

**Allen Van De Vusse, Louise and John Dean talk about
their time at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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5 Cheryl McQuaid: This is the Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team. I'm Cheryl McQuaid.
6 Also on the team is...
7
8 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
9
10 Cheryl McQuaid: We are going to interview three retirees from Fisher Body, Allen Van De
11 Vusse, Louise Dean, and John Dean. Today is June 14, Wednesday, and
12 it's approximately 9:15 a.m. We're at the 602 Union Hall back conference
13 room. Allen, can we start with you? [0:32] Would you state and spell
14 your last name for us?
15
16 Allen Van De Vusse: Allen Van De Vusse, it's V as in Victor, a-n D-e V-u-s-s-e.
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:45] And what is your address Allen?
19
20 Allen Van De Vusse: 5012 Applewood Drive, Lansing, Michigan.
21
22 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:52] What did your parents do for a living?
23
24 Allen Van De Vusse: My dad was a chef and my mother was a, just a housewife. She died when
25 I was 7 years old, so I was growing up with my grandparents.
26
27 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:07] And where were you raised?
28
29 Allen Van De Vusse: St. Johns, Michigan.
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:11] Could you give us a little bit about your educational background?
32
33 Allen Van De Vusse: Well, I graduated from high school in 1949 and I went into the navy
34 reserve. Then, I hired into American State Bank in 1950, and I left there
35 to go to Fisher Body in 1953. And after that, I took a cor-, correspondence
36 course in accounting and I also took some math courses at MSU and later
37 at LCC.
38
39 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:54] Do you remember, uh, when you hired in to Fisher Body? What's
40 your seniority date?
41
42 Allen Van De Vusse: April 13, 1953.
43
44 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:01] And where did you hire, what department did you hire in to?
45
46 Allen Van De Vusse: The payroll department, as a payroll auditor.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: Okay, now we're going to switch to Louise Dean and I'd like the same
3 information from you, Louise. [2:13] What is – could you state your name
4 and spell your last name, please?
5
6 Louise Dean: My name is Louise Dean, D-e-a-n.
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:22] And what is your address?
9
10 Louise Dean: 9336 Riverside Drive, Grand Ledge, Michigan.
11
12 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:31] And do you have children? Are you married?
13
14 Louise Dean: I'm married with no children.
15
16 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:37] And where were you born and raised?
17
18 Louise Dean: Flint, Michigan and raised in Lansing, Michigan.
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:41] What did your parents do?
21
22 Louise Dean: My father worked for the Flint Journal and he passed away when I was 8
23 weeks old. My mother returned to Lansing where I was raised here and
24 she worked for an insurance company.
25
26 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:55] Um, could you give us a little bit about your educational level?
27
28 Louise Dean: I went to school in Lansing, graduated from Sexton High School and went
29 one year at Western Michigan and then hired in to GM in 1963.
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:11] What did you do before hiring in to Fisher Body? Did you come in
32 right out of school?
33
34 Louise Dean: No. I went to California for three years, then I came back to Michigan and
35 went to Warren, Michigan. I hired in at the Tech Center, the Ternstedt
36 Division of GM. I then transferred to Lansing Fisher Body because John
37 and I were getting married in 1966.
38
39 Cheryl McQuaid: Okay. And John, Louise's husband, is here with us. [3:39] You don't
40 need to – address and name spelling is all the same, correct?
41
42 John Dean: That's correct. We're not divorced. [chuckle]
43
44 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:47] Would you state your name and tell us a little bit about where you
45 were born and raised?
46

1John Dean: My name is John Dean. I was born and raised in Lansing. I went to high
2 school at Everett High School here in Lansing, graduated from there and
3 went to work at Oldsmobile in 1955. I worked there a year and from there
4 while I was in high school, as a matter of fact, I was working as an
5 apprentice in the heating business so I went from there to the heating
6 business for a while and I worked at REO for a while, back in to the
7 heating business and eventually I got to be a journeyman tinsmith and I
8 hired in to Fisher Body. I strictly went there because I wanted the
9 benefits. We didn't have any benefits in the construction industry at that
10 time and I went there to get the benefits. And I – they wanted me to hire
11 in on skilled trades and I said no, I had enough of that and I didn't want to
12 work seven days a week and all that. So that was 1971 when I hired in, I
13 think it was May 24 or something like that. It was right close to my
14 birthday, I remember that.
15
16 And, uh, when I went to work there I started going back to school again,
17 so I picked up an associate's degree at LCC then. And then through the
18 course of time, I picked up enough credits to have another year of
19 education, so about three years of college is what it amounted to. But the
20 benefits that we had, of course, we don't have as much anymore [chuckle]
21 but times have changed.
22
23 But I think that all the jobs I had in there, I, I started out working in the
24 paint shop. Matter of fact, Al Van De Vusse here was one of the first guys
25 I ever worked for [coughing] and it was in the old Building 9 area and I
26 worked down there for a few months, then I went into plant security as a
27 patrolman, and then I went through a pre-supervisory training program
28 and went into plant security as a sergeant, then back out as a body shop
29 supervisor, and I went back in to plant security for a while again, and then
30 I went back as, as a night shift safety coordinator as engineer and I came
31 off of that when [Jill Burch 5:59] passed away and I was made the director
32 of safety, and then I went into plant security as the chief of plant security,
33 and then when they consolidated the two plants here in Lansing, I went
34 down to maintenance as a coordinator of plant, with plant engineering, so
35 that kind of sums up my career. [chuckle]
36
37Cheryl McQuaid: So we're going to do something a little different today. We're going to
38 just kind of do a roundtable of your memories at the plant. Louise, I don't
39 – yeah, I did too get your date of hire in, didn't I? You hired in in Warren
40 [inaudible 6:34].
41
42Louise Dean: 6/24/1963.
43
44Cheryl McQuaid: '63. [6:40] And what – when you transferred to Lansing, what department
45 did you transfer to?
46

1 Louise Dean: To personnel and while in personnel I hired in labor relations and then
2 went to salary personnel, hourly, insurance, and safety. All, all the time
3 was spent in personnel.
4

5 Cheryl McQuaid: [6:58] Was there a dress code when you hired in?
6

7 Louise Dean: Yes. [chuckle] Dresses, skirts.
8

9 Cheryl McQuaid: Dresses. That's it, huh?
10

11 Louise Dean: Right. No slacks, no pantsuits.
12

13 John Dean: No smoking at your desk.
14

15 Louise Dean: No smoking at your desk. No coffee. No, you could drink coffee at your
16 desk but you had to smoke in the lounge.
17

18 Cheryl McQuaid: [7:23] And Al, do you remember anything about the dress code when you
19 hired in? Was there a dress code?
20

21 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yes. For salary you wore a white shirt and ties. But they were talking,
22 she was talking about the smoking. When I hired in back at that time, the
23 desk had spittoons next to them.
24

25 John Dean: Yeah.
26

27 Louise Dean: Oh.
28

29 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
30

31 John Dean: Andy did.
32

33 Allen Van De Vusse: And that's where when you smoked, we smoked at our desk and when
34 afterward you, you just threw the butts in the spittoon. And it was
35 probably somewhere around the late 50s where they took those out and I
36 wish I had one of those old spittoons just as for memorabilia.
37

38 John Dean: Yeah.
39

40 Allen Van De Vusse: But then...
41

42 Cheryl McQuaid: [8:12] So there was a spittoon by every desk?
43

44 Allen Van De Vusse: Between two desks there would be a spittoon and that was all through the
45 accounting department, so that was, that was quite unique I thought,
46 [chuckle] not very sanitary.

1
2John Dean: You wouldn't see it anymore, would you?
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: No.
5
6Allen Van De Vusse: Pardon?
7
8John Dean: You wouldn't see it anymore.
9
10Allen Van De Vusse: No. But I was surprised to hear Louise say they couldn't smoke at their
11 desk because we always did.
12
13Louise Dean: I may have had it reversed. You had to smoke down the hall and drink
14 coffee at your desk or drink...
15
16Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, well.
17
18Louise Dean: Smoke at your desk. I don't know.
19
20John Dean: They had lots of restrictions. I remember, remember that even when I
21 came there, lots of things women couldn't do the men could.
22
23Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
24
25John Dean: One of them was that men could make more money than women could.
26
27Allen Van De Vusse: [chuckle] Well, that's true, yeah, except on the line. On the line it was the
28 same, yeah.
29
30John Dean: That was different, yeah, but salary it was [inaudible 9:05]...
31
32Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, salary [inaudible 9:06].
33
34John Dean: ...than the women.
35
36Allen Van De Vusse: Of course, there wasn't, at that time, there wasn't any women in the
37 higher-paid jobs at all.
38
39John Dean: No.
40
41Allen Van De Vusse: So I guess you couldn't really compare it.
42
43John Dean: No, not really.
44
45Cheryl McQuaid: I think when we interviewed, um, Shirley Sanborn she had mentioned that
46 salary you weren't even allowed to talk about how much you made.

1
2John Dean: That's right.
3
4Allen Van De Vusse: Oh no.
5
6John Dean: Absolutely.
7
8Allen Van De Vusse: Oh, that was strictly secret.
9
10John Dean: Very confidential.
11
12Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
13
14John Dean: You didn't discuss that at all, good or bad, I don't know how you'd, you
15 know, classify that. But I know when I got into the higher positions, God,
16 I had a lot of women working for me and when I looked at their pay as
17 opposed to the pay of their counterparts in the same jobs, it was...
18
19Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
20
21John Dean: ...ridiculously low. And when you went to the director to find out what's
22 going on here, these women are working as well and doing as good a job
23 as the men, boy, you got your tail feathers singed right now I'll tell you. I,
24 I even went to the plant manager on one situation. They finally relented
25 but you didn't make any friends doing that I'll tell you, because they, they
26 just didn't do it. Women were not to get paid what men got paid. You
27 didn't make any friends. [chuckle]
28
29Cheryl McQuaid: Al...
30
31John Dean: [Inaudible 10:23] all kind of stuff. Dress codes were funny for women. I
32 remember one time that, of course, I was chief of plant security at the time
33 and one of my female officers, she was a young girl, she came parading
34 through the plant one day when short shorts were popular and she walked
35 past the personnel director's office and boy he was on the phone to me in a
36 hot minute, "you get these girls straightened out" you know. And I was
37 "what are you talking about?" I walked over there and sure as the devil
38 she had on short shorts. Well, so what, you know. Well, you got to send
39 them home to get their clothes on and all this and that. They just wouldn't
40 tolerate that stuff, you know. It's weird, you know. [chuckle]
41
42Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, today...
43
44John Dean: They [inaudible 11:00] about it. [chuckle]
45

1 Allen Van De Vusse: They did that throughout the plant. I mean, if a gal came in with shorts
2 that were, you know more than halfway up the, the upper part of the leg,
3 by gosh, you sent'm home.
4

5 John Dean: Yeah.
6

7 Allen Van De Vusse: They had to get something appropriate on, but that was a...
8

9 John Dean: People didn't like to confront those issues, I know that. I used to get calls
10 when I was on safety on the night shift of, you know, I had one guy
11 complaining about, the supervisor complained to me that this girl was
12 working across in the old cushion room, you know, where they were out
13 there in Building 19...
14

15 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
16

17 John Dean: ...when they had the cushion room out there and she wasn't wearing any
18 bra and she had a tank top on, you know, and when she would lean over
19 the line to work, she was exposing herself. There was a guy that worked
20 right across the street from her, right across the line from her that was
21 really upset about this, you know, he was a Christian kid. And so when I
22 went out there, and the supervisor didn't want to address it, you know, and
23 he thought it was a safety issue so here I am, you know.
24

25 And, uh, so [chuckle] I went to her and I said you got to come in the office
26 with me. I got to talk to you. And I talked to the guy, you know, and boy
27 he was [inaudible 12:05] my wife and blah, blah, blah. Okay. We go in
28 the office, I talk to this girl and I said, you know, I realize it's hot out here
29 and I know you want to be comfortable and this and that but you can't
30 expose yourself like this, you know. And she said I'm not, blah, blah,
31 blah, defending it. And I said, well, you're going to go home and you're
32 going to put some clothes on, that's all there is to it 'cause you can't work
33 tonight like that, but anyway, she goes home and she comes back and the
34 next day, of course, the union comes out saying you can't do that to our
35 employees and I said, well then, I'll write a new plant rule, you know.
36 [chuckle] And that's where that one came from, you know, that was, you
37 know, if it's offensive or abusive to other people, you can't, you know,
38 you can't wear that type of clothing, that's where that came from.
39 [chuckle]
40

41 Cheryl McQuaid: So you used to write some of the plant rules.
42

43 John Dean: Oh yeah. [chuckle] People didn't like to put things down on paper back
44 then. The only way I find that you can make people do things or make
45 them even cognizant of what it was supposed to be, you write it down.
46 You get a bad reputation when you do that too. [chuckle]

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: Well, I always remember you having a good reputation, so.
3
4John Dean: Thank you.
5
6Cheryl McQuaid: It didn't, uh, it didn't follow you like that I don't think Mr. Dean.
7
8John Dean: [inaudible 13:12] it's hard to say. Irregardless, you do what you got to do.
9 [chuckle]
10
11Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Could you tell us – I think when we interviewed, um, Mr. McGhee.
14
15John Dean: Sam.
16
17Cheryl McQuaid: Sam McGhee.
18
19John Dean: Mm-hm.
20
21Cheryl McQuaid: I believe he was telling us a little bit about the cameras and some of the
22 stuff the plant security had to do.
23
24John Dean: Yeah, yeah.
25
26Cheryl McQuaid: [13:32] Could you go into the plant security for us?
27
28John Dean: Well, yeah, back – what Sam was talking about the cameras was we were
29 probably one of the first plants in Lansing to put up a security surveillance
30 system around the periphery of the plant. Because we were getting so
31 much damage out in the parking lot and you know [inaudible 13:48]
32 enough people to patrol everything [inaudible 13:51] so we put cameras
33 up all over the place so you could see the parking lot, so you can see the
34 periphery of the plant and so, and all the monitors were down at the plant
35 security desk so you could see anything, anytime you wanted to and some
36 of the things you seen you didn't enjoy seeing. [chuckle] But anyway,
37 you know, it was, it was a way to deter theft and damage to people's
38 property and so, and you could also observe some things that you wanted
39 to see but, or not to, you know, shouldn't be made public, let me put it that
40 way.
41
42 But anyway, we used a lot of that stuff and we used a lot of controls for
43 the periphery of the plant as far as doors and things of that nature, you
44 know, to control people's flow in and out of the plant. They wanted to put
45 in, matter of fact, when I went to work there they had put in the alarm
46 systems at the gates so, you know, when you walk through it would ring a

1 bell if there's a metal object and so on, which at, at that time they were
2 unsophisticated and you couldn't, you couldn't temper them down so that
3 it wouldn't trigger at the slightest metal object going through them, see.
4 So anyway it was ridiculous. I mean they turned those things on, I hadn't
5 been working there I don't think three months when I was out there and
6 hear this damn thing is going off, you know, and I'm going what in the
7 world is happening here. The guys are carrying metal lunch buckets
8 through there, well, they're going to go off. [laughter] So anyway, they,
9 they unhooked those very, very quickly so that they never were used. You
10 probably when you went to work there you would probably see them
11 sitting out there because they never did take them out. They just sat there
12 for a long time.

13
14 Well, now, of course, they went to these swinging gates and all that stuff
15 that was prevalent when you used to work there and, you know, they had
16 the punch cards and all that stuff. Well, these things that I'm talking about
17 were the forerunner of all that stuff, see, to secure the plant. But, you
18 know, the biggest thing that we had as far as security goes was the
19 patrolling of the plant and all that really was was a deterrent to people
20 doing things so that they were conscious that there was somebody there
21 [inaudible 15:53]. All plant security really was was an observing and
22 reporting organization. It was up to guys like Al to control their people.
23 All we did was hand in reports that your guys did this, you know, and it's
24 our word against yours, you know, and do what you will with your people,
25 you know, 'cause we didn't have any right to arrest or anything like that.
26 We just report what we see, you know. And a lot of people thought that
27 plant security people were cops. They weren't cops. They were observers
28 and reports and controllers and that's all it amounted to. And we had
29 some guys that thought they were cops, there's no question about it but
30 believe me, they were [inaudible 16:30].

31
32 Jerri Smith: Still do.

33
34 John Dean: Oh yeah, I'm sure. [chuckle] But you know, and it was tough to get it
35 across to those people 'cause they, they get abuse like there was no
36 tomorrow. There were no two ways about it. I remember when I was an
37 officer, you walk around that plant, I would have guys challenge me
38 nightly, you know, they'll take you out and kick your tail and all this and
39 that. Uh-huh, you bet, you know. [laughter] But you know, it's part of the
40 game.

41
42 One of the most important things that plant security had was the fire
43 protection systems, you know, and the people we had controlling all that
44 stuff because they were vital. [Inaudible 17:01] you take like in that paint
45 shop that Al had, I mean one spark up there, boy, they would go up like a
46 candle, you know, so you had to keep everything under control and

1 working condition so the [inaudible 17:12] alarm systems we had there,
2 you know, we were continually working on that stuff because he had dry
3 systems up there 'cause a lot of the paint shop area was open to the outside
4 air and therefore you can't have water in the line because it would freeze
5 and break so you had to use dry systems and you had these valves inside
6 the main lines and so they had to be checked. And if they weren't
7 operating, the alarm would go off down at the desk then you got to get
8 them repaired.
9
10 You can't have those things shut off so, you know. With a building that
11 big or a facility that large you can't have all these things shut down so you
12 got to constantly be monitoring that stuff to make sure it was working.
13 But that was a biggie and, of course, we had a guy on each shift to control
14 that, you know, and to work with it and so on. And we had maintenance
15 people specifically assigned to us so we keep that stuff operational. If you
16 didn't, [inaudible 18:01] burn the place down no matter what. [chuckle]
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: And it sounds like that was...
19
20 John Dean: That was [inaudible 18:06].
21
22 Cheryl McQuaid: ...easy to do.
23
24 John Dean: Well, believe me, we had some damage there at times. [chuckle] Scary,
25 scary fires.
26
27 Allen Van De Vusse: Yup.
28
29 Cheryl McQuaid: Allen, John brought up the paint shop. [18:15] Why don't you talk a little
30 bit about the paint shop? You were there when it went from the old paint
31 shop to the new shop, didn't you?
32
33 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
34
35 Cheryl McQuaid: Weren't you?
36
37 Allen Van De Vusse: When I first went to Fisher Body we had, the paint shop was a one-line
38 system through the sealer room and then it split. I had [inaudible 18:32]
39 and then it was a two-line system and we built all convertibles on the one
40 line and, and closed bodies on the other line and that was before we went
41 into, uh, oh goodness, the, uh, the, the post-less cars, you know, where
42 they, when you open the windows it was all open. What did you call
43 those?
44
45 John Dean: Yeah.
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: I can't even remember.
2
3 John Dean: I can't remember now either.
4
5 Allen Van De Vusse: [chuckle] At any rate...
6
7 John Dean: [Inaudible 19:01] open all the way across.
8
9 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, yeah. And, uh, then in – when we came out with the F85 in 1961,
10 we went from a...
11
12 John Dean: [Inaudible 19:16].
13
14 Allen Van De Vusse: To a two...
15
16 Cheryl McQuaid: Kind of like that picture, that's a convertible.
17
18 Allen Van De Vusse: No, that's a convertible.
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: Oh, okay.
21
22 Allen Van De Vusse: But the, the cars we had a two door and also a four door that had a roof on
23 it but it was all open across just like a convertible, the windows rolled
24 down in the back and down here. And, uh, but I was going to say in 1961
25 when we started building the, the F85 it was called at that time, it
26 eventually became the Cutlass, uh, then it was a two-line system all the
27 way through the paint shop and we built, had to build some additional
28 spray hose because they had a painted interior on them. Then, uh, let's
29 see, that was, we continued that paint shop until we moved up into the new
30 paint shop in 1984 when we started building the GM20 program. Uh, of
31 course, there were a lot of changes in between but minor changes like
32 every year they'd come in and do something minor. But that old paint
33 shop, like I say, it lasted a lot of years. It was there long before I was, up
34 until like say 1984. That's kind of a brief history of the paint shop as I
35 recall it.
36
37 Cheryl McQuaid: [20:45] Do you remember any of your headaches from having that old of a
38 paint shop? [chuckle]
39
40 Allen Van De Vusse: All the time. John was talking about his safety and fire protection. One of
41 the big...
42
43 John Dean: That was a [Inaudible 20:54] down there. [chuckle]
44
45 Allen Van De Vusse: One of the big problems in the paint shop was contamination from a
46 silicone base like hand creams or that had a silicone base. And we even

1 got plagued with, with fish eyes they called them from, from a silicone-
2 based material or a polymer and we couldn't find that and couldn't find it
3 and finally it was coming over a wall from a room where they filled fire
4 extinguishers.
5
6John Dean: Fire extinguishers.
7
8Cheryl McQuaid: [21:29] What is a fish eye?
9
10Allen Van De Vusse: It's just a little imperfection in the paint but it's, uh, kind of like if you get
11 an oil spot on something, it's just hard to get out. I mean you could sand
12 the hell out of it...
13
14John Dean: It's a pit or a bubble. [chuckle]
15
16Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. And you'd sand it right down to the bare metal and you'd spray it
17 again and the darn thing would pop right through again because [inaudible]
18 21:51].
19
20John Dean: You know where the main aisle was in Building 1 right where Building 9
21 offices are?
22
23Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
24
25John Dean: You come out that far north door there, the northeast door [inaudible]
26 22:00] Building 9.
27
28Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, yeah.
29
30John Dean: Right there was where the old fire hall was, okay, that's where they had
31 the firetrucks and stuff and that's where we filled extinguishers. On the
32 other side of that wall was his paint shop. [laughter]
33
34Allen Van De Vusse: That, that powder just floated out over this brick wall and, and my God,
35 we just had an awful time finding that.
36
37John Dean: Oh yeah. Well, we had the same problem in the new paint shop.
38
39Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
40
41John Dean: Because people would [inaudible 22:27] they touch off all those fire
42 extinguishers up there.
43
44Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
45
46John Dean: That stuff would go in the air, you know. [chuckle]

1
2 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. Oh yeah. We had constant problems in the paint shop. They were,
3 uh, the booth cleaners occasionally would leave the door open up on the
4 roof of an oven, well, then you'd get contamination through just the
5 outside air, the dust and everything and, and, well, paint shop was a
6 constant battle. And it was always our fault no matter what happened. If
7 the, if the body shop had a problem, the paint shop was supposed to fill it
8 with sealer or something, you know, fix it up for them.
9
10 John Dean: That's true.
11
12 Allen Van De Vusse: If the trim, if the trim shop had a problem, it was the paint shop's fault
13 because they had too much sealer in a window opening or it was always, it
14 was a constant battle.
15
16 John Dean: Coming up out of the body shop, you know...
17
18 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
19
20 John Dean: ...the last thing they do is grind on these things.
21
22 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
23
24 John Dean: It would be lead grinding, see.
25
26 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
27
28 John Dean: And then you're supposed to go through a washer to take that stuff off.
29 They get up to the paint shop and go around that [inaudible 23:27] area up
30 there and then ship them down into paint, see, and man, that stuff would
31 be on that car. He's trying to get it off through the bonder right here and it
32 won't come off. [laughter] It was a [inaudible 23:40].
33
34 Allen Van De Vusse: It was a constant battle.
35
36 John Dean: It was just always, you know, the people, I can remember, Al, when I was
37 walking on housekeeping tours up there and people cookin'...
38
39 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh.
40
41 John Dean: ...in the damn ovens, you know. Grease splatter and all that stuff, you
42 know. [laughter] Popcorn machines going, you know. [chuckle] Grease
43 on everything.
44

1 Allen Van De Vusse: In the old paint shop [coughing] on the night shift occasionally like at a
2 holiday period somebody would get the idea and they, they actually put a,
3 put a pig in an oven.
4
5 John Dean: Yeah.
6
7 Allen Van De Vusse: And they thought they had it all covered up with tinfoil but my God all of
8 a sudden the cars started coming out just splattered with, with grease from
9 this p-, pig being baked in the oven. [laughter] I'll tell you, oh, if you go
10 back, back in the fifties, the supervisors back then, of course, were taken
11 from the line and they were, they were buddies with the people on the line.
12
13 John Dean: Sure.
14
15 Allen Van De Vusse: And you can't imagine how many whisky bottles and that type of stuff
16 that we took out of even foremen's lockers.
17
18 John Dean: Oh, you bet.
19
20 Allen Van De Vusse: Because they were all buddy-buddy, you know, and especially the night
21 shift. The day shift wasn't quite so bad because a lot of people were
22 around watching but that night shift was something else.
23
24 John Dean: Even when I went there we used to, when the body shop was down there
25 on, along Verlinden Avenue...
26
27 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
28
29 John Dean: ...in 3X I can remember us guys I'd put up a patrolman out there in the
30 front of the building, you know, on the night shift.
31
32 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
33
34 John Dean: And here would come a rope out through the window, you know, a guy
35 would tie on a six pack, all kinds. [laughter] And the same thing would
36 happen out, you know, where the Executive Drive was, the Executive
37 garage for the trim shop, right behind the trim shop you'd see them out
38 there throwing stuff over the fence, you know, and guys running out there
39 and grabbing it you know...
40
41 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
42
43 John Dean: ...and back in to the plant. It was just, you know.
44
45 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
46

1John Dean: It's the way things were. But I know when I first went to work there,
2 drinking was very, very prevalent...
3
4Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
5
6John Dean: ...in that shop.
7
8Allen Van De Vusse: Yup.
9
10John Dean: I mean, I know of even, you know, salary people having bars set up in
11 their areas and you name it.
12
13Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
14
15John Dean: It was different. [laughter] [coughing]
16
17Allen Van De Vusse: Then after the drinking, you know, that got under control pretty much.
18
19John Dean: Yeah.
20
21Allen Van De Vusse: But then drugs entered into the picture.
22
23John Dean: Then drugs came in.
24
25Allen Van De Vusse: And that was the worst...
26
27John Dean: Yeah.
28
29Allen Van De Vusse: ...thing than the drinking because it just was harder to control, you
30 couldn't.
31
32John Dean: Yeah. The alcohol we finally...
33
34Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
35
36John Dean: ...did get that semi under control, you know.
37
38Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
39
40John Dean: But that, that drug thing, that was just pretty wild.
41
42Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
43
44John Dean: [Inaudible 26:23] maybe you could see it, you knew it, you know, and you
45 could even, I had lists of people who were involved in that stuff, you
46 know, but to do something about it was very, very difficult. And, you

1 know, you tried to get help from, you know, the union guys and stuff,
2 well, they [inaudible 26:40] put their foot in a noose, you know, or their
3 neck in a noose. They're not going to do that, you know, so you just kind
4 of had to temper it as best you could, you know. And that, it led to some
5 quality problems, it led to some, you know, safety issues. It led to a lot of
6 things, you know.
7
8 Allen Van De Vusse: Yup.
9
10 John Dean: It just, you just did what you could do to help, you know, the situation as
11 best you could and there wasn't a whole lot you could do. I – we had
12 some police working in there at one time and we had done a lot of things
13 of that, you know, in those regards to try to control that. We even had
14 police in the parking lot sometimes and those cameras were part of that
15 issue and you sat there and watched the dealings going on, you know.
16 You knew who it was, you know, and you could show it to the cops but
17 they...
18
19 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
20
21 John Dean: ...they can't do anything on private property until they get off private
22 property, you know. So there were a lot of issues like that but it, it caused
23 problems, there were no two ways about it. We could have a far better
24 quality job coming out of there over the years if it hadn't have been for
25 alcohol and drugs.
26
27 Cheryl McQuaid: So it was a major problem then.
28
29 John Dean: Oh sure, sure it was.
30
31 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah, yeah. Constantly.
32
33 John Dean: Continually. Yeah, you know, it's like Al was talking about the food and
34 stuff, you know, in that plant. If you wanted to have an experiment, you
35 wanted to come in to Fisher Body on Friday night at about 7 to 9:00 at
36 night anyplace in there, you walk through that place and you'd smell fish,
37 popcorn, pizza. [laughter] And of course back then, you know, the plant
38 rules was you couldn't, you couldn't have coffeepots, you couldn't have
39 radios, you couldn't be cooking in the plant, you know, and all that stuff,
40 you know. And of course, the plant security guys were responsible for
41 finding that stuff and reporting it to the supers and all this, you know.
42 And you didn't want to step on the people's throat. It was bad enough
43 being in there on a Friday night but on the other hand that was your job,
44 you know, and it was a plant rule. Radios, my gosh you couldn't have a
45 radio. You couldn't have nothing, you know. It was just awful. But over
46 the years they relented on some of that stuff. I can remember getting calls

1 from Tom [inaudible 28:31] the plant manager, get down there and get
2 that situation straight. He went through that cushion room one night and
3 he was just going crazy 'cause there was all this country western music
4 going.
5
6 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
7
8 John Dean: You couldn't hear yourself think down there, you know, so. [chuckle]
9 Russ was the safety guy on the day shift and I said come on Russ, you go
10 [chuckle] down there with a noise meter, you know. [laughter] And I said
11 okay, you guys, you're over the decibel limit, turn them down. [laughter]
12 It was awful but they finally relented on that stuff, you know. You could
13 have coffeepots and if they were in their proper area and all that and same
14 with the radios and all that crap, you know, but it was years.
15
16 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
17
18 John Dean: Boy, I mean we used to burn a lot of people...
19
20 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
21
22 John Dean: ...just for having that stuff around, you know, [inaudible 29:16].
23
24 Allen Van De Vusse: And even after they relented on, on those things, there again the paint shop
25 couldn't have...
26
27 John Dean: No.
28
29 Allen Van De Vusse: ...the, you know, the coffeepots and that because of the contamination and
30 so those people were kind of discriminated against.
31
32 John Dean: Remember that time we found that deodorants were causing problems in
33 the paint shop?
34
35 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
36
37 John Dean: Unbelievable.
38
39 Allen Van De Vusse: [inaudible 29:39] yeah. Yeah, anything that like I say, that would have a,
40 a silicone-type base to it like, like I say perfumes and any kind of makeups
41 that...
42
43 John Dean: We even found one problem one time with the shipping aids for the
44 [inaudible 29:57] they're coming in with the powdery stuff [inaudible
45 29:59].
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
2
3 John Dean: Contaminated the paint shop. [chuckle] [Inaudible 30:05] hazardous
4 materials we'd look at data sheets on all that stuff, you know. You could
5 just look it up, you know, and sure as heck that would be the problem, you
6 know. I remember one, several times that they'd have compressor
7 problems over in the powerhouse and Al would go out and your filters up
8 there are going crazy and all this and that. Well, it's, you know, what he
9 was talking about was the air supply valves was up on the roof, see.
10
11 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
12
13 John Dean: When they changed the filters up there a lot of times they'd knock a lot of
14 stuff loose, you know, and the next morning, boy, you turn that line on,
15 they'd have pits and crap in the paint job like there was no tomorrow.
16 Well, I said we didn't change any filters this time, you know. We didn't
17 do nothing. Well, come to find out what they had done was over in the
18 powerhouse they had changed their filtration over there on the air supply
19 system and they had even oiled up their equipment. [chuckle]
20
21 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh boy, yeah.
22
23 John Dean: He was suffering the effects because it went through the air supply lines
24 into the paint shop.
25
26 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
27
28 John Dean: He's got a mess.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: Everything affected the paint department.
31
32 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah, yes. It was, it was like I say, a constant battle all the time. The
33 least little – oh, if you had a little breakdown in an oven, you know, which
34 we had occasionally a body truck would come off the line for some
35 reason, there was a piece of metal or something in the track and it would
36 shake the oven, well, my God, then [inaudible 31:23] you had dirt...
37
38 John Dean: Oh yeah.
39
40 Allen Van De Vusse: ...because it just shook it all loose.
41
42 John Dean: Well that, and the people going in there [inaudible 31:30]. [chuckle]
43
44 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, yeah. People going in to fix the, you know, to take care of the
45 breakdown.
46

1John Dean: A lot of times they'd scrap jobs right and left because they just couldn't
2 save them, you know, after that contamination [inaudible 31:41].
3
4Allen Van De Vusse: And he was saying about getting calls from Tom [inaudible 31:44], of
5 course. Did you know Tom [inaudible 31:48]?
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: I know I believe he worked there when I did but he wasn't around.
8
9Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
10
11John Dean: He was the plant manager.
12
13Allen Van De Vusse: Well, Tom [inaudible 31:56] was the kind he spent his Sundays in the
14 plant and...
15
16John Dean: Dedicated guy.
17
18Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. He, I mean, that was his life and that's where he was at and many a
19 Sunday morning I'd get a call, Al, come on down here, I need to show you
20 something. Well, after about a few months of that, my wife would answer
21 the phone, she'd say, well, Tom, he isn't here. He's in church. [laughter]
22 And I, I think after that he's going out to breakfast with some people, so.
23 [laughter] She, she got where she'd make excuses for me 'cause I mean he
24 just wanted company really.
25
26John Dean: That's what it was. He loved that.
27
28Allen Van De Vusse: He just wanted somebody there...
29
30John Dean: He was a dedicated guy.
31
32Allen Van De Vusse: ...to walk around the plant with him, you know, so he could point things
33 out. [chuckle]
34
35John Dean: Yeah, he loved that. Man, he'd come by my office and he'd grab me and
36 we're going to go for a walk. And all you did was you take your little pad
37 with you, write down all these comments 'cause he had something to say
38 about everything. There was a plant manager that was hands on [inaudible
39 32:59].
40
41Allen Van De Vusse: [Inaudible 32:59] yeah.
42
43John Dean: Everything. [chuckle]
44
45Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
46

1John Dean: And he expected you to be an authority on everything too.
2
3Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
4
5John Dean: But he was, he was the kind of guy he was, what do I want to say, a
6 dominant individual, very dominant and to the point that he was a dictator.
7 He'd not only point the problem out to you, he'd tell you how he wanted it
8 corrected. [laughter]
9
10Louise Dean: He could write beautiful letters. Mr. [inaudible 33:23] could write
11 beautiful letters.
12
13Allen Van De Vusse: Oh [inaudible 33:25] writer. Yeah.
14
15John Dean: Oh, he could do that.
16
17Allen Van De Vusse: He would jot three to four letters a day [inaudible 33:29].
18
19John Dean: He was the one that told me to start writing stuff down, writing policy and
20 procedure. He didn't want to hear about it anymore, he wanted to see it,
21 yes sir. [laughter]
22
23Allen Van De Vusse: Well, you know, I had experiences too because I was in, I was a time
24 study person for a number of years.
25
26Cheryl McQuaid: Now t-, time study, [33:49] could you explain what a time study person is?
27
28Allen Van De Vusse: Well, we had, when I first started we had a single stopwatch and a board
29 of the single stopwatch on it and you'd go out and you'd write down the
30 elements of a job. Like if you were putting sealer on the body in the paint
31 shop, you'd write down what they were, where it was being, uh, applied
32 and, uh, you'd time each, each little segment of the job. And then this was
33 a requirement in our plant that every job in the plant would be studied
34 every year and it took the first, oh, two, three months of the new model
35 run to get all the studies of everybody and, of course, people used to kind
36 of resent us and they'd drag their feet and, uh.
37
38John Dean: Well, there was walk and carry time and...
39
40Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah, you had [inaudible 34:48].
41
42John Dean: ...bend and twist.
43
44Allen Van De Vusse: You'd break...
45
46John Dean: All the elements.

1
2 Allen Van De Vusse: You break it right down to as, as fine an element as you could time. And,
3 uh, they were useful in a lot of cases and, and it didn't just work for the
4 company. Uh, I recall one time that a gentleman that was at that time who
5 later became a paint superintendent, Bob Brown, he called me one day and
6 he said this young lady just has got a problem, he said we can't, she can't
7 get her job done and she wants you to come out and study it. So I went
8 out and, and when I studied it I told Bob, I said, well, she really has got
9 too much work she can't keep up, so we had to break the job up. So it did
10 help the person sometimes too, more, more for the company than, than the
11 line worker but it did help them on occasions.
12
13 And that was – we had a book in the office and I had every job on a, on a
14 sheet of paper [inaudible 35:52] paper [coughing] [inaudible 35:53] and at
15 that time I knew everybody's job. If you walked up to me and say what
16 does Jane Doe do out there, I could tell you exactly what she did. And
17 that was, that was my job just – and make recommendations on, of course,
18 how you could save money, how you could reduce manpower, how you
19 could do a job better, more efficiently. Now you brought up ergonomics.
20 Now at that time we didn't even think about that.
21
22 John Dean: No.
23
24 Allen Van De Vusse: That was, that was not a, not a...
25
26 John Dean: Not even an issue. You just did your job.
27
28 Allen Van De Vusse: ...[inaudible 36:29]. It was just how to do the job [beeping] more
29 efficiently and that was, that was the job. The same way you know back
30 when I hired in, I went into payroll. I talked about knowing every job in
31 the paint shop, I knew that well. When I hired into payroll, I had the
32 cushion room and the Building 5 Paint which had at that time a polish line
33 and a repair line. And after, oh, I don't know, a few weeks, my boss at
34 that time said okay, come on, I want you to tell me who these people are.
35 You had to go out and tell him, go down the line and say, well, this is, this
36 is Jane and that's Bob and this is Joe and that's, you know, you had to
37 know everybody's name. That was a criteria. That was a, that was
38 something, by God, [coughing] you had to do and so you, like I say, you
39 learned how to remember people and you remembered after that how to
40 remember everybody's job, what they were doing. And at that time also I
41 used to go in and spray jobs so I'd know what, what the job was or I'd put
42 sealer on the job. And the people were very cooperative. They, they all
43 used to call me Little Al, here comes Little Al. [laughter]
44
45 John Dean: The girls liked you best. [laughter]
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: Pardon me?
2
3 Cheryl McQuaid: John said the girls liked you best.
4
5 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh, well.
6
7 John Dean: Back then there was two areas that were loaded with women, one was the
8 sealer line...
9
10 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
11
12 John Dean: ...and the other was the cushion room. Boy, I'll tell you, [inaudible
13 38:01].
14
15 Allen Van De Vusse: Well, see, we had cut and sew. When I first went there, they had a cut and
16 sew department and they made all the trim, the seat covers and, uh, side,
17 the side panels for the doors and all that. We made that right in our plant.
18 Well, then they sent that down to [inaudible 38:22] to a centralized cut and
19 sew department and, of course, the cut and sew department was primarily
20 all female so there was, those ladies had to go, you know, filter in to other
21 departments and paint shop was the biggest recipient. They, they picked
22 up most of the, most of the females that came out of the cut and sew
23 department, that and the cushion room. The cushion room also, uh, took
24 over, took part of them so that's how really – well, when I first went on
25 supervision out of qual- or out of the labor standards into the paint shop, I
26 went on as a supervisor, a line supervisor and I had 40 women working for
27 me and there were probably four or five men was all but the whole line
28 was women.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: [39:11] And that was approximately what year? Do you remember when
31 you went into...?
32
33 Allen Van De Vusse: Uh, 1966.
34
35 Cheryl McQuaid: That was in '66 a lot of women.
36
37 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yes, yeah.
38
39 John Dean: Oh, when I went there in '71 that cushion room was all women and they
40 had men supervisors.
41
42 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
43
44 John Dean: They had women, women, they had the sealer line I'm going to say was
45 90% women.
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah, yeah.
2
3 Cheryl McQuaid: [39:29] How many female supervisors back then? [coughing]
4
5 Allen Van De Vusse: None.
6
7 John Dean: None. You didn't get into that until the 80s.
8
9 Allen Van De Vusse: Yup. No, we didn't have any.
10
11 John Dean: It's like when Al was talking about ergonomics and safety, see, those were
12 nonissues.
13
14 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
15
16 John Dean: They didn't exist.
17
18 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
19
20 John Dean: I remember when I went in the safety department. I was the night shift
21 rep, [chuckle] the most hated person in the world because they didn't
22 know safety. They didn't care. They didn't want it, you know. Well,
23 they, they didn't want it because they didn't understand it.
24
25 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
26
27 John Dean: They didn't know it was a hindrance to production, you know. And the
28 white-shirted people were the worst of the bunch. The hourly rate, you
29 know, they [inaudible 40:02], you know, but they wanted to use it from
30 the standpoint of a better job, you know, get, get something for themselves
31 out of it...
32
33 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
34
35 John Dean: ...you know, rather than eliminating an issue. And Russ Bower at the time
36 I went on, when I went on as director, why Russ was just coming on as the
37 UAW rep for safety and we'd go out and we'd look at some of these
38 situations, you know. It was God awful. I mean they had to have a little
39 woman like, you know, 3 foot tall...
40
41 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
42
43 John Dean: ...working up here on a line, you know, and they'd wonder why she was
44 hurting you know. [chuckle]
45
46 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. That's true.

1
2John Dean: Because you tell the super, she can't work like that or he can't work like
3 that, nobody cares, it's his job, you know, well. [chuckle]
4
5Allen Van De Vusse: What John is saying, you know, uh, short people, we had some short
6 people but they came, we hired short people years ago because when we
7 went, when they went through the water test up in trim, they'd climb in the
8 trunk and ride through the water test in the trunk with their flashlight...
9
10John Dean: Yeah.
11
12Allen Van De Vusse: ...to see if there was any leaks and they specifically hired shorter people to
13 do this job.
14
15John Dean: Yup.
16
17Allen Van De Vusse: And then they quit doing that. They went to a black light, what they
18 called a black light system...
19
20John Dean: Yeah.
21
22Allen Van De Vusse: ...and so they didn't need these people anymore so therefore we got them
23 into other jobs in the plant. And like John was saying I had one real short
24 lady that you just had an awful time finding a job she could do because
25 she was so short.
26
27John Dean: You wouldn't believe...
28
29Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
30
31John Dean: ...what it took to get a platform built so...
32
33Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yeah.
34
35John Dean: ...a person didn't have to stand on their tiptoes to do their job.
36
37Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
38
39John Dean: It was just, everybody had complete disregard for safety.
40
41Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
42
43John Dean: And the employees were as bad as the, the salary people because you
44 know, they, they didn't know what was going on. They had no idea, no
45 conception of what that was all about, you know. You'd try to say, well,
46 you know, but then as you got going, as you got the, the safety process

1 going in people's mind and it took a lot of beatin' up of a lot of people,
2 you know [inaudible 42:00] beatin' up on myself I know that [chuckle]
3 'cause people didn't like you, you know. They started misusing it. You
4 ever see, look at all the fans in Fisher Body. I mean every job had a fan
5 for it, you know.
6
7 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
8
9 John Dean: And some of it was all right, some of it wasn't, see. They wanted to use
10 safety as the issue to get a fan for personal cooling, you know, and it really
11 wasn't. It was just, you know, I'd just tell the supervisor when I'd go up
12 there, Bower would do the same thing, you know, this isn't a safety issue,
13 it's a, you know, comfort issue. Do you want your employee to have it or
14 don't you, you know. And so they started a, uh, a stamp system, if we felt
15 it was a safety issue, you know, like fumes or something [inaudible
16 42:38], we'd stamp the work order. If not, then it was just a comfort
17 thing, you know. And it was just crazy back in those days. [chuckle] You
18 know, finally they just put'm up wherever they wanted, you know, and
19 you've seen thousands of them up there, I'm sure you have. But that was
20 just one thing.
21
22 But I mean it was just ungodly to try to get a safety program going in that
23 plant and we finally did. It finally started taking hold and I always felt
24 that the only way you were going to make it work in there, and when I left
25 safety I told them that, you ought to get the hourly-rated people involved.
26 That will be the driving force, that's all there is to it. And if you're just
27 going to rely on two salary guys and one guy from the UAW working on
28 it, it ain't going to work, you know, 'cause you're going to be the bad guys
29 and all the other guys would be the good guys so you got to get the good
30 guys involved in it, you know. Well, they finally did [chuckle] and it took
31 off from there but it was, it was like pulling teeth for a lot of years.
32
33 Allen Van De Vusse: Well, you know, in that same vein, back when I hired in in '53, you know,
34 a shop job was the low, the lowest thing you could do. I mean back then if
35 you went to work for Fisher Body on the line, I mean it was because you
36 couldn't get anything else. Well, you saw the transformation from being
37 an undesirable job to being, boy, I wish I could get in there because the
38 pay is good and, you know, the working conditions were so much better
39 and everything because as it, as the years went along these changes
40 happened...
41
42 John Dean: Yeah.
43
44 Allen Van De Vusse: ...and it made it from a sweatshop and a hellhole into a desirable place to
45 work and it was quite refreshing just to go through that transformation so
46 that was...

1
2 John Dean: I remember going to the body shop, you know, back then and, you know,
3 all that welding going on, there were a lot of people down there then. It
4 wasn't all equipment then. And man, the smoke would be so thick down
5 there you couldn't see straight, you know. And when I went into safety I
6 find out why it was that way 'cause they'd, they'd damaged the air
7 handling units during the winter to get warm, you know. And therefore
8 when it comes summertime, you know, it's so doggone hot and that smoke
9 would just hang in there because the air handling units were destroyed,
10 you know, and they weren't functional so therefore they wouldn't pull that
11 stuff out of there, you know. So it was just a constant campaign to get
12 maintenance to go down there and get those body shop supervisors to
13 handle the situation for their own employees. Get the smoke out of here,
14 you know. The equipment was there, they just didn't maintain it.
15 [coughing] It was just unbelievable but nobody cared, you know. It was
16 just, you know, you could see smoke and soot hanging in the air down
17 there. If you ever remember walking through the body shop when
18 changeover came and they'd be washing down all that stuff, that smoke
19 and soot would be that thick all over everything up there.
20
21 Cheryl McQuaid: [45:26] And how thick is that?
22
23 John Dean: About a quarter of an inch to half an inch.
24
25 Cheryl McQuaid: Quarter of an inch.
26
27 John Dean: Yeah. It would just lay in that stuff, you know, but, but people didn't
28 seem to care. They just didn't, you know. And it was just, I remember
29 when we started the solder grinding program, you know. People were
30 going down to the hospital to get their blood levels checked for lead and
31 lead was a serious problem and, geez, they'd be elevated way up beyond
32 reason. Well, part of it was misuse by people but they'd carry their
33 cigarettes in their shirt pocket, you know.
34
35 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
36
37 John Dean: And the lead dust would go in there, you know, and they'd smoke the
38 cigarettes and, of course, it would be contaminated. Well, once we got the
39 program going, you know, and they got hoods on these people and we
40 were washing the hoods and we were doing all the good stuff to take care
41 of the lead problem and we had signs on the doors telling them what to do
42 and all this, the lead levels went right down where they should be, they
43 were normal, you know. So all of a sudden we started getting a rash of
44 high lead levels again and I couldn't figure out why 'cause we were doing
45 all the same stuff, you know. I go down to the hospital one night and I'm
46 looking at this guy, his level was way high, you know. And I said what do

1 you do at home? He said, well, he said, I repair automobiles. [chuckle]
2 And I said what do you wash parts with? Gasoline. I said, oh, come to
3 find out what he's doing is washing parts in gasoline. Of course, gasoline
4 has got lead in it, it absorbs into his skin. It had nothing to do with the
5 plant. [chuckle]
6
7 And then we got to figuring out that if a guy wanted out of booth, because
8 the booth grinding job was not a desirable job to have, you know, they'd
9 do something like that cause, you know, if your level was high, we'd have
10 to take you out of the booth and put you on another job until you got the
11 level back down and seniority put you back in there, see. People were
12 clever, believe me. [chuckle] But no, it was, it was just something. It was
13 interesting. I always said Fisher Body was a city within a city and, you
14 know, you just had to look at it from that point of view, you know. You
15 had all kinds of human elements in there and different types of people.
16 And, and there was a lot of nepotism in Fisher Body. I mean you would
17 be surprised how many people were related to other people that knew
18 other people. It was unbelievable. [coughing]
19
20 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. And that was good and bad in a lot of respects because you, uh –
21 when I – I never had – my son came to work there but he never worked for
22 me or anything. But, but I, I think that a person that their, their child
23 comes to work there, that, that child has something to live up to, you
24 know. They can't be the, the hell-raiser and that because their dad or their
25 mother is there and they're watching them so it, it helped in that regard.
26 And, and it was a close knit area even though we had at one time 5000
27 people, you know, at Fisher Body and, my gosh, you know, you just about
28 knew everybody even though it was that many people. I had the fortune
29 or misfortune going on nights occasionally and working with the night
30 shift and like we've said, you get to know the people there but it was a, it
31 was a different life on the night shift. You just went, just like they say,
32 from night to day because it was entirely different. And I think the people
33 on the night shift were even closer than the people on the day shift really.
34 But it, it was, like John said, it was a city within a city and a real
35 experience, so.
36
37 John Dean: Yeah, you should have stepped in to some of the staff meetings we had on
38 issues with [inaudible 49:09], you know, here you're sitting there and
39 [chuckle] everybody in that room is related to somebody, you know.
40
41 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
42
43 Cheryl McQuaid: We're going to take a short break now.
44
45 John Dean: Sure. [recording clicks off]
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: Do you want me to repeat that?
2
3 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah. [49:23] Tell us that story.
4
5 Allen Van De Vusse: Uh, the offices for the personnel department and the cafeteria was in the
6 basement where later the, it was a [inaudible 49:39] area for the body shop
7 down there after that, after they tore that out and built a new cafeteria
8 upstairs in Building 9.
9
10 John Dean: Yeah.
11
12 Allen Van De Vusse: And the ladies every year, hourly and salary, would put on a fashion show
13 and it was, and also a talent show. They, they'd have people come in in
14 this big, in the cafeteria down there and they'd, they'd have a fashion
15 show and a talent show and I can't remember any, [coughing] the one gal
16 was married to a Sober. What was her name? She was the clerk, uh.
17
18 Louise Dean: Lil [inaudible 50:21].
19
20 John Dean: Lil [inaudible 50:23].
21
22 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah. Lil, Lillian. She was part of it.
23
24 Louise Dean: Lillian [inaudible 50:25].
25
26 Allen Van De Vusse: And Sober and about four other names, but.
27
28 Louise Dean: [Inaudible 50:29]
29
30 Allen Van De Vusse: [Inaudible 50:31], yeah.
31
32 Louise Dean: [inaudible 50:32], not Sober.
33
34 Allen Van De Vusse: Not Sober, [inaudible 50:25]. Right. He was a...
35
36 Louise Dean: Country western.
37
38 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
39
40 Louise Dean: He sang in bars.
41
42 Allen Van De Vusse: That was a, you know, there was so many, it was like your home. Fisher
43 Body at that time was not a second home.
44
45 John Dean: Family.
46

1 Allen Van De Vusse: It was almost your...
2
3 John Dean: Your family.
4
5 Allen Van De Vusse: It was almost your first home and, uh, 'cause you spent so much time there
6 and there was activities like that. Like I way saying, between the office
7 buildings and the old paint shop back in the early fifties, between there
8 was the grassed areas and they had horseshoe pits in there where the
9 hourly rate and the salary people would go out there at noontime during
10 lunch periods and, and play horseshoes and they had contests and, and
11 tournaments and everything back there at that time. Well then, that was
12 all filled in and the, the garage was put in there and then the other part was
13 built into the paint shop and also there was a conference room. Remember
14 the conference room that was back there, John?
15
16 John Dean: Yup, sure do.
17
18 Allen Van De Vusse: And, uh, but...
19
20 John Dean: If you remember that area, Al, that later became a maintenance storage
21 area for equipment and stuff...
22
23 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
24
25 John Dean: ...for a lot of years. And plant security was on the other side of the aisle
26 from that, from the main entrance.
27
28 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
29
30 John Dean: They moved over to that area and boxed in an area and put their security
31 system in there and so on. Then they moved that, that junk out of there
32 that was down in that storage area for maintenance and they made it into
33 an office area for when they started having the UAW people...
34
35 Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
36
37 John Dean: ...have offices and [inaudible 52:04].
38
39 Allen Van De Vusse: Yup. Yeah, they did.
40
41 John Dean: At the far end of that area was a tunnel that used to went all the way up to
42 the Building 2...
43
44 Allen Van De Vusse: Oh yes.
45
46 John Dean: ...office area up to [inaudible 52:13] office...

1
2Allen Van De Vusse: Yup.
3
4John Dean: ...the plant's manager's office.
5
6Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
7
8John Dean: I remember when we backfilled that in the eighties, you know. It was all
9 filled in with sand and everything so we could build a new trim shop over
10 there in Building 15.
11
12Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
13
14John Dean: Just a lot of changes took place.
15
16Cheryl McQuaid: Well, I know that you do have another appointment and I really appreciate
17 all the time you spent with us this morning and if you would like to come
18 back and spend some more time with us.
19
20Allen Van De Vusse: Sure.
21
22Cheryl McQuaid: I know that we have only gotten the tip of your stories and memories.
23
24Allen Van De Vusse: Okay.
25
26Cheryl McQuaid: So I really thank you both, thank you all.
27
28Jerri Smith: Yes, thank you very much.
29
30Allen Van De Vusse: Okay.
31
32Louise Dean: It was fun.
33
34John Dean: Yeah, it was.
35
36Allen Van De Vusse: Yeah.
37
38John Dean: Enjoyed it.
39
40
41/mlc