

1 **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY – SHAWN NICHOLSON**
2 **MARK WARNER DISCUSSES HIS CAREER AS A PRODUCTION WORKER AND**
3 **UAW MEMBER AT THE FISHER BODY PLANT IN LANSING MI**
4
5

6Doreen Howard: Um, I'm Doreen Howard. We're in the DeWitt facility today. We will be
7 interviewing Mark Warner. Um, [tsk] if you guys could go ahead and
8 introduce yourselves.
9

10John Fedewa: My name's John Fedewa.
11

12Marilyn Coulter: [tsk] Marilyn Coulter.
13

14Mark Warner: And I'm Mark Warner.
15

16Doreen Howard: [0:16] And could you spell your last name, please?
17

18Mark Warner: W-A-R-N-E-R.
19
20

21Doreen Howard: Okay. [0:20] And your address?
22

23Mark Warner: 6110 Coleman Road, East Lansing 48823.
24

25Doreen Howard: Okay. [0:27] Um, [tsk] are you married and do you have any children?
26

27Mark Warner: Uh, married and 2 children. Um, their ages are 26 and 24.
28

29Doreen Howard: Okay. [0:38] Um, where, where were you born?
30

31Mark Warner: Saint Johns, just a l-, 20 minutes north of here.
32

33Doreen Howard: Okay. [Inaudible 0:45].
34

35Mark Warner: A small farming community.
36

37 [background conversation throughout audio]
38

39Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 0:46]. Were you a farmer?
40

41Mark Warner: Uh, my grandparents were.
42

43Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 0:49] .
44

45Mark Warner: Both grandparents on both sides were, um, and we had – growing up we
46 had what we considered a small farm. It didn't really produce anything

1 other than what we needed ourselves, so it was small on a scale compared
2 [clanking] to farmers that produce, you know, stuff for the market but
3 [knocking] it was something [throat clearing] my family wanted to carry
4 on. [clicking] [background music throughout audio]
5
6 Doreen Howard: Very nice. [1:13] Um, your [clanking] educational background?
7
8 Mark Warner: Saint Johns, uh, in high school and elementary school, um, [tsk] and then
9 LCC and then Michigan State.
10
11 Doreen Howard: Oh, okay. [1:25] Um, what is your, [coughing] uh – do you have a degree
12 from Michigan State University?
13
14 Mark Warner: It's in history. [coughing]
15
16 Doreen Howard: [1:30] In history? Oh, that's very nice. [1:32] Um, do you have a military
17 background at all?
18
19 Mark Warner: No.
20
21 Doreen Howard: [1:34] No? Okay. [1:36] And, um, [tsk] what did you do before you hired
22 in to Fisher?
23
24 Mark Warner: Um, I worked, uh, construction, [throat clearing] uh, in the summer
25 months and into the fall months, uh, to – because I liked being outdoors
26 and it also was a, a way to earn some money to save for school. So it was
27 one of those things that I was interested in and I like creating things with
28 my hands and, uh, I worked in – we did mostly, uh, uh, rough framing...
29
30 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
31
32 Mark Warner: ...uh, that kind of construction, farm construction, some pole barns, some,
33 some additions on houses, uh, a few new houses but o-, mainly in the, uh,
34 the rough framing, uh, [clanking] portion of, of general construction.
35
36 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [2:20] Um, and what is your seniority [tsk] date?
37
38 Mark Warner: W-, GM seniority is, uh, August 7, '78 and I came to the body plant in, uh,
39 March of '81.
40
41 Doreen Howard: March of '81. Okay. [2:33] Um, what brought you to, to come to General
42 Motors to seek a job?
43
44 Mark Warner: Um, eh, [clanking] when I was working construction, uh, the company
45 that I worked for was relatively small, so they didn't have a lot of, uh, uh,
46 additional income or fringe benefits other than your wage. So I was

1 looking for something where I could earn more and have some additional
2 benefits and wasn't that I was seeking out GM. I was just looking for
3 higher paying jobs and [clanking] and heard through somebody – I can't
4 remember who – a friend that, uh, GM was taking applications. So I put
5 one in with not much thought of it until I got a call shortly thereafter for an
6 interview. So I musta been in the right place at the right time.
7

8Doreen Howard: Um, think back to that day when you, uh, put in your application. [3:29]
9 Uh, what was some of the circumstances surrounding the, uh, whole
10 application process? [3:36] Uh, how many people were there and what
11 did, what did that entail?
12

13Mark Warner: Well I remember, uh, [tsk] I was, uh – it was in the spring. Uh, I'm gonna
14 guess it was sometime maybe late spring, May or June. And, uh, I was
15 working construction in the daytime, um, and going to LCC in the
16 afternoons and then in the evenings, I was [laughter] working as a
17 bartender and heard...
18

19Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 4:03].
20

21Mark Warner: Yeah. Heard that, uh, they were taking applications, so I went with some
22 friends after work, uh, after we got done working at the bar [laughter] late
23 at night and went and got in line to stand in line to put our applications in
24 and ended up standing in line all night and then putting the application in,
25 you know, eh, when they started. I think it was 8 or 9 in the morning. So I
26 put my application in after up all night [laughter] and, uh, didn't really
27 expect much of it but, eh, it seems like there were probably a couple
28 [thumping] hundred people. Um, I remember the line was a long line
29 down the sidewalk and we all stood around and talked all night and, uh,
30 didn't have high expectations out of it, especially, uh – they did a little – I
31 think the application we put in and then there was a short interview, um,
32 and didn't – I, I went away with the feeling that it didn't impress the
33 interviewer. So I didn't expect much. So I was surprised when I got a call
34 later on.
35

36Doreen Howard: So let's go back to that first day. [5:04] Um, what was your experience?
37 [5:08] Uh, what [clanking] department did you hire into and, [tapping]
38 um...
39

40Mark Warner: Um...
41

42Doreen Howard: ...describe...
43

44Mark Warner: It was a whole new world.
45

46Doreen Howard: ...what it was like?

1
2Mark Warner: Um, growing up in Saint Johns was, like I said, it was kind of a small
3 town then, um, and coming into Lansing and working in an environment
4 that was, uh, a lot more diverse than what I was used to, uh, a lotta
5 different kinds of people. I was used to, you know, small town farmers'
6 mentality, which was, eh, unknown to me at that time was very narrow
7 and narrow view. So it was like an education. Eh, and, uh, at first you
8 walk in and you're kinda wide-eyed and overwhelmed but after a while I
9 liked it. Um, and the thing I came to realize, uh, early was that the thing I
10 liked about it was the diversity of people. Um, and I – I'm kind of a people
11 [clanking] person and I like meeting a lotta different kinds of people, a
12 lotta different kinds of people that have interesting backgrounds. And I've
13 always viewed GM's workforce as their most important valuable asset
14 because if you get to know people and you network like I kind of do, um,
15 you, you kind of lock away in your mind okay, this person knows a lot
16 about that or farming and this person might know a lot about science and
17 this person might know a lot about, uh, politics or, or schmoozing
18 [laughter] and it – and you, you, you kinda remember these things.
19
20 And then you go okay, if I ever need this resource or that resource, then
21 you remember. And I always thought that GM had the greatest group of,
22 uh, kind of a smorgasbord of [inaudible] [or of 6:47] resources. Um, that
23 was one of the things that always appealed to me about GM, was that there
24 were people from, eh, such a wide background, uh, that you could always
25 – if you, if you didn't know them personally and you needed something,
26 you could ask around amongst your friends and say you know anybody
27 that, that knows something about fixing a, a sh-, [tapping] a Chevy pickup
28 or if you know anybody about – [knocking] that knows anything about
29 fixing, you know, uh, my [eavestrough 7:14] or you could – and if you
30 didn't know where to find that, you could find somebody that did know s-,
31 oh, yes, so and so over here, go talk to her [tapping] or, you know, and,
32 and, eh, I always felt like GM, eh, eh, never knew how, how great of a – I
33 say, eh, eh, it seemed like an endless resource that they have out there. I
34 still don't feel like they utilize that like they should or could, so...
35
36Doreen Howard: [7:43] So that first day you come in here and you look around and you see
37 the diverse workforce that you'll be working with and, um, what
38 department did they put you on and in what job did they put you on and
39 being a new hire, a lot of, a lot of the groups tend to want to feel out the
40 person and see how they react to things, did they do any new hire pranks
41 to you?
42
43Mark Warner: Um, I hired into the warehouse, um, and it's a little different over there,
44 um, whereas I don't think there were as many, um, hijinks and pranks that
45 went on. Uh, I actually hired into a small area that was, uh, kind of
46 processing parts for outgoing shipment...

1
2Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
3
4Mark Warner: ...and I think I was, uh, kinda taken in by this group that were mainly
5 people that I thought had really high seniority I think. Um, [clanking] and
6 I felt – kinda it felt like a, a small extended family. It was kinda really, uh,
7 comfortable. There were a couple older women that worked in there I
8 know that were very close to retirement and they, they reminded me of my
9 grandmothers and there were some other guys that reminded me some of
10 my uncles. And, and even though these were people that had a – much
11 different backgrounds than what I was used to, um, it still felt like, uh,
12 they had your back, you know, they could take care of ya. And, and there
13 was a lot of advice doled out early on. Okay, this is what you want to do.
14 This is what you don't wanna do. You don't wanna miss any time. You
15 always wanna be on time. You never wanna take a day off in your first 90
16 days. I remember that was the – what everybody said, be on time and
17 don't ever miss work.
18
19 Um, and so I – because it was a small area, I didn't get a lot of outside
20 influence until after I had been there for a while and, uh, [clanking] but at
21 that – when I first hired in, I remember feeling this, this is quite a bit
22 different and it felt like a learning experience and, and it was like okay,
23 I'm gonna soak this all up because this is really kinda nice, you know. I,
24 uh, I really felt surprised by that because it didn't seem – at, at first when
25 you walk into this huge building and you drive into this big city, um, I
26 thought wow, this is really gonna be hard. This is really gonna be, uh,
27 strange and I don't know if I'm gonna like this and, eh, you went through
28 some of those doubts early on. The first few weeks, I remember thinking
29 man, did I make a mistake. [knocking] You know, do I really wanna work
30 inside this big ole dusty warehouse, uh, this big ole building compared to,
31 you know, being able [thumping] to do the things that I had done growing
32 up.
33
34 And before I hired in, I was always outdoors and I, I a-, I'm an outdoor
35 person anyway and I all of the sudden, um, you know, being indoors
36 [throat clearing] for 8 hours a day was really, really different and it was,
37 uh, kind of a, a l-, a ch-, a shock, a big shock. And, uh, those were the
38 biggest things that were hard for me. But then, eh, once you get to know
39 people [in here 10:57], it didn't take only a few weeks and you started
40 thinking okay, yeah, these people are starting to embrace me and starting
41 to welcome me and, and, uh, eh, it was kinda okay, this isn't gonna be so
42 bad and maybe I can do this. [laughter]
43
44Doreen Howard: Marilyn Coulter.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah. [11:14] How was it – because you were an outside person and how
2 long was it before you started to work on the actual assembly line?
3

4 Mark Warner: [tsk] Um, well we had – in the, in the warehouse over there, there were
5 small assembly lines, uh, but nothing like, uh, working at the body plant,
6 um, where you actually are producing, eh, the product from b-, beginning
7 to end. Over there it was filling orders, uh, packaging the orders and
8 shipping'm down to an area where they packed'm into trucks or into
9 railcars. Uh...
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 11:47].
12

13 Mark Warner: ...there were a lot of – if you can imagine small assembly lines, um, eh,
14 like what we have in the body plant, um, feeder lines in the Body Shop
15 where they might subassembly a wheel, wheel-housing area or the cushion
16 room where they built just the seats, those, those type of small assembly
17 lines. There were a lot of those over there.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: [12:06] So what was the transition like when you went from [throat
20 clearing] the warehouse and then you came into the Fisher Body?
21

22 Mark Warner: Um...
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: [12:12] What is where you're tied to an assembly line?
25

26 Mark Warner: It was...
27

28 Marilyn Coulter: [12:16] How's that?
29

30 Mark Warner: The work itself was, uh, a little bit more physical, um, but it wasn't all that
31 different because it was just on a grander scale. So, um, and you could
32 actually see a product being made. So in the – in a way, it was a little bit
33 more satisfying than just filling orders. Uh, the other – at the warehouse, I
34 thought it was, uh – one of the things about the work [clanking] was it felt
35 like it was monotonous and unfulfilling [throat clearing] and in here it's
36 not a whole lot – or when I say here, I mean at the body plant – it wasn't a
37 whole lot more fulfilling or satisfying b-, but, at the same point, you could
38 walk from the beginning of the assembly process to the end of the
39 assembly process and see [coughing] an actual product that you had a
40 hand [coughing] in building, so in that aspect, it was a little bit more
41 satisfying and the people are what I have always embraced and liked
42 about, uh, working at the body plant. There were – there are much – many
43 more and, um, I enjoy being around more people.
44

1Marilyn Coulter: [13:24] So did you find that the culture of the people was different – any
2 differences between [knocking] the ones that worked at the warehouse and
3 the ones that were in the body plant on the line?
4

5Mark Warner: Not a lot. No. Um, s-, uh, as I talked to people and got to know people, uh,
6 I found a lotta similarities in my own background where they – a lot of'm
7 felt like [tsk] okay, when they first hired in, they didn't probably hire in
8 with the intention of staying 30 years and retiring. A lot of'm probably
9 said okay, this is a job that pays me really well or well enough and I'm
10 gonna – I have other goals, like maybe I'm gonna save money for college
11 or maybe I'm gonna save money for a new boat or, or for my kids or
12 whatever and I think a lot of'm started out, at least it felt like the same –
13 with the same kind of intentions that I did. It was like okay, I'm going to
14 save money, go to school [tsk] and this isn't something I probably will
15 want to do for 30 years.
16

17 I'm gonna leave here in 5 years or I'm gonna leave here in 7 years and, and
18 that, I think it felt like there was a lotta people that started that way and s-
19 stayed the same way that I did. It was like 5 years came and went and you
20 did a little bit of what you thought you would and then next thing you
21 know, you had that new car and you – maybe you bought a house and then
22 you thought well [tapping] this is, eh, or maybe I'll stay another 2 years or
23 maybe I'll – all right my new goal is now I'm gonna stay 10 and get out.
24 You know, by then I'll have my degree [laughter] and next thing you
25 know, it's like okay, you've got, eh, a bigger mortgage [laughter] and
26 another new car and maybe y-, a couple more kids or – and it's like okay,
27 well I've got 15 years in now. I'm halfway there. Maybe this wouldn't be
28 such a bad – and I, I felt like a lotta people started that way and ended that
29 way with – like I did and, and you realize that working fulltime [tsk] and
30 going to school was, was easier when you were a teenager [laughter] and
31 as the time went on, it got more difficult.
32

33 Well family and life and everything, uh, becomes more time consuming
34 and you feel like okay, that school is still important but it keeps getting,
35 eh, bumped down 1 more notch on the priority list [laughter] and it took a
36 long time. Um, you know, I remember that I would go to school and I'd
37 stop for a while or a couple semesters and then I'd go back for a couple
38 more s-, semesters or 1 on and 1 off and it, uh – I remember thinking God,
39 is this ever – am I ever gonna get there, you know, and do this. And, and
40 as time went by, you realize okay, I've got, you know, I'm halfway to a
41 pension or I'm, I'm two-thirds of the way to a pension or I'm three-quarters
42 of the way to a pension now. And, and you realize well, you know, maybe
43 it wouldn't be such a bad idea to stay here and, and, and draw a pension
44 and then move on and start – 'cause in this day and age it's, it's not
45 uncommon, uh – I think it's uncommon for people to stay in [tapping] 1

1 place 30 years like we do. I think a – in, in professional careers, a lotta
2 people change much more frequently than we do.
3
4Female: Mm-hm.
5
6Mark Warner: And I've, I've seen it and observed it in my personal life a lot. People
7 reinvent themselves, change jobs, that kinda thing.
8
9Marilyn Coulter: Um, d-, before we go f-, I have 1 other question I want to ask you. When
10 [scraping] you, um, c-, you came here from Saint Johns and you came into
11 the facility, there are a lotta people like you. [16:46] Was there any
12 preconceived notions that you had about the factory workers that y-, that
13 you found to be different once you became one?
14
15Mark Warner: Um, eh, eh, that's really hard to say because I didn't have any notion at all
16 of factory w-, life or workers because I didn't know m-, anything about'm.
17 All I knew, uh, I had heard from some friends that it paid good.
18
19Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
20
21Mark Warner: And, and that was one of my goals when I came and applied. I remember
22 thinking this will make it easier to save f-, for school [tapping] and maybe
23 it will make life a little more comfortable. So at that, at that juncture in my
24 life, I, eh, as a teenager, I don't think you really think about what those
25 people are like. You just think about okay, that's more money than I'm
26 earning now and it has health insurance and so I thought that's, that's
27 worth puttin' an application in there.
28
29Marilyn Coulter: [17:36] So by you going to school while you were working, I take it that
30 you took a-, advantage of the UAW GM negotiated benefit of tuition
31 assistance...
32
33Mark Warner: Yes.
34
35Marilyn Coulter: ...program?
36
37Mark Warner: Yes. And that was, that was the other thing about staying at GM. I, I
38 remember thinking okay, they have this program that will pay for the
39 majority of school and I'd be, I'd be [tapping] really s-, uh, unintelligent if
40 I didn't take advantage of it. So it was, uh, it was another thing that said
41 okay, [thumping] you're making good wages; [tapping] you have health
42 insurance and you have a TAP program that pays for school. Why would
43 you leave? [throat clearing] You know, if you can take, uh, classes and,
44 and go to school and, and get the majority of it paid for, eh, eh, I, eh, with
45 my resources and my background, I didn't know of a better avenue to do
46 that, to reach the goals that I wanted to do. So, um, [papers rustling] I

1 think that was another major, [tsk] uh, [tapping] advantage to staying and,
2 and it just fell in with all the other things that the next thing you know, 5
3 years came and went and you w-, you think [clanking] okay, I've got 6-1/2
4 years in now.
5
6 Okay, I'll stay 10 [laughter] and then – and the next thing you know, the
7 10 went flying by, [laughter] you know. So, uh, and you thought well, I
8 still got TAP and [laughter] if [laughter] they had ever done away with
9 TAP, it might've been easier to leave but I don't think it would've been,
10 eh, an easy decision. I think I probably, because of the wage that we
11 earned and, um, I think it would've been, uh, the only way I would've left
12 is if, if I woulda had – [thumping] uh, fell into a, uh – [clanking] or found
13 another career that said okay, we will help you with your school and you
14 can earn as much and we have a more rewarding, uh, career for you. And,
15 and I think those are, those are rare. Those opportunities are very rare and
16 so it made it easier to stay.
17
18 Doreen Howard: Um, you said that you were married and you had children. [19:40] Um,
19 what shift did you hire in on and, um, how did that affect – how did
20 working here affect your family life and what adjustments did you have to
21 make in your personal [throat clearing] life? [clanking]
22
23 Mark Warner: Well, eh, at the warehouse when I first started in [throat clearing] they,
24 they had 3 shifts over there. [banging] They still have 3 shifts. Um,
25 because they don't have, uh, the demands of, of making up lost production
26 or overtime like they do at the assembly line, [tsk] um, and I hired in on
27 dayshift, which wasn't, wasn't unlike what I was doing currently. It's – I
28 think the difference was only about a half an hour different, earlier.
29 [banging] Um, so that wasn't much of an adjustment but [rattling] I didn't
30 stay on that shift very long. Um, I went to, um, the afternoon shift. I think
31 I was – I think I got – was bumped, [tapping] um, probably after [tsk]
32 about 4 months and stayed – I was l-, fortunate enough to be I think in a,
33 in a small group that kinda fell in between, uh, the cracks as far as staying
34 in 1 place or getting, um, bumped to and locked in to 1, uh, shift that was
35 [clanking] usually reserved for lower seniority. I [papers rustling] for
36 some reason, um, had the luxury of either getting bumped or, or being able
37 to apply for [thumping] and move into a different shifts, um, I thought
38 throughout my career at GM fairly easy.
39
40 I don't know why. Um, it seemed like I, I got bumped a lot but I also – I
41 always got bumped to something I wanted, [laughter] which it worked out
42 for me. I didn't and I, I never – I don't remember too many times where I
43 was bumped when I didn't want to be. Um, I worked – [sneezing] I think I
44 had about 6 months seniority and I, and I worked the third shift, [tapping]
45 which worked out really well for going to school. Eh, we would get out at
46 7 a.m. and I would go right – I would apply for early morning classes and

1 go right to LCC and then go home in the afternoons and get some rest and
2 it allowed me to have what I thought was the best situation w-, which was
3 most people worked during the day, have the evenings with their family
4 and then sleep at night. Where I, I went to school during the day, had the
5 evenings with my family and worked at night, so I, I thought it was just
6 the opposite or just, you know, the – and I also thought okay, I – I tried to
7 look for the positives in every situation and I thought well the, the
8 advantage to this is I have a third shift premium, so I actually had a little
9 bit extra money, um, and I could go home midday and get some rest
10 before, you know, your family life would begin.

11
12 And I would usually get up around 5 [coughing] or 6 at night [sneezing]
13 and still have the evening hours with, with the family. So [thumping]
14 when I went to that shift, um, there was an op-, I was gonna get bumped
15 and I, I don't remember, [tsk] uh, [tapping] where th-, I had a couple a
16 choices and I was fortunate enough to say okay, I can make this move or
17 that [tapping] move and I thought well, I'll take the third shift and it
18 actually worked out pretty well for me and I, I held that shift for about 5 or
19 6 months. I n-, I remember it being it being a couple a semesters [tsk] and,
20 um, I thought this is, this is pretty good. Um, so in that aspect, early on in
21 my GM career, it was pretty good, [tapping] um, and then, um, the
22 economy changed [banging] and things slowed down over there, so we
23 started getting laid off and that's how I ended up going from the
24 warehouse [throat clearing] to the body assembly [clicking] plant.

25
26 Um, in the first 2-1/2 years at GM, [tsk] I think I was laid off about 6
27 times from the warehouse and every time, um – not every time, a lotta
28 times, it was only for a few weeks. [thumping] Sometimes it was 4 weeks.
29 Sometimes it was 5 or 6. Um, and, eh, usually if I was off more than a
30 month, [thumping] it would – we would get called, uh, in the area hire
31 provision [clicking] and I worked, um, at the, uh, main plant, uh, twice. I
32 worked at the **stamping** plant once and I worked at body shop t-, or body
33 plant twice [clanking] and the second time I went [throat clearing] back to
34 the body shop or body plant, um, I decided that, eh – I had talked to a lotta
35 people at that point and I realized that the work here was steady. Um,
36 everybody that I had [tapping] talked to said, we don't think that, eh, it'll
37 ever be a slowdown enough where you will be laid off like you, [clanking]
38 like you're history of, eh – 'cause I, I remember saying I've been laid off 6
39 times in, in 20 months and it was, it was unsettling to have that kind of –
40 those periods of unemployment.

41
42 Um, [tsk] so well I made the decision to stay at Fisher Body, uh, [pen
43 clicking] when I got, uh, so w-, cause every time there would be a small
44 pickup in the market, [throat clearing] the warehouse would call and say
45 you have return rights, [clanking] we need you to come back and I'd
46 always say well, how long for and they'd say [thumping] well we can't

1 guarantee you f-, you know. And sometimes you'd go back [laughter] to
2 work [clanking] for 9 weeks and then you'd be laid off again and that was,
3 [clanking] that was difficult and although the, the work was more physical
4 at the body plant, I chose to stay [throat clearing] and [clanking] it was a
5 pretty good decision. Um, over the years, we've been laid off a lot less and
6 we also have or had for quite a few years, you know, the luxury of having
7 a, a summertime [thumping] changeover that was nice. Um, I like those
8 few [clanking] weeks off every summer. It's a good time to enjoy time
9 with family.

10

11 Marilyn Coulter: [25:16] Uh, Mark, can you please tell us [clanking] what changeover
12 [thumping] is?
13

14 Mark Warner: Changeover was [clanking] the changeover of model from the current year
15 production to the following year production and sometimes if, if the
16 redesigns were drastic, there would be a longer changeover where they'd
17 have to do more retooling [banging] where the general assembly would be
18 laid off for a longer periods of time and maintenance and skilled trades
19 would, uh, complete the changes needed for the new model [to run 25:44].
20

21 Doreen Howard: [tsk] So, um, uh, Doreen Howard. So your transition from, uh, the parts
22 plants to the body plant, um, you went from a 3- [thumping] shift
23 operation to a 2-shift operation. [26:03] Um, how, how did that, uh,
24 impact you, going – were you o-, did you come into our plant on first or
25 second shift? [clanking]
26

27 Mark Warner: Well again I feel like I was fortunate because [clanking] I came in at a
28 time when, um, I didn't feel like I was ever locked in to the low seniority,
29 uh, shift, uh, which was second. I actually hired in on the dayshift, [throat
30 clearing] stayed on the dayshift for about [tsk] oh, 2 or 3 months and got
31 to [clanking] work with a lotta higher seniority employees and, and
32 learned [tapping] the transfer, uh, process and learned how to [clanking]
33 put in transfers and, um, learned how to use the system that – to find a job
34 that, uh, would suit my needs and I, I think I was fortunate in the fact that I
35 was able to move around. Even though I didn't have a lot of seniority, I
36 felt like I spent, uh, a good amount of time on the dayshift, which was the
37 preferred shift, um, sometimes on the, on the afternoon shift, which was
38 mostly summertimes, [clanking] um, didn't mind that too much. Uh, felt
39 like I got into some groups that allowed me to get back to dayshift, uh,
40 when I needed to or when I wanted to and that was, uh, usually in the fall
41 and winter months so that it was easier to take classes.
42

43 Doreen Howard: Now you, you talked about, um, your work family. [throat clearing]
44 [27:25] Um, is there any particular coworkers that, um, impacted you
45 [thumping] significantly or, um, can you talk about, um, some of the, the
46 coworkers and the things that you maybe did during your working hours,

1 uh, in the facility to, um, entertain yourselves or, or make the day go by a
2 little smoother?

3
4Mark Warner: Well, eh, um, [tapping] one of the fondest memories I have is working in
5 cushion room. Uh, the cushion room was where they build the seats and
6 the cushion room was kind of isolated. It was out in an area that was, um,
7 what I felt like was surrounded by materials storage areas. Uh, we were
8 between the Trim Shop and the Body Shop and it was kind of like we had
9 our own area that was isolated but there was such a good group of people
10 [clanking] out there that it was a lotta fun to work there. Um, there was
11 always a, uh, a feeling of when you worked in the cushion room that you
12 took care of other cushion room people and everybody – we kinda,
13 because we were so isolated, we kind of, uh, entertained ourselves. Uh,
14 and it was a really good group of, uh, of people.

15
16 I was working Utility out there, uh, [clanking] which is, uh, absentee
17 replacement operators. I didn't have a regular assigned job. I would fill in
18 for people who were on vacation or, or sick [tsk] and so I got to move
19 around and which when I was younger was, was easier to do. I used to
20 learn jobs easily and it had gave me the opportunity to meet a lot more
21 people, um, than if you had [clanking] regular assignment. So I knew just
22 about everybody in the cushion room and I liked the group that we were
23 with. Um, I worked to the afternoon shift there, um, although I didn't
24 always work the afternoon shift. Sometimes we – being Utility, we got a
25 chance to work, uh, both shifts, uh, during, uh, deer season and, and other
26 parts of the year when they were looking for double shifters. Um, so I had
27 a chance [throat clearing] to work both shifts.

28
29 But it was still a, a unique environment out there c-, in the fact that we
30 were kind of – you knew no one was gonna come and help you out, so you
31 had to take care of each other out there and it was kind of, uh, eh, a, a fun
32 environment. A lotta people were a lotta fun and I still have a lotta those
33 friendships to this day that, you know, [throat clearing] you look back and
34 you run into these people whether they stayed in Trim or worked in
35 different areas, like some of'm have gone [coughing] to Body Shop. Some
36 have gone to the Paint Shop. Some of'm have left GM. Uh, but you s-,
37 when I see one of those people, I always h-, have a good smile and I have
38 a good smile returned because y-, we remember what it was like. Um, eh,
39 it kinda felt like a, a fraternity of – [coughing] that I have noticed
40 [coughing] and some, some [coughing] people have when they were in the
41 service together. You know, it's like that, that period in your life where
42 you, you experienced a, a closeness, eh, that people share it seems like for
43 a lifetime.

44
45Doreen Howard: You, you talked about, um, having a fun environment out there. [30:46]
46 What, what w-, what did you do for fun? [30:48] What...

1
2Mark Warner: Oh, there was a lot of loud...
3
4Doreen Howard: ...entertainment [did you do 30:49]?
5
6Mark Warner: ...radios, a lot of a, a what I would cos-, call [laughter] rambunctious
7 personalities. Um, it seemed like the cushion room, uh – I don't know if it
8 was, uh, intentional or by accident but it, it seemed to get a lot of the
9 colorful personalities. Um, there were a lot of people that were fun just to
10 be around and, [clanking] and you could, uh – it wouldn't take very much
11 to get them [clanking] into a jovial mood. Um, [throat clearing] so, um...
12
13Doreen Howard: [31:21] Did you have dinners or did you play cards with anyone at lunch?
14 [31:26] Uh, what type of activities did you, did you do...
15
16Mark Warner: Yeah.
17
18Doreen Howard: ...during the...
19
20Mark Warner: We had, uh, we had a few...
21
22Doreen Howard: ...the workday?
23
24Mark Warner: ...dinners. I r-, I don't recall a lotta [clanking] dinners but yes, we, we had
25 a lot of – there was a lot of games and cardplaying and, um, it seemed like,
26 uh, eh, we would get together after work, uh, a lotta the people from the
27 department that I was in, um, a lotta times and, and spend personal time
28 outside, uh, together. So it was a really close-knit group and when I look
29 back at on it, the, uh – there was a group of Utility, uh, persons, like
30 myself, that, uh, to this day, we're real close because we shared a – [throat
31 clearing] like I say, we, we had to kind of look out for each other out
32 there. I enjoyed that a lot.
33
34Doreen Howard: [Okay 32:14]. Um, [thumping] [clanking] you were at a couple different
35 facilities. [32:20] [tsk] Explain [thumping] what you saw [clanking] as far
36 as, um, the differences between [clanking] the, the supervisory techniques
37 between one facility and another.
38
39Mark Warner: Um, working at different plants, uh, there were similarities and, um, and
40 then some differences. The – it seemed like, uh, [tsk] the body plant and
41 the general assembly or main plant, uh, were most similar, um, except
42 that, eh, in the, eh, the afternoon shift at the, at the main plant seemed to
43 have, um, [tsk] less involvement by the supervisors and the management
44 team [rattling] over there. Um, I didn't work there for a long, long time, so
45 I, I really [thumping] don't have strong feelings about it but it seemed like
46 it was run more by, uh, group leaders or team leaders or, or pick-up, uh,

1 repairmen that, [thumping] that took care of the areas. It seemed like the
2 supervisor was there if, if there w-, to, you know, take attendance, pay
3 people and if there were [papers rustling] some kind of major problems
4 but [rattling] I think the workers themselves, it's – it felt like they took
5 more of r-, of an active role in, in running the area [banging] and it ran
6 good. Um, it seemed like, uh, everybody knew their responsibilities and
7 their jobs and, and they took care of'm the best they could and it seemed
8 like it ran, ran good over there.
9

10Doreen Howard: [33:54] And how did that compare to the body plant?
11

12Mark Warner: Um, the body plant, it seemed like there were, there were more, uh, what I
13 considered engineering problems or it felt like engineering problems. Eh,
14 it seemed like there were more fit problems, more mechanical problems
15 where things didn't go together correctly. Um, it felt like the, the chassis
16 side of the assembly process [throat clearing] felt like it was, uh, less, um,
17 [tsk] fit problems. That's not really a good way to put it but it, eh, when,
18 when we built cars at the chassis, it seemed like the body part was
19 something that came down and sat on it and everything went together the
20 way it was supposed to over there, whereas here there were a lot of –
21 [coughing] it never felt like it was engineered well [banging] so that we
22 couldn't – we didn't – we couldn't built it smoothly over here. Um, but I
23 don't remember it being a huge difference other than the fact that, um, I
24 remember the line never stopped [inaudible 34:57] and in Body, there
25 were always problems and breakdowns and things that, things that stopped
26 the line over here, it seemed like more to me.
27

28Doreen Howard: Um, I was also interested in, um, the differences in the actual
29 environmental aspects of the, the different plants that you were in. [35:20]
30 Um, you know, were they loud? [35:21] Were they noisy? [35:21] Were
31 they clean or dirty? [35:23] Um, what's some of the differences that you
32 saw between the different facilities as far as in the actual environments
33 that you were in?
34

35Mark Warner: Um, eh, the plant itself, uh, I worked at General Assembly Building 70 at,
36 at main plant, which is where they used to build the Cutlass, um, which
37 was known as the C line here at the body plant. Um, the building itself and
38 the facility seemed cleaner and newer. It looked a lot newer by decades,
39 [papers rustling] um, although the work in the general assembly line was,
40 was dirtier. Um, so it was [throat clearing] interesting to note that the work
41 here at the body plant, I felt was a lot cleaner, um, but the building was
42 much older. So you had, um, a dirtier plant to work in but easier, cleaner
43 work. Um, the, the chassis side seemed to be much dirtier work. There's a
44 lot more fluids involved, a lot, lot more grease, uh, but in a cleaner
45 building or a newer building and it seemed like a newer facility. Uh...
46

1Doreen Howard: [35:32] Uh, also could you, um, elaborate on, um, the, the safety, safety-
2 wise some of the, the changes [throat clearing] that you saw between the
3 different facilities as far as, um, procedures that they [clanking] had in
4 place for different safety issues?
5

6Mark Warner: Um, I always felt that the chassis plant [throat clearing] had the potential
7 for more or d-, more dangers or more accidents, although I never
8 witnessed any. Um, it, it felt like you were around a process that had, uh,
9 much more potential for injuries, although w-, I never, like I said, I never
10 witnessed any. Uh, around here, it felt like, uh, there were more safety
11 precautions in, in place. Um, eh, and I think the fact that your building in
12 the general assembly line over there, you were putting, uh, [tsk] putting
13 together engines, putting together drivetrains, putting together exhaust
14 systems and wheels and, and then putting the body onto the chassis, it felt
15 like, um, much more of an assembly process because it was bigger and,
16 and you got to see the complete process come together, whereas here it felt
17 like – working on a car [throat clearing] you'd, you'd build a lot of it but
18 there's still a lot of it that's unfinished when you – when it leaves here.
19 When I say here, I'm referring to the body plant. Um, it always felt like we
20 were a vendor to the, the, the final assembly plant.
21

22Doreen Howard: [38:07] Do you have a best memory that you can recall or, or a favorite,
23 uh, person or something funny that happened that, that you'd like to share
24 with us?
25

26Mark Warner: My best memory isn't anything specific. It is the, the friendships and the
27 people that I've gotten to know over the years. Uh, I feel like I've made a
28 [thumping] lot of acquaintances and I've, I've known a lot of different
29 people that have come and gone but the thing that I remember or I will
30 remember always [banging] are some of the friendships that I've made
31 over the years and, um, I don't know of another place that I've ever, uh,
32 experienced this many different kinds of people come together, uh, a-, and
33 in a small, concentrated area and I always find that interesting.
34

35Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Mark – Marilyn Coulter – while you worked, um, for your 20-some
36 odd years at, um, Fisher Body, um, the building [itself alone 39:05] have
37 gone [thumping] through a lot of different programs and processes.
38 [39:09] Where there any specific processes that impacted you? [39:12]
39 Where there any that you were [throat clearing] involved in? [39:15] Were
40 there any that you felt really helped to make Fisher Body the Capitol of
41 Quality?
42

43Mark Warner: [tsk] Well I've always, uh, felt like, uh, the auto industry, [tsk] GM in
44 particular has been, um, [tsk] too conservative and too slow to react to,
45 um, political and economic issues from the outside [throat clearing] and in
46 that aspect looking at it, um, it's been frustrating because working on the –

1 from the labor point of view, uh, [thumping] it, it has always felt to me
2 that our input or our influence [thumping] over how the car is produced
3 has meant very, very little to the decisions and the process. Um, so from
4 that aspect, you kind of – from my point of view, I felt like I can't, um,
5 give my heart and soul into, [tsk] uh, [tsk] changes and decisions, uh, on
6 car making because [throat clearing] of the dead ends and the frustration
7 or the, the lack of, uh, it seemed like sincerity of, of our input into the cars
8 and the way they're made.
9

10 Um, and I think, I think that's more evident today when you look at the
11 current economic, uh, situation and the global economy, um, and the
12 political atmosphere that GM seems to be, um, either incr-, incredibly
13 naive or, or, uh, [clanking] stubborn in, in changing and adapting to a
14 changing world and the auto industry, I think, is, um, sadly is, is a dying
15 dinosaur, um, because of – it feels like, um, one of those companies that is
16 going to hang on as long as they can with – by their fingernails but that
17 eventually is probably not going to succeed and it's going to [throat
18 clearing] continually shrink. At least that's my opinion. Um, I've enjoyed
19 [thumping] working for GM but it's been frustrating in that point or
20 looking at it from that aspect.
21

22Doreen Howard: Uh, Doreen Howard. Um, you were at different, uh, facilities with General
23 Motors. You've met a lot of people. You said you were laid off and came
24 back and laid off and, and returned once again. [41:55] Um, [thumping]
25 how does the closing of the body plant, [throat clearing] uh, personally
26 affect you?
27

28Mark Warner: [tsk] Um, that has always felt – we, we knew it was coming for quite a
29 while. Um, it wasn't this big secret. Eh, the exact date of when it
30 happened, um, to me felt like it came on quite suddenly and as the months
31 have passed, um, since it's closing, it has – it's saddened me a little bit to
32 feel like it's the end of an era because I have always felt like Fisher Body,
33 uh, is a part of our history and especially in the midwest and especially in
34 Michigan where the auto industry has been an important part of the
35 industrialized [tapping] age, you know, although we are just about to close
36 that chapter. [tapping]
37

38 Um, and it's, it's, [tapping] an honor to feel like I've been part of that and
39 to feel like [papers rustling] yeah, uh, Fisher Body was something that will
40 be remembered I hope fondly and I h-, and I hope, eh, it'll be looked on,
41 eh, in respect that it was important. But at the same time, it's sad to see
42 that it's closed and it's gone [tapping] and that, um, eh, it – it's hard to
43 imagine, um, that kind of, um, lifestyle continuing for future generations.
44 Um, I – it may happen but I think it, it will change drastically enough that
45 it won't be the – anywhere near what we remember. Um, I – what I will r-,

1 will remember are, again, the friendships and the [throat clearing] people
2 that I've met over the years.
3

4Doreen Howard: [43:34] Uh, have you ever, um, purchased any of the vehicles that you've
5 built over the years?
6

7Mark Warner: I have, uh, been a, a GM customer, uh, for a good portion of my life. Um,
8 I have not personally owned the products that we have built. No. So, um, I
9 could say I've bought our company products, uh, many of'm but, uh, as far
10 as – I've been a, a pickup truck driver for quite a while and so I like, I like
11 pickup trucks. Um, so, um, and we've [thumping] always built cars.
12 Although I've liked – uh, the Oldsmobile brand is something, uh, my
13 family grew up with. Uh, uh, we've had a lot of Oldsmobiles and my
14 parents and my grandparents drove a lot of Oldsmobiles. I drove a few
15 Cutlasses when I was younger but they were older, uh, vehicles that I had,
16 had not purchased or not worked on. [tsk] Um, and then, uh, I had started
17 driving trucks probably a couple decades ago and I've always drove –
18 since then, I've drove trucks.
19

20Doreen Howard: [44:41] Um, final question, is there anything at all that you wanted to,
21 [throat clearing] to talk about that we have not touched on, um?
22

23Mark Warner: Um, eh, I'm, I'm happy to see that this project has taken place. Um, I've
24 always felt [papers rustling] that there has – there was always a need to,
25 um, have a historical, uh, record that would kind of set the record straight.
26 I think the autoworker – the American autoworker, I think, is much
27 maligned, uh, and, uh, I think it's too bad that the stereotype of the
28 autoworker is, I think, way, way, way off, um, and I – I'm glad that you
29 guys are doing this project and, uh, I'm happy to be part of it, uh, [tsk] so.
30

31Doreen Howard: [45:34] Uh, Marilyn?
32

33Marilyn Coulter: You said it was maligned. [45:36] What would you – was – what would
34 you say is the bissest-, biggest misconception about the autoworker that,
35 um?
36

37Mark Warner: Well you, you – I try to view, um, most things, uh, that you read in the
38 media or hear on t-, television or radio with a grain of salt because I
39 believe probably – I've felt this way for more than a decade that media, uh,
40 will create a story or report a story with their own agendas [tapping] in
41 mind and with, um, with the point of view that they have to make it
42 interesting otherwise you're not going to read it or watch it but, at the same
43 time, you have to sell newspapers. And so I think that they will collect,
44 you know, a, a great deal of facts and use the ones they want to, to create
45 the, uh, story that they wanna tell and I believe that that has always been,
46 um, [tsk] [clanking] a part of the story. I don't believe – and I think it's

1 always been, uh, in a semi-negative [thumping] depending on which point
2 of view it's coming from.
3
4 Uh, if you're, if you're watching the news, you will hear about [tsk] big
5 decisions that labor or management had made, um, that create a – I think a
6 picture that is, um, very, very incomplete, um, and a lot of times,
7 especially in the local newspaper media around here, the, eh, I think the
8 facts that are released or the statements that are released are, are very
9 biased and 1 sided. You, you hear a GM spokesperson that will come out
10 [thumping] and make an announcement about this or that and everybody
11 that [throat clearing] works in the labor side will, will see or read it and
12 say where did that come from [laughter] or, or that is so far off that we
13 need – it seems like the UAW needs a spokesperson that, um, is I want to
14 say, [banging] uh, more gutsy just to speak up for – I think for labor and
15 say this is how we see it and that is, you know, the other side and here's
16 this side and instead of – I think too many people are too concerned these
17 days with being politically correct.
18
19 And th-, I think that is very difficult for the general public to interpret. Uh,
20 a lotta times you'll read something and you go wow, that really sounds bad
21 but if you knew the whole story and all of the facts and you were able to
22 do – to, you know, form your own opinion, it probably wouldn't be as 1
23 sided as it really sounds. And I think that's, that's a sad fact with, with
24 multimedia today, is that, [throat clearing] you know, I think, uh, reporters
25 and, uh, editors in particular are under too much pressure to – their bottom
26 line is to sell newspapers and to sell newspapers you gotta create
27 interesting stories and, [beeping] uh, a lotta times it's, it's pretty negative
28 or all negative and you don't hear enough. I d-, I don't think you hear
29 enough or unbiased, equal reporting on the same s-, uh, same subject on
30 [tapping] all sides of the story.
31
32Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 49:01].
33
34Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 49:02]. Thank...
35
36Doreen Howard: Thank...
37
38Marilyn Coulter: ...you.
39
40Doreen Howard: Thank you.
41
42Mark Warner: You're welcome.
43
44John Fedewa: Thank you, Mark.
45
46 [recorder clicking]

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