?
37
38Renida Taylor: Uh, eh, I, uh, eh, eh, aside from the fact that I had a 9-year-old daughter
39 made it very difficult for her formative years to be stuck on the nightshift,
40 I, I actually enjoy nightshift better.
41
42Marilyn Coulter: [9:25] What made you enjoy it better?
43
44Renida Taylor: Well I think, eh, f-, first of all, there's way too many big cheeses walking
45 around on the dayshift. Uh, they're stumbling over themselves and I've
46 always felt management was top heavy. Uh, they leave you alone –

1 obviously on the nightshift, there's a lot less of'm. You can make a
2 decision on the nightshift and get something [tapping] done a lot better
3 than you can on the dayshift. And for me personally, I think if you work
4 the nightshift, you have a whole day to take care of things. [throat
5 clearing] N, now today m-, everything's open 24 hours but 25 years ago,
6 [thumping] they weren't and if you had business to take care of, you had to
7 take care of it on the dayshift. So if you were a dayshift employee, it was
8 hard to t-, get anything gone. That's why there was even provisions in our
9 local a-, agreement to – for doctors a-, appointments, etc., because
10 dayshifters [background noise] had to do it on the dayshift.
11
12 Cheryl McQuaid: [tsk] Cheryl McQuaid. [10:17] How old were you when you hired in?
13
14 Renida Taylor: 28.
15
16 Cheryl McQuaid: [10:21] So this might be tough, Renida, but could you think about when
17 you first hired in walking into the plant what a typical day was like for
18 somebody in [extra] [inaudible 10:32], um, Utility.
19
20 Renida Taylor: Yeah. Uh, they had a process that you reported to the supervisor's office
21 and you didn't even necessarily [thumping] have to talk to the supervisor
22 because anybody who wanted the day off at that time went in and wrote
23 their name on a piece a paper. So the Utility people knew and usually the
24 supervisor would tell ya hey, uh, Susie, Bobby and Tom are going home,
25 those are the 3 jobs you have to cover. And then amongst themselves, the
26 Utility people would say okay, I'll take Bobby's job; you take Susie's job;
27 [thumping] so and so t-, takes Timmy's job. Uh, and that worked pretty
28 well in most areas unless you got a supervisor who decided they preferred
29 [tapping] a person, uh, you know, a personal friend or whatever and then
30 they l-, allowed them to take [throat clearing] the favor-, favored job every
31 time. And that was changed and addressed the, uh, '87 Negotiations Local
32 Agreement to rotate Utility, to alleviate that, uh, uh, disparity. [clanking]
33
34 Cheryl McQuaid: [11:35] Do you remember who trained you on some of the jobs that you
35 had [tsk] to learn.
36
37 Renida Taylor: Well the employees were – trained you. E-, uh, each [coughing] individual
38 job. [Diane Spekene 11:42] [throat clearing] taught me how to put back,
39 uh, moldings on the Cutlasses [clicking] back in those days on the right
40 hand si-, or – excuse me – the left-hand side of the car and Donna
41 Holbrook on the left [clicking] [clanking] or – excuse me – [laughter]
42 right. [thumping] Uh, and each employee – eh, when you went to learn
43 urethane, you had to get Craig Johnson outta the way – he hired in same
44 day as, day as me – uh, outta the way and he'd show you – you'd try to
45 run a practice glass, etc. Eh, so the employees taught ya. [thumping]
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [12:12] Do you have any other family members that work at Fisher Body?
2

3 Renida Taylor: Yeah. I have a younger sister that works in the Body Shop.
4

5 Cheryl McQuaid: A-, oh, that's right. She hired in with you.
6

7 Renida Taylor: S-, she has 2 days more seniority than me. And she didn't wanna get outta
8 bed that day. [laughter] [tapping]
9

10 Cheryl McQuaid: [12:29] What was it like standing in that line for 6 hours?
11

12 Renida Taylor: Well it was s-, for me it was just hopeful. Uh, I was a single mother. I was
13 getting no child support and I was working for \$5.65 an hour before I'd
14 gotten laid off 6 weeks before Christmas. So I was hopeful and desperate
15 and hoping that I'd get the job. I didn't care it was cold. [popping] Uh, it
16 was an opportunity [papers rustling] for me.
17

18 Cheryl McQuaid: [12:52] Did you meet many people in that line?
19

20 Renida Taylor: No, not really, just the common how long have you been standing here,
21 you know, did you know anybody [clanking] because rumors had been
22 about, uh, you could go – if you knew somebody or [tapping] knew a
23 supervisor, etc., you'd have – they'd pull your card, your application, eh,
24 eh, just general conversation. [pen clicking]
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: Um...

27

28 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter. [clicking] [13:17] R.T., you came in 19 – in the '80s.
31 Um, there's some certain things about you that we'll get into later that [had
32 that 13:26] but during your time there, what were some of the biggest
33 [papers rustling] environmental or working conditions that changed over
34 those th-, s-, from there to 2007?
35

36 Renida Taylor: The one that sticks out in my head the most is that, eh, back when I hired
37 in, there was no, [tapping] um, ergonomic matting. Now you – when you
38 stood and built windshields [tapping] all day, uh, that was done on the
39 concrete and I can tell ya that my legs hurt for about 6 weeks and I was in
40 really good [laughter] physical condition. I was a tennis player. They hurt
41 for 6 weeks. Until it finally hit me it was standing on the concrete. And
42 today there's very few spots that doesn't have ergon-, or, or at least before
43 the plant [clicking] went down that didn't have ergonomic matting. Made
44 all the difference in the world.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: What – and you just said something. Before you, uh – so [tapping] I'm
2 gonna digress a little bit. [14:19] Before coming in to the Fisher Body
3 plant, had you heard anything about the plant or Fisher Body before you
4 came in?
5

6 Renida Taylor: Yeah, of course, uh, just like everybody out there now that has, has no
7 experience, uh, with actually being an autoworker. I heard the overpaid,
8 uh, beer-drinking, lowlifes, etc., and th-, within, within a couple a weeks, I
9 realized how hard the people really worked and what a, what a toll it
10 would take on your body over a period of time, which it has on an awful
11 lotta people that are now up there close to my age. Um, it's, eh – there was
12 a lot of drinking. There was a lotta drugs in the '80s, way worse than it is
13 today. But, uh, I think part of that was just the monotony of it.
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

16

17 Renida Taylor: But the jobs w-, most of those jobs really do take a toll on ya. You earn
18 your money.
19

20 Marilyn Coulter: [15:13] W-, were there other things about the people, your coworkers that
21 the public might have believed about'm but you found [knocking] that it
22 was untrue?
23

24 Renida Taylor: [tsk] Uh, the a-, another thing that I remember really [coughing] simply
25 was the, the impression before you go in there is that everybody's, uh,
26 uneducated, illiterate and just in my own area, I know I – Linda Johnson
27 [clanking] who's been our newspaper editor for oh, I would say it was
28 probably [tcho-tcho-tcho] '84 when [Louis Schultz 15:43], [tapping] uh,
29 [tapping] put her on that job. When I hired in, she was on the line putting
30 on front windshield moldings and she had a degree in journalism. There
31 was an attorney, who's no longer there – um, oh, I can see'm right in front
32 of me. Eh, I'll come up with it in a minute. There was, there was a couple
33 of attorneys actually. Um, there was quite a few educated people who
34 chose to come in there just because the, the wages and benefits were so
35 good. And there, there were a lot of educated people. Dave Brown has a
36 degree.
37

38 Female: Mm-hm.

39

40 Marilyn Coulter: Um, so I know that you said that there were, [coughing] there were some
41 drugs; there was some drinking. [16:28] What, what, what types of things
42 did you – when you were working on the average day, did you notice any
43 pranks or things? [16:34] What types of things did people do [clicking] to
44 get them through their day other than maybe drinking and occasional
45 [thumping] [drugging 16:39].
46

1Renida Taylor: Oh, well, eh, when it was hot in the summertime, we had water fights.
2 [laughter] No question about that. ‘Cause I had a guy come up with a butt
3 can one time, [thumping] a big 5-gallon butt can full a water and threw it
4 at me [laughter] across the car and hit me. [laughter] Well that was, as I
5 said earlier, that was before you could put the back glass in. It had to go to
6 [tapping] vinyl tops. Well by the time it got to vinyl tops, which was what
7 f-, sixty yards away, they couldn't put the vinyl top on, so they had to stop
8 the line because that car was full a water and, naturally, nobody knew who
9 did what to anybody but I was standing there covered with water.
10 [laughter] [coughing] [thumping] Yeah, they do pranks and stuff like that.
11 That was a l-, that was fun.
12

13Marilyn Coulter: [17:23] Were there other things? I know that they had things like in-plant
14 vending and...
15

16Renida Taylor: Eh, in-plant vending?
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
19

20Renida Taylor: Well you had people like [Daryl Mangles 17:34] that would, uh, go around
21 and sell pop and ice cream in the summertime and sandwiches and you
22 had, uh, uh, [Daryl Bruner 17:43] that was always running, eh, 1 raffle
23 after another f-, uh, there was all kinds a people. [Terry 17:51] –
24 [snapping] oh, what was his last name? [Terry 17:54] – remember he got
25 caught in the scam that he raffled off a car and then it ended u-, he ended
26 up giving it to his own cousin or brother? Oh, I can't think of his last
27 name. Anyways there was always somebody trying to run some scam
28 making money. You know...
29

30Marilyn Coulter: So...
31

32Renida Taylor: ...extra money.
33

34Marilyn Coulter: There were different things. Now, um, one thing that I know about you is
35 that you became union active in the plant and, um, and you moved up
36 quite the ladder. [18:31] Um, what made you want to become involved
37 [clinking] in your local union and how did – [clanking] you want to tell us
38 a little bit about how that happened and some of the changes you were
39 able to make happen for your coworkers on the floor?
40

41Renida Taylor: Well [sighing] Gary t-, Bernath doesn't like me telling this story but he's
42 the reason why I ran for election the first time because back in, uh, '83 I
43 was on Utility still [thumping] and George Burdette walked up to me and
44 told me report over to Ken DeRosa's area, the next area over. I said why,
45 eh, the contract says the low man gets reassigned, which I'd already read
46 our Local Agreement. And he said I don't care what it says; get over there.

1 Well, of course, I put a committee call in. My committeeman at that time
2 was [Joe Cerna 19:14] but, uh, Gary Bernath was the alternate. So Gary
3 Bernath came out and I explained the situation to him, that I wasn't the
4 lowest seniority because Tim, uh, even though he had '78 corporate
5 seniority, had come over from, uh, the parts plant.
6
7 So at that time – remember our separate seniority? We had corporate
8 seniority and you had in-plant [tapping] seniority. Gary went away and
9 was gone a couple hours and came back and told me that naw, that's the
10 way it is R.T. and I just knew that that was wrong and I well I could do a
11 better job. So when the next election came up about 3 months later, I ran
12 and to my advantage, [Joe Cerna 19:53] [knocking] had gotten disciplined
13 for [laughter] being drunk in the plant. Got a week off [laughter] about 1
14 week before the election. And there was 6 of us running. So I just
15 squeaked by 36 to 30 was my first election. [laughter]
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [20:07] And it was your first election but now with you being [clanking] a
18 female, were there [clicking] many females who were committee
19 representatives?
20
21 Renida Taylor: When I first got elected in '83, no [zipping] there wasn't. It was all men
22 on the nightshift. But I was thinking about that on the way over here. In,
23 uh, the '86 elections, there was a lotta women. [Elaine Lee 20:26] was a
24 district committeeperson.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
27
28 Renida Taylor: [Debbie McNichols 20:28] dayshift Paint or [Debbie Clements 20:30]
29 today. [background noise] Barb Johnson was Dick Bennett's alternate.
30 Um, [Marcia Ralia 20:38] – remember [Marsha Soblisky 20:40] and she
31 got married...
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.
34
35 Renida Taylor: ...[Marsha Ralia 20:41], she was a fulltime committeeman. Um, oh,
36 what's her name? I can see her right in front of me. In QC – beautiful
37 black woman, uh, [Hazel 20:56]...
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [Hazel Hosh 20:57].
40
41 Renida Taylor: [Hazel 20:57]...
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [Hazel Hosh 20:59].
44

1Renida Taylor: So, eh, eh, back then up – eh, in '86 there was quite a, quite a shift. All the
2 sudden you had 5-6 women that were in positions – [thumping] elected
3 positions.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [21:11] And even though the population, which was predominantly men,
6 elected you, how did that work for you and the other women?
7

8Renida Taylor: Uh, I don't think it bothers me at all, uh, 'cause I've always been
9 tomboyish. I think there was a definite sexism that you could feel and
10 some people were blatant about it – well [tapping] you don't belong in that
11 job; that's a man's job, uh, with some of the old timers. But the people out
12 on the floor certainly accepted [thumping] it fine. [clicking] They didn't
13 have a problem with it. And, and in fact, I'm not trying to take credit for it
14 but I think it might've showed some of these other women that they could,
15 in fact, run and get elected because 3 years later quite a few did,
16 [thumping] did run and did get elected.
17

18Marilyn Coulter: [21:55] So were there, um, [coughing] specific things that you remember
19 as far as helping the work life of the employees, that things that you knew
20 as an employee needed to be worked on that you were able to help
21 change?
22

23Renida Taylor: Well I'd like to think [tapping] I did that on a daily basis. I mean, uh, eh, I,
24 uh, I know I complain today that – [tapping] the way I was taught and that
25 was under – [Ron McKeever 22:21] was may zone at the time –
26 [background noise] that you checked your book every hour on the hour. If
27 there's nothing there, okay, you can sit in the work center but you gotta go
28 check it every hour, uh, and the attitude today is oh, we have 3 days to get
29 a committee call, which is nowhere in writing anywhere. [background
30 noise] So my point being that we were [clinking] on top of what was going
31 on. [tapping] We stuck together. If, if there was an issue up in Paint,
32 [tapping] [there was 22:44] many times us trimmers, Dick Bennett,
33 myself, [Ron Perry 22:48] would go walking up into the Paint Department
34 to, to show a strength, a [rubbing] sense of unity that we're the union and
35 [tapping] and this is not gonna happen to our people.
36

37 Whether it was heat relief, even though I'm a district committeeman down
38 in Trim, we're marching up to Paint. Uh, I used to write health and safety
39 grievances all the time. You know, remember rarely the line stopped. Well
40 one time it did stop [clicking] and I was right out there watching and all
41 the sudden it started a minute or so later and somebody almost got
42 knocked over by an open [background noise] door and I wrote that to
43 [Tom Roth 22:20], was the [MC 23:21] at the time, and got the –
44 [beeping] got it in writing that they would announce before they ever
45 started up a – the line again [clanking] that the line would be started up.
46

1Female: Mm-hm.
2

3Renida Taylor: Uh, so we were doing that on a [thumping] constant basis. If there was a
4 fire in the Body Shop, we would all tear out down to the Body Shop.
5

6Female: Mm-hm.
7

8Marilyn Coulter: [23:38] Can you explain to us what a heat relief is?
9

10Renida Taylor: Yeah. In, in the Paint Department, uh, they had an agreement that if it got
11 over 88 degrees in the clean rooms, they were given additional relief, time
12 away from the job. So Paint Department, uh, historically carried additional
13 relief people for that purpose. Well, of course, management would always
14 argue when it was implemented. We finally – I can't remember what year
15 this actually went down in writing but it ended up p-, being put in writing
16 like May 15th and it ended September 15th. But for years, you had to
17 argue over it's extremely hot up there, uh, put – give them some additional
18 relief. And you'd have to argue. They'd wanna pull the relief people out
19 early [thumping] when you know there's obviously some hot days still in
20 September. But that was to give them some, uh, uh – what's the word I'm
21 looking for – break from the excessive heat that was generated because
22 those clean rooms were right off the ovens.
23

24Marilyn Coulter: [24:36] Now [throat clearing] you became a [throat clearing] union
25 member and a, a, a union leadership in the '80s, right?
26

27Renida Taylor: Yes.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: And, um, during that time, that's when as far as the industry changed, they
30 started coming up with a lotta different projects and programs that got the
31 hourly [rank and file 24:55] line worker employee involved. [24:59] Um,
32 were you instrumental in any of those programs? [25:02] What did you
33 think about it? [25:03] Did it change the environment that we worked in?
34

35Renida Taylor: Uh, yeah. I was still on the line. I got elected in June of '83 the first time
36 and I remember [Dean Crosston 25:12] [throat clearing] walked up to
37 Indian who's [Jerry 25:16], uh, [thumping] [pause] oh...
38

39Marilyn Coulter: [VanAlstein 25:23].
40

41Renida Taylor: [VanAlstein 25:24]. There you go. Uh, I was gonna say [Aiming 25:27].
42 [Jerry VanAlstein 25:27] – and said hey, uh, you – we gotta new program;
43 you wanna be the EPG leader. And I listened for a minute and he
44 explained that it was called the Employee Participation Group leader and
45 that people were supposed to elect their own out of a supervisor's area,
46 etc. And I'm listening to this whole explanation as he's asking a guy does

1 he wanna be it. So [Jerry 25:51] said yes. He took the job and, uh, I knew
2 right then it was just one more program of the month. [tapping] And then,
3 of course, [background noise] once I got elected they st-, sent us to, uh –
4 th-, this, this program was under the cu-, QWL, Quality Work Life,
5 umbrella and it was in the '84 National Agreement. And it used to talk
6 about improving the quality of work life of employees and it talked about
7 equality of sacrifice between management and union workers. That has
8 since dropped from the contract and, eh, in subsequent years, they've
9 altered it a little b-, eh, you know, they had the Main Street [thumping]
10 School in '84 when the conversion from the Cutlass and the 98s and 88s
11 happened to building the M car, the, [clicking] uh, Grand Ams. They've
12 had a program every couple a years and it's not designed to do what it was
13 intentionally or intended to do [tapping] initially. [recorder clicking]
14

15Cheryl McQuaid: [26:51] So, Renida, were you Utility up to the point where you were [pen
16 clicking] elected as a committeeperson?
17

18Renida Taylor: No. I was on Utility about, oh, 15 months. In the summer of '82, uh, they
19 put me on station wagon side glass [tapping] build and install. [thumping]
20

21Cheryl McQuaid: [27:09] And how long did you do that job?
22

23Renida Taylor: Until it got el-, until they went away actually. Actually, they went away
24 before I got elected. I was on the line on Utility again. They – we only
25 ran'm for not quite a year, [background conversation] the station wagons.
26 Remember that?
27

28Marilyn Coulter: You're right. [background conversation] [rubbing]
29

30Cheryl McQuaid: [27:27] And [sighing] what did you think about being a committeeperson?
31 [27:33] Did you enjoy that job?
32

33Renida Taylor: I loved it. I, eh – in, in all the jobs I've ever done, it was the hardest I ever
34 worked. [background conversation] You had more responsibility. I got
35 pages at all hours of the night and day, calls, phone calls at home and on
36 the weekends. But I liked, I liked learning anyway. So for me, in the free
37 time, it was sitting down reading umpire decisions, reading the back of the
38 National Agreement, the different documents and, uh, appendix letters and
39 the educational outlines. Uh, went over all the memos that had ever been
40 written comparing one contract to the next, what they got, etc. So I, I
41 loved that job. [background conversation] I loved writing the contentions,
42 uh, in [inaudible 28:16] for what 3 years, 4 years I was a district, uh, I
43 never had to run a grievance past the second step because I would write a
44 contention. It's like a brief – [coughing] a legal brief and, uh, I would refer
45 back to umpire decisions and research it and, and I just had a good time.
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?

2

3 Marilyn Coulter: Now you were a committeeperson and you were also a zone. [28:46] Can
4 you tell for those people who don't – who are – who don't know, can you
5 tell the difference between a committeeperson and a zone as far as the jobs
6 [or 28:54] responsibilities?
7

8 Renida Taylor: Sure. A, a committeeperson, you're elected by up to 250 people in a given
9 geographic area and your responsibilities start [tapping] at the beginning
10 of the shift, uh – well actually they've changed it now [thumping] in the
11 National Agreement. Prior to [2 back 29:09] – I think it was the '99
12 agreement, prior to then you were technically supposed to be on the line
13 the first hour of the shift and the first half hour after lunch. Locally we
14 never did that. So it was understood that you didn't go out on the floor for
15 the first hour [thumping] at the beginning of the shift and the first half
16 hour. Um, but as soon as your hour was up [papers rustling] back when I
17 was a committeeman, we all headed out, checked our respective books,
18 uh, and [clicking] started taking committee calls and it was nothing to
19 have 20-25 committee calls a day and got them all in a given day. Uh, you
20 referred people to the EAP, which was a fairly new program back then.
21 We only had Ralph [Beg 29:53] and [Louie Schultz 29:54] was a
22 chairman, uh, in '84 [tapping] and he appointed Ralph [Beg 29:58], so it
23 was a fairly new program.
24

25 Cheryl McQuaid: [20:02] What was EAP?

26

27 Renida Taylor: Uh, [tapping] Employee Assistance Program. At the time, uh, [squeaking]
28 with very little knowledge about [thumping] the drug problem in the work
29 environment or out in the world, [thumping] it was basically dedicated to
30 alcoholism. [clanking] Uh, and it grew. [squeaking] I think it was '86 they
31 put [Mark Laport 30:20] on on the [squeaking] nightshift [background
32 noise] [banging] and, uh, that was – [clinking] [recorder clicking] um, and
33 around that same time, Martha Adams went on and, uh, within a year or
34 two the Chaplaincy Program went on. [Louie Schultz 30:39], uh, in-,
35 initiated a lotta [thumping] programs back then, between '84-'87,
36 [clanking] those 3 years right in there. But a zone, your responsibilities are
37 entirely different. You get e-, elected plantwide and although you're,
38 you're given a specific area, whether it be the Body Shop, Paint
39 Department, Trim Department, uh, the only reason why you don't serve –
40 [if 31:05] someone – say if I'm the Trim Zone and a body shopper walks
41 in the work center, it's basically outta curtesy to the other zone who is
42 supposedly representing them but many times we did do that. We'd cross
43 over.
44

45 Your responsibility as a zone is basically to process grievances at the set-,
46 once they hit the step and a half, which is a local – that's not in the

1 National Agreement. Uh, it's a step that we – we've developed at our
2 location that kinda gets an awful lotta stuff settled before you hafta to
3 reduce it to writing at the second step and exchange contingents, etc. So a,
4 a zone goes into the step and a halves and, if need be, then, of course, you
5 go – has to write the contention and, and pursue the grievance in the
6 second step. A, a zone sits on the Bargaining Committee, so a lotta times,
7 uh – I kinda had the reputation for being the memo queen, uh, kinda
8 sarcastically because oftentimes the – no matter how good a job you try to
9 do during negotiations you overlook something or something comes up
10 between contract years.

11
12 Uh, so I would go to management and say you recognize this is a problem;
13 I recognize this is a problem; it's not specifically addressed in the Local or
14 National Agreement, so let's get a Memorandum of Understanding
15 together. And then you would reduce it to writing; you'd sign it and you'd
16 present it at the union meeting [throat clearing] and it became part of your
17 Local Agreement. Um, you would research issues that were broad in
18 nature, uh, such as hospital calls. Uh, you know, it wasn't something
19 specific to your own zone, maybe a h-, Trim zone but people that come
20 from the Body Shop and go to the hospital have the same [papers rustling]
21 issues. So you'd research, [background conversation] you know, generic
22 issues, things that a-, [papers rustling] affected everybody. Uh, but the
23 immediate, uh, relationship with, with the people [papers rustling] out on
24 the floor isn't there as a zone like it is as a district and I, I missed that. I
25 really enjoyed being the district. I liked'm both but the district was, eh,
26 was actually the hardest job I've ever done.

27
28 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. You said that as a district you would get typically 25
29 calls a night. [33:12] What type of calls would you get? [33:14] What
30 were some of the problems?

31
32 Renida Taylor: Well there were things back then th-, like I said initially, the supervisors,
33 they might've been old school well – where they would have, uh, the union
34 ain't telling me what to do and maybe you just negotiated something in the
35 new '84 agreement, Local Agreement. They didn't know about it. They
36 didn't care about it. So they were gonna violate it regardless. Uh, for
37 instance, eh, eh, under – this is actually National Agreement, it says when
38 s-, an employee puts in a [thumping] committee call they will [thumping]
39 be sent for immediately. The committee person'll be sent for immediately
40 and no discussion. Well when you report in a given area, th-, a
41 supervisor's area and say hey, I want [tapping] Joe Schmo on here for a
42 committee call and they tell ya well, no, I've got'm [tapping] over there
43 doing repair, [thumping] no, your committee calls get top priority and
44 that's by agreement. So I would get that a lot, where a supervisor felt that
45 their obligation [clicking] to supplement the Repair people, uh –
46 remember we used to have Group 20 and Group 25, the Hard Trim Repair

1 and Soft Trim Repair? Well I got a pickup man down doing repair work.
2 [tapping]
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [Mm-hm 34:23]. [laughter]
5
6 Renida Taylor: So there might be 7 or 8 calls outta that area because they wanted their
7 committee call and either the, uh, supervisor [clicking] said well you can't
8 have one. That was another thing they'd like to say because they felt that
9 they could discuss it and, uh, they just had a different attitude back then. A
10 lot of'm might be safety [tapping] issues. A lot – a lotta times back in
11 those days, supervisors would threaten people, so, eh, eh, I'd get a lotta
12 committee calls.
13
14 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [34:56] Do you have what would – what you would call like during your
17 time as a happiest moment, a saddest moment?
18
19 Renida Taylor: Uh, [sighing] I don't know. I'm kinda pretty a steady person and can take
20 pretty much everything in stride. I th-, the, the moment that sticks out in
21 my mind is in September of '92 when we went on strike and when we
22 walked out that front door, I, I just can't explain it to you the
23 overwhelming sense of responsibility that when you're on strike, you're
24 actually out of a job...
25
26 Female: Mm-hm.
27
28 Renida Taylor: ...and when you walk people out, I know the attitude is all right, finally
29 giving'm hell but it was overwhelming for me to think that my God, I'm
30 really helping put 4,000 out of – I mean [thumping] I, I thought we would
31 win and so on but if you really understand how, how serious it really is,
32 that was, that was just overwhelming to know that I was walking 4,000
33 people outta the plant. That's when I started smoking again. [laughter]
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [35:57] Um, [throat clearing] what about one of your happiest moments?
36 [tapping]
37
38 Renida Taylor: Well I, I don't know about happiest moments because, like I said, to me it
39 was all, uh – [tsk] there's certain little victories that I remember.
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: [36:14] One that stands out that you [really 36:15]...?
42
43 Renida Taylor: Well the one that stands out in my mind is in the '93 negotiations when,
44 uh, they brought in [Tom Tiviarz 36:20], uh, Princeton, uh, master's
45 degree, 28 years old, in Labor Relations to whip our butts because,
46 [tapping] eh, you know, management does go to school. They are very

1 well trained, Labor Relations staff, and they assume that we're all
2 uneducated idiots and can't hold our own with them. So they brought this
3 hotshot in and that's when they wanted to go to full team build. Well we
4 designed the First Time Build Program and we got there but then he
5 started really, eh – we thought we were over with, we were done and he
6 really, really said hey, look, they're gonna close this plant, etc., etc. – you
7 know, the threats coming like they've always been – if we don't have Full
8 Team Build. And we'd argued it so many times.

9
10 Uh, Dick Bennett went to open his mouth. He was the chairman at the
11 time. I said – he was sitting next to me. I said, Dick, eh, can I say
12 something. He said yeah, go ahead. So I just leaned across the table. I said,
13 Tom, you know what, I think you better find a way to tell Detroit that this
14 is what's good for this plant because it's not gonna happen and, guess
15 what, if this plant goes down, you're out of a job and I pointed to each one
16 of'm successfully or successively, John Couthen and Mary Watson and
17 you're out of a job and you're out of a job and you're out of a job too.
18 [background conversation] So save your threats. It's not gonna happen.
19 Well he flushed beet red and they called for a recess but then they came
20 back in and got off of it and that was the end of that negotiations.

21
22 And th-, that felt good because, [tapping] you know, they loved to do that.
23 They loved to threaten you. Eh, how many years did they threaten that
24 they were gonna close that plant? And I always said that they would not
25 close that plant based on what type of Local Agreement we had here in
26 Lansing. If you've got a board of directors sitting around in Detroit trying
27 to decide whether you're gonna spend \$2 billion in Lansing, Michigan,
28 [tapping] they're gonna say hey, hey, Joe Schmo, uh, what'd you do on the
29 federal government level for the EPA, air quality checks, etc. Oh, we, you
30 know, did good. You're gonna go, uh, hey, Joe Schmo, how'd you get on
31 tax abatements? What are you doing there? Oh, yeah, the City of
32 Lansing's agreed to this and that. They're not gonna say hey, Joe Schmo,
33 do they have Team Concept. [laughter] That's not gonna be a deciding
34 factor [tapping] [laughter] in whether they invest \$2 billion in Lansing,
35 Michigan. So I was just sick to death of the threats and [tapping] I'd seen a
36 few cave-ins prior to that when I wasn't in a position to stop [inaudible
37 38:47]. That was a victory as far as I was concerned. [background
38 conversation]

39
40 Cheryl McQuaid: [38:52] What did you feel... [papers rustling]

41
42 Male: Cheryl McQuaid. [tapping]

43
44 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [laughter] [38:56] Um, what did you feel made a good
45 supervisor? [tapping] [39:02] And what is the difference between
46 supervisor then and now?

1
2 Renida Taylor: Uh, to me integrity is number one. [tapping] Uh, I don't care if you're
3 gonna disagree with me, if you're gonna say I don't think that job is too
4 heavy or if you're gonna tell me, uh, well I think I need to burn that guy
5 'cause I don't believe the reason why he's absent if that's what you
6 sincerely feel. But, eh, and in – back in the day – back in my day, that's
7 the kinda [thumping] answer you'd get. Now you might have to fight like
8 hell with that supervisor but they were telling you [thumping] what they
9 really thought. Today none of'm make a decision on their own.
10 [background noise]
11
12 Male: Mm-hm.
13
14 Renida Taylor: They get direction from on high and right before I, I lost [thumping] in
15 '96, my attitude was don't take a first-step grievance answer from a...
16
17 Male: Yeah.
18
19 Renida Taylor: ...first-line supervisor. Go take it right to the [MC 39:51] and when they
20 [thumping] raise hell, what are you doing, you tell'm hey, you're giving
21 them the answer anyways. And when I go to have a step and a half, I won't
22 have it with you. I might have it with the superintendent [thumping] and a
23 few [tapping] times [coughing] I'd get a committeeman who would do that
24 and it [throat clearing] kinda helped a little bit. But ever since about '86
25 when the invasion of the – I s-, I say it, for me it started with [Bud
26 McCurdy 40:11] coming over from the Chassis side, uh, trying to direct
27 traffic, uh, macro-manage, you know. Sit up here and tell everybody what
28 to do down on the floor. [tsk] Uh, [background conversation] that's the
29 way they operate today and, eh, it's not the way it's intended. It's not the
30 way it's designed under the union [tapping] agreement and I think they
31 let'm get away with it way too often.
32
33 Cheryl McQuaid: We're, uh, getting ready to go to a new plant.
34
35 Renida Taylor: Mm-hm.
36
37 Cheryl McQuaid: [40:38] What do you think, um, it's gonna be like?
38
39 Renida Taylor: [tsk] Well, [sighing] eh, eh, I'm, I'm a little cynical 'cause I've heard a lotta
40 things I don't like and matter a fact, I've heard things that would be, would
41 be illegal if they come to pass but, you know, you hear stuff all the time.
42 So I'm, I'm just kinda sitting waiting to see what happens, uh, and how it's
43 gonna operate because, uh, [background conversation] under, under law,
44 some of the items I'm hearing and some of the direction these new, uh,
45 team leaders are supposed to – some of their job responsibilities, if they do

1 what people are alleging they're gonna be doing, it will be illegal. It won't
2 be against the contract. It'll be illegal.
3
4 Cheryl McQuaid: Earl Nicholson?
5
6 Earl Nicholson: E-, Earl Nicholson. [41:30] Are you talking about NLRB violations...
7
8 Renida Taylor: Yes.
9
10 Earl Nicholson: ...or [UPL 41:33]...
11
12 Renida Taylor: Yes.
13
14 Earl Nicholson: ...violations?
15
16 Renida Taylor: Yes, NLRB.
17
18 Earl Nicholson: Okay.
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: [41:38] What is NLRB?
21
22 Renida Taylor: National Labor Relations Board.
23
24 Earl Nicholson: Oh, boy, I'm just, uh, uh – that, that's, uh, under national – that's – and,
25 uh, politics has a – plays a lot to do with that. [41:52] Uh, is it possible
26 [coughing] that the one of the reasons that they think they can get away
27 with it is because we have a republican president and the NLRB is packed
28 with pro-business...
29
30 Renida Taylor: Uh, th-...
31
32 Earl Nicholson: ...that would allow them to get away with [UPLs 42:06]?
33
34 Renida Taylor: Not in my opinion. I mean there was republican presidents during my
35 tenure. Regan was in. He fired the PATCO workers. Uh, I don't think – I
36 mean all – like, like they say, all politics is local and you're only as strong
37 as your weakest link and if, if your leadership, uh, does not direct or teach
38 the, the [tapping] people that have the direct relationship [thumping] with
39 the supervisors on the floor or [clicking] if they're sitting a room
40 negotiating and agreeing [thumping] to things without knowing
41 [thumping] that they're illegal or, or, [throat clearing] you know, for just
42 flat out saying oh, I don't care if it's illegal, we're gonna agree to this,
43 that's where you have a problem. And, and I think that's the direction that
44 has changed. The politics in that plant used to be, in my view, used to be
45 directed towards impressing your constituents and, and now they seem to
46 be – everybody's impressing [tapping] the leadership.

1
2 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith. [43:02] Can you give [clicking] us example of things that you
3 think are illegal? [clanking]
4
5 Renida Taylor: Yeah. One thing, any condition of your employment, uh, as far as your
6 absenteeism, etc., has to be a supervisory function and I have been told
7 and, again, you – you're – you hear a lotta things. That's why I'm cynical
8 but, uh, I'll [thumping] have to wait and see but I'm told that, uh, these
9 team leaders will be taking attendance. They won't be taking attendance on
10 me. They will know nothing about my attendance record. That's a super-,
11 by law, that's a supervisory [thumping] function and that's the number,
12 number 1... [clicking]
13
14 Female: Mm-hm.
15
16 Renida Taylor: ...thing that I've heard from a lotta [thumping] people, that they're being
17 directed that they would be doing.
18
19 Jerri Smith: And I've heard also, eh – I don't know how true it is – that the group
20 decides when you get to take a vacation. [43:51] How is that gonna work?
21
22 Renida Taylor: Eh, I hadn't heard that one but, [throat clearing] eh, I just – [background
23 conversation] you know, you can model – General Motors can, can go
24 and, and spend millions of dollars sending people all over the world and to
25 Japan to see how they function, uh, to be-, become more productive, etc.,
26 and maybe their manufacturing style includes some of these things.
27 [background conversation] Doesn't mean they're legal and it's up to our
28 leadership to know the difference.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: R.T., you had a model of 3 things [tsk] that made a good union person, a
33 good, g-, good union leader or, or good committeeperson. [44:35] Can you
34 share those things with us and also, um, you know, you know, talk a little
35 bit about that?
36
37 Renida Taylor: [tsk] Well I've al-, I've always said, uh, that it takes 3 things [tapping] to
38 be a good union leader – knowledge, integrity and guts. [background
39 conversation] Uh, and in-, integrity, I guess is the bottom line because I've
40 had examples over the years and you guys might know different people
41 that didn't appear to be all that knowledgeable th-, I mean they couldn't
42 [tapping] quote paragraph 62 says like I might be able to do but they knew
43 it was [thumping] somewhere in there but they have integrity; [tapping]
44 they didn't lie for somebody; they didn't lie to management [background
45 noise] and, uh, they [squeaking] had the guts enough to represent you at, at
46 every turn.

1
2 And the other [banging] side of the coin I've seen [squeaking] is –
3 [recorder clicking] um, and as I was saying, o-, on the [throat clearing]
4 other side, uh, you can have somebody that doesn't appear to be, you
5 know, a stomping and screaming [tapping] at management and we, we
6 know of 1 example of an excellent committeeman by the name of [Kenny
7 Michaud 45:41] that the perception was well, he's a milk toast. Well the
8 guy made up f-, in, in the area of stomping and screaming at management,
9 he made up double in, in his ability to write contentions and, and, uh,
10 make detailed, uh, records of what happened and s-, but the guy had
11 integrity. You can balance a little knowledge. You can balance a little
12 guts. But [thumping] if you don't have the integrity, [papers rustling]
13 you're just not gonna be a good committeeman because you're, you're not
14 in there for the right reason. [tapping]
15
16Female: Mm-hm.
17
18Renida Taylor: You're, you're there to get off the line or you're there, [tapping] uh,
19 [clanking] on a power trip [tapping] or you're there just to play politics
20 with your buddies and that-, that doesn't get the job done for the
21 membership. [tapping]
22
23Cheryl McQuaid: Earl Nicholson?
24
25Earl Nicholson: [45:31] Uh, okay, we've, we've covered [clanking] a lot about the external
26 politics [clicking] involving the UAW and, uh, General Motors but I'd like
27 to talk about a little bit right now would be the internal politics [tapping]
28 of the [thumping] UAW specifically and, uh, the, the follow-up question
29 of that would be how do they directly affect you?
30
31Renida Taylor: Well I've never, eh – you know, if you define politics, it's called the, the
32 art of persuasion and I guess for a while I was able to pursued people that
33 my way of thinking was the right way of thinking and in the last 9-10
34 years, [tapping] uh, I've been unsuccessful and other people have been
35 successful and that's politics. They, they have used whatever means
36 necessary to gain power and maintain power and, uh, you know, there's
37 been dirty politics. I've never subscribed to the idea of, of letters out on the
38 floor, unsigned and we n-...
39
40Earl Nicholson: [47:29] What is a – what is a letter out on the floor? [thumping]
41
42Renida Taylor: Well, you know, at election time, we've seen'm. We've seen'm as far back
43 [thumping] as far back as, uh, [Curly Jones 47:35]. He had a bunch blasted
44 at him and I know who wrote'm and, eh, eh, [tapping] it's just not right. If
45 you don't have the courage to address somebody either at a union meeting
46 or man to man, face to face, [rattling] uh, then – [coughing] or sign

1 [thumping] your letter that you're trying to impress people, uh, then you
2 shouldn't do it. Unfortunately, uh – and it's – I've had one directed at me.
3 We all know that [tapping] in '96 and...
4

5Female: Mm-hm.
6

7Renida Taylor: ...my first reaction to that letter – [clanking] it was on a Saturday
8 morning. My sister called me 'cause the plant was working at 6:00 in the
9 morning in the Body Shop. She called me at 6:15 in the morning and said
10 you won't believe this and, and read this gawd-awful letter to me and my
11 attitude was nobody'd believe that. Well, uh, that was kinda naive on my
12 part because – I mean peop-, don't people read the National Enquirer?
13 [clicking] Don't people get the Globe? Don't they get the Star? [rattling]
14 Don't we listen to rumors and, and fight very hard not to pass them on.
15 Uh, so [tsk] that's th-, what politics has become in the last few years and
16 I'm not saying anything negative about, uh, [Steve Bramos 48:42] but we
17 all know that [thumping] there was a campaign directed against
18 [thumping] [Doug Taylor 48:47] for a good 6-8 months – we will repay
19 [thumping] [clanking] in May; we will repay in May, unsigned letters
20 coming out about once a week prior to the 2002 elections.
21

22 Well I don't think [thumping] elections should be based on that and
23 [background noise] and shame on those people that do it [coughing] but
24 there's a responsibility on the part of the voter too to, to check things out
25 and, unfortunately, we don't do that. We don't do it in local politics and
26 we don't do it in national, state and federal politics. We, we pick one idea
27 or we listen to what somebody else told us. We don't investigate on our
28 own and, and [thumping] so we get stuck with who we have. I mean how,
29 how did the majority of people vote [thumping] for George Bush?
30 [clanking] Hello. [laughter]
31

32Female: Mm-hm. [knocking]
33

34Earl Nicholson: [42:31] So w-, what was your position in the UAW when that unsigned
35 letter came out?
36

37Renida Taylor: [tsk] I was a zone committeeperson and I was running for chairman
38 against [Bob Grissom 59:41] and [Doug Taylor 49:42]. [throat clearing]
39

40Earl Nicholson: [49:43] And what was the effect of that unsigned letter? [thumping]
41

42Renida Taylor: Well the effect was I got squashed. [papers rustling] [laughter] I was
43 soundly, soundly defeated. And it's actually reared its ugly head in several
44 elections since then. I've had people still tell me that certain people that
45 have maintained power pull that letter out every May, every time there's
46 an election. [tapping] [clanking]

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. Renida, you, eh, kinda touched on it, um, rumors in the
3 plant. [thumping] [50:18] Could you discuss [knocking] the rumor mill
4 and a little bit about why it happens and what kind of effect it had on?
5
6 Renida Taylor: Well I, I think it's human nature to some degree to gossip. Like I said, uh,
7 I'm not gonna say I never have. Eh, you have to catch yourself. It's really
8 hard to say [clanking] shoot, I shouldn't be [knocking] repeating that
9 [tapping] because too often [clanking] out of boredom, people will, will
10 relay information whether it's factual or not or you go – you get into – you
11 dragged into a discussion, oh, really I couldn't believe that a her blah-blah-
12 blah but, eh, the seed is already planted. There, there may not be any truth
13 to it and it just goes. It just goes like wildfire. I don't know if that's human
14 nature or out of boredom. Uh, it, it happens that way and so that's what
15 makes it so unfortunate that you might have, uh, well-qualified, well-
16 intentioned people that are destroyed [background noise] by this, this
17 smear [thumping] campaign with no factual basis and it – it's unfortunate
18 because I think the membership suffers.
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: [51:26] And, um, and, and, and not to actually make comment on your,
23 um, interview but it's like any – the rumors, unfortunately, are anything
24 from we're going home early on a hot day...
25
26 Renida Taylor: Sure.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: ...based on nothing [background noise] to destroying someone's career...
29
30 Renida Taylor: Right.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: ...based on a lie because it's easier to believe a lie than it is the truth...
33
34 Renida Taylor: Sure it is.
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: ...and irregardless of what good you have done...
37
38 Renida Taylor: And, and how are you always...
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: ...will likely destroy you.
41
42 Renida Taylor: ...throughout [thumping] history m-, so it must be human nature. How
43 does a, a – white people suppress blacks? How did, uh, white people
44 suppress Italians? [thumping] When my father told me the story of being
45 a-, an Italian, that he couldn't go on the south side of town and I was
46 [thumping] absolutely flabbergasted why. It was like [sighing] 'cause

1 we're Italian. I shoulda just understood that. Well how does everybody
2 who wants to be in power suppress [thumping] the next person? It's, it's by
3 [coughing] blastin'm and putting them down. Makes you feel like you're
4 bigger and better. And it's the same thing in the rumor mill. Eh, eh, if you
5 want to get ahead and you can't stand on your own 2 feet, what do ya do?
6 You blast the next person.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: Make the person out to be a monster.
9
10 Renida Taylor: Right.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: Um... [thumping]
13
14 Cheryl McQuaid: [52:36] Renida, is there anything that we've not asked you that you'd like
15 to share with us?
16
17 Renida Taylor: Uh, [sighing] [ta-ta-ta] [clanking] no. I've seen an awful lotta changes over
18 the years, uh, some of'm are f-, for the better. They're an improvement but
19 an awful lot of it, I think, we've gone way backwards. I wish we would get
20 back to, back to our strength, to our roots, to, uh, uh, the integrity behind
21 it, t-, to saying what we mean, mean what we say, representing the people.
22 We don't represent management. [sighing] We don't care, eh, when – in
23 '96 [clicking] or so, eh, I started hearing the term well, you know,
24 management has the right to manage, from union representatives. Before
25 that our attitude was no, they don't; we'll [laughter] manage. You know?
26 Eh, eh, and, eh, to me that's a better way to go. You're representing your
27 people, eh, if you take their side every time.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: Um...
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter?
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: [53:37] Um, one thing with, uh, and it's, it's just coworkers and through
34 your time being there at the plant, has there been coworkers who have
35 become like family that has impacted you and you've c-, extended it
36 outside of the worksite? [background conversation] [53:58] Do you look at
37 your co-, your fellow brothers a-, your workers as a family? [background
38 conversation]
39
40 Renida Taylor: Eh, I, I don't know if this is everybody's experience or if it's just mine.
41 When I make a friend, almost invariably they're friends forever. I've had
42 people – now I haven't been in an elected representative position since
43 [papers rustling] '96 and I still get phone calls at home over issues – y-, I,
44 I knew you'd know R.T., would you look for me, you know. Uh, and I
45 don't mind that at all. I, I like doing that for people and I do socialize with
46 a lotta people outside a work.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
3
4Renida Taylor: Eh, it wasn't just a well you're my coworker but I don't like ya because
5 there's very few people I d-, over the years that I don't like...
6
7Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
8
9Renida Taylor: ...a-, and the ones that I make it very well known that I don't like are
10 people with no integrity. So, eh, yeah, I, I kept a lotta relationships for
11 years and years.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [54:55] Renida, Fisher Body in Lansing have been
14 considered the Capitol of Quality, I guess I'd like to know w-, why do you
15 think that? [55:05] Why do you think [zipping] we are the best?
16 [thumping]
17
18Renida Taylor: I think [thumping] we always have been the best. From the day I hired in,
19 like, like we talked a little bit earlier, I remember my preconceived notion
20 that well they were lazy, overpaid, beer-swizzling losers. That was what I
21 was told [zipping] [throat clearing] before I ever hired in. Well
22 immediately I looked around and I watched the job people were doing or
23 trying to do and they had such a good work ethic. If anything – and once I
24 got in a position to, eh, to blast management about this, I would tell
25 management that if there's any quality problems, it's because you hold
26 people [tapping] back. People point out to you hey, [tapping] you know,
27 uh, eh, I don't know, the windshield's not fitting properly. Instead of you
28 getting a hold of Fab and saying hey, this, this frame is off, you say just
29 put shims in it or put extra urethane in it and a year or so down the road,
30 the thing is leaking or, or wind leaks or air leaks.
31
32 The people were always pointing stuff out, a better way to do it and
33 management wouldn't listen. Their, their goal has always been get it off
34 the end of the line, get it off the end of the line. And even though they,
35 they [zipping] so-called made all these changes just in time delivery and,
36 eh, eh, eh, that's a-, talking outta 2 sides of your face 'cause at the same
37 time [clanking] they added lines up in [17-2 56:21] to hold more to bank
38 more cars. They added banks [thumping] in the Body Shop,. So there's
39 still goal – [zipping] their goal is still [throat clearing] to get that car
40 [thumping] off the end of the line, car off the end of the line even though
41 you're supposed to be able to stop the line and fix stuff. They've got so
42 many banks built in [clanking] to – so as to not stop production. Uh, and if
43 they woulda listened to people 20 years ago, 25 years ago, I don't think
44 they'd be in the bind they're in now.
45
46Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. All right.

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you so much, Renida.
3
4Renida Taylor: Okay. Thank you very much.
5
6Marilyn Coulter: Thank you.
7
8John Fedewa:: Thank you.
9
10Jerri Smith: Yes. [thumping] [recorder clicking]
11
12
13/lo