

1 **Doug Gross discusses his career as a production worker and UAW EAP advisor at the**
2 **Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**
3
4

5Cheryl McQuaid: This is Cheryl McQuaid with the Lansing Fisher Body historical team.
6 We're at the Lansing Car Assembly plant in the Labor Relation-, I'm
7 sorry, the engineering conference room. It's October 17th, 2005. We are
8 preparing to interview Doug Gross. [0:21] Could you state your name,
9 Doug, and the spelling of your last name and your address please?
10

11Doug Gross: Yes. My name is Doug Gross, and it's spelled G-R-O-S-S, and I live at
12 118, 11874 West Cutler Road, Eagle, Michigan, 48822.
13

14Cheryl McQuaid: We'd also like to take a moment to let everybody else in the room state
15 their name.
16

17Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.
18

19Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
20

21John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
22

23Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
24

25Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.
26

27Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming.
28

29Cheryl McQuaid: [0:54] Uh, Doug, we would like to know the date you hired into this plant
30 and maybe a little bit about the first day that you hired in.
31

32Doug Gross: Okay. I hired in, um, March 25th of, uh, 1981, and, uh, I remember I, uh,
33 came in and I worked across the line from a guy named Vern, and, uh,
34 Vern was a very, um, uh, uh, he was kind of a, an older gentleman. And,
35 uh, he was, he was pretty negative. Of course, at that time they were
36 gettin' ready to put on 2 shifts. So, um, my, the guy that was breaking me
37 in, his name was, um, oh, gosh, he was an Italian guy, Luigi or somethin'
38 like that and, um – now, Tim Ferris was gonna be my partner on afternoon
39 shift – and, um, it was, it was quite an interesting first day learnin' the
40 wagons and the breaks and, and, um, they told me to, uh, go down to the
41 hospital and I got lost [chuckle] for like 3 and a half hours. [laughing] I
42 like, I walked, I was just like, I had no idea where I was. And, uh, I got
43 back, and everybody was laughin' at me. Vern was, Vern was trippin' on
44 me goin', "Yeah, yeah, you're just one of those," you know, "low life
45 young kids that come in," you know, and he was givin' me a hard time

1 about gettin' lost but honestly I got lost and, you know, so, I learned to,
2 uh, look at column numbers [chuckle] really quick.
3

4Michael Fleming: [2:20] What was wagons and, and your breaks? Talk about that.
5

6Doug Gross: Oh. Well, wagons was, of course, when they came around and they had
7 the little cart and, uh, they would sell, um, oh, let, what I bought almost
8 every day was the, uh, honey buns and the orange drink because I really
9 liked those, the orange drinks that come in the carton. And, uh, I really
10 liked the orange drinks; they were good. The fruit punch wasn't that good;
11 it kind of had like a funny aftertaste to it, so I, I didn't like those, so, but –
12 and then the, uh, pop machines where the, uh, the plastic cup would drop
13 down and then ice would come into it and then the pop would, the syrup
14 would come and then the pop, the sodi-, er, the, uh, fizzy stuff would
15 come after that, so. And, of course, you'd buy a Pepsi and you'd put
16 peanuts in there and it was really good.
17

18Doreen Howard: [3:08] What, what brought you to come to Fisher Body, to actually hire in
19 here?
20

21Doug Gross: Well, um, in 1979, um, my general business teacher, um, Mr. Ludwig, um,
22 had us, uh, myself and John Fedewa do a project. And, uh, the project was
23 to either do a resume or a letter of application. And, um, the both John and
24 I did the letter of application to General Motors. Um, I don't even think
25 that we had heard that they were hiring at the time, to tell you the truth,
26 but they, we thought that, you know, we'd put it in there, and so John and
27 I, um, skipped school one day to, uh, come over and, um, try and get an
28 interview and, uh, we got the interview and John got hired in '79 and I
29 didn't, you know. He, uh, obviously spent more time in the confessional
30 than I did at that period of time of our lives [laughing].
31

32 So, so, at any rate, um, it, uh, then in 1981 during, from '79 to '81, I had
33 called a lady in the, uh, personnel department – her name was Donna –
34 and I called her, um, I believe it was every Tuesday at, between 9 and 10,
35 and, uh, it just got to be after, you know, after a couple of years, she just
36 knew that it was me, you know, and, and she's like, "Nope, Doug," you
37 know, "we're not hirin' yet," and, and then I heard that they were hiring
38 and I had called her like 2 weeks before or a week before and she hadn't
39 said anything that they were thinking about hiring or anything and, um,
40 and so I was standing out in the line and, uh, the line went from the south
41 gate and it zigzagged like a snake 4 or 5 times before I got there at like
42 6:00 in the morning.
43

44 And, um, and so it got to be about, I don't know, 8:30 or 9:00 and I told,
45 you know, the people who was in front of me and in back of me, "Hey,
46 I'm gonna go over and use the phone," 'cause we were all, you know, we

1 would run over to the store and get a pop or whatever and we'd hold our
2 place in line. And, uh, I told'm, you know, if I'm not back in, like, you
3 know, 20, 30 minutes, just go ahead, you know, you guys can have my
4 place in line, and they said all right, and I went over and called and Donna
5 said, "Yeah, come on in," so she said, "just walk by everybody," and so I,
6 I went from over by Sav-Way at the, uh, uh, where the telephone was and
7 I walked around to the front of the building and I walked by a bunch of
8 people I know, you know, my cousins and stuff, and I walked right by'm
9 and went up in and they put me to work the next day. So, it was, it was
10 pretty neat.

11

12Doreen Howard: [5:41] How many people do you think were standing in that line?

13

14Doug Gross: Thousands.

15

16Doreen Howard: Wow.

17

18Doug Gross: I mean, there were a lot of people there, you know. And it, it was kind of
19 like a single-file, double-file line, you know, and it had – by the time I got
20 there at 6 a.m., it was, it was a long line. It came out, out of the doors and
21 then it went, like, through that little close parking lot and then once it hit
22 the big parking lot, it zigzagged probably a good 4 or 5 times. And then
23 there were people at the front gate too.

24

25Doug Rademacher: Doug, that, uh, is an interesting story. [6:16] Tell me, what was it like, uh,
26 to walk past everybody and to go down into the front corridor where they
27 were accepting applications and not be in line? How, well that must have
28 been a very odd feeling and ...

29

30Doug Gross: Yeah, you know, because, you know, my cousins, I know my cousin Jim
31 looked at me and he's like, "Well, where are you goin'?" I'm like, "In
32 there." [laughing] You know? I mean, I didn't really, I was just excited,
33 you know, I mean, that she had said, "Yeah, come on in," you know, just,
34 just, walk by everybody and I'm just – once I got to the security guards,
35 you know, they're like lookin' at me like, "Hold it, what are you doin'?"
36 and I'm like, "Well, Donna said ..." and they're like, "Oh, you're Doug,"
37 and I'm like, "Yep," and, you know, she had already called down to
38 security to tell'm to let me in, so ...

39

40Marilyn Coulter: [6:59] Doug, what made you be so persistent for so many years to get in
41 here?

42

43Doug Gross: Money. [laughing] Money and, and that's where, you know, I mean, my,
44 uh, I have quite a lineage in here. Not with my mom and dad but, um, like
45 my uncle [Leon 7:14] worked, uh, worked here; he's retired now. Um, my
46 uncle Dick, um, my uncle Larry, my aunt Karen, my, uh, aunt Loretta, um,

1 and then, of course, my cousin Jeff, he hired in in '79 with John. And then
2 me in, um, let me see myself, and Jim Feldpausch hired in in '81 and then
3 Scott hired in, I think, in '84, and then, um, Ed in – I mean, there's just a
4 [muck 7:47] of people.
5

6Marilyn Coulter: [7:47] So, because you had so many family members who worked here,
7 what were some of the things growing up that you heard about this place,
8 outside of the money, of course?
9

10Doug Gross: Well, money, benefits, um, you know, I was, um, I hung around a lot with,
11 of course, with the family and everything and they just always made a
12 good living, you know. It was just like they were always comfortable. As
13 we were, I mean, my dad, of course, owned his own shop and, um, in
14 Portland, but, um, you know – well at the time that was in [Sherlat 8:18] –
15 but, okay, you know, they always made a good living and they didn't
16 really complain of, ever about the work. I never heard'm ever complain
17 that the work was like way, way, way too hard or that, you know, work
18 was a drag. You never heard that coming from'm, you know. And then, of
19 course, I had, um, on the Gross side, all of those guys worked at, um, oh,
20 at the Oldsmobile plant. And so, you know, I had sent both, both, uh, the,
21 when John and I did the project, um, I had sent'm to both to 652, well,
22 what was it called, Oldsmobile, and here. And I had gotten a physical and
23 an orientation at both places but, again, in, you know, in '79 they had just
24 stopped hiring just short of me. It was like, here I've got, you know, I'm
25 like it's in my hands. I've got the orientation, the safety glasses, the
26 physical, everything, and then they go and, "We'll call ya," and, you
27 know, and it's like the call never came. So ...
28

29Doreen Howard: [9:17] So that first day must have been just ecstatic for you too.
30

31Doug Gross: Yeah, it was. It was, it was really, it was, it was really cool, you know,
32 and, and, of course, Tim and I are still really, really good friends. Um, you
33 know, we've had a lot of people, um, you know, come and go, you know
34 what I mean? As far as, um, like, when, uh, oh, when they started offerin'
35 buyouts and, and, and stuff like that, um, you know, a couple of my good
36 friends took the buyout, you know, which, um, you know, they're doin'
37 very well now, you know, they're doin' really, really good, you know, so
38 it, I mean, life does go on beyond Fisher Body, you know, but, you know,
39 all about attitude and what you do, so ...
40

41Marilyn Coulter: [9:58] Can you explain bl-, buyout for those people who don't know what
42 buyout means, please?
43

44Doug Gross: Yeah, um, a buyout is when they would, um, give you, um, like, 35,000
45 dollars and then you would just basically give up your job. They would
46 give you a chunk of money and then, you know, you, more or less, they

1 just bought you out, so they just erased your social security number from
2 GM.
3

4Doreen Howard: [10:22] When you first came in, can you explain the first job that they put
5 you on and, um, what department and what shift?
6

7Doug Gross: Sure. Well, when, the first day I came in, of course, we knew that we were
8 being hired for the second shift. Um, it was down on what was called the,
9 um, A System at that time, which, um, which, of course, now is called the,
10 which now, well, was called the C System. And we were building the, uh,
11 Cutlasses, um, the, uh, Cutlass Supreme, 2 doors, 4 doors and wagons,
12 and, um, I did the, uh, retractor house bolt down and the, uh, C09, um, top
13 vinyl ring that went along the, uh, back window of the car. And, uh, I had
14 to put in 6 rivets, um, around the back window and then we built up our
15 own retractor houses and you had to put, um, deadener patches and sealer
16 in each of the corners and, um, and then you put foam that would stop it
17 from rattling along the curved end. And then you had to just reach into the
18 car and slide the slot up in and put it down and then the next people down
19 the line put in 8 screws around there and then 1 major bolt, and then 2 jobs
20 down the line they bolted in the, uh, actual, uh, oh, the actual, uh, retractor
21 that retracted the seatbelt back inside there.
22

23Doreen Howard: [11:50] So, what did you think of that job? Did you think it was hard? Did
24 you think that ...
25

26Doug Gross: No, it was the cat's meow compared to what, you know, I had did in the
27 past. I was pourin' concrete and, uh, if anybody's ever poured concrete,
28 that's, uh, you know, we pole concrete into forms, you know, that were
29 about waist high. Uh, it was actually a, uh, uh, they made hot tanks, you
30 know, and, um, these, they would pour a base and it would be like as big
31 of a football field over the top, you know, then they'd build a, um, pole
32 barn over the top. And so we did all the solid forms and then the slatted
33 forms. So ...
34

35Doreen Howard: [12:26] So compared to what, the physical labor that you were doin' prior
36 to that, this was a good job?
37

38Doug Gross: Yeah, oh yeah [laughing]. Yeah, it was, um, yeah. It was a great job, you
39 know. The only, the only thing that I found difficult was that I was tied in
40 one place and couldn't go any, couldn't go anyplace unless somebody
41 came and took my place, where at the other plant, if you had to go to the
42 bathroom, you would just say, "Hey, I'm goin' to the bathroom," and
43 somebody would just jump in and take your place and, you know, fill in
44 the person drivin' the fork truck. You could go to the bathroom and come
45 back and then you'd take the pole right back and go right back to work.
46

1Doreen Howard: [13:02] Now, as, as time went on, did, did you still have the same attitude
2 toward the, the jobs that you did? Did you find that they were still
3 physically easy or, or was there, um, ever any time where you started to
4 have problems at all with any of the jobs?
5

6Doug Gross: No. Physically, no. Um, we, uh, um, sat windshields. Af-, after I, um, did
7 the retractor house spools down, um, I went over and started runnin' the
8 windshields and, um, and so there was, um, a 3-man team and then 1
9 person rotated, so, you had 3 tables that built the glass, 1 person got the
10 glass, and then 1 person was on break, okay? So, the person who was
11 getting the glass was on the first table and then we rotated between the 3
12 tables. And that was with, um, [Gale 14:02] Crandall, uh, Dennis Pelton,
13 um, uh, would've been myself, and there, let me see, 1, 2, 3, and then
14 there was 4, Paul, um, I can't remember Pauly's last name, Paul Denney?
15 And, um, we ran those windshields. And, um, like I said, you know, that
16 was probably the most physical job, um, that I ever had because you
17 actually had to pick up the windshield and, you know, with the suction
18 cups and then walk across the line and put it in, put in a piece of
19 permagum on the side. So, but we had a lot of fun down there. We really
20 did.
21

22 Um, we turned – the table went from 1 to 10 and, uh, when you least
23 expected, whoever was doin' glass, if they put the table on 10, it was
24 flyin', man. The glass would almost take off. It looked like a helicopter
25 [laughing], you know, and you would go, "Whoa," and then you'd, you
26 know, 'cause it was, I mean, you had to stay in sync with everybody else.
27 If not, the process was, it was a nightmare because, you know, then you'd
28 have to run up the line. The next job up the line they, um, paddled the
29 windshield, paddled the urethane, and, to tuck it into the glass, and then
30 the next one was the reveal molding, and if you got by the reveal molding
31 then everybody was shippin' their stuff and, of course, then the, you know,
32 can call guy at that time – that's what we called'm who would give the can
33 calls or pick up the stuff down the line – um, he was just screamin'. He
34 would get so mad at us 'cause we were constantly messin' around. I mean,
35 there wasn't a day that didn't go by that we were down the line.
36

37Doreen Howard: You, you started to touch base a little bit on, um, some of the pranks and
38 things that, that you did. Um, you talked a little bit about, um, going to the
39 hospital and getting lost and things like that and, and other, um, turning up
40 the speed on the glass. [15:51] What's some of the other things that you
41 guys did for...
42

43Doug Gross; For fun?
44

45Doreen Howard: ... for fun? Yeah.
46

1 Doug Gross: Well, um, what we, what I would do, specifically, is, um, you know,
2 Dennis, uh, Dennis Pelton and I had a love/hate relationship, you know.
3 We really, really liked each other. We're still really, really good friends.
4 Um, you know, I talk to him all the time out at the job bank and stuff –
5 but, what I would do is I would take, um, oh, a zip strip, a plastic, long
6 piece of plastic, and I would get some urethane and I would put it all the
7 way up into the top of the glove of his middle finger. Now, urethane,
8 unless you had special hand cleaner, you couldn't get it off ya. It was a
9 nightmare and the, and the primer too. It was terrible. And, um, so in
10 between, like I said, every 20 minutes and in 20 minutes his whole hand
11 would turn black and he wouldn't even know it, you know, and he'd pull
12 off his glove and go, "Doug!" Scream and, you know, of course, then
13 he'd chase me around with his hand tryin' to touch me and stuff and we'd
14 be laughin', then we'd get all down the line and then he'd go to break and
15 then we'd spend his whole break gettin' back up the line, you know. It
16 was, um, you know, or, you know, but, yeah, we did that. And, um ...
17

18 Cheryl McQuaid: [16:56] Why did you do that?
19

20 Doug Gross: Huh?
21

22 Cheryl McQuaid: Why did you do that?
23

24 Doug Gross: Well, because I liked him. [laughing]
25

26 John Fedewa: [laughing]
27

28 Doug Rademacher: [laughing]
29

30 Doreen Howard: [laughing]
31

32 Linda Johnson: [laughing]
33

34 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughing]
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: [laughing]
37

38 Michael Fleming: [laughing]
39

40 Doug Gross: That, and, and, um, I would always steal his cigarettes. Um, because I was,
41 I, you know, when I was quitting cigarettes. I was trying to quit when I
42 hired in. And I would always bum cigarettes and it would drive him nuts.
43 "Why don't you just buy your own pack?" I'm like, "Well, because you're
44 buyin'm, you know, I don't have to." And so, um, I would always, I was
45 constantly, constantly, I would either bum'm or I would just grab his pack
46 'cause we had these little trays that we would set our personal stuff on,

1 and, um, I would, I would just take one, you know, from him. And, of
2 course, he'd get all mad at me and everything and then, so, for, um, one
3 Christmas, I, uh, bought him 4 cartons of cigarettes and had his wife
4 wrap'm for me and put'm underneath the tree kind of like a Santa Claus
5 thing. And he came, he came in, he was just touched that I would even buy
6 him something, let alone, you know, and, uh, I think, really that was the,
7 you know, the start of when Dennis and I actually really started to like
8 each other. [laughing] You know?
9

10Doreen Howard: You started to touch base on some of the camaraderie. [18:09] Um, do you
11 have other friends in, in the plant that you do things, um, either in the plant
12 or outside of the plant with at this time? It sounds like you ...
13

14Doug Gross: Um, yeah, you know, uh, Roy Fedewa and, and myself, we, we'll go
15 fishin' from time to time. Um, you know, really, you know, the people that
16 you work around is basically, you know, they, they turn into your family,
17 you know? And, um, uh, when I worked up in polish, um, was probably,
18 you know, besides windshields, was probably, um, the, really the closest
19 I've ever been to a group of guys. Uh, Rich Smith, Brent, um, Brent
20 Moore, um, Rob Haney, um, who else was up there? Doug Scott. Um,
21 there was just a bunch of us up there and, uh, you know, and, and really,
22 you know, those guys were probably the biggest influence on me because,
23 of course, at that point, you know, all those guys were Christians and you
24 had, you know, lonely Doug up there, you know, who was runnin' to the
25 bar [chuckle], you know, every lunch hour.
26

27 Um, and so, those guys were really, you know, the reason why I really
28 started to, you know, believe as strongly as I do, so, and then, of course,
29 shortly after that, then, you know, about 3 years after that I started Bible
30 college and, you know, the getting into Bible college, you know, I went
31 through all of that and got put in a set ministry and then I got ordained.
32 Well, first I was licensed, then I got my ordination and then this job came
33 open and I was already a alternate in the, um, Employee's
34 Assistance/Work Family office and, um, so I just moved right into this
35 position as, as the chaplain.
36

37Marilyn Coulter: [19:48] Doug, before we, before we go to chaplain and you talk about it,
38 what were some of the things that those groups of men who were Christian
39 men, what were some of the types of things that they did on their
40 downtime that drew you into the faith?
41

42Doug Gross: Um, well, it, it wasn't really like, you know, this huge religious Bible
43 study thing, you know? It was more like a camaraderie of, um, you know,
44 we're all in this together. It was like a teamwork thing. It was like, um,
45 you know, we would bring in, we would have all kinds of, uh, I want to
46 say cookouts, but cook-in, you know, people would bring in their favorite

1 dishes and we would set it down on a picnic table. We had parties and,
2 um, Rich and I drank hot chocolate. We had this hot chocolate thing goin'
3 on with the marshmallows and, you know, I had a little hot coffee pot that
4 I did the hot water in and then, you know, everybody just, you, like I said,
5 you know, it was like a, for a season there, it was just like, uh,
6 Thanksgiving every day.
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Every day.
9

10Doug Gross: [laughing] Yeah, I gained a lot of weight.
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Now, I know, um, like on certain areas, though, they do have Bible studies
13 in the ...
14

15Doug Gross: Yes.
16

17Marilyn Coulter: ... on the floor. [21:00] And, do you find, did you find that there were
18 very many of those? And were they well-received?
19

20Doug Gross: Um, I've known, when I, when I worked in paint, um, we had one – there
21 was a bunch of sanitation guys and a bunch of people from paint because
22 there's so many, um, staggered times in paint, it was like a moving Bible
23 study that lasted about an hour and a half, with the same people in it. Um,
24 Don Loomis and, um, Glenn Babb were the ones that pretty much, you
25 know, took control of the, of the meeting. Not, I don't want to say control,
26 they more or less had the devotion, the scripture picked out for the day,
27 and then we would talk about that specific scripture. Now, the best, and, of
28 course, we would bring in our guitars and we would play bluegrass music
29 and Lyle would break out his harmonica and, you know, I mean, we just
30 really, you know, had a good time. You know? We really did.
31

32 The best one I ever went through, I mean, as far as teaching-wise was one
33 that was in the, uh, Labor Relations conference room on the afternoon
34 shift. Uh, Ray Jackson ran that one. And, it was just a really, really nice
35 Bible study, you know. Down to earth teaching, you know, stuff that you
36 could use every day, you know, to help you with your spiritual growth,
37 you know. And it really, you know, I looked forward to it, you know? So,
38 every day at lunch, I mean, we always had some place to go and people
39 took communion with, you know, so ...
40

41Doreen Howard: Now, you've talked about when you started out you started in trim.
42

43Doug Gross: Mm-hm.
44

45Doreen Howard: [22:23] And then you talked about polishing?
46

1 Doug Gross: Right.
2
3 Doreen Howard: [22:26] Where, where was that at?
4
5 Doug Gross: Well, in 19, in 19, let me see, what year was it? It would've had to have
6 been 19, that long changeover, 1984, I believe. Between '83 and '84, they
7 had quite a long changeover there, and, uh, at that point, I leveled off up
8 into paint. And, um, they said, you know, when they took us up there,
9 when we leveled off, they said, you know, "Who likes overtime?" and I
10 raised my hand, so they put me up in building 21-3, which was off of
11 repair, so the cars would come up out of the main color booth. They would
12 either get bought – if they got bought, they came onto our line. They got
13 the deadener, the elephant ears, and, um, they were sanded, the little
14 defects, and then they went into the polish booths. The sides was first and,
15 um, the, uh, then it came around to our side and then we did the roofs, tops
16 and the decklids 'cause we were up in the air up on a ramp in a booth.
17
18 And, um, probably one of the most funniest things that I've ever seen in
19 my life was, um, Wilbur, um, he was, he was a black guy and Wilbur was
20 just, he was just a super, super guy, you know. Always wantin' to help
21 people and everything. And, um, he was up there [chuckle] and he was
22 polsihin' and he had the cord wrapped up underneath his arm and then he
23 had the polish wheel, you know, the cord came up over the top of his
24 shoulder, and I told him, I'm like, "Wilbur, dude, man," you know, "you
25 need to take that cord off your shoulder," you know? And he's like, "Oh,
26 no, no, man, I'll never hit it, it's in back of me." And I'm goin', "Dude,
27 I'm tellin' ya, that, that cord is gonna – if you touch that cord, it's gonna
28 wrap up," I said, "and it's not gonna be pretty," and he's like goin', "Oh,
29 man, I got it, I got it." I'm like, "Okay," you know, I never wanted to push
30 people to do somethin' they didn't wanna do, and it wasn't 2 jobs later,
31 man, and that polish wheel went wham [laughing] right up – he was all
32 tied up in that polish wheel, you know.
33
34 We had to shut the line down 'cause he couldn't, I mean, it was so tight
35 and up underneath his chin, he couldn't put his chin down to see to try and
36 get the cord off [laughing]. It was just hilarious. I'm like goin', "Dude,
37 man!" [laughing] We went down there and, you know, of course, like I
38 said, you know, first thing I did was unplugged it and then me and Rich
39 and Brent helped him get untangled from the, uh, from the cord. But he
40 didn't get hurt at all. He got, you know, scratched up a little bit. The polish
41 wheel, it kind of scratched up his arm, you know, but other than that he
42 was, he was all right.
43
44 Doreen Howard: [24:54] Now, the 21-3 you said? Was that ...
45
46 Doug Gross: Yes.

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2Doreen Howard:

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6Doug Gross:

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[24:55] Now, um, describe where that is in location to, um, the other parts of the plant and, um, was there a lot of people up there and was it, uh, as, as far as proximity, in closeness to other areas?

Okay. Uh, building 20, building 21 was probably the closest thing to Heaven you would ever get because it was way up in the air and it, man, if you didn't get the elevator, you were gonna be sweatin' when you got to the top of those stairs. There was, um, a stairwell over, um, it would be, let me see, the, uh, west side of the plant, um, and the stairwell, I believe there was, I'm gonna say, 700, 800 steps in the whole stairwell. It was, it was un-, it was unbelievable. Seven st-, 7 steps per flight, and there was, had to have been 15 to 20 flights in that stairway.

And, um, but building 23, you had, um, all of the mainline buyers, the repair buyers, um, 'cause the cars would be set on repair, they would go downstairs into repair, they would be fixed, come back up through the oven, and then they would come upstairs and then you would have the buyers who took off all the plastic and everything and then those 2 lines fed our, um, FF line, which was the f-, uh, finish, finesse line. And then the first job was the elephant ear job, then it would go into the, um, blackout job where they would spray, um, blackout paint, um, which would be right in front of where the, um, radiator would sit. They would spray blackout up there and then it would come into the deadener booth, um, and then once it was got into deadener – of course, I worked in deadener too – um, but once it got into deadener, they would spray deadener inside both the fender wells and it would go out of there and then it would be the side polishers and the side cleanup and then it went around to the, the first job in the booth. So, there was probably, maybe 60 or 70 people at one time. I think that would've been about the most that worked up there at that time. They had 2 intermittent relief guys.

Um, Jerry and, uh, Dennis Pelton ended up followin' me up to paint and so for a while when I worked in the deadener booth, he was my first-time build coordinator and that would've been the second gift I bought him, because he would come in and he would stand in one spot and me and the pers-, me and Jeff Hunter would work opposite of each other, so when he was starting a job, I was finished a job; when I was starting a job, he was finishing a job, so we never sprayed each other. And so, Dennis would come in and he would stand all the way up there and I would come up the line and I would just spray him with deadener. And then he'd go, "Douggy!" every time I hit him, so, like, if he was in there for 15 minutes, for 15 minutes every other minute you'd hear, "Douggy!" So, I'd spray his socks and, his white socks, 'cause he always wore shorts, his white socks would end up black, so for Christmas every year I would buy him a package of 6 pairs of socks.

1
2 John Fedewa: [laughing]
3
4 Doreen Howard: [laughing]
5
6 Linda Johnson: [laughing]
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughing]
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [laughing]
11
12 Doug Rademacher: [laughing] Doug, you said, um, you worked in trim and then you went to
13 polish.
14
15 Doug Gross: Yep.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: You said you leveled off to get there. [28:06] Would you explain what
18 leveled off means?
19
20 Doug Gross: Um, leveling off is, is basically when, um, the whole plant goes down,
21 they bring, they bring them back by seniority per department. If you level
22 off, um, I believe, in the first 3 days, then you will be put in a list to come,
23 to be in seniority when your seniority comes up plantwide. So, if you level
24 off in the first 3 days, or you have, or on the 89th day – now, you can wait
25 until you come back per job in your department. So, like, if I would've
26 stayed out, I probably would've stayed out for another 3 or 4 weeks before
27 trim was populated again. So, being that they were populating, first they
28 would populate body shop, then they would populate paint, then they
29 populate trim. So, s-, I was in trim at that time. I leveled off, which, in the
30 first 3 days, so I leveled off as soon as I went out and, um, as soon as my
31 seniority came up – now, if my seniority would've come up in body shop,
32 then I would've come back in body. So, but, being that I was [waiting
33 29:11] seniority, then they populated the paint department; I went up
34 there.
35
36 Michael Fleming: [29:15] While you're talkin' about leveling off, Doug, um, talk about
37 some of the layoffs and the strikes if you've been through any of those.
38 Have you been through anything like that?
39
40 Doug Gross: Well, I've been though, um, uh, I mean, because they used to, before,
41 before they negotiated that we could, that we had those 2 weeks off, um,
42 they would, if, you could put your name on either a maintenance list or a
43 sanitation list to work the changeover. So, anytime that I could, I always
44 worked. So, um, most of the changeovers, I always, I always worked'm
45 because I always wanted either the vacation time or I wanted that stuff
46 back.

1
2 Um, but I remember when, um, we used to clean ovens every year and,
3 um, you would go up in there and, you know, the, the paint was just caked
4 on, you know, the, from the fumes and stuff, and you would go up there
5 and, and they had, like, air chisels and stuff. And they had teams in each
6 oven and you would go through and you would clean up, um, sealer off
7 the floors and the paint and stuff off the walls and then that first team
8 would go through with the air chisels and then another team would go
9 through with brooms and dustpans and then another team would go
10 through with tack racks and tack it all off, and then once you got the whole
11 oven done, which was, it seemed like they were a mile long, you know,
12 and it was hot in there, too, not – they shut the ovens off, of course, but it
13 was in the middle of the summer. And so you would go through, and once
14 you got all done, then they would, um, take, like, Vaseline or some kind of
15 sticky material, they would put it on a car and then they would keep
16 running that car through to get all of the dust up so that way they wouldn't
17 have dirt in the paint when, when they started the line back up.

18
19 Um, but at any rate, and, um, a couple of times I worked for maintenance
20 and, uh, the maintenance people are really, really good to work with. Um,
21 they're just, uh, I believe, you know, there's only been really a couple that,
22 you know, weren't, um, really cordial, you know, when, when you would
23 work with'm. And, um, and they liked the helpers, you know, 'cause we
24 would get out all of the tools and, um, we would, uh, put'm all on the
25 truck and everything, you know, and especially once you've worked with
26 a group of guys, if you worked really hard, they always wanted you back.
27 And so it was, once you got your foot in the door in maintenance, which
28 you would get maintenance helpers pay, you know, which was more than
29 the sanitation pay, pay, plus you would get to work 7 days a week, not just
30 5 days a week, you know, and so, like, if you worked through the 4th of
31 July, you would actually get triple time on the weekends, you know, on
32 those holidays.

33
34 So, but at any rate, getting back there, um, Bob Green, um, helped me
35 build a, uh, helped me build a locker and, uh, at the time I was working up
36 in building 21-3 and you would get terrible reception being that I worked
37 in the booth. I had a little TV because I liked to watch, um, Jay Leno and,
38 um, what was the other show I watched? LAPD Blue or something like
39 that. But anyways, and so in between the jobs I would look at my TV set.
40 Well, I got terrible reception, so I got the bright idea of, um, going up to
41 the roof and running an antenna wire down from 21-3 and so I said, well I
42 need a, um, you know, and that, that involved walking up in the steel
43 beams way up in, in, it was really high in the air. A couple of times I
44 thought I wasn't gonna make it [chuckle]. But anyways, I got one runnin'
45 all the way down there and, um, I put the antenna up on top of the roof and
46 ran the antenna wire down and then Bob says, "Well, you know, you need

1 a locker. Let's build you one." And so, he, you know, took me through the
2 steps of how to get the metal on there, get it straight so that it sat nice and,
3 you know, perpendicular on the floor.
4
5 And, um, then he taught me how to make, uh, belt buckles and knives and
6 so I spent the rest of the, uh, um, uh, changeover building, um, belt
7 buckles and taking engravers and engraving stuff on 'm and I made like a
8 mountain of belt buckles. I made like 4 or 5 knives and it was really – I
9 mean, I learned so much, um, from the millwrights and the tanners that it
10 was just, you know, it was, it was really good.
11
12 Michael Fleming: [33:26] [throat clearing] That was to avoid a layoff in what you call a
13 changeover, right? Now, that, talk about, tell, tell us what changeover is
14 and then go into telling us if you really were laid off at all.
15
16 Doug Gross: Right. Okay, changeover basically is when they would change over to a
17 new model, the next model gear. Um, when I hired in in '81, the
18 changeovers were like 3 or 4 months long. Um, and, that's what I would
19 do to try and avoid, um, the layoff. Some people would want the layoff to
20 spend time with their families, um, and at that time I just didn't like the
21 break in my pay. Um, so, um, I would just always, like I say, try and work
22 those changeovers. Um, towards, gosh, it had to have been, what 1989 or
23 90 when they started the rolling changeover where they would actually,
24 the material people would follow that and there would be a 3-car gap in
25 the line and the material people were actually changing the stock on the
26 line as the new car rolled through because the body change wasn't that
27 significant to where they had to change carriers and change the distance in
28 the dawgs and take the chains out of the conveyers and so on and so forth.
29 So, and the chain, um, that I'm talking about and the dawgs are the, uh, the
30 dawg that hooks the car, that pulls the car down the line. So, um, all right
31 and what else did you want me to talk about?
32
33 Michael Fleming: Talk about if you ever were in a layoff. [34:57] Were you ever affected by
34 a layoff?
35
36 Doug Gross: Um, I believe there was only, only one and that was the one in between,
37 um, 19, um, 83 and 1984 when I leveled off, um, up into paint and then,
38 um, I knew Eddie Holmes and, um – I'm tryin' to think of the name of the
39 other supervisor. I knew those 2 guys real well 'cause they came to my
40 Bible study and so that was the foot in the door. They said, "Do you
41 wanna work changeover?" I'm like, "Yeah." They're like, "Well, you're
42 gonna be cleanin' ovens or, you know, booths, shovelin' out the booths."
43 I'm like, "That's fine," and so that's when I got my foot in the door and I
44 was able to, I worked pretty much every changeover, um, all the way
45 through until we started doin' the mandatory 2-week shutdowns.
46

1Michael Fleming: [35:40] Doug, how 'bout strikes? Are you ...

2

3Doug Gross: Um, we, we had 1 strike and, um, that I was actually a part of and, um,
4 the, what I chose to do was, uh, walk the picket line over on Michigan
5 Avenue over by the, um, south lot. Um, and, again, that was just because I
6 didn't wanna have to drive in. Um, I believe the, uh, pay that we were
7 gonna get for strike pay was gonna be 60 dollars a week. Um, in between
8 60 and a hundred. I thought it was a hundred.

9

10 And, again, you know, we, we, of course, talking before, we were tryin' to
11 figure out who was the chairman and – I know that, that [Hartmann 36:17]
12 was the president at that time because I was tryin' to get into the benefits
13 field and, um, I learned who Ted [Hartmann 36:24] was at, at that, um, uh,
14 at that interview. Because I sat down in front of him and they said, you,
15 well, I sat down at the end of the table and there was a bunch of people
16 around there and they're like, "Do you know everybody here?" and I said
17 yeah, you know, I know, um, uh, Doug Taylor, I know Ken Michaud, I,
18 you know, and I went around and I named everybody and, uh, Ted
19 [Hartmann 36:42] was sittin' all the way to the other end. I said, "Well, I, I
20 really don't have any idea who you are." [laughing] He said he was the
21 union president, you know. So, I'm like, well, I blew this interview, you
22 know, and might as well kiss this job goodbye, you know.

23

24 So, but, um, and that was just a part of, um, because there's always
25 opportunity, um, talking about – I'll explain what an appointed position is.
26 An appointed position is where, that is basically an offline job where, um,
27 the union picks people who have specific gifts and talents, um, uh, like,
28 for instance, um, uh, the chaplain's job, you know, the job that I'm in right
29 now. You know, they would pick an ordained minister, um, who had
30 experience in that field, um, you know, because they wouldn't just take
31 anybody and put him into an EAP. You know, they wouldn't take, you
32 know, like I said, just anybody and put'm into a position. Um, kind of like
33 the, uh, photo editor that Linda Johnson is, you know, they wouldn't take
34 a person who didn't know how to type, so they would, um, you put a, uh,
35 resume in at the hall and actually put in for the job and then the, uh, uh,
36 executive board or the president and the chairman would go over all of the
37 best of the best and then, um, uh, resumes, and then they would pull those
38 people in and interview'm. And so that's what that interview as like. So,
39 did that answer your question? Did I leave anything out?

40

41Doug Rademacher: Well, you threw in the acronym EAP. [38:10] Would you explain what
42 that is?

43

44Doug Gross: Yes, the EAP is the, uh, Employee's Assistance, um, uh, Program. The
45 Employee Assistance Program was, uh, started, um, way back in the, uh,
46 late 1970s, I believe, early '80s. And what, what it was is it was based in

1 substance abuse. People who had substance abuse problems, um, would,
2 uh, come in into our office and then they would find them help. And, um,
3 now it's called the, uh, Work Family Program and we do everything from
4 childcare, elder care referrals, um, which we would either give them a
5 phone number to call or, uh, you know, find them help. Um, for instance,
6 an employee might come in and they might be having problems, um, with,
7 um, a mom or a dad or grandma or grandpa who is in Florida and they're
8 up here and, of course, they can't leave here to go to Florida and to take
9 care of them, and so as far as the elder care program, um, it's a 1-800
10 nationwide number and you would call, they call that number and they
11 say, "Well, my mom and dad are in Florida and I need to find them help."
12 And so, they would actually, you know, help them find it. Same with
13 childcare. People working on the afternoon shift who are having, um, uh,
14 problems finding a, uh, babysitter or something. The childcare, um, rep or
15 ourselves would actually help them find licensed daycare for their shift in
16 their area.
17
18 Um, and then, of course, we, uh, send people to a CDR, which is a central
19 diagnostic and referral company for substance abuse and counseling. They
20 do everything from financial counseling to marital counseling to substance
21 abuse counseling, um, uh, grief counseling, any kind of counseling that
22 our members, um, or the people in the plant – and that's for supervision
23 and for hourly people- um, if they need help, uh, because a lot of times
24 when people are on the line they think in a circle, you know, just like they
25 are putting the part on the car, and so, and that causes them to, um, you
26 know, have anxiety and, you know, problems with their, with their job, so
27 we're just there to, to assist them.
28
29 Doug Rademacher: [40:28] Doug, are you married?
30
31 Doug Gross: Yes, I am. I've been married for 23 years. Um, we have 4 biological
32 children, um, a 15-year-old, uh, that we are going to adopt and a 9-year-
33 old that we're going to adopt.
34
35 Doug Rademacher: [40:44] Can you share the difficulty or what was it like for you to raise a
36 family and work at, uh, General Motors, uh, about 30 miles away from
37 your home or so-?
38
39 Doug Gross: Yeah. Yeah. Um ...
40
41 Cheryl McQuaid: With a lot of overtime.
42
43 Doug Gross: Huh?
44
45 Cheryl McQuaid: With a lot of overtime.
46

1 Doug Gross: With a lot of overtime. Um, the, I've got a fantastic wife [chuckle], you
2 know, so, I mean, as far as raising the children, she's always taken the, I
3 was just the enforcer, you know. If I come home, if mamma wasn't happy,
4 nobody was happy. Somebody pays, you know, and that's just how it is.
5 Um, but, I mean, the hardest thing was working the second shift. I mean,
6 that's the, what I had the hardest time with because, um, parent-teacher
7 conferences, if we couldn't get in during the day, my wife would go
8 herself. Um, watching baseball, soccer, stuff like that. That happens at 4 or
9 5:00 in the afternoon. I'm already at work, you know, and you can't really
10 take work off to go to your child's games. So, um, I missed out on a lot of
11 that stuff. The real important stuff I would be at. I would try and hit as
12 many of 'em as I could. Take vacation days and stuff.
13
14 Um, but as far as raisin' the family, you know, really, when you talk about
15 workin' on the line and you talk about getting into, um, other people's
16 families and other people's lives, you tend to, you know, talk to the people
17 about the problems that you're having. And so, when you're talking about
18 it, a lot of times, you know, you come up with pretty darn good ideas on
19 how to handle certain situations, especially with the older people who
20 have already raised children or the younger people who are trying to raise
21 children. So, you know, like potty training and stuff like that, you know,
22 and, I mean, teenage years we all know, you know, the kids lose their
23 brain; they have none, you know. It's all right. You know. So, but
24 [laughing], you know, I've got, um, I've got 4 teenagers right now and,
25 um, it, it's fine.
26
27 Doug Rademacher: [42:38] Did you drive in every day or did you carpool?
28
29 Doug Gross: Um, on and off. Um, when I lived in Ithaca, I drove every day by myself.
30 When I lived in Portland, um, I rode with, uh, Mike Galey for a while.
31 Um, Matt Strickland for a while. Um, I was in a carpool with, um, uh, if I
32 can remember everybody's names. Jerry Kramer, um, let me see, Jerry
33 Kramer, Mike Galey, there was, there was 5 of us 'cause we all rode in
34 Mike's van. But anyways, um, Randy, um, Randy [Peak 43:19]. Who else
35 was in that?
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [43:23] Well, how'd you, how'd you, did you pay money to one person,
38 did you change vehicles, or ...?
39
40 Doug Gross: Yeah. Once, once we got ...
41
42 Doug Rademacher: [43:28] What was that commitment? What did it cost ya?
43
44 Doug Gross: Right. Once we got in, you know, once you found a group of people, if
45 one guy had a van, normally you would pay him 10 to 15 bucks a week
46 and then they would just drive back and forth and you never had to drive.

1 When I just rode with 2 people, then we would just alternate back and
2 forth, or 3, you know, you'd alternate, every third day you would drive.
3 And because we all lived in the same community, we would just drive to
4 those people's houses and pick'm up and then we would drop'm off that
5 night, you know, so ...
6
7 Doug Rademacher: [44:01 So, what about, uh, Michigan winters? That quite a, uh, quite the
8 adventure?
9
10 Doug Gross: Yeah.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: [44:06] Talk about your early days. What did you do before work, after
13 work, your lunchtimes?
14
15 Doug Gross: [chuckle] Well, [throat clearing] oh, do I really wanna open up this can of
16 worms? In the early days when I first hired in, um, I would, uh, you know,
17 we would, um, uh, smoke a joint, you know, maybe or 2 or 3 and then,
18 you know, drink a pint of whiskey or so and then we would, uh, you
19 know, once I got, once I got my 90 days in, of course. And then, at break
20 we would, of course, run out to our cars and, you know, or just hop
21 outside and we'd smoke a joint or 2 and, and one particular time there was
22 probably – I'm not gonna name any names – but there were probably, oh,
23 gosh, there had to have been 6 people standing in a circle right, right by
24 the door where you walked in. And we were standin' there smokin' a joint
25 and, um, it was goin' around and it came around to a particular, uh, young
26 man and, uh, the guard comes walkin' through the door and he looks at us
27 and he's like, "Are you guys smokin' a joint?" And the man who had it
28 says, "Yeah." And he just kind of laughed it off and walked away like we
29 weren't serious [laughing], you know?
30
31 We were there, you know, and, um, uh, but anyways, you know, and then,
32 of course, every lunch we would either, um, run over to, uh, Harry's or the
33 Shop Stop or, you know, if we were, um, if we had a long lunch, if the
34 line was down, we would go to the pubs, or the Irish pub or, um, the
35 Dispatch because on Thursday nights they had their, uh, their steaks and,
36 um, you know, pretty much whoever was havin' the food deal at that time.
37 Um, so, and Gus's, of course. Gus's bar. Um, at that particular point in
38 time, um, we would call over to the bar and he would set up probably 6 or
39 8 te-, um, amaretto or tequila slammers and we would go over there and
40 pound'm on the table, [laughing] drink our slammers down, run to the car,
41 smoke a joint and then run all the way back up to 21-3.
42
43 Doug Rademacher: So, at the end of work ...
44
45 Doug Gross: Huh?
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [46:15] Now, making that trip, did you guys plan payday? Did you plan,
2 uh, adventures?
3

4 Doug Gross: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we did. And I suppose you want me to tell you some of
5 the ...
6

7 Doug Rademacher: Well, no ...
8

9 Doug Gross: ... some of the adventures.
10

11 Doug Rademacher: No, if you're
12

13 Doug Gross: At the, at Thursday, Thursday nights, pay night, um, of course, you'd go
14 over to the bar, you'd cash your check at lunch and then we would go over
15 to the union hall parking lot and, um, we would just go over there and
16 everybody, you know, turned their radios on the same station or if, you
17 know, you'd have, you know, maybe the rappers over here, rock 'n roll
18 over here and country and western over here. And, uh, everybody would
19 just kind of congregate around those cars and we would just stand there
20 and drink and, you know ...
21

22 Doug Rademacher: Doug, you say everybody. [46:51] Can you, can you share how many
23 people who show up at this, uh, after work gathering?
24

25 Doug Gross: Do you really want me to tell you that number, Doug?
26

27 Doug Rademacher: [laughing] [Inaudible 46:59]
28

29 Doug Gross: Well, I guess. Um, well, some, some nights, you know, it wasn't, it, I
30 mean, some nights it got pretty crazy. I mean, you know, the lot was full
31 and other nights it wasn't so full, you know, it would all really depend on
32 who all made plans to go over there, you know, there was ...
33

34 Linda Johnson: [47:18] What's a lot?
35

36 Doug Gross: What's a lot?
37

38 Linda Johnson: [47:21] How many people?
39

40 Cheryl McQuaid: [47:22] Is this a paint thing?
41

42 Linda Johnson: Give me a number. I don't know how big this parking lot is.
43

44 Doug Gross: Oh, okay. Okay. You want a number of people. There was, on a busy
45 night, there had to have been, I don't know, 60 to 100 people over there,
46 maybe more, you know. Somewhere in there, you know.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [47:35] Was this a paint department thing?
3
4 Doug Gross: No, I wouldn't say just paint because there was people, you know, when I
5 worked in trim I would go over there, so, I mean, it was, it would be paint,
6 trim and body.
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: Okay.
9
10 Doug Gross: You know, altogether. And then, you know, of course, different starting
11 times. Everybody would just kind of funnel through as, you know, body
12 would get out first and body shop would go over there and then the trim
13 people would, or the paint people would go over there, and then the trim
14 people would, you know, so it was just, you know...
15
16 Doug Rademacher: So, you say the union hall. [48:02] Was the hall open?
17
18 Doug Gross: No, the hall wasn't open itself. The executive board wasn't there, just the,
19 uh – I call it the cage, you know, the cage was open, so you could go in
20 there and, and, you know, um, you know, [inaudible 48:18] up in the tree
21 or, you know, whatever you ...
22
23 Doug Rademacher: [48:19] Cage being the fenced in part.
24
25 Doug Gross: The cage would be the fenced in part around the hall to protect it from,
26 um, the riffraff, um, in the area.
27
28 Linda Johnson: [48:27] So, was that okay. I mean, the police didn't mind you in there
29 having ...
30
31 Doug Gross: Oh, the police ...
32
33 Linda Johnson: ... a party?
34
35 Doug Gross: The police would show up from time to time. And, you know, if it got to
36 be, you know, [laughing] 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning and, you know, the
37 music was up too loud, yes, the police would show up and kind of disperse
38 the crowd so's to speak.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [48:47] Were they just, um, plant folks or were there some community
41 folks there also?
42
43 Doug Gross: Um, pretty much it was mostly plant, plant folk. I would say probably 99
44 percent of'm were plant folk. Every now and then you'd have, you know,
45 maybe a spouse or somebody drive in looking for their – [laughing] no,
46 I'm just teasin'.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: No, you're not. [laughing]
3
4 Doug Gross: [laughing] I mean, I'm sure it happened, you know, lookin' for their, their
5 spouse and the paycheck, you know, but it, it was, you know, a couple of
6 times it, uh, you know, got out of control a little bit but, you know, the
7 police would show up accordingly and, like I said, disperse us, so ...
8
9 Michael Fleming: [49:24] Doug, seein' how you've [throat clearing], um, lived the life and
10 you're certainly leading by example now, talk about some of the outreach
11 programs that you do, uh, as a chaplain, uh, such as the prisons, the sick
12 and shut-ins, the funerals that you attend, the things that you do that we
13 don't see you do. Can you talk about some of those things, please?
14
15 Doug Gross: Sure. You know, my, my job as a chaplain ranges, um, uh, it's, it's a pretty
16 far range. Um, we, of course, do weddings and funerals and baptisms, um,
17 but it's not really about, um, Christian faith, it's more about, it's like a
18 ministry of compassion. Um, if somebody needs us, of course, we go. Um,
19 we do, er, myself and the committee – I've got a committee; um, 3 other,
20 uh, ordained ministers that, um, that help me do the ministerial stuff.
21 Kirklin Hall, Rever-, er, Reverend Kirklin Hall, Reverend Eugene
22 Murchison, and, um, the Reverend Walt Saxton and myself are all
23 ordained and, um, we do the weddings and the funerals, the licensed part
24 of the, of the ministry, and then I've got, um, uh, Craig Johnson, uh, Dave
25 Brown, Martha Adams, um, Fred Powell, [Cheryl Vaughan 50:42], and
26 those people do the lay ministries, like the hospital visits, um, sending
27 cards, sympathy cards, get well cards, um, and it's like a network that, you
28 know, we have people, um, from body shop, paint and trim that are all on
29 the chaplaincy and when they hear of people that are maybe sick, um, you
30 know, they had a loved one die, pass away, then they get ahold of me or
31 they go themselves and, uh, see the people.
32
33 Um, as far as prison ministry, um, unfortunately, we do have, uh, members
34 that are housed with the, with the, uh, state of Michigan, and, um, they
35 range from all the way down by Adrian to all the way up to, uh, Marquette
36 in the upper peninsula and, um, I don't go up to, um, Marquette on a real
37 regular basis, but when I do go to Black Lake for like the chaplaincy
38 conferences or the EAP conferences, they normally give us a Wednesday
39 afternoon and on that Wednesday afternoon, so I'm up there like twice a
40 year and, um, I go up and I visit the, visit people who are in Marquette
41 prison or the Hiawatha state prison, um, all the way down to Jackson,
42 Adrian, um, Pontiac, um, all over the place. And then, up on top of all of
43 that, um, we do people who are in, um, inpatient, um, uh, like detox units
44 and, um, uh, you know, they're in, they're in the program so's to speak.
45 The program being the, um, they go to AA, NA, CA, MA, um, and they're

1 inpatient. Um, we will travel to the hospitals in Grand Rapids, well,
2 wherever they are, you know, Grand Rapids [inaudible 52:27].
3
4 Michael Fleming: [52:28] Tell, tell us what AA, NA, and what was the other one?
5
6 Doug Gross: CA and MA. Uh, Alcoholics Anonymous, uh, Cocaine Anonymous,
7 Marijuana Anonymous, and, uh, Narcotics Anonymous.
8
9 Michael Fleming: Okay.
10
11 Doug Gross: So, all of those and then, um, uh, basically in the plant, um, we try and be
12 as visible as we possibly can and, um, you know, if people need us, we'll
13 either, we can, uh, you know, go out there on the floor, um, or come, if
14 they want it to be a, a very confidential thing, then we have them come
15 down to the office and we talk to 'm. It's all confidential. We don't, um,
16 tell anybody anything about anybody's life, you know. It's all, uh, um, as
17 far as that goes. Um, let me see, what else do I do? Um, I write ...
18
19 Michael Fleming: [53:15] Community, community organizations?
20
21 Doug Gross: Yes, um, well, let me step back here a little bit. Um, if people are trying to
22 get their driver's licenses back, um, most people who are in the program, I
23 will, um, write letters of recommendation, um, if I know about their
24 program, you know, um, uh, you know, and write them a letter of
25 recommendation letting them know that, you know, of course, I know, that
26 I know them and I know what kind of a program that they're running and
27 stuff like that. Now, moving forward, what was that question?
28
29 Michael Fleming: Community organizations [inaudible 53:45].
30
31 Doug Gross: Um, I work on the critical and stress management team, which, uh, we call
32 it the CISM, Critical Incident Stress Management. And what we do is, um,
33 we work in the tri-county area, Eaton, Ingham, and Clinton counties, and
34 we go around and do debriefings, um, what a debriefing or a defusing is is
35 for the fire department and the, um, and the police department, when they
36 go up to a tragic accident or a scene, um, they have, you know, they get
37 that picture in their mind and if they're havin' trouble sleeping at night or
38 they're getting irritable or, you know, whatever the case may be, then they
39 get the whole team together as a team and we, um, then I say we – we
40 have, uh, people from Community Mental Health; um, Doug Patrick who
41 is in management here is also, um, on the team with us; um, I don't know
42 all the names of the people in there, but there's probably a team of like 25
43 people – um, and we go in, we sit down with 'm and we just ask specific
44 questions and go through like a format that helps them debrief, you know,
45 seeing that, you know, they did this and it was all a part of the big picture.

1 And, um, I also am in the AFL-CIO Church Community Labor Alliance.
2 Um, and we, uh, do different things. Um, Paula – what is Paula’s ...
3
4 Linda Johnson: Simons.
5
6 Doug Gross: Huh?
7
8 Linda Johnson: Simons.
9
10 Doug Gross: Simons, yeah, okay. I wanted to say Smith for some reason. Um, I work
11 with her and, um, some of the other ministers in the community and, uh,
12 we are out there, um, trying to make a difference, um, and, uh, uh, in the
13 community. Um, One church, er, One Pastor One School. Um, there’s all
14 different kinds of stuff that we do there. Um, uh, I’m tryin’ to think what
15 else we do.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: [55:39] Well, while you’re thinking that, Doug, is there – back to Fisher
18 Body – I know you can’t share names but is there a particular, uh, scenario
19 or event that you had a major impact on that’s impacted your life or a
20 memory of, the most rewarding thing you’ve done through your ministry
21 work?
22
23 Doug Gross: Well, um, we, we had, um, uh, 2 people, um, who had died in the plant
24 and, um, and, 1, 1 person was, uh, up in paint and the other person was
25 down here in engineering and, uh, doing the, uh, critical incident stress
26 management for that and, and seeing, you know, the, you know, really just
27 – when, when you talk about death and dying and people suffering loss,
28 um, especially in the workplace when you’ve worked with a person for
29 years and, and they pass away and, um, just helping the people see that,
30 you know, no mater what, you know, no matter, in the perfect incident
31 they probably wouldn’t have been able to save the person’s life if they had
32 a massive coronary or, you know, they had something major happen.
33 Helping them get from that step to a place of, okay, acceptance. Because
34 really, in my eyes, you never really get closure when you’re dealing with
35 the loss of a loved one. You will always remember that person. They’re,
36 they’ll always be a memory in your mind of the smiles that they gave you
37 or the, you know, the stuff that they would bring in or the jokes that they
38 would tell or, you know, the time that they helped you in their personal
39 life so, in essence, you never really get closure. What we try and work
40 them to is acceptance; that they did the best that they could at that
41 particular point in time.
42
43 Um, I think those, those situations or, uh, visiting the, uh, funeral homes,
44 those are the time when, you know, you see people really at, at the most
45 critical times of their lives, you know? And, um, hospital visits are good
46 but really the funeral homes, going there and seeing people when they

1 experience loss and they're hurting and, um, knowing that you care, you
2 know, that you care enough to come and see them, you know, and, and
3 help them. Go ahead.
4

5Doreen Howard: I have a question. [58:08] Um, tell me a little bit about the changes that
6 happened within the culture of Fisher Body from the time when you first
7 started, 'cause, um, you talked about that, and the partying atmosphere and
8 things like that, to how did you get to where you are today? What, what
9 happened? What, the transition, um, was that somethin' that happened
10 culturally within the plant, um, and, or was that more of a personal issue?
11 'Cause I know, 'cause I know for myself that I noticed a lot of the
12 different transitions between people.
13

14Doug Gross: Right. Um, it really, you know, when I was workin' with Rich and, and,
15 uh, Rich, Brent, Roy, and there was, there was just a, you know, the group
16 of guys and we were, um, eating. Th-, those guys, even though that they
17 knew that I was smokin' cigarettes and smokin' pot and drinkin' and stuff,
18 they just loved that. I mean, they just accepted me for who I was. They
19 didn't – you look at the, and I call them bad points of who Doug was
20 because Doug was really rough around the edges. I cussed and swore and
21 everything but, you know, uh, you know, Rich had said to me one time,
22 you know, "Doug, I'd sit next to ya in church. I wouldn't have a problem
23 with that," you know, and so I went to his church, you know, and, um, he
24 just accepted me right where I was at. He didn't, you know, rub in my face
25 that I was this, you know, this sinner person that had to do a lot of
26 changin', he just really, um, just showed me Christ and, you know, I
27 started lookin' at my life versus their lives and, you know, Rich could buy
28 a car for 50 dollars and sell it for 500 and I'd buy one for 1500 and sell it
29 for 5, 50 bucks [laughing], you know?
30

31 I mean, everything, you know, and, and he would talk about his wife and,
32 and how happy they were, you know, being married and he'd talk about
33 their kids and playin' wiffle ball and, you know, he'd talk about his in-
34 laws and his mom and dad and, you know, he just, everything really that I
35 want, I was just naturally gravitating towards that part of my life, you
36 know, or do I want to, you know, keep using drugs and using and have
37 my, you know, life – not that my life was all terrible because my life really
38 wasn't, you know, but I just knew that there was something, something
39 more that, um, that I was reaching for. You know, I wanted that place of
40 peace to where I didn't have to spend, you know, 40 bucks on a bag of pot
41 in order to get peace or drink a pint of whiskey in order to get that [sigh],
42 you know, I'm finally here, you know, type of feeling. And so, um, I had,
43 uh, you know, I had worked with Rich for, I don't know, probably a good,
44 eh, it was probably a year or so and, um, I just decided that there was a
45 change that needed to be made.
46

1 And so I just, it slowly gravitated from me going out at lunch every day
2 and hanging with the group that I was hanging with at the bar to, you
3 know, now I'm involved in, we had lunch every day, you know, naturally
4 talk about, um, biblical things – they would bless the food and, you know,
5 being raised a Catholic, I knew quite a lot about the Bible, you know,
6 surprisingly enough, I could really hold my own [laughing], you know. I
7 mean, I knew who Abraham and Moses and, you know, I knew who, you
8 know, Joshua and all the people of the Old Testament and Paul and, you
9 know, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and you know, [Barnabas 1:01:37]
10 and all those guys. I knew who they were because I had been raised
11 around that, you know, so, um, it was just an easy transition for me to
12 make.
13

14 Doug Rademacher: [1:01:45] I just wanna know, was the program you speak of, the, uh,
15 employee assistant program, was there something like that available to
16 you or was it, was it there or was it not there back then and that's why you
17 embraced it now?
18

19 Doug Gross: Um, I think it, it was there, um, but I don't think it was that well-known or
20 trusted in at that point in time. I think it was more for the substance abuse,
21 uh, arena, and, um, you know, really people who use don't really want to
22 admit that they have a problem, you know, you're the last person to know
23 that you have a problem, you know, until you actually try and quit.
24 [laughing] You know? And then all of a sudden, hey wait a minute here,
25 you know, somethin' is missin', [laughing] you know. But, um, uh, you
26 know, as far as the employee's assistance, you know, program goes, you
27 know, all 3 of us that work in the office, um, Martha Adams, um, Nadine
28 Reynolds, and myself, we work very hard to try and keep a very
29 confidential program. Um, and, uh, we try and get out in, not only in the
30 plant but in the community to, um, to help people, you know, that we
31 know that are in need.
32

33 Marilyn Coulter: [1:02:56] Doug, now, um, if I'm not mistaken, I think one of the largest
34 masses that I saw, the, uh, EAPs participate in was when they had the, um,
35 death up in 3X with the construction worker. Were you a part of the team
36 at that time?
37

38 Doug Gross: No, I wasn't. No. But Nadine and Martha, um, were. Um, and like I say,
39 you know, I've taken, I've taken place in a couple of the critical
40 incidences when people have died, um, here in the plant and really
41 affected, um, the coworkers. Um, you know, they may feel at fault.
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. That was the largest, um, that particular incident, 'cause I was a part
44 of that one.
45

46 Doug Gross: Mm-hm.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: I didn't remember whether or not you were there but there was a large
3 group of people that were affected by that particular incident. And, so,
4 your group that you belong to, it's a good group.
5
6 Doug Gross: Yes. Yep, they were up there.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: [1:03:47] Doug, would you talk about your union?
9
10 Doug Gross: Um, yeah, our union, um, right now, um, I'm very proud of the, uh, uh, the
11 executive board, our president, our chairman. They're, um, they're, they
12 have huge, huge hearts. Um, more so, I, and I can't say it's more so than
13 any other president and chairman, um, but I will, because, you know, I, uh,
14 how do I wanna put this? I think that they genuinely care about each and
15 every person that's in our, um, that's in our local. Um, I think they really
16 listen to, uh, to the people. Um, I think they work very, very hard. They
17 really pour themselves in their lives. They spend a lot of time, um,
18 working, not only here in the shop but out in, in the community. Um, and I
19 think it's a pretty big sacrifice that they make, you know, trying to, you
20 know, take care of everybody's needs. And again, you're not gonna be
21 able to make everybody happy, you know, because you'll make one
22 decision and, you know, eve-, and all, a group of people will yell about
23 that and you'll make another decision and then a whole different group
24 will yell about that, you know [laughing].
25
26 So, you know, from what I've seen, um, I do, I think our union, um, uh,
27 really helps us, not only in the negotiation, um, part, but being there to
28 protect us. Um, as far as neg-, like I said, not negotiations but as far as
29 being in the workplace, um, you get a big variety of foremans, um, some
30 who care, some who don't, you know. Some who are, you know, really
31 genuinely care about the product that are getting out and some who are
32 climbing the ladder, you know, trying to get to a higher position and
33 they'll burn anybody that they can. And I think our, uh, our local union,
34 the UAW Local 602, is a very good, has a very good safety net, um, not
35 only the, uh, online committeemen – I call them online, but the people
36 who take the committee calls – but the, uh, the districts, the zones, um,
37 like I said, the whole executive board. I think they just have hu-, huge
38 hearts, so ...
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [1:06:05] Doug, outside of chaplaincy and being a EAP, are there are any
41 other union functions for, um, uh, committees that you set in or have set in
42 on in the past?
43
44 Doug Gross: Um, uh, the black history program, um, the, uh, CAP, um ...
45
46 Michael Fleming: [1:06:28] What is CAP?

1
2 Doug Gross: Capital ...
3
4 Michael Fleming: Community Action Program.
5
6 Doug Gross: Thank you. [laughing] [Inaudible 1:06:34] Community, is a what?
7
8 Michael Fleming: Community Action Program.
9
10 Doug Gross: Yeah, it's Community Action Program. Um, all right, now I lost my train
11 of thought. Where was I? Flashback, flashback. [laughing]
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Which is also a legislative arm, but you were talking about the different
14 committees that you've pa-, participated in along with being chaplain.
15
16 Doug Gross: Right. Well, every year, you know, the chaplaincy tries to team up with as
17 many, um, of the, um, um, standing committees as we can to get food
18 baskets for, uh, Christmastime. Um, we, uh, try to get, um, at least 5 or 6
19 food baskets, um, up and around which has, um, all different kinds of
20 goods in'm; um, maybe hats, gloves, um, toilet paper, um, paper towels.
21 Um, uh, the adopt-a-family, um, uh, programs. Um, uh, I'm just tryin' to
22 think here.
23
24 Marilyn Coulter: You [inaudible 1:07:38] and funded some things.
25
26 Doug Gross: Yeah, that, right, we, we try and be as involved as we possibly can. If
27 anybody has, um, an invocation or a benediction that they would like
28 done, um, they co-, for any committee, um, we're honored to do those
29 for'm. Um, any kind of, uh, uh, we try and work hand in hand with Mike
30 Clark's committee. What is that, uh ...
31
32 Interviewer: Community services.
33
34 Doug Gross: The community service where they had – Ms. Martha, um, and, uh, Mike
35 Clark really did a fantastic job of steppin' up to the plate for the, uh,
36 people who, um, were being down from New Orleans, the, uh ...
37
38 Interviewer: Katrina.
39
40 Doug Gross: Katrina. Hurricane. Um, and, of course, they, they had called me and, and
41 by the time, um, I had gotten my kids taken care of, um, I showed up
42 [laughing]. I was there. So, um, but they had already had – you know, we
43 have such just hardworkin', generous people, um, at our local.
44 Hardworking, dedicated to, um, making sure not only the UAW Local 602
45 but the people in the community are, are taken care of.
46

1Michael Fleming: I want to go back and talk about benefits very briefly, um, and what the
2 benefits you have received from the UAW and General Motors. [1:08:54]
3 Uh, you know, talk about your, schooling that it takes for you to do what
4 you do as an EAP, the schooling that you had to have to be a chaplain, and
5 the training. And you also spoke about Black Lake. What is Black Lake?
6

7Doug Gross: Okay. Starting at the beginning. Um, when I, uh, felt a call in my life, I did
8 the Tuition Assistance Program and I went to Bible college at, um, Mu-,
9 Lansing Mount Hope, uh, Bible Training Institute. Um, I was in that Bible
10 college for 4 years before I had gotten the – it wasn't a degree, it was a
11 certification to be licensed. Um, and then, at that point, um, I joined the
12 World Harvester Minister Network out of South Bend, Indiana, um, Lester
13 Sumrall's church, and, um, they are the ones, uh, who helped me, um,
14 walked towards my ordination. Um, the TAP program is the Tuition
15 Assistance Program and, um, basically what they do is they pay for your
16 classes in a specific field or personal enrichment. Um, and you fill out a
17 form or get on the internet and, uh, you apply for this and as long as you
18 get a C or better, they pay for that class.
19

20 Um, going into Black Lake. In order to be an employee's assistance, uh,
21 representative, you have to take, um, the basic training, which consists of,
22 um, learning how to listen, learning how to parrot, um, people back,
23 learning, uh, comforting, uh, uh, comforting words, um, learning how to
24 pick emotions out of what the people are going through, because a lot of
25 times if a person is angry it's just a fruit of a tree that has a root; if they
26 have a substance abuse problem, it's a fruit on a tree that has a root. And
27 so, what you're going after is the root of the tree, um, so that, uh, you can
28 help them work through their problem or, um, get them into counseling,
29 professional counseling. Um, uh, Black Lake, um, is basically the, uh,
30 Walter Reuther, um, uh – go ahead, help me out, Doug.
31

32Doug Rademacher: Walter and May Reuther Educational Center.
33

34Doug Gross: Thank you. Yes, that's what it is. And it's a, uh, very, uh, very beautiful,
35 um, rustic, um, place where you go, where we go for our training and, uh,
36 they have classrooms, gymnasium, swimming pool, workout center, uh,
37 lot of rooms, very nice rooms. And, uh, you go up there and they have
38 classes, uh, for a week long. And you go through these classes and, again,
39 they teach you, uh, really how to do your job, how to be effective on your
40 job. And so, um, you spend a week up there and, um, uh, once a year, and
41 that keeps you up to abreast on the changes in the, uh, work family, work
42 family internationally and, um, the stuff to bring back so that locally you
43 can help people better.
44

1Doreen Howard: [1:11:59] In, in, um, wrapping up here, I wanted to touch base on what are
2 your personal feelings of the plant closing and how does that, you know,
3 affect, affect you?
4

5Doug Gross: Well, of course, being that I've, I've worked here, um, for 23 years, it's
6 been a huge part of my life. Not being, not driving down Saginaw or down
7 Michigan Avenue and seeing, you know, and knowing that I'm coming to
8 this big green building [laughing], you know, um, it really, it – because
9 ever since I hired in here, they've been telling me, you know, when I first
10 hired in, "You're never gonna make it 90 days. Oh, you're never gonna
11 make it to your 5 years. Oh, you're never gonna make it to 10 years. Oh,
12 you're never gonna make it to 15 years." Well, what 23 and a half years
13 later, here I sit [laughing], you know, still working, you know, only bein',
14 you know, really having to take a layoff 1 or 2 times.
15

16 You know, the people – it's not really about, um, the building in itself, it's
17 more about knowing that I'm going to the new plant with all of the people
18 that I've known for this many years is, is really a blessing in my heart.
19 Will I miss the building? No, it's dirty. [laughing] It's old. It's fallin'
20 apart. It leaks. [laughing] The body shop floods when it rains. No, I really
21 won't miss the building. Um, it, it would really break my heart for them to
22 say, "Well, we're closing you down and all of you people are gonna be
23 GM gypsies and dispersed all over the place. That would in itself
24 devastate me because, you know, you can't work someplace 20 years and
25 all of the relationships that, that have been built and, and, you know,
26 knowing other people's families and, you know, seeing them go from,
27 seeing them have children and now their children are in college and, you
28 know, they're going from college to they're having babies themselves and,
29 you know, and now they're grandparents and seeing those changes in life
30 are just, it's just a huge, huge blessing, you know, to be able to be a part of
31 as many people's lives as what we are.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Doug, thank you for sharing.
34

35Doug Gross: Not a problem.
36

37Doug Rademacher: Thank you very much, Doug.
38

39Doug Gross: Great bein' here.
40

41Michael Fleming: Thanks, Doug.
42

43Interviewer: Thank you very much.
44
45/kd