

**Kirk (Shorty) Alexander discusses his career
at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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2
3
4
5Doreen Howard: [clicking] This is Doreen Howard. We're over at UAW Local 602 and it
6 is [rustling] September 16th, 2005, and we will be interviewing Kirk [Lee
7 0:22] Alexander today. [tsk] [rustling] Um. Can everyone at the table
8 please introduce themselves?
9
10Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.
11
12Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
13
14Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
15
16Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming.
17
18Kirk Alexander: Shorty.
19
20Doreen Howard: Okay.
21
22Kirk Alexander: Make sure you put that in there 'cause they don't – people don't know me
23 by that name other than Shorty. That's all they know me by. It's the
24 truth.
25
26Doreen Howard: Well, since ya started with that, tell us the story of how you got your
27 nickname.
28
29Kirk Alexander: [tsk] I was hired into the spray shop and, uh, everybody in there was about
30 5'2" and I was, um, 5'10", so they said, uh, we're gonna nickname you
31 Shorty and that's the way it's been for 36½ years. [laughter]
32
33Doreen Howard: [laughter] Okay. Um, [papers rustling] I see that you're from the DeWitt
34 area. Have you always lived in DeWitt or have you...?
35
36Kirk Alexander: No, I lived in North Lansing.
37
38Doreen Howard: In North Lansing.
39
40Kirk Alexander: That's where I was born, yeah.
41
42Doreen Howard: Okay. Um. [tsk] And, uh, could you tell me what your seniority date is?
43
44Kirk Alexander: It's 4/25/63.
45
46Doreen Howard: 1963. So you've been a long time with General Motors.
47

1Kirk Alexander: They wouldn't hire me for the first 4 days.
2
3Doreen Howard: Why?
4
5Kirk Alexander: I t-, I came and I slept with a sleepin' bag at the front door...
6
7Doreen Howard: Hm.
8
9Kirk Alexander: ...and plant protection used to let me in to go pee-pee at night. You know
10 [laughter] what I mean?
11
12Doreen Howard: [laughter]
13
14Kirk Alexander: And I stay right there and I wanted a job and I went all through the
15 paperwork and everything and there was a doctor in the hospital, his name
16 was Dr. [Osner 2:03], I believe is how you say that. And he turned me
17 down for bein' too tall. He said they weren't hirin'm to 5'10". They were
18 only hirin' to 5'8" or somethin' like that and he turned me down. And the
19 next mornin', there I am again 'cause I slept all night in that sleepin' bag
20 right at the door. They didn't hire me until Thursday, the fourth day, and
21 he said haven't you been through here before? I said I've cut 3 woods just
22 for the paper that you've wasted on me 'cause it's that thick by the time
23 you get to the door. Four days straight. He said you're gonna be here
24 tomorrow? I said yes, sir, I'll be right here tomorrow. He said you're
25 hired. You're hired. Go down with this.
26
27Doreen Howard: [laughter]
28
29Kirk Alexander: And he hired me.
30
31Doreen Howard: Hm. Well, that, that's...
32
33Kirk Alexander: And I worked days. They hired me in on the day shift Friday and bumped
34 me to nights on Monday mornin'. [laughter]
35
36Doreen Howard: Yeah. So, so how tall are you?
37
38Kirk Alexander: Now?
39
40Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
41
42Kirk Alexander: I grew a little since then. I'm 6'5".
43
44Doreen Howard: Oh, wow. You grew a lot...
45
46Linda Johnson: And you were 5'10"...

1
2Doreen Howard: ...since then. [laughter]
3
4Linda Johnson: ...when they wouldn't let you in?
5
6Kirk Alexander: I was 5'10" when they hired me in and...
7
8Linda Johnson: How old were you?
9
10Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 3:11].
11
12Kirk Alexander: I was, uh, 19.
13
14Male: [Inaudible 3:14].
15
16Kirk Alexander: And when I turned 21, I grew 7 inches.
17
18Doreen Howard: Wow.
19
20Kirk Alexander: And then they thought the pituitary gland was shot and they did tests like
21 ya never imagine. They said you're gonna be 8 feet tall. I said 6'5" is bad
22 enough. I hit my head on all the pipes in my dad's basement now.
23
24Linda Johnson: [Mm-hm 3:32].
25
26Doreen Howard: [laughter]
27
28Kirk Alexander: But I never grew an inch after that; 6'5" is what I stayed.
29
30Linda Johnson: Hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: Back then, I weighed 2 and a quarter.
33
34Doreen Howard: Okay. Um.
35
36Kirk Alexander: Now I weigh, uh, 373. [laughter]
37
38Doreen Howard: Wow.
39
40Kirk Alexander: Too many hamburgers [laughter] over at Harry's.
41
42Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
43
44Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
45
46Linda Johnson: Tell people what Harry's is.

1
2Kirk Alexander: [laughter] Yeah, Harry's Bar, [laughter] bar and grill. There ya go.
3
4Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 3:59] [tsk] Um. What, what's your birth date?
5
6Kirk Alexander: My birth date?
7
8Doreen Howard: Yeah.
9
10Kirk Alexander: 12/8/43. It's December 8th, 1943.
11
12Doreen Howard: Okay. So that makes you how old?
13
14Kirk Alexander: Do the math.
15
16Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 4:14].
17
18Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
19
20Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 4:16]. [laughter]
21
22Kirk Alexander: Oh.
23
24Doreen Howard: Old enough to know better.
25
26Kirk Alexander: I'm 61.
27
28Doreen Howard: Okay.
29
30Kirk Alexander: Yeah, I'll be 62 this year.
31
32Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 4:22].
33
34Kirk Alexander: I just signed up for old peoples' money, social security. I went through
35 that mess in the last 2 weeks. What a mess.
36
37Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. And you've retired from General Motors?
38
39Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
40
41Doreen Howard: In, in what year did you retire from General Motors?
42
43Kirk Alexander: Uh, I retired May 1st, uh, 1999.
44
45Doreen Howard: Okay.
46

1Kirk Alexander: Been out 6 years. Unbelievable.
2
3Doreen Howard: Okay.
4
5Kirk Alexander: I don't know where the 6 years went.
6
7Doreen Howard: Uh-huh. [Inaudible 4:46]. Um. [tsk] Do you have any, um, military
8 background at all or...?
9
10Kirk Alexander: No, they turned me down.
11
12Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 4:54].
13
14Cheryl McQuaid: Too tall?
15
16Kirk Alexander: I, I went down – no, I, I always wanted to be in the state police [sighing]
17 and so when I graduated high school, I went out to Michigan State and I
18 passed their physical test and then they – where they make you climb all
19 the ropes and junk and, and th-, then I did the paper test and I passed that.
20 And they said you're 17 years old. You need to do somethin' for 4 years
21 'cause ya can't start the academy until you're 21. I told'm I was gonna go
22 down and join the marines and, and, uh, go into military police and the
23 guy said I'll take ya down. So he gave me a ride to Detroit and, uh, I went
24 in and volunteered. I couldn't pass the physical. They said that bein' born
25 flat-footed, you'd never be able to take the marchin' is what they said.
26 And they put me down as 1-Y and bein' they turned me down 'cause I
27 couldn't march, then the state police turned me down. I mean, you know,
28 things just – when they start one way then goin' the wrong way, they just
29 – it catapult. You know what I mean? I went crazy almost. That, that
30 was always my dream, so I had to find somethin' to do. There wasn't no
31 work in '63. The shop wasn't hirin'. Or in '62 I mean; '61, '62, shop
32 wasn't hirin', and so I sacked groceries in a grocery store, Wrigley's
33 Supermarket in Frandor, for a while and then I worked at Michigan State
34 for grounds maintenance. Then I worked with a guy layin' ceramic tile in
35 bathrooms and all that kinda stuff. Then I did roofing. Then I [finished
36 6:33] cement. Then I laid blocks. I mean...
37
38Doreen Howard: Hm.
39
40Kirk Alexander: ...I cut pulp. [laughter]
41
42Linda Johnson: You did this all between 17 and...
43
44Kirk Alexander: [Oh 6:39].
45
46Linda Johnson: ...19?

1
2Doreen Howard: [laughter]
3
4Kirk Alexander: I – all that.
5
6Linda Johnson: Wow.
7
8Kirk Alexander: Th-, then I – when, uh, they laid me off from the shop, then I’d go to
9 Muskegon and cut pulp with – for, uh – cut red pines is what ya did for
10 pulp for the paper mills. I made more money there than I did at General
11 Motors but they didn’t make no – he didn’t pay no benefits there, you
12 know, so it wasn’t – was fun for the summer but [sighing] I don’t know as
13 it’d been fun in the winter.
14
15Doreen Howard: So what brought you to the steps of General Motors?
16
17Kirk Alexander: Fisher Body?
18
19Doreen Howard: Yeah.
20
21Kirk Alexander: Big money. [laughter]
22
23Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 7:11].
24
25Kirk Alexander: Lot better money than I was makin’.
26
27Doreen Howard: [Oh 7:14]?
28
29Kirk Alexander: Grocery store was \$1 an hour. Then I worked at Michigan State for \$1.90.
30 I thought was – I had the world by the tail, you know what I mean?
31 Double the money. And General Motors, I started out at \$2.22 an hour.
32
33Doreen Howard: Wow, so that was a big increase for you then.
34
35Kirk Alexander: In 3 months – I think it was either 2 or 3 months, ya got a – like a 30-cent
36 raise, you know what I mean? And, uh, everybody got that. They wanted
37 to stay, have more money. You know what I mean? More money...
38
39Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 7:44].
40
41Kirk Alexander: ...yeah.
42
43Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 7:45].
44
45Kirk Alexander: Make your car payments and your insurance payments, [laughter] you
46 know. It seemed good. Travel all over the country. Had a lotta fun.

1
2 Michael Fleming: Did ya have the opportunity to work any extra hours at General Motors or
3 was it a straight 40-hour week when ya came in?
4
5 Kirk Alexander: Well, when I hired in, day shift was goin' 10 hours a day, night shift
6 automatic [10/4 8:05].
7
8 Doreen Howard: Hm. What department...
9
10 Kirk Alexander: Ev-, every night. Hm?
11
12 Doreen Howard: ...what department did you come into?
13
14 Kirk Alexander: Paint. I hired right into Paint and I was...
15
16 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
17
18 Kirk Alexander: ...always in paint.
19
20 Doreen Howard: Tell me about that first day when you came in and started up in the paint
21 department.
22
23 Kirk Alexander: Oh, it sucks. Takes ya 2 hours just to find it. Ya hire in the front door,
24 they make ya come in the back door and ya don't even know where you're
25 at for 2 hours and everybody ya ask lies to ya.
26
27 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
28
29 Kirk Alexander: Oh, yeah, right down here and go right and ya get down there and ya
30 didn't know where ya was at and nobody down there knew [laughter]
31 where ya was at – supposed to be. You know what I mean? They all lie
32 to ya when ya first come in. It's funny. Yeah, I was lost for 2 hours. My
33 first foreman was [Ray Durham 8:46] and he said where in the hell have
34 you been? We start at 6 in the mornin', not 8.
35
36 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37
38 Kirk Alexander: I said [laughter] I came in the back a the plant, that's the best I can
39 [laughter] tell ya. You know.
40
41 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
42
43 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
44
45 Kirk Alexander: Hadn't buzzed in yet. I hadn't found the clock! I didn't know where it
46 was at. Oh, it was funny.

1
2Doreen Howard: [laughter]
3
4Kirk Alexander: The clock was down near wet deck. Oh, they bring ya in, show ya where
5 your locker is, which was funny back then. Nowadays they got lockers
6 that open and ya put your stuff inside. Down there in wet deck, they
7 didn't have that. You had a hangar that was on a pipe. Ya had a little box
8 that ya – just a little screened thing that ya unlock and put your shoes in
9 and stuff your pants in. Y-, when ya got your clothes out at night, ya
10 looked like a wrinkled mess, ya know what I mean. But, uh, it was down
11 near wet deck and then if ya had a jacket, ya hung that on this little hanger
12 but people'd steal it, so there was this chain hooked on the box and you
13 ran that down the sleeve, hooked it in the padlock and then hooked it on
14 that little box. That was your locker. That was different.
15
16Doreen Howard: [laughter]
17
18Kirk Alexander: People'd come by and put crap on your coat...
19
20Doreen Howard: Oh, yeah?
21
22Kirk Alexander: ...shove stuff in the sleeve, you know what I mean? Like nasty stuff.
23
24Linda Johnson: [Inaudible 9:58].
25
26Kirk Alexander: Yeah...
27
28Doreen Howard: [laughter]
29
30Kirk Alexander: ...you get out at night and you take a shower and – shower room was right
31 there. Take a shower and get all clean, come down and shove your arm in,
32 [inaudible 10:06] from there, you know, 'cause...
33
34Linda Johnson: [My god 10:07].
35
36Kirk Alexander: ...somebody decided to do ya a little while ya weren't...
37
38Doreen Howard: [laughter]
39
40Kirk Alexander: ...lookin'. Yeah. Fun times.
41
42Doreen Howard: [laughter]
43
44Michael Fleming: So those were some a the practical jokes that you...
45
46Kirk Alexander: Oh, they...

1
2John Fedewa: ...were exposed to?
3
4Kirk Alexander: Th-, y-, you get caught in all kinds a things.
5
6Michael Fleming: When – uh, go back to when you first walked in and the 2 hours that you
7spent.
8
9Kirk Alexander: When I was late?
10
11Michael Fleming: Did that happen to most new hires that came in the back door? That it
12was, uh...
13
14Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
15
16Michael Fleming: ...uh, something that they did to them just so that...
17
18Kirk Alexander: Some fool'd tell'm to go the wrong way. You know what I mean?
19Instead a just tellin' ya to cross the [sealer 10:36] line, hang a right, and go
20up the main aisle to the office – I mean, it was simple after ya learned it.
21
22Doreen Howard: Yeah.
23
24Kirk Alexander: They didn't do that. Oh, yeah, you go down here and ya – you know, and
25they'd get ya.
26
27Doreen Howard: Totally different department.
28
29Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
30
31Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 10:48].
32
33Linda Johnson: Did you pass that along when a new hire asked you?
34
35Kirk Alexander: No. No, I didn't. I didn't do that to – I didn't do that bad thing to people.
36[laughter]
37
38Doreen Howard: [laughter]
39
40Kirk Alexander: Supervisors is the ones I shafted. I didn't shaft none a the...
41
42Doreen Howard: [laughter]
43
44Kirk Alexander: ...line workers.
45
46Michael Fleming: [laughter]

1
2 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
3
4 Kirk Alexander: They were, they were like brothers, you know. [laughter]
5
6 Michael Fleming: Well, you know, it really isn't hard for that to happen because it's a very
7 large facility. If you – you know, if you're not familiar with the Fisher
8 Body facility, it is huge and we've got, uh, 3 floors and it just covers an
9 awful lotta area, so you could get lost very easily if ya didn't know where
10 you were goin'.
11
12 Kirk Alexander: If you, um, if you've hired in and you've been in one a those areas and
13 then you go to another plant, we'll say, and you ask somebody where to go
14 and you see these guys with smirks on their face, you know they just stuck
15 it to ya. You know what I mean? You get so you can read people after a
16 while. Ya might just as well sit down and wait for somebody to get tired a
17 the joke and tell ya the right place to go. It's strange. Well, it's fun, I
18 suppose, to them, you know. They can see ya wanderin' around way over
19 there somewhere and ya don't know where you're [laughter] goin'. Uh,
20 for – I'll bet it was for a week. I was lost the second day. I didn't do any
21 better.
22
23 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
24
25 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
26
27 Kirk Alexander: And, and I made Ray Durham laugh, my foreman, even though he was
28 unhappy with me for not bein' there on time. I told him I was gonna bring
29 a hillbilly compass and he said what's that? And I said it's a big ball a
30 string.
31
32 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
33
34 Kirk Alexander: When ya get outta work at night, ya tie it on your locker. [laughter] Ya
35 just let the ball unwind until ya get [laughter] to the door and ya tie it
36 there.
37
38 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
39
40 Kirk Alexander: I said the next day, ya follow the string in and you'll, you'll be there on
41 time.
42
43 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
44
45 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
46

1Kirk Alexander: That's a hillbilly compass. [laughter]
2
3Linda Johnson: [laughter]
4
5Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
6
7Doreen Howard: [laughter]
8
9Kirk Alexander: We always called it that. [sniffing]
10
11Doreen Howard: So you worked in the paint department. What job did they put ya on?
12
13Kirk Alexander: Uh, well, I was down in the front offices and – they took ya to the front
14 office finally when they found ya and I set down there. I remember some
15 a the guys I hired in with, um, settin' there with me. It was [Doug Hawley
16 12:49]. Ya all know him...
17
18Doreen Howard: [Mm-hm 12:51].
19
20Kirk Alexander: ...probably.
21
22Doreen Howard: Hm.
23
24Kirk Alexander: [Russ Bauers 12:52], he was down there. [Roger Stark 12:55]. Uh,
25 myself. Who was the other guy? Hm. One a them senior moments. I
26 can't remember th-, who the other guy was. There was 6 of us and the 1
27 guy quit 2 days later. [laughter] Yeah, yeah, he said he'd had enough. He
28 wasn't comin' back no more.
29
30Linda Johnson: Hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: But when they come to get us, you're in a pool there like and they come
33 and got Russ Bauers and they took him to wet deck. He hired into wet
34 deck – or they put him in the wet deck area. And they come and got Doug
35 Hawley and they took him to the body shop. And they come and got
36 myself and, uh, Roger s-, uh, Roger – wait a minute. Roger Stark went to
37 wet deck and then myself and the other guy I couldn't think of, what's his
38 real name? Oh, man. [Marvin Shade 13:49]. Marvin Shade and I went to
39 the [glaze booth 13:53] and a course we all – them are the ones we know
40 and so now you all come to the same area to eat lunch, you know what I
41 mean? 'Cause, whew, it was almost like somebody ya knew. You know
42 what I mean?
43
44Doreen Howard: [laughter]
45
46Linda Johnson: [laughter]

1
2Kirk Alexander: All them other people, ya – you know what I mean? You know, all them
3 people, all these eyeballs lookin' at ya, you know, like you're a [laughter]
4 criminal when ya walk...
5
6Doreen Howard: [laughter]
7
8Kirk Alexander: ...down through there. Uh, they know they can rip ya. That's why. Ya
9 just know you're vulnerable, vulnerable. You know what I mean? It's
10 scary. Yeah, it was fun though. I actually enjoyed the whole experience.
11 Especially toward the end, I guess. You know it's gonna end and you
12 really don't want it to because in a big plant like that, the biggest problem
13 with all your friends that ya know there, um, they all come from all over
14 the country. You know, different towns and stuff. Ya never see anybody
15 again. You know what I mean? You just don't. I go to auctions, I go to
16 [all those 14:51] shows around different places and sales and you never
17 see nobody. Even though I knew 5500 people [laughter] there, you know,
18 and I knew most of'm. Not every single one but a lot of'm.
19
20Doreen Howard: Hm.
21
22Kirk Alexander: [tsk] When I retired, they have this little book that guys sign, you know
23 what I mean, and they take that around for ya. Well, they took it around
24 part a the way and then I came in and took it around the rest a the way.
25 But I took it all through the plant, uh, on day shift and then I came in and I
26 took that book through the whole plant on night shift 'cause I knew a lotta
27 guys on nights. And they said that was the most anybody had ever had
28 was a book that thick and a half of another one.
29
30Linda Johnson: Wow.
31
32Kirk Alexander: And they said there musta been over 4000 signatures in there.
33
34Doreen Howard: Hm.
35
36Kirk Alexander: And they didn't all know me like close enough to say let's go get a
37 sandwich or somethin'...
38
39Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
40
41Kirk Alexander: ...but they knew who I was. They knew my name and they wanted to
42 sign...
43
44Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
45
46Kirk Alexander: ...the book and that's why ya do it.

1
2Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
3
4Kirk Alexander: Two days later, ya can't remember any a their names. Just faces. Uh, th-,
5 that's all I really...
6
7Linda Johnson: [Inaudible 15:55].
8
9Kirk Alexander: ...remembered was faces. I don't – and I'm worse now now that I've
10 been out. I ask other – few retirees that I see. I said I gotta problem. And
11 they say what's that? And I say I think I had a li-, small stroke after I
12 retired and they say why's that? I said see people that I worked with 25
13 years and I can't remember their name. And I, and I, I cheat. I go up to'm
14 and I say hey, buddy, how ya doin', you know?
15
16Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
17
18Kirk Alexander: And ya give'm the buddy thing about 4 times and ya got the br-, your
19 wheels in your head crankin', just smokin', tryin' to think...
20
21Linda Johnson: [laughter]
22
23Doreen Howard: [laughter]
24
25Kirk Alexander: ...a that guy's name and before he walks away, I tell him oh, I don't know
26 how to tell ya this but I can't remember [laughter] what your name is. Uh,
27 I said I don't know why but I just can't remember. I said I think I had a
28 stroke after I retired and I didn't know. Just a little one...
29
30Linda Johnson: [laughter]
31
32Doreen Howard: [laughter]
33
34Kirk Alexander: ...you know. But the other fellas that are retired said the same thing.
35
36Linda Johnson: Hm.
37
38Kirk Alexander: They worked with guys 30 years and they haven't seen'm for – I mean, we
39 ain't been in the area for 4, 5 years and all of a sudden, you come face to
40 face with one and then they can't remember the guy's name and they said
41 I wonder what makes that? I told'm senior moment. Somethin'. You
42 know what I mean? Brain fart. I don't know.
43
44Doreen Howard: [laughter]
45

1Kirk Alexander: Somethin'. You know? You try to think of a, [laughter] a reasonable
2 thing but you can't think of anything...
3

4Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
5

6Kirk Alexander: ...and it really – in your own mind, it, it, uh, well, you wanna bonk
7 yourself with a wooden mallet 'cause ya know ya should know that guy's
8 name. You know what I mean? And it just – it won't...
9

10Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 17:23].
11

12Kirk Alexander: ...come out. Ya can't spit it out. It just won't come out. Three days later,
13 while you're doin' somethin' at home, ya think damn! That's that guy's
14 name! All of a sudden, it [came] [inaudible 17:34]. It only took...
15

16Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 17:35].
17

18Kirk Alexander: ...3 days, you know.
19

20Doreen Howard: [laughter]
21

22Michael Fleming: [laughter]
23

24Marilyn Coulter: [It 17:37] fell outta the filing cabinet. [laughter]
25

26Kirk Alexander: Yeah. I don't know. It's the craziest thing. Uh, just all of a sudden,
27 you'll be thinkin' a nothin' and boom, that guy's name would come to ya.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: So Shorty...
30

31Doreen Howard: Hm.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: ...you s-, you know so many people. How many different jobs did you
34 have in the paint department?
35

36Kirk Alexander: [tsk] Oh, my gosh. [sighing] Uh, there's a good one there. You did have
37 to ask that wouldn't ya, huh?
38

39Marilyn Coulter: Did ya move around a lot or...
40

41Kirk Alexander: Well...
42

43Marilyn Coulter: ...like were in the wet deck or were ya in the...
44

45Kirk Alexander: I was...
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: ...[painter] [inaudible 18:01]?
2
3 Kirk Alexander: ...I was utility a couple a times for, oh, like 2, 3 years at a, at a shot.
4 When they first started utility, um, they wanted people to take the place of
5 sick ones, you know, around the way and they called it utility. They were
6 gonna pay a quarter more per hour. Oh yeah, that's for me. Yeah, you
7 know. Uh. [laughter] Anybody. And to get a raise, I mean, it's great.
8 Twenty-five cents an hour was a lot.
9]
10 Marilyn Coulter: So [inaudible 18:27]...
11
12 Kirk Alexander: Huh?
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: ...when they started utility?
15
16 Kirk Alexander: When they first started utility and s-, called it utility, um...
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 18:34].
19
20 Kirk Alexander: ...they, they gave that as a heading with your name, you know, like a
21 special part a the job or somethin' and, um, yeah, I went on and 4 or 5
22 other guys, finally coaxed them in to goin' on. I enjoyed it. I mean,
23 you...
24
25 Cheryl McQuaid: Do you remember what year that was?
26
27 Linda Johnson: What year?
28
29 Kirk Alexander: Oh, brother. I don't know that. [Inaudible 18:50].
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: Was it shortly after you hired in or...
32
33 Kirk Alexander: No, I'd say about...
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: ...early '70s...
36
37 Kirk Alexander: ...maybe...
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...late '70s?
40
41 Kirk Alexander: ...16 years later, 15 or 16 years. Um.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44
45 Kirk Alexander: 'Cause I was on days when it – well, there was a good one too. Had about
46 10 years. Lotta guys was on days. Went to days, you know, that was, uh,

1 younger seniority [to me 19:09] and I said, uh, maybe I'll give it a shot.
2 Hate gettin' up early in the mornin' but, uh, I said I like nights better. So I
3 gave it a shot. I went to days and I was good for 3 days and they bumped
4 me back to nights and, uh, I said well, this is wonderful. I shoulda stayed
5 here in the [laughter] first place.
6
7 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
8
9 Kirk Alexander: 'Cause then all it does is mess up your eatin', your sleepin', and all the
10 other things, you know. And so I stayed there until I w-, I had 16 years, I
11 believe when I went back to days again. I was good for a week that time
12 before they bumped me back to nights. I said I don't think I'll ever go to
13 days again ever. I mean, it just messes ya all up when ya do that. And –
14 but I did, um. They had utility and that's how I got bumped the first time.
15 No-, nobody wanted utility. It was a new thing and nobody wanted it. I
16 jumped in and I liked it. I mean, you know, they put ya in wet deck and
17 well, maybe you run a wheel on top a the car, you know, down there then
18 they'd slip ya over in lacquer and y-, and you, you had a exterior lacquer
19 or interior lacquer. Next day, you'd be in [rubber] [inaudible 20:18] and
20 it, it made it – kinda mixed it up a little bit so that you just didn't go to
21 sleep while doin' your job. You know, otherwise sprayin' paint, it was
22 like – I, I enjoyed sprayin' paint. That c-, them cars – this sounds funny
23 but them cars comin' to us, the thing that really irked me was we sell our
24 iron ore to Japan and then we buy the steel back from them and all this
25 steel that was on the cars there said made in Japan right across the cars,
26 you know, and th-, and they didn't have front ends when we were doin' it.
27
28 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
29
30 Kirk Alexander: They just had, uh, the firewall. They didn't, they didn't add that till later,
31 doin' the front ends. But there it'd be right across the front a that firewall,
32 you know. Made in Japan. Man, I can't wait to get that paint and cover
33 that up. That just irked me. They want ya to buy U.S. and here it says
34 made in Japan right on the front a the car. But I enjoyed sprayin' paint. I
35 don't know what there was about it. And now he may a lied about it but
36 Ray Durham used to say I was his best sprayer. There was 2 guys, d'ya
37 ever jo-, know [Joe McGee 21:26]?
38
39 Doreen Howard: Hm.
40
41 Kirk Alexander: Big black man. Huge black man.
42
43 Doreen Howard: Hm.
44
45 Kirk Alexander: Well, he was a good sprayer and ya, and ya just had to have a loose wrist
46 is the best I could say...

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
3
4Kirk Alexander: ...and we could fog each other to death in here, Joe and I could, or we
5 could not cover each other with paint at all. Just mattered what kinda
6 mood he was in 'cause if he started it, [I could] [inaudible 21:48]. But,
7 um, you either had it or ya didn't...
8
9Doreen Howard: Hm.
10
11Kirk Alexander: ...and it was our job to break the guys in on each line when they'd bring a
12 new model in because ya had to – well, there was different little ways ya
13 had to turn your wrist to get the paint and him and I, we just look at the
14 job and it came natural. I mean, it was just easy to do it. But we broke all
15 the other guys in.
16
17Doreen Howard: Did you ever work in any other department other than paint?
18
19Kirk Alexander: Yeah. [sighing] Um. Well, in this utility thing, I worked in the body shop.
20 I got a horrible job down there one day. A guy broke his leg. They took
21 me down and put me on a spot welder that weighed...
22
23Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
24
25Kirk Alexander: ...84 pounds. [laughter] Now, you didn't have to hold it up all the time but
26 you had to lift it up and then it'd hold it in place for ya and you go around
27 the windshield and do the spot welds and it was hard on T-shirts down
28 there because ya burned holes in 'em on the front a ya here. Plus, it was
29 hard on other parts a your body when one a them big sparks rolled down
30 too far. I mean it – it'll make ya dance. It w-...
31
32Linda Johnson: [laughter]
33
34Doreen Howard: [laughter]
35
36Kirk Alexander: ...it was hot. I mean, I ain't kiddin' ya. It was hot. And now that was a
37 horrible job but I worked in body shop, um, I worked in trim. They put
38 me on window regulators up there. That's an exciting job. You got the
39 window regulator and ya poke it in a hole. You shove your arm in a hole.
40 The line's movin' all the time. You got this bolt and you gotta line up that
41 window regulator and that nut in the back and all the while, the line keeps
42 jerkin' like this. You get done in the afternoon, all ya are is solid blood
43 and scabs where it keeps cuttin' your arms all the time. So then I tried
44 puttin' them little – you know, that little thing they give ya to cover your
45 wristwatch up in the paint department so ya don't scratch the cars? I don't
46 know what it's called but it's a little...

1
2Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 23:42].
3
4Kirk Alexander: ...cotton thing.
5
6Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 23:44].
7
8Kirk Alexander: I put them on my arms and I said oh, I got it made. It never hits the
9 cotton. It always cuts ya above or below. So then I got stupid and I went
10 down in the body shop and they got sleeves you can put on to keep ya
11 from gettin' burned? I cut one a them down and then I taped it on each
12 end and I said there, that'll be good. I got the sleeve caught in a car and I
13 couldn't...
14
15Doreen Howard: [laughter]
16
17Kirk Alexander: ...get my arm out.
18
19Linda Johnson: [laughter]
20
21Doreen Howard: [laughter]
22
23Kirk Alexander: I went 3 cars down, you know. I mean, you just can't...
24
25Doreen Howard: Oh.
26
27Kirk Alexander: ...you, you tryin' all kinds a goofy little things and they don't always
28 work out. And another thing, late in the day, when ya had to take the tape
29 off, oh, it was like one a them bikini waxes. Rip!
30
31Doreen Howard: [laughter]
32
33Male: [Yeah 24:21].
34
35Linda Johnson: [laughter]
36
37Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
38
39Kirk Alexander: Oh, man. Never had any hair on my arms from here down.
40
41Doreen Howard: [laughter]
42
43Linda Johnson: [laughter]
44
45Kirk Alexander: Pull it all off, you know. That was crazy.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
2
3 Kirk Alexander: Yeah, that was fun times. I worked in the cushion room. Um. They put
4 me [up 24:34] there in one a them – what did they call them? Hog nose
5 rings or somethin'? They're scary. You, you got all these springs and
6 they're makin' the seats is what they're doin' and you put another hunk a
7 wire on there. Ya bang, bang. Ya hit this thing and it – it's got wire
8 shaped like this and where you – uh, say, like you lay 2 wires together,
9 this thing goes over the top and pinches'm together and it, and it, it ends
10 up formin' the seat. But they were scary. I mean, th-, why you could
11 shoot'm near the wall and stick'm in the wall. Boom, boom, boom! You
12 know? Guys are shootin' at each other all the time down there! Ya had to
13 duck! You know what I mean? 'Cause they'd...
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
16
17 Kirk Alexander: ...you'd hear'm ricochet next to ya. Yeah, that was...
18
19 Female: [coughing]
20
21 Kirk Alexander: Well, then, uh. Well, another fun thing that I did out there. Guy gave me
22 a hard time. They put me th-, doin' that and then the next day, they put
23 me sweepin' out there. Sanitation guy was out and ya have to clean out
24 under – where the ends a the line had come down, it'd pack with cotton in
25 there. Ya had to pull that out at lunchtime when everybody had the line
26 down. Well, there was an idiot used to sleep down there right where I had
27 to clean that out and I, and I bump him with a broom, you know. He was
28 nasty. And I didn't wanna argue with him so there was a pallet layin'
29 there and the one day - they said he really sleeps hard. I said good. I love
30 that. I went over there with one a them hog nose jobs and where his shirt
31 was open like this, I nailed him right to the pallet...
32
33 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
34
35 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
38
39 Kirk Alexander: ...on both sides. [laughter] Yeah, and then I'd tie his shoelaces together
40 and then them guys, you know, they holler line's runnin'! And he goes to
41 jump up and [bang] on his face 'cause both, both feet won't go, you know.
42
43 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
44
45 Kirk Alexander: Ya can't get your feet to go with your...
46

1Doreen Howard: [laughter]
2
3Linda Johnson: [laughter]
4
5Kirk Alexander: ...shoelaces tied together and he ripped his shirt off because he...
6
7Michael Fleming: [laughter]
8
9Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
10
11Doreen Howard: [laughter]
12
13Linda Johnson: [laughter]
14
15Kirk Alexander: ...I'd hog-nosed him to that...
16
17Michael Fleming: [coughing]
18
19Kirk Alexander: ...pallet. Yeah, that took care a that.
20
21Michael Fleming: [coughing]
22
23Linda Johnson: [Inaudible 26:23].
24
25Kirk Alexander: Yeah, he didn't sleep there no more.
26
27Doreen Howard: [laughter]
28
29Linda Johnson: [laughter]
30
31Kirk Alexander: And then they put me feedin' the line with one a them little, uh, forklifts
32 that ya kinda pump the thing and push it along. We used to do that. I used
33 to feed the line. That was a fast job. Somebody's always hollerin'
34 [inaudible 26:38] we need [inaudible 26:38], you know, and you'd tear
35 around there pushin' this little thing and it ain't as good as them ones that
36 you push the gas pedal but we'd feed the line. Then in the – the only thing
37 I can think of that really ever happened was – one was that when I hog-
38 nosed that guy to that pallet. Well, one night, they had a rainstorm. The
39 cushion room was downhill, I don't know why, but all the water always
40 ran down in the back a the cushion room down there. Not so much where
41 ya worked but where all the stock was back there, water'd get like, you
42 know, that deep. That one night, it got about maybe 5 foot, I would...
43
44Doreen Howard: Wow.
45

1Kirk Alexander: ...say in there and it was startin' to get the stock. They kept it up on
2 pallets but it was startin' to get up there and the boss said I don't know
3 what we can do. I tell him I know what we can do but they might not be
4 happy with ya. And he said if it, if it ain't gonna kill nobody, do it. I said
5 okay. So I went around. I knew other guys from bein' utility workin'
6 different places and I went over to the, uh, [tsk] what do you call that?
7 Where they work on the trucks. Body trucks and stuff. Mechanics?
8

9Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

10

11Kirk Alexander: They had a big finger truck over there. I mean, it was huge. I don't know,
12 maybe 8-foot forks and thick, really thick up near the front. I got that
13 baby. They won't on-, they won't go – only go so fast. I mean, you can
14 make'm wide open and well, it's about like a semi backin' it up. It'll only
15 go so fast, you know. So here I come around the corner and into the
16 cushion room and he said what's that for? I said keep watch. I drove it
17 right through that 5 foot a water and I drove them 2 forks right through
18 that brick wall. All the water ran out on the ground [laughter] and he said
19 hey, we're home free. I said no problem.
20

21Doreen Howard: Hm.

22

23Kirk Alexander: Just crazy...

24

25Linda Johnson: [laughter]

26

27Kirk Alexander: ...ideas.

28

29Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.

30

31Kirk Alexander: You know what I mean? I knew that wall wasn't very thick, so them big
32 forks I figure outta go thr-, well, you got like, um, 18,000 pounds a iron on
33 that forklift.
34

35Cheryl McQuaid: [Mm-hm 28:35].

36

37Kirk Alexander: You gotta be runnin'm wide open. Takes a little bit to stop but yeah, I
38 drove them forks through the wall and all the water ran out the back. And
39 he said hey, we're in business. We went right back to work.
40

41Doreen Howard: [laughter]

42

43Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]

44

45Kirk Alexander: Just somethin', you know, crazy. That's a crazy deal there but that..
46

1Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
2
3Kirk Alexander: ...ain't a bad one, you know what I mean? There was bad things that I did
4too.
5
6Linda Johnson: [laughter]
7
8Kirk Alexander: Now that I – I set and thought about that the other [laughter] day with [Jeff
9Andrews 29:00] and ooh, man. Yeah, I pulled some bad ones [inaudible
1029:04]. I didn't hurt nobody but, I mean, [laughter] yeah, you upset – I
11upset a few of'm. Bosses, you know. Always white shirts. No...
12
13Doreen Howard: [laughter]
14
15Kirk Alexander: ...fellow employees. Just, just supervision.
16
17Michael Fleming: Shorty, how long did it take...
18
19Doreen Howard: [laughter]
20
21Michael Fleming: ...before you seen, um, protective equipment? Like when you and your
22friend were spraying in the booth...
23
24Kirk Alexander: Right off the bat.
25
26Michael Fleming: You guys had protective equipment?
27
28Kirk Alexander: I wore a respirator.
29
30Michael Fleming: Okay, they had respirators...
31
32Kirk Alexander: [Inaudible 29:30].
33
34Michael Fleming: ...back then [inaudible 29:31].
35
36Kirk Alexander: Nobody wore'm but me. I was the only one that wore'm in the whole
37booth and there was...
38
39Doreen Howard: Hm.
40
41Kirk Alexander: ...13 guys in each booth. Uh, twenty-six guys and I was the only one that
42wore them respirators.
43
44Doreen Howard: Hm.
45

1Kirk Alexander: They brought ya big box a filters so you could keep changin' it, you know,
2 'cause it'd get, uh, painted. Then you're [sniffing] – you can't get no air
3 through it. You know...
4

5Doreen Howard: Yeah.
6

7Kirk Alexander: ...you know when it's dirty. It tells ya. You can't get no air, so ya rip that
8 baby off, unscrew that thing, and put a new filter in there and screw it
9 back up. And I wore, um, ear plugs too in the booth. There was a lotta
10 noise in there. You had [side 30:05], you had roof guns, ya had your own
11 gun. But later on, I went away from them ear plugs. It caused me to have
12 a ear infection...
13

14Doreen Howard: Hm.
15

16Kirk Alexander: ...and the doctor said it was from wearin' the plugs, so I wore the –
17 [inaudible 30:21] muffs or...
18

19Linda Johnson: Muffs.
20

21Kirk Alexander: ...whatever ya...
22

23Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 30:22].
24

25Kirk Alexander: ...call it. Yeah. I still got my muffs. [laughter] They're at home on a
26 shelf. Well, they told me when I retired, they said they don't give them to
27 anybody else. They just throw'm away. Said you can have'm if ya
28 want'm. I said okay. I took'm home.
29

30Linda Johnson: So your hearing's held up really...
31

32Kirk Alexander: Huh?
33

34Linda Johnson: You've taken care of yourself...
35

36Kirk Alexander: Oh.
37

38Linda Johnson: ...so...
39

40Kirk Alexander: Oh, it's, it's amazing. Um. When I did the hearin'...
41

42Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
43

44Kirk Alexander: ...test when ya – oh, ya first hire in, within the first week or so, they give
45 ya a hearin' test to see how you're doin' and they said I had supersensitive
46 hearing. I – 'cause I could hear that little [hum] a lot lower than, I guess,

1 other people did. And when I went to retire, it was about a week before I
2 went to retire. They had a group a them come in, you know, to do that
3 hearin' t-, well, they were tryin' to sell hearin' aids or somethin'...
4

5Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
6

7Kirk Alexander: ...and, um, I still got supersensitive hearing they said. They said that it's
8 amazing to keep it all those years workin' in all them different places.
9

10Michael Fleming: Mm-hm.
11

12Kirk Alexander: Especially droppin' them cars with them forklifts, scarin' those guys to
13 death.
14

15Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 31:28]
16

17Kirk Alexander: Coulda blown my eardrum, you know.
18

19Linda Johnson: [laughter]
20

21Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
22

23Kirk Alexander: I had the muffs on.
24

25Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
26

27Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
28

29Doreen Howard: Were you ever, um, laid off or [sighing] involved in any strikes or
30 anything like that while you [inaudible 31:42]?
31

32Kirk Alexander: Both.
33

34Doreen Howard: Oh?
35

36Kirk Alexander: Um. When I was laid off, I wasn't laid off for a long time. I think the
37 longest one was about 6 months I was out. But, uh, it was a – it was
38 considered a changeover, a model change. They were just doin' a super
39 model change I guess you'd call it. And then they cut'm down to about
40 like 4 months, then 2 months. Pretty quick they charged ya for a week and
41 then let ya have a week on unemployment. That was cute by the time they
42 finally got down that far but oh, I, I used to work other things when I'd be
43 laid off. I'd, uh, cut pulp up north and, uh, make better money than I did
44 in the shop. You make \$55 a day if y-, if you worked at it. You know
45 what I mean? I worked about 12 hours. The guy that I cut pulp for said I
46 don't care how long you work for me but that at noon, you stop for an

1 hour and don't start that saw again for a whole hour. I want ya to just
2 leave that saw alone. And they'd come and get'm. Pick up – pick your
3 saws up so ya couldn't use'm. And ya just lay around and sleep. When
4 the, the lunch hour was over, he came through with a pickup and blew the
5 horn and gave ya a heart attack and put ya back to work. You know.
6
7 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
8
9 Kirk Alexander: But we'd cut red pine and, uh, that was different. You know, somethin'
10 different to do [inaudible 33:09] and then ya had a pole, ya cut it in 8-foot
11 lengths, then ya just sorta drug it over to the side. I forget what they call
12 that pole with a hook on it but ya either hook it and slide it real easy over,
13 then that – and then the skidder'd come down through and pick it up. He
14 gave you a can a paint every mornin' and you'd spray the end a the log
15 with that color paint and that way it showed you were the one that cut that
16 log. I didn't know what it was for for a long time. Didn't even come to
17 me. [papers rustling] But, uh, the guy that had me workin' up there, uh,
18 work about 12 hours a day, and he'd pay ya cash each day just in case, he
19 said, you wanna go to the bar and not come back...
20
21 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
22
23 Kirk Alexander: ...no more. That night...
24
25 Doreen Howard: Hm.
26
27 Kirk Alexander: ...he gave ya the \$55 a day. I made the full – uh, he said...
28
29 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
30
31 Kirk Alexander: ...I made the biggest money for him.
32
33 Linda Johnson: [Yeah 33:54].
34
35 Kirk Alexander: I just worked at it, you know what I mean? I want money.
36
37 Doreen Howard: Durin' the – that layoff, during that time, did you receive any benefits
38 from General Motors during that time?
39
40 Kirk Alexander: No, ya got no SUB pay.
41
42 Doreen Howard: [Yeah 34:05].
43
44 Kirk Alexander: All ya got was unemployment and it was \$33 a week...
45
46 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

1
2Kirk Alexander: ...[inaudible 34:08] the lady [like 34:09] you.
3
4Doreen Howard: Do you remember when that came in?
5
6Kirk Alexander: No.
7
8Doreen Howard: Yeah.
9
10Kirk Alexander: That's like tryin' to remember your buddy's name ya worked with 30
11 years.
12
13Doreen Howard: [laughter]
14
15Linda Johnson: [laughter]
16
17Kirk Alexander: I don't remember the [laughter] date a when that happened.
18
19Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 34:20].
20
21Linda Johnson: I-.
22
23Doreen Howard: Okay, um, [tsk]...
24
25Kirk Alexander: I don't tell none a those good stories when ya got it on.
26
27Doreen Howard: Oh, okay. [laughter]
28
29Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
30
31Doreen Howard: Um. [tsk] You worked in the paint crib for a while. Tell me, tell me a
32 little bit about that job.
33
34Kirk Alexander: Coverall crib?
35
36Doreen Howard: Coverall crib.
37
38Kirk Alexander: Yeah...
39
40Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 34:38].
41
42Kirk Alexander: ...in the paint department.
43
44Doreen Howard: Yeah.
45

1Kirk Alexander: Well, I had a, I had a problem back in the old building where, uh, they
2 found out I got a vein disease and, um, it eats all your capillary veins up
3 and your legs ain't right and you can't go very far, walk very far, so I had
4 to have a job settin' down part a the time and walkin' the other part a the
5 time, just keep your legs workin'. And so they gave me – they to-, well,
6 they laid me off. [Jerry Brooks 35:08] laid me off and said he didn't have
7 a job for me, so I come in and walk through the plant lookin' for a job and
8 then on the sealer line down there, they had a job sealin' quarter windows
9 and you set on this little seat that you made out of a hunk a wood and then
10 a hunk a cushion room material on there and a bunch a tape and then you
11 set on that and, and sealed the quarter windows. So I ask him if I could
12 get that job and they brought the doctor and stuff in and the doctor said it
13 looked fine to him and [Jerry Brooks] wanted to put me upstairs, um, doin'
14 headliners. You can't do headliners. Not a guy 5'10". You don't fit
15 inside that car. By the time I got in there, the car was past the, you know,
16 and then gettin' back out, that was terrible. So finally, he knuckled under
17 and let me have that sealing quarter windows down there. Well, then, uh,
18 we got in the new building and they decided to take that job – eliminate
19 that job, so they were lookin' for work for me and they came through and
20 they had the committee man, [Don Baker 36:16] at the time. You knew
21 [Don], didn't ya, Linda?
22

23Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.

24

25Kirk Alexander: Uh, [Don] came through and he had a clipboard and he said if you wanna
26 job off the line, sign the paper. Well, there's about 4 sheets a peoples'
27 names there, you know, and so I signed it. And the next day, [Don] came
28 through and he said how many, how many names do ya see on the top a
29 my paper? They put the highest seniority on there. My name was the only
30 one on the top. And, uh, he said how many years' seniority you got? I
31 said 22 years. And that's what got me the crib job. So they put me in the
32 crib. And it started out 2 guys that was runnin' the crib [sighing] both
33 went to paint mix and it was open, so that's the reason they gave me that
34 job. You could stand up part a the time and sit down part a the time. And
35 you just handed out coveralls and made sure that they got turned in to be
36 cleaned and, and come back and everything. Then later on, they added,
37 uh, pants and shirts. Ya had to order pants and shirts for the people in the
38 – just in, um, what do they call it? The clean room in there. They were
39 the only ones allowed to get, get'm and then you kept track a when they
40 got'm and a year later, you tell'm it's time to order. Each month, I'd look
41 and see who was ready. And, um, th-, oh, it was interesting because the
42 sales reps for the clothes came into the plant, you know, and you'd go to
43 lunch with him. Free lunch, you know.
44

45Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

46

1Kirk Alexander: Well, shoot, can't beat that. Some of'm were pretty, you know. [laughter]
2
3Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
4
5Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
6
7Kirk Alexander: That's how they sold their pants and shirts [laughter], you know. Send a
8 pretty girl. But, um, the gal for the laundry, oh, her name was, uh, [Beth
9 Yoxheimer 38:05], and that was, um – well, we had all different ones. We
10 had, um, different kinds a coveralls and we had great coveralls when I
11 hired in, I mean, when I took the job and then we went from there to bad,
12 worse, worser. [laughter] They had cotton coveralls and those'll, um,
13 [inaudible 38:26] get the sweat away from your body, it'd be cooler. Then
14 we went to cotton-polyester, 65-35s as they called'm. you sweat more in
15 them because a the polyester.
16
17Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
18
19Kirk Alexander: Then we went to the worser...
20
21Doreen Howard: [Mm-hm 38:41].
22
23Kirk Alexander: ...100 percent polyester. Oh, man. Hot. Terrible things. And everyone a
24 these coveralls had a different place to wash'm or clean'm and we went to
25 a 100 percent rayon coverall. That was different. They, they called them
26 [combinitos 39:01] and they were silver-colored and durin' changeover
27 one year, I – they had that crib made out a [tornado 39:08] fencing or
28 whatever ya call it. You know? I told'm you outta make it solid walls
29 because they were bringin' a lotta contractors in to do work in there. I
30 said one of'm'll come up here and break into that and we won't have
31 anymore coveralls. 'Cause you could see everything I had in there, you
32 know. And they said, uh, oh, you know, w-, w-, like we're worried, you
33 know. And I said hey. They said he'd had to have [inaudible 39:32]
34 either a cuttin' torch or somethin' to get in there. I said no, he don't. He
35 don't have to cut it at all and he can save all the coveralls. And they said
36 how? And I said take a finger truck, run it in under the wire, and jack it
37 up. I said it'll make a hole in there big enough to run a Mack truck
38 through...
39
40Linda Johnson: [Mm-hm 39:46].
41
42Kirk Alexander: ...and it don't hurt none a the coveralls. [They didn't keep me from 39:50]
43 model change. Came back after model change and there's a great big hole
44 in the wire there. All the coveralls are gone. Fifty-five hundred coveralls
45 was gone outta there. And I told'm, I said well – this outfit was [laughter]
46 outta Detroit. I said [inaudible 40:08] no offense here, but I said every

1 black man in Detroit, they wanted to be pretty, has got him a pair a
2 **combinitos** standin' on a corner in Detroit. 'Cause, uh, they were shiny,
3 slippery, pretty, you know. Actually, not nothin' to spray paint in but th-,
4 they were nice, you know. And I told him, I said that contractin' outfit,
5 and they were all black men that was workin' in the plant, and they kept
6 comin' by there and sayin' oh, them are pretty. I said oh, man, we ain't
7 gonna [laughter] have no coveralls when I get back and I got back and
8 there wasn't any. They took'm all outta there. But it's the way it goes.
9 They came up and they said make a drawing a what you want here for a
10 building. So I got to my boss and I said you really want me to draw that?
11 And he said yeah, make it any way ya want it. And it was right
12 underneath the line that came down outta the mezzanine comin' down in
13 the sealer line there. So I drew it up with solid walls and, uh, skilled trade,
14 um, th-, some of'm are kinda a disaster, you know? [laughter] They, they
15 made the walls and everything okay and we got that all put together. Then
16 they're gonna make the shelving to go in there to put my coveralls on and
17 I told'm metal'll be better than wood but if ya wanna make'm outta wood,
18 it don't matter. So they made half of'm outta wood in there and they
19 decided there should be metal up on the top because they could follow the
20 curve a that roof, you know, better with metal than they could with wood.
21 And I said okay. So a guy come out and he measured it and he said you
22 need 2, one for each side a the crib inside here. And I said yeah. So they
23 brought the one up and they – 2 guys, you know, stuck it up in there and
24 got it just right and I said yeah, that's cool. They got the other one and
25 went to stick it up in there. They didn't put the curve in the back of it and
26 it wouldn't fit. And I said you didn't [**know I work** 42:02] in the last 2
27 weeks and, and that one, you had your guy measure that, you know. It
28 wasn't like I measured it and they got it wrong.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
31
32 Kirk Alexander: And they said what are ya gonna do with that? And I said it won't fit in
33 the crib. I don't know what I'm gonna – just set it outside? Let guys put
34 cigarette butts in it, you know what I mean? That's what'll end up.
35
36 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37
38 Kirk Alexander: Garbage, you know what I mean? [laughter] They'll come by and throw
39 their milk cartons [**inaudible** 42:25]. I said I don't know. I don't know
40 what to do with it. And he said – the boss come down from maintenance
41 and he said could you do us a favor? And I said yeah, what? And he said
42 come in early in the mornin', like 5 or somethin' before your shift starts,
43 take your finger truck and take that shelving thing out and put it in that big
44 gondola out back where...
45
46 Doreen Howard: [laughter]

1
2Kirk Alexander: ...all the [metal 42:48] goes. He said I – I said yeah, outta sight, outta
3 mind? And he said that's right. He said somebody's gonna get burned
4 over that deal. And he said if you take that outside and it disappears,
5 everything'll be cool. I said okay. So I waited about 2, 3 days 'cause I
6 thought maybe they might be settin' me up 'cause they could be. They
7 could wait for ya down there. So I went the long way down, [laughter] a
8 different way, slipped out to that gon, dumped it in there. But – and then
9 they never made another one like they said they were gonna do. Never
10 did. It was never there. We go in there now and i-, I know there ain't no
11 shelf...
12
13Doreen Howard: [laughter]
14
15Kirk Alexander: ...in that one side. They just – once they, once they poop out, I guess
16 [laughter] th-, j-, that's it. Hm. No more. We ain't gonna do that again.
17
18Cheryl McQuaid: Hm. Shorty...
19
20Kirk Alexander: [Inaudible 43:35] that crazy?
21
22Cheryl McQuaid: ...you worked in that crib for a long time. Did, did you ever see any
23 fatalities?
24
25Kirk Alexander: In the crib?
26
27Cheryl McQuaid: Or in the paint area or...
28
29Kirk Alexander: Yeah, there was one in the crib. My boss came in and caught me sleepin'
30 one time. That was a – I was the fatality.
31
32Linda Johnson: [laughter]
33
34Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
35
36Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37
38Kirk Alexander: [laughter] Doin' paperwork. Y-, I don't know. The [laughter] boss came
39 in, you know, and he's pokin' and shovin' me, you know, and I looked up
40 at him and I said oh, hi boss. [laughter] He said was you sleepin'? And I
41 said I think so. I'm not sure but I think so. Either that or passed out. One
42 or the other.
43
44Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
45

1Kirk Alexander: Oh, he said you do this all the time? I said no. Just happened, I guess.
2 Stayed up too late last night and paperwork is just – I mean, it can drag ya.
3 Doin' all them charts and I had 50 zillion charts to do every day and you
4 had to keep track a everything. Yeah. I'd be doin' like you are...
5

6Linda Johnson: [laughter]
7

8Kirk Alexander: ...over there. I'd be yawnin', yawnin'. Pretty quick, I guess, I fell asleep.
9 I don't know. Probably set down, I'll just rest for a second and it was like
10 2 hours got by in a second. Yeah, I was a fatality in the crib.
11

12Cheryl McQuaid: You have so many memories. Anything that stands out?
13

14Kirk Alexander: The bad fatalities you want me to talk about that I told ya about the other
15 day?
16

17Cheryl McQuaid: If you wanna share that. You don't have to.
18

19Kirk Alexander: Okay. I can. When they redid down in the, um, marshalling area down
20 there, [tsk] I don't know what the reason is but they cut out a line and they
21 put a little bobcat, I don't know if you know what them are or not.
22 They're like a tiny bulldozer-type thing with a arm on it and they were
23 holdin' that end a the line and they had a bobcat on the other end. It must
24 be – I don't know, that mezzanine's gotta be at least 150 feet long. That's
25 a lotta steel between there and they cut all the welds all the way and just
26 left 2 on each end and then they had a guy up there cuttin' that one off on
27 this end [and they 45:38] cuttin' the one off on the other end and they
28 could – there was no way they could let it down easy. They were hurryin'
29 to do the job and they were gonna be paid extra money if they could get it
30 done. So they just had them bobcat – they got everybody outta the area
31 and I hid around the corner and I'm peepin' between a big pipe and a, and
32 a H-beam in a hole about that big. I was watchin' and when them bobcats
33 dropped that hunk a steel – I don't know how many tons that's gotta be
34 when it hit the floor. And when it hit the floor, I seen there was about 6
35 guys over by the cafeteria. You ever know that area in there? Where the
36 m-, where the marshalling area was? It was alco – also called 17?
37

38Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
39

40Kirk Alexander: Building 17? Well, over in the corner, you go to the cafeteria, you go
41 down the stairs. There was about...
42

43Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
44

45Kirk Alexander: ...6 guys standin' way over there. That's a couple hundred feet away.
46 When that thing hit the ground, I seen one a them hit the ground too. He

1 just, boom, you know, went down. I thought oh, man, he got hit with
2 somethin'. So I jumped on a truck and tore over there to see what it was.
3 That wasn't good. That was bad. When that hunk a steel hit the ground,
4 there must a been a bunch a tools layin' in there and a shovel went all the
5 way from where that metal was and cut that guy's head mostly off.
6
7 Cheryl McQuaid: [gasping]
8
9 Doreen Howard: Oh my goodness.
10
11 Cheryl McQuaid: Oh my god.
12
13 Kirk Alexander: He laid there in a pool a blood that big around. [Inaudible 46:58].
14
15 Linda Johnson: Uh, when was that?
16
17 Kirk Alexander: Oh, man, that was that one restructurin' they did. Oh, that was probably
18 about the last big one they did.
19
20 Linda Johnson: The last big one before the – when we put in the doors off?
21
22 Kirk Alexander: When ya put in the who?
23
24 Linda Johnson: When they put in the line that takes the doors off...
25
26 Kirk Alexander: Oh, the...
27
28 Linda Johnson: ...and the...
29
30 Kirk Alexander: ...the...
31
32 Linda Johnson: ...[IP 47:15] and all that? Where they built the new body shop with the
33 cement – new cement floor? Back then? That woulda been in...
34
35 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 47:23]..
36
37 Kirk Alexander: No, it was after that.
38
39 Doreen Howard: ...in paint department up in 17.
40
41 Kirk Alexander: It was – this was up in the paint department...
42
43 Linda Johnson: [Inaudible 47:25]?
44
45 Doreen Howard: Up in paint [inaudible 47:27]...
46

1Kirk Alexander: ...in 17 but...
2
3Linda Johnson: I know, but I'm talkin' about that time period.
4
5Doreen Howard: Oh, yeah.
6
7Kirk Alexander: I don't know if that's when they brought in all them...
8
9Linda Johnson: All the contractors were in here workin'?
10
11Kirk Alexander: There was a ton a men there.
12
13Linda Johnson: Yeah, that was when...
14
15Kirk Alexander: That was it?
16
17Linda Johnson: ...they redid the body shop and...
18
19Kirk Alexander: I couldn't remember if they were d-, redoin' it then or th-, they'd done it
20 another time. But I, I know they were redoin' that upstairs there b-,
21 because they wanted to – instead a – let's see. How was it? The cars used
22 to hang on a arm comin' down around there and they wanted to take that
23 all out and have'm on, uh, body trucks and bring'm up through instead but
24 boy, droppin' that hunk a steel, well, they were way ahead, head a
25 schedule. They, they had so many, um, what do you call'm, steel cutters
26 in there with cuttin' torches. I never seen so many. Uh, they must a had
27 50 guys workin' in there. And they were bein', um, well, as far as...
28
29Linda Johnson: Yeah, those steel cutters were only in for a couple a weeks and they cut
30 everything outta the body shop and...
31
32Kirk Alexander: Yeah, th-, they did all up there...
33
34Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
35
36Kirk Alexander: ...but they wacked one a...
37
38Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
39
40Kirk Alexander: ...their own guys up there. But they were crazy up there too. I don't
41 know – down in the body shop – I didn't go down there and watch'm but
42 one a your safety things, when you, um – usin' the cuttin' torch with [all
43 48:39] them big long hunks a hoses, you make sure nobody's cuttin' back
44 behind ya and droppin' fire on your – and they had fire on hoses
45 everywhere in there. They just – they were careless. They were really

1
2
3
4 Linda Johnson: And he was one a them?
5
6 Kirk Alexander: He was one a theirs, yeah.
7
8 Doreen Howard: Hm.
9
10 Kirk Alexander: And I just happened to see him go down. I mean, they're all standin' over
11 there lookin' this way. They weren't lookin' at him either.
12
13 Linda Johnson: Hm.
14
15 Kirk Alexander: Boom. I seen, you know, the one on the end go off and I said oh, he had
16 to be hit with somethin'.
17
18 Doreen Howard: [Oh 49:10].
19
20 Kirk Alexander: So I hurried all the way over there and there he laid on the floor. He got
21 hit in the face with a shovel. Cut most a the – most a his head. Just
22 chopped it. And there was more fatalities than that. The one, um – I don't
23 remember how much [sighing] seniority I had then. Coulda been 8, 9
24 years, I don't know. It was before I got to the 16 years when I went on
25 days. But in the old building, in the back a the spray booth, everybody
26 came outta the spray booth and there was a smokin' area out there and
27 what it was was a train well. They brought a train in there and they could
28 load stock out of it; steel for the body shop. And the girl that did the
29 wagons, we had a 6-minute wagon break in the mornin' and in the
30 afternoon. I liked that way better than what they went to but the girls'd
31 come around that little end a the aisle down there and, and then go around
32 this, um, train well and they'd stop and sell us stuff and then they'd go
33 over to small parts and sell them, you know, stuff. But this girl, when she
34 was goin' back – and you knew all the girls. I mean, what the heck, they –
35 you see'm every night. And she was goin' back and most all the guys had
36 went in the plant and I was gettin' my last drag off my cigarette, you know
37 what I mean? You didn't get'm often in there. And, um, this girl
38 screamed and I thought what the hell, you know, 'cause she screamed
39 bloody murder, you know, over there. So I ran around – couldn't run now
40 but I did then.
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
43
44 Kirk Alexander: I tore around there to see and there was a door that went in the main
45 offices back then and, uh, that's where it was b-, that it happened. And
46 what there was was, um, quarter panels all stacked up in the air and they

1 were banded with steel bands. Well, one a them steel bands had broken
2 and that – all that metal came down and there was a man layin’ on the
3 ground with the whole top part of head layin’ right off beside his head.
4
5 Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
6
7 Kirk Alexander: He was in a big pool a blood.
8
9 Linda Johnson: Hm.
10
11 Kirk Alexander: And she came around the corner and there, there he laid, you know what I
12 mean? And yeah, that was, that was pretty nasty.
13
14 Doreen Howard: Hm.
15
16 Kirk Alexander: That was pretty nasty. I wasn’t in on the deal where the, the guys, um,
17 durin’ changeover died in that pit. I knew the guys but, I mean, I, I
18 wasn’t, you know, right in there when that happened. I seen all the
19 ambulances that came and all this kinda stuff. Too late. That was a bad
20 one. That paint is really strong and they’re down there chipping that out,
21 you know, with them jackhammers and stuff. It’s probably that thick
22 down in there that just solidifies in the bottom a them tanks. Yeah, that
23 was bad. Nobody checked them air tanks or nothin’. I mean, it was just a
24 safety thing where somebody didn’t do their job. They put them
25 backpacks on and them air tanks and went down in there and no air and
26 they couldn’t get’m out. The boss went down to save’m and he died in
27 there too.
28
29 Doreen Howard: Hm.
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
32
33 Kirk Alexander: That was a bad one.
34
35 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
36
37 Doreen Howard: Hm.
38
39 Kirk Alexander: A man died right in front a my crib one day. Um. Electrician.
40
41 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
42
43 Kirk Alexander: He’d go back and turn the lights on through the paint booths and stuff
44 early in the mornin’ when I was in there gettin’ ready to do coveralls. And
45 he come out and he, he looked kinda flushed to me a little bit. I never
46 knew his name but I always knew his face and always talked to him ‘cause

1 I see him every morning. And he, he come out and he said I feel kinda
2 sick. And I said sit on the guard rail and I'll call the ambulance. He said
3 oh, I don't need them. Uh. He may a not needed'm but I did 'cause I
4 didn't think he looked that good, so I went in and called'm and they had a,
5 what I call the [paddy wagon 52:55] comin' up to get him, you know what
6 I mean, for the ambulance and, uh, he just set there and he kinda teetered
7 back and forth and I said you're feelin' really bad? If ya gotta throw up or
8 somethin', I'll get ya a bucket, you know, butt bucket or butt can. He said
9 no, I just feel funny. And he said I feel kinda weak. I said well, here,
10 lemme get ya by the shoulders and I'll let ya down on the floor and you
11 can set on the floor rather than to fall off, land on your head. So he's
12 sittin' down on the floor and then finally I just seen him kinda, you know,
13 his head tilt back and he keeled over and I dove for him and kept his head
14 from hittin' the floor. I started CPR because I figured he was – I didn't
15 know if his heart was beatin' or not. I couldn't find nothin' on his neck,
16 so I started CPR. You do that for about 15 minutes, you got up a lather. I
17 ain't kiddin' ya. That – it, it don't sound like you're doin' much with CPR
18 but, but it actually gets to be a – quite a thing. Then 3 other electricians
19 come runnin' outta the back and said what's up? And I said give me a
20 hand here, do one a the parts and so they s-, they took over for me. And I
21 said the ambulance is comin'. I already called'm. I said they take their
22 time sometimes. They are – they were slow. They, they had a l-, slow
23 response time. When that ambulance comes to go up that ramp and stuff, I
24 don't care what trucker's there, they, they outta have brains enough just to
25 drop their forks and let that ambulance through. They don't, [they'd hold
26 guys right 54:25] up, hold that ambulance up, somebody could be dyin'
27 upstairs, you know? But they got up there and picked'm up and they had
28 the ambulance waitin' downstairs. I told'm that I, I wanted them to come
29 back to the crib the next day and let me know how that man did.
30
31 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
32
33 Kirk Alexander: And – 'cause you don't know. And they came up the next mornin' and
34 they said that when he got to, um – it was, it was the older plant. It was –
35 uh, what I mean, it was, um, [tsk] it was when Saint Lawrence Hospital
36 was still...
37
38 Linda Johnson: Hm.
39
40 Kirk Alexander: ...Saint Lawrence Hospital. They went right to Saint Lawrence...
41
42 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
43
44 Kirk Alexander: ...and they said he was DOA when they got there and he was dead on
45 arrival.
46

1Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
2
3Doreen Howard: Hm.
4
5Kirk Alexander: And I had the locker rooms downstairs, the women's and the men's and,
6 um, when his wife came in – that was another one ya had to deal with.
7 When different people died, you had to go down, they had the committee
8 man and labor relations and the bosses and they – you'd go down with'm
9 and open the locker and then give the lady or the man, whichever it was,
10 all the belongings of the deceased. You'd take the coveralls and then
11 you'd go upstairs and, um, take the cover-, take the coverall slip that
12 they'd sign for and you'd mark on there, you know, refunded and stamp it
13 and give it to the lady or the man, whichever was pickin' the stuff up.
14 But, um, that was kinda – I don't know, that was a morbid part a the job,
15 you know, 'cause ya knew somebody had died. And different ones,
16 accidents and stuff, but that man there, when his wife came in, um, I ask
17 her – I said I, I don't, you know, wanna get into your business or anything
18 but could you just tell me what happened with him? If he had a stroke or,
19 or heart attack or somethin' and she said he had a massive heart attack.
20 His heart laid in 3 pieces in his chest. And, uh, she said I, I heard you did
21 CPR on him for about 20 minutes and then the other guys about 10 or 15.
22 And I said yeah, we tried to, you know, keep him goin'. I said I couldn't
23 find no pulse but that don't mean it ain't there. You could be missin' it a
24 little bit and she said the doctor said that when he went to the – they figure
25 when he fell over on the floor there, boom, he was gone just like that. All
26 that work we did was just in vain but we were just tryin', you know what I
27 mean, to save him. But he – she said he died of a massive heart attack.
28
29Linda Johnson: Hm.
30
31Doreen Howard: Hm.
32
33Kirk Alexander: And he was like 39? I mean, he was...
34
35Linda Johnson: Hm.
36
37Kirk Alexander: ...was down there.
38
39Doreen Howard: [Uh-huh 56:59].
40
41Kirk Alexander: He was a, a real nice fella. Real quiet. Real quiet sorta guy but, um.
42
43Doreen Howard: Um, movin' into, um, another [papers rustling] direction here, w-, what's
44 your favorite memory of Fisher Body? Do ya have one?
45
46Kirk Alexander: Hm. [laughter]

1
2Doreen Howard: Do you have a best memory? Or favorite supervisor or...?
3
4Kirk Alexander: [Inaudible 57:18] best? I can think a my worst.
5
6Doreen Howard: [laughter]
7
8Kirk Alexander: Two worst. [laughter] Let me see. What would be a good one? Hm.
9 Let's move onto somethin' else.
10
11Doreen Howard: Okay.
12
13Kirk Alexander: Maybe somethin'll come to me.
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: Did you just share your 2 worst with us? [laughter]
16
17Doreen Howard: [laughter]
18
19Kirk Alexander: No.
20
21Doreen Howard: No?
22
23Kirk Alexander: No. No, no. No, there was...
24
25Linda Johnson: Is, is that something you'd like to share or, or, or not?
26
27Kirk Alexander: Ya shut the machine off, I'll share...
28
29Doreen Howard: [laughter]
30
31Kirk Alexander: ...it with ya but...
32
33Doreen Howard: [laughter]
34
35Linda Johnson: [Inaudible 57:49].
36
37Kirk Alexander: ...I, [laughter] I don't think it'd be good to put on the machine. Yeah, that
38 was embarrassing, really.
39
40Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 57:55].
41
42Kirk Alexander: I'd overheated there to where I almost burn out I think [laughter] when ...
43
44Linda Johnson: [Oh 58:01].
45
46Kirk Alexander: ...that lady embarrassed [laughter] me. Oh, my gosh.

1
2Doreen Howard: Hm.
3
4Kirk Alexander: No, I'm not gonna bring that one out. I can't bring that one out.
5
6Linda Johnson: How [about] [inaudible 58:08]?
7
8Kirk Alexander: I'll tell ya [that] [inaudible 58:09] I'll tell ya about that one. That was –
9 oh, my gosh. It was awful.
10
11Cheryl McQuaid: Did you ever work with Mr. [Wiethorn 58:14]? Do you have any stories
12 you could tell...
13
14Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
15
16Cheryl McQuaid: ...us about [inaudible 58:17]?
17
18Kirk Alexander: [tsk]
19
20Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
21
22Kirk Alexander: Oh, you remember that one too, huh?
23
24Cheryl McQuaid: I do. I remember...
25
26Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
27
28Cheryl McQuaid: ...what you said, Shorty.
29
30Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 58:23].
31
32Kirk Alexander: [tsk]
33
34Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
35
36Kirk Alexander: Well, Mr. [Wiethorn] used to park out in the north lot sometimes instead of
37 parkin' in on his building where all the Goody Two-Shoes parked [under
38 there 58:33].
39
40Marilyn Coulter: Who is Mr. [Wiethorn]?
41
42Kirk Alexander: [Tom Wiethorn 58:35].
43
44Marilyn Coulter: And he was who?
45
46Kirk Alexander: Plant manager.

1
2Doreen Howard: Plant manager. Okay.
3
4Kirk Alexander: And they called him high pockets 'cause he was like 7 feet tall. He was...
5
6Doreen Howard: Oh.
7
8Kirk Alexander: ...tall. [Inaudible 43] he was...
9
10Cheryl McQuaid: Taller than you?
11
12Kirk Alexander: ...he was taller than I was. Uh, him and I could see eye to eye 'cause we
13 were right up there with each other but I know...
14
15Doreen Howard: [laughter]
16
17Kirk Alexander: ...he was taller than I was.
18
19Cheryl McQuaid: You had a nickname for him.
20
21Kirk Alexander: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I did. I was gettin' to that. He, he...
22
23Doreen Howard: [laughter]
24
25Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
26
27Kirk Alexander: ...parked out in the north parkin' lot. We had a freezin' rainstorm one day
28 while we was at work. Terrible. I mean you could skate goin' out to the
29 cars. Tom Wiethorn went out to his car and he fell in the parkin' lot and
30 he sprained his right shoulder is what they said. I thought he just wanted
31 to get outta paperwork. I – he was doin' that all the time. But he had that
32 in that sling for like 6 months, you know, or somethin'? Now, most
33 people if they wear a sling, it's, it's a couple a months but it ain't 6 months
34 and it was from the winter until about June. And when he came – he'd
35 always come in the back door, come through sealer, hit that main aisle,
36 and that's where all the guys'd set smokin' or whatever out there before
37 the line started. He'd walk past there and go up to the offices and he's
38 talkin' and laughin' and kiddin' with all the people. And when he'd come
39 by me, I stuck my hand out to him and I said, Farmer Tom, and he said
40 why do you call me a farmer? And I said well, I knew you fell in the
41 parkin' lot a while back, like 6 months ago, you know, instead a 2 months.
42 About 6 months ago. I said you've been milkin' that shoulder now for
43 about 4 months more than ya need to and if you're milkin', you're a
44 farmer, so you're Farmer Tom from now on. I called him Farmer Tom the
45 rest a the time.
46

1Doreen Howard: [laughter]
2
3Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
4
5Kirk Alexander: I always did.
6
7Doreen Howard: [laughter]
8
9Kirk Alexander: And if I seen him with a while bunch a dignitaries, that was fun.
10
11Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 1:00:24].
12
13Kirk Alexander: Hey, Farmer Tom! You know, I [inaudible 1:00:26]. [laughter] He'd
14 wave. He'd come all the way down to where I worked in the spray booths
15 and I'd be buried back there somewhere and I could hear him say to'm
16 where's Shorty? Where's Shorty? And he'd come down there and talk to
17 me. He'd, he'd kid with me, you know what I mean? He was a, he was a
18 fun guy. Now, he always wanted me to be a supervisor. He'd had my
19 foreman come and ask me to be a supervisor and they said you won't even
20 have to take the test. I'll just put ya right on. And I told him no. And, uh,
21 he said how many times you turned me down? I said I don't know, 5 or 6
22 probably. He said why do you turn me down? So finally I told him, I said
23 one day when I was out in the sealer line – they had these, oh, like park
24 benches around that half-circle there where the people set in the mornin'
25 before the line started. Well, this was like at lunch. And my – one a, one
26 a my foremans that I'd worked under was, um, [Max David 1:01:27]. You
27 knew Max, didn't ya? Short, bald-headed guy?
28
29Cheryl McQuaid: He was my foreman at one time.
30
31Kirk Alexander: Okay, well [Max David] was – I called him pretty boy. But, uh, [Max
32 David, uh...
33
34Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
35
36Kirk Alexander: ...he was settin' there at the, at the – on the bench and he's talkin' with a
37 bunch a people and Tom came through, Farmer Tom did. And he walked
38 right up to [Max David] and he grabbed him by his clothes and jerked him
39 up out of his chair off that bench. And then he – he was makin' a point
40 and every time he made a point, he stabbed him with his finger like that
41 hard in the chest, you know? You'd see [Max] kinda cringe. I said you
42 yanked my supervisor off the bench out here one day and to make your
43 point, you were pokin' him in the chest, I said, about 6 times. And you
44 want me to become a supervisor so you can do that to me? I said no way.
45 I said if I'd a been settin' there and you'd a jerked me up outta my seat
46 and poked me with that finger, I said, I woulda told ya unless you want

1 that finger broke off and drove about 4 feet right up your ass, do not poke
2 me with that finger again. And he said you think you could take me?
3 We're standin' there right then. I said yeah, I could take ya. And he said
4 you come with a right lead? I said no, I come with – I'd grab ya on both
5 sides a your waist, come with my knee right in your balls. I said that'd
6 take care a ya right there.
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 1:02:47].
9
10 Kirk Alexander: And Tom always was friendly with me after that but he never asked me to
11 be a supervisor again. There ain't...
12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
14
15 Kirk Alexander: ...no way...
16
17 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
18
19 Kirk Alexander: ...I'm gonna take that off a higher person, you know what I mean? He
20 could come and talk to ya but he didn't talk to his people. He was rowdy
21 with'm and they allowed it. General Motors allowed it. They shouldn't a
22 never allowed it. That's wrong to treat your people like that.
23
24 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
25
26 Kirk Alexander: Hey, we're all just human bein's, we're all workin' for the same thing,
27 we're all buildin' the same product, you know what I mean? I don't see
28 that.
29
30 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
31
32 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:03:19].
33
34 Kirk Alexander: I don't, I don't see – well, that's sorta like where a guy's the boss and he
35 tells his secretary either have sex with me or I'll get your ass put in the
36 street. It ain't no different.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: That's wrong.
39
40 Kirk Alexander: It's the same thing. Only it's man to man instead a, you know, man to
41 woman.
42
43 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:03:34].
44
45 Kirk Alexander: But they didn't stop that. They, they let them supervisors – well, what do
46 you call'm, shift superintendent – manager. They let them – as long as

1 they were over ya, yeah, the crap started at the top and went to the bottom.
2 The bottom guy really got crapped on. I don't want that. He said you'd
3 make a lot more money. I said for why? I said I wouldn't be very happy
4 with the money.
5
6Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:03:59].
7
8Kirk Alexander: I said another thing, I might only work here a couple weeks. You come in
9 here and grab me, [laughter] I'm gonna be in the street. [laughter]
10
11Doreen Howard: [laughter]
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
14
15Kirk Alexander: All this, all this work all this [laughter] time buildin' up...
16
17Doreen Howard: [laughter]
18
19Kirk Alexander: ...to retirement, you'd grab me, and I said, party's over.
20
21Linda Johnson: Hm.
22
23Doreen Howard: Hm.
24
25Kirk Alexander: Yeah, he – and then he used to – like he'd come down [with 1:04:17] one
26 a the guys out there when I was settin' on the rail and he'd say watch this
27 guy right here. He'd get to me and he'd say watch this guy right here.
28 He's like a mad dog. [laughter] He used to say that about me...
29
30Doreen Howard: [laughter]
31
32Kirk Alexander: ...all the time and so after that one, he'd come by [grr], you know, he'd
33 make a little noise [inaudible 1:04:35]. But I got along great with Tom.
34
35Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
36
37Kirk Alexander: Even [inaudible 1:04:39] told me one day he was gonna retire [at 1:04:41]
38 Petoskey. I don't know if he's still there. I heard he'd had a heart attack
39 at one time but I don't know if he's still there. Yeah, I'd go up and holler
40 Farmer Tom at his front door just for the fun. [laughter]
41
42Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
43
44Kirk Alexander: [laughter] I – most people I got along with. Not everybody. There's a –
45 there was a couple guys at the shop there that...
46

1Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
2
3Kirk Alexander: ...I don't know, ya just couldn't...
4
5Michael Fleming: [coughing]
6
7Kirk Alexander: ...make'm happy. Then [inaudible 1:05:06] they went...
8
9Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
10
11Kirk Alexander: ...one was a supervisor and the other one was just a what I call a fellow
12 worker, you know.
13
14Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
15
16Kirk Alexander: Just couldn't get along with'm.
17
18Doreen Howard: Yeah. Um. You have a lot of – lotta friendships, it sounds like, in there.
19
20Kirk Alexander: Tons. Tons.
21
22Doreen Howard: Any particular friendship stand out that...?
23
24Kirk Alexander: Close – one closer than the other?
25
26Doreen Howard: Yeah.
27
28Kirk Alexander: No.
29
30Doreen Howard: No?
31
32Kirk Alexander: They were all – I don't know, I always felt they were all the same to me
33 really.
34
35Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
36
37Kirk Alexander: And I never – now, my wife and I talked about this couple weeks ago. I
38 never had what'd you call a close friend, one that you could, oh, share
39 things with that you wouldn't a shared with anybody else.
40
41Doreen Howard: Hm.
42
43Kirk Alexander: I don't know. I just never felt I had a friend like that. I tried that once
44 when I was younger and found out it was blabbed all over the country and
45 I don't know, I kinda went hermit-style I guess you call it or somethin'. I
46 just hold it in.

1
2Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
3
4Kirk Alexander: I don't know. I enjoy people though. I really enjoy people.
5
6Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:06:11].
7
8Kirk Alexander: I watch their mannerisms, look at their blue jeans, stuff like that.
9
10Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
11
12Doreen Howard: [laughter]
13
14Kirk Alexander: Oh, sorry, Cheryl.
15
16Doreen Howard: [laughter]
17
18Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
19
20Kirk Alexander: Cheryl wasn't payin' attention.
21
22Doreen Howard: [laughter]
23
24Kirk Alexander: I caught her when she was [inaudible 1:06:22].
25
26Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:06:24].
27
28Kirk Alexander: She walked out the door. I happened to notice her blue jeans, [you know
29 what I mean 1:06:27]?
30
31Doreen Howard: [laughter]
32
33Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter] I thought you were talkin' to Doreen.
34
35Doreen Howard: [laughter]
36
37Kirk Alexander: Oh, baby. Yeah. I was lookin' [laughter] at both of'm, yeah.
38
39Doreen Howard: [laughter]
40
41Michael Fleming: [laughter]
42
43Kirk Alexander: Well, actually, see, I th-, I thought you had buttons. Buttons on the back a
44 your blue jeans till I re-, realized that was a reflection a my eyes off the
45 seat a your...
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: Oh.
2
3 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
4
5 Kirk Alexander: ...pants.
6
7 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
8
9 Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
10
11 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
12
13 Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
14
15 Doreen Howard: Oh, no.
16
17 Kirk Alexander: Ah.
18
19 Doreen Howard: Hm.
20
21 Kirk Alexander: My wife said...
22
23 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
24
25 Kirk Alexander: ...that, uh, she tells everybody that she knew from – through Christian
26 Women's Club and [stuff 1:06:55]. Why she, um, tells'm that she married
27 me because I was crazy. They said why would you do that? She said I
28 never had to worry about him goin' crazy. He was crazy right from...
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: Yes.
31
32 Kirk Alexander: ...the get-go.
33
34 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
35
36 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37
38 Kirk Alexander: And...
39
40 Cheryl McQuaid: That's sweet.
41
42 Kirk Alexander: ...it's probably true. It's [laughter] probably true. I don't know. It – I –
43 an old guy a long, long time ago – now I'm old like he was. But, um, his
44 name was [Bart Thompson 1:07:20] and he was up north. I used to fish
45 with'm back in the woods. I ran into a shack back in the woods and there
46 was a [laughter] man in it and we'd go fishin'. We started goin' fishin,

1 you know, and he told me, he says, um – and I ain't pattin' myself on the
2 back but I think he's right. I really feel he's right. He said, uh, y-, you got
3 a gift. [sighing] He said when people are sad, you can make'm laugh. He
4 said people are down, you can get'm up. He said in everybody's life, a
5 little rain shall fall, and he said so laugh all ya can and bein' ya got that
6 gift, he said use it. Take it to old folks' homes and stuff. So I started
7 doin' this. I went to old folks' homes in, uh, Muskegon and I have down
8 here went to 3 or 4 and ya just – there – they each one of'm have a little
9 door in there, you know. Ya knock on the door. And the one that was
10 funny was here in Lansing. Um. I won't tell ya what home you'll find
11 that lady in. She'll still cuss me out. Uh. I knocked on her door and, uh, I
12 said would you like to set and chat with anybody or, you know, ya need,
13 you know, company? And oh, she was nasty right off the bat, you know,
14 and said don't come to my door again! Boom! And she slammed the door
15 shut. Well, that little area that she had, they got 2 two doors. They got
16 one there and you go around the side, there's another door. So I went
17 around the side and knocked on the other door.
18
19Doreen Howard: [laughter]
20
21Kirk Alexander: She came to the door and I, I said, uh, [inaudible 1:08:50], I said I hope
22 you're in a lot better mood than that woman was on the other side. I
23 said...
24
25Doreen Howard: [laughter]
26
27Kirk Alexander: ...no kiddin'. I said she outta go back and go to bed and try gettin' out the
28 other side even if it's against the wall. I said she'd be in better shape
29 [laughter] than she was when she was...
30
31Doreen Howard: [laughter]
32
33Kirk Alexander: ...at that front door.
34
35Doreen Howard: [laughter]
36
37Kirk Alexander: And she just stood there glarin' at me and, and then she started to kinda
38 grin a little bit, you know. I said why don't ya get in your wheelchair and
39 hobble out here, I said, and we'll race down the aisle. And she said you're
40 kiddin' me. And I said no, I know ya got a wheelchair in there. So pretty
41 quick she came out with her wheelchair. I jumped in a wheelchair and
42 beat her to the other end. I told her I could. I was in a wheelchair year
43 and a half myself. I know what it's like.
44
45Doreen Howard: [laughter]
46

1Kirk Alexander: But, I don't know, I just enjoy people. It's, it's just fun to be around –
2 well, some people. I mean, some of'm suck, you know what I mean, but
3 other than that, other ones are, are fun. Now Marilyn Coulter there, she
4 laughs a lot. She's fun. She'd be fun to be with all afternoon. You don't
5 think so [inaudible 1:09:50] Cheryl.
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: [Yeah 1:09:50]. [laughter]
8
9Doreen Howard: [laughter]
10
11Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
12
13Michael Fleming: So Shorty...
14
15Kirk Alexander: Ah.
16
17Michael Fleming: ...you, you, you talked about your wife. Um. Certainly, you have a
18 family. How many children do you have? How long have you been
19 married?
20
21Kirk Alexander: No children.
22
23Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 1:10:05]. You don't have any children.
24
25Kirk Alexander: No.
26
27Michael Fleming: Uh, how long have you been married?
28
29Kirk Alexander: Oh, let's see. I was married 4 t-, 4 years the first time and no children
30 there. And then I've been married 31 t-, 31 years this time.
31
32Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 1:10:19]...
33
34Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:10:19] say thirty...
35
36Marilyn Coulter: ...31 times.
37
38Doreen Howard: [laughter]
39
40Kirk Alexander: And, uh...
41
42Doreen Howard: Yeah.
43
44Kirk Alexander: ...I was sterile. That's what we found out way back a long time ago. But,
45 uh, first one couldn't stand me too long but the second one, she said she
46 gonna s-, make me suffer until I die.

1
2Doreen Howard: [laughter]
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
5
6Kirk Alexander: That's what she told me.
7
8Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
9
10Doreen Howard: [laughter]
11
12Cheryl McQuaid: Sounds like a sweetheart.
13
14Kirk Alexander: Oh. [laughter]
15
16Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 1:10:38].
17
18Doreen Howard: [laughter]
19
20Marilyn Coulter: Shorty, were you from Lansing or what's – uh, what – where are you,
21 where are you from?
22
23Kirk Alexander: Yeah, I was born at Saint Lawrence Hospital right over here in Lansing.
24
25Marilyn Coulter: So where'd ya go to school?
26
27Kirk Alexander: I went to school at Lansing Eastern.
28
29Marilyn Coulter: Eastern.
30
31Kirk Alexander: Mm-hm. Well, first I – I grew up in the north end a Lansing and I went to
32 Sheridan Road for kindergarten through 8th grade. And then they
33 switched ya to C.W. Otto for 9th grade. And then ya went over to Eastern
34 for 10th, 11th, and 12th. I told'm I figured the reason that I went to
35 Eastern over there...
36
37Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
38
39Kirk Alexander: ...was that if you got to be a bad enough person, they just flip ya over the
40 fence 'cause Boys' Vocational School is on the other side a the fence.
41
42Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
43
44Doreen Howard: [laughter]
45
46Kirk Alexander: [laughter]

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: So being that you lived in, um, Lansing, what was it like – because they
3 said there was so much industry here and Fisher Body was here. What
4 was it like – did you have any interac-, interaction with Lansing Fisher
5 Body or [inaudible 1:11:31] before you came in? As a child?
6
7 Kirk Alexander: No. Well, my dad worked here in the...
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 1:11:38].
10
11 Kirk Alexander: ...body shop.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Oh, okay.
14
15 Kirk Alexander: Yeah, he was a metal finisher in the body shop for 25 years.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: Oh, okay.
18
19 Kirk Alexander: But as far as Lansing goes, I had relatives that worked at all the plants.
20 All the plants that folded.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
23
24 Kirk Alexander: They worked at Motor Wheel. It folded. Well, he worked at REO, my
25 uncle did. It folded. And my dad worked there. And then they come to
26 Motor Wheel and it folded. They went over to, um, [tsk] oh, gosh, what's
27 the hammer shop there? It's right next door to – Motor Wheel's on this
28 side and – it ain't [Lindell 1:12:15]. Uh, that's a different one. And I
29 lived there all my life and heard them hammers all year, you know what I
30 mean? Every night long and I can't think a the name a that, that plant but
31 they closed it too. Right, right across from Motor Wheel. There's Motor
32 Wheel and you kinda go through under the big viaduct that goes over the
33 top and it's – Melling. Melling Drop Forge.
34
35 Female: [Inaudible 1:12:36].
36
37 Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 1:12:38].
38
39 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
40
41 Kirk Alexander: Um, I had uncles that worked at Melling and they went from Motor Wheel
42 [laughter] over to Melling. Then Melling folded, so that ended that. My
43 dad said he worked at, uh, REO and he worked at Nash-Kelvinator. They
44 both folded. Then he worked at Fisher and, uh, then he retired outta here
45 but he only had 25 years 'cause he came so late after them other places

1 folded late on him. Was that – that’s the only reason. The only reason I
2 came here, money.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
5
6 Kirk Alexander: It’s the truth. I mean, you know, they, they offered big money compared
7 to sackin’ groceries.
8
9 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
10
11 Kirk Alexander: I can tell ya how crazy I was. I used to work at Wrigley’s sackin’
12 groceries and I walked out there to put my application in. It was a long
13 walk from North Lansing to Wrigley’s supermarket, so I got a pair a roller
14 skates [laughter] and I roller-skated. When you went down Grand River
15 Avenue, when you hit the top a that hill and headed for the armory out
16 there, you were doin’ 60 mile an hour [laughter] by the...
17
18 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
19
20 Kirk Alexander: ...time you got to the bottom. You had to stop for Oakland, so you always
21 ended up grass-stained ‘cause [laughter] you dove in the grass to get
22 stopped. But I remember my feet almost burnin’ up ‘cause them steel
23 rollers on them roller – they weren’t like them rollerblades today. Them
24 babies got hot.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
27
28 Kirk Alexander: You could throw’m off in the grass and see the steam come right off’m.
29 They were that hot.
30
31 Doreen Howard: Hm.
32
33 Kirk Alexander: Oh. Didn’t have a car, you know. Had to get there somehow.
34
35 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
36
37 Kirk Alexander: Hitchhikin’ wasn’t a – wasn’t an option.
38
39 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
40
41 Kirk Alexander: No, that wasn’t an optio-, I didn’t – you heard a too many stories about
42 hitchhikers, you know, wackin’ people and...
43
44 Doreen Howard: Hm.
45

1Kirk Alexander: [Inaudible 1:14:20] to end up dead in a ditch. I was just tryin' to make a
2dollar an hour, you know.
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
5
6Linda Johnson: [laughter]
7
8Doreen Howard: You, you talked about coming to General Motors for the money. What
9about benefits? Was there, um, any particular benefit that you thought
10was better than the other or...
11
12Kirk Alexander: They had a lotta good....
13
14Doreen Howard: ...used more than another one?
15
16Kirk Alexander: ...benefits but [inaudible 1:14:38] honest with ya, I came here for the
17money. I didn't know hell of a lot about benefits really. I mean, it was –
18when you're young, it's get a car, pay your insurance, [laughter] buy tires
19'cause ya burn'm off. You know how that is. You didn't think about
20benefits.
21
22Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
23
24Kirk Alexander: I don't know how many benefits we had right to start with. They kinda
25added those down the way, you know? Added glasses and that was good
26because, uh, you know, you get older, ya need glasses. And they added
27dental. Your teeth were all rotten out from not brushin' your teeth, so
28yeah, that was good. And far as the lawyer thing, I didn't, I didn't need
29that one thank god. You know? [laughter] I wasn't in no trouble. I didn't
30– I was nuts in here but I wasn't nuts [laughter] outside.
31
32Linda Johnson: [laughter]
33
34Kirk Alexander: I didn't break the law. I won't say never ever but I didn't get caught, you
35know what I mean? I didn't, I didn't cross the line much.
36
37Doreen Howard: Hm.
38
39Kirk Alexander: Just [tauntin' 1:15:36]. That's the only time I coulda got fried.
40
41Michael Fleming: You went from roller-skating to the armory to – what was your first car
42when ya got to General Motors?
43
44Kirk Alexander: My first car from General Motors?
45

1Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 1:15:50]. When you started workin' at GM, started makin' the
2 money...
3
4Kirk Alexander: What was my...
5
6Michael Fleming: ...[inaudible 1:15:53]...
7
8Kirk Alexander: ...first car when I...
9
10Michael Fleming: ...first – [inaudible 1:15:55] first – what was the first automobile you
11 purchased?
12
13Kirk Alexander: A 1959 Ford Galaxy 500 2-door sedan. And it was 3 years old when I
14 bought it. But it was new to me, you know. It was the first car I ever
15 bought. It was Sherwood green I remember. And through the – it's
16 strange. Now in here, my nickname was Shorty but my wife says at home
17 – she tells different people if somebody calls on the phone and asks for
18 Kirk, she knows it's a salesman. If they call and ask for Shorty, she
19 knows it's somebody I knew through the shop. And if they call and ask
20 for Cork, it's somebody through the family.
21
22Doreen Howard: Hm.
23
24Kirk Alexander: They named me Corky a long, long time ago.
25
26Doreen Howard: Hm.
27
28Kirk Alexander: My grandma did. Said I was a corker. So the first car I got, I had The
29 Corker put right on the back [inaudible 1:16:46]. Well, that was a big deal
30 back then, you know.
31
32Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
33
34Kirk Alexander: And, yeah, I had my name put on there. But, uh, it was fun, you know.
35
36Michael Fleming: Talk about some a the vehicles that, uh, you had throughout your time at
37 GM.
38
39Kirk Alexander: You're gonna love it. Let's see. What was the next year Ford I bought?
40
41Doreen Howard: [laughter]
42
43Kirk Alexander: [laughter] Let's see. I had a...
44
45Cheryl McQuaid: All, all Fords?
46

1Kirk Alexander: Um, well, not always but – there was other ones [laughter] in there. I
2 bought a '59 Ford. I'm tryin' to think when the next one was. I bought a
3 '64 Ford Galaxy 500, um, station wagon. I love station wagons.
4

5Cheryl McQuaid: Shorty, are there any other fun stories that you can share with us?
6

7Kirk Alexander: None.
8

9Cheryl McQuaid: Ha.
10

11Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
12

13Cheryl McQuaid: You're funny.
14

15Kirk Alexander: Oh. You want the one with the coal pile.
16

17Cheryl McQuaid: Yes, I do.
18

19Kirk Alexander: Okay. Um. Mr. **Wiethorn** had called on the PA system and asked for –
20 uh, s-, uh, some sales rep had parked his Cadillac in the train well and they
21 couldn't get the stock in and they needed it bad. And he had announced it
22 and announced it, so I got a page and so I had to go to a phone and call
23 and it was Mr. **Wiethorn**, Farmer Tom. And he said this is Mr. **Wiethorn**.
24 I said is this Farmer Tom? And he said yes, it is. He said could you do
25 me a favor? I said what? He said you drive a forklift. I said yeah. He
26 said a big one. I said yeah, good one. I said we can haul trucks. He said I
27 got ya – I got a car down here. You come down to, to dock 5, he said, and
28 we'll have a chat. I said okay. So I came down there. Hurried down there
29 'cause ya don't know what it's gonna be. And Farmer Tom was there and
30 I said what do ya need? And he said can you move that Cadillac? It was
31 big full-size black Cadillac and he said can you move that? I said sure.
32 And he said without hurtin' it? I said yeah, pretty, pretty close. So we got
33 rags and put'm in by the rocker panel so it wouldn't crush it when ya
34 picked it up and I said what do ya want me to do with it? I picked it up
35 and I said what do ya want me to do with it? And he said take it out and
36 set it on the coal pile. I said you got it. So I went around the building and
37 out back there and set it on the coal pile. But I knew the guy that ran the
38 dozer on the coal pile and I said burry that son of a bitch. [laughter] He –
39 all he left was a hunk a the roof [laughter] stickin' out. Yeah. The rep
40 couldn't find his car for 2 weeks he said and finally somebody told him it
41 was the in the coal pile, buried in the coal pile out there.
42

43Doreen Howard: [laughter]
44

45Kirk Alexander: But, uh, I don't imagine he was happy, uh, when he started it. It probably
46 sound like he had **[inaudible 1:19:42]** Hollywood mufflers on there

1 because w-, when you lift a car up with them forks, it crushes the exhaust
2 system under there and he had duellies on there and it crushed both pipes.
3 I looked under there before I set it in the coal pile. I run his car up in the
4 air, well it was – you could see in there good. [laughter] Oh. Yeah,
5 [inaudible 1:20:01] crazy things happen. That's where that expression shit
6 happens comes from [inaudible 1:20:07].
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
9
10 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
11
12 Kirk Alexander: Did that time.
13
14 Doreen Howard: Do ya have any – some good stories that happened where ya didn't have to
15 do, uh...
16
17 Kirk Alexander: Nice things you mean?
18
19 Doreen Howard: Yes. Where you got to do nice things.
20
21 Kirk Alexander: Oh. Let's see. One a the nice things was they give me a written
22 reprimand one time for missin' too much time here at the shop. And they
23 said in 6 months, we'll pull that off if you're nice. I said okay. I never
24 missed a day, I wasn't late. At the end a the 6 months, I said get the
25 committee man. We're pullin' that written reprimand off and they said
26 hey, that's fair. So that was on a Friday and they pulled that written
27 reprimand off and I took [recording pauses]
28
29 Male: ...[go back to your party 1:20:50].
30
31 Doreen Howard: Okay.
32
33 Kirk Alexander: Some a the guys that came to the retirement party were some a the older,
34 um, supervisors and, and, uh, they asked me if I'd ever had a written
35 reprimand and I told'm yeah, yeah, I had and they didn't believe it. Oh, I
36 missed – I went 14 years without missin' a day [sniffing] and, uh, that's
37 like a miracle. [laughter] But, uh, they said, uh, are, are you sure you've
38 had a written reprimand? I said yeah, yeah, I'm sure. And they said how
39 many written reprimands have you had? And I said 32. [laughter]
40
41 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:21:33].
42
43 Kirk Alexander: I said you could repaper the inside a the shit house a couple [laughter] a
44 times. I said I had [laughter] a lot of'm. They said for what? And I said
45 oh, bein' late too many times like in a month and bein' absent too many
46 times within a 2 or 3-month period. Horseplay. [laughter] Few things, you

1 know. Few things I got caught for but, uh, I said nothin' real critical or
2 anything. I never had no time off. They – they'd take ya – the – they'd
3 give ya a verbal, they'd give ya the written reprimand. Next time, they'd
4 give ya 3 days. I never got no days. I always got good until they took it
5 off and then I'd blow that next Monday off. I loved it. [laughter] Oh.
6
7 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:22:21].
8
9 Kirk Alexander: Quit yankin' the table, right? Oh.
10
11 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:22:23].
12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
14
15 Doreen Howard: Um.
16
17 Kirk Alexander: Sorry.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
20
21 Male: It's your table today.
22
23 Kirk Alexander: [laughter] Oh, geez. There's so many, though, memories. Uh. Some
24 good, you know, and some bad. In-between. But there was so many
25 people. I really like the people. There's been a lotta the people [sighing]
26 pass away that were...
27
28 Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
29
30 Kirk Alexander: ...younger than I was. It, it amazed me. Lost good friend this last week
31 here. Uh. Let's see, what's his last name? I think his name is [Ryan]
32 [Inaudible 1:23:04].
33
34 Doreen Howard: Yeah?
35
36 Kirk Alexander: But, uh...
37
38 Michael Fleming: Yeah.
39
40 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
41
42 Doreen Howard: Just saw that in the [inaudible 1:23:08].
43
44 Kirk Alexander: He was a nice fella. He kinda quiet. Not, not real loud. He'd laugh. At
45 least I could make him laugh anyway.
46

1Doreen Howard: Hm.
2
3Kirk Alexander: But, uh, h-, he – good-natured guy. I, I never had no problems. I ain't
4 sayin' he never got mad at anybody but I never seen him get mad at
5 anybody.
6
7Doreen Howard: Hm.
8
9Kirk Alexander: He was a nice fella. I, I felt bad when – you always feel bad when ya, you
10 know, ya see them younger fellas passin' away. [Tim McCoy 1:23:33],
11 um, [tsk] he died of a heart attack over a year ago. I don't know, maybe 2
12 years ago now. Time goes by. I was out to see him. He was goin' up
13 north deer huntin'. He wanted me to [hunt his 1:23:47] place and I said
14 ah, wait till next year when ya – we'll hunt together next year. And he
15 said okay, we'll together for a hunt next year. And he went up north deer
16 huntin' the next day and then – and, um, [Rick Hands 1:24:00] called me
17 and said guess who died today? And when he said [Timmy 1:24:04], I
18 couldn't believe it.
19
20Doreen Howard: Hm.
21
22Kirk Alexander: I mean, he was younger than I was. Been retired 1 year. He was 51, I
23 think. I think he was 51. Just amazing. I don't know. [Jack Hunsicker
24 1:24:18], he was settin' at a corner and a girl decided to run the stop sign
25 and never saw him settin' there on his motorcycle and hit him at 70 mile
26 an hour right in the rear end. Oh, he didn't die that day but he died the
27 next day from a heart attack from the trauma that – well, he had broken
28 ribs, broken pelvis, broken everything.
29
30Doreen Howard: Hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: And I, I went over to Jack's funeral – or, or visitation. It was over at, uh,
33 Greenville. First time I'd ever been in Greenville. I didn't even know
34 where it was at. I had to look it up on the map.
35
36Doreen Howard: Hm.
37
38Kirk Alexander: But I went there to – for the visitation. There was a bunch a guys there
39 from the shop and one of'm I hadn't seen in a while. Um. [Ron Selvers
40 1:25:06]. Yeah, John – let's see. John's his brother and Ron – and I
41 always teased John. He was on, uh sanitation. I'd [musical ringing] kid
42 him all the time but Ron said he'd, he'd, uh. [musical chiming] Throw that
43 thing on the floor [inaudible 1:25:28]...
44
45Doreen Howard: [laughter]
46

1Kirk Alexander: ...if ya can't the button. [laughter]
2
3Doreen Howard: Well, um...
4
5Kirk Alexander: Well, he, uh, uh, he t-, he had had cancer in his...
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: W-.
8
9Kirk Alexander: ...throat and I asked him how it was doin' and he said oh, it's not doin'
10 too bad. He said it's been a war with, uh, chemo. He'd been fightin' it for
11 probably 10 years. And, uh, he'd go into remission and come back [out
12 1:25:50] and go in remission. He was in paint mix. But, uh, I got home
13 and I [inaudible 1:25:56] from, from over there to Jack and, uh, for his
14 visitation, it was about maybe 3 or 4 days and [Nate] [Inaudible 1:26:05]
15 called me and he said you lost a friend again. And I said oh, man. Who
16 went this time? He said Ron Selvers. And I said I was just talkin' to him
17 about 2 days ago. He said well, he'd been so sick with, uh, chemo for so
18 many years, he told his wife that he decided that – uh, well, I guess he
19 called Nate and told him that – 'cause that was his boss. He called and
20 told him that he was just gonna pack it in. He j-, he was just tired of
21 fightin' it. And an hour later, his wife called and said he's dead.
22
23Linda Johnson: Hm.
24
25Kirk Alexander: And he'd been walkin' right around and was good. But bein' he give up
26 the will to life, boom, he was dead in an hour.
27
28Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
29
30Doreen Howard: Hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: That's amazing.
33
34Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:26:51]. Lotta, lotta good, good times, good memories, good
35 friends...
36
37Kirk Alexander: Oh, yeah.
38
39Doreen Howard: ...over, over your time here. Um.
40
41Kirk Alexander: There was one better than that.
42
43Doreen Howard: Hm.
44
45Kirk Alexander: You, you knew [Don Baker 1:27:03], didn't ya Linda?
46

1Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
2
3Linda Johnson: Where'd he work?
4
5Kirk Alexander: Worked at paint. Little short committee man.
6
7Linda Johnson: Okay.
8
9Kirk Alexander: And, uh...
10
11Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:27:10].
12
13Kirk Alexander: ...[inaudible 1:27:10] Don, I, I knew as kids all his life while he was
14 growin' up and, uh, Don and I fished together, hunted together, [I don't
15 know 1:27:21], run around the shop together, [laughter] you know. Goofy
16 stuff. Eat lunch together. Different things like that. Different time.
17
18Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:27:28].
19
20Kirk Alexander: And, uh, Don says – well, he always wanted to shoot a bear and, uh, so we
21 went up north in Canada and, and we didn't see a bear. Then we went to
22 Lake Gogebic [laughter] over there huntin' bear again. And Don liked to
23 set the bait. Terrible, settin' the bait. Ya gotta set downwind, so all the
24 rotten guts and cow heads and...
25
26Female: Hm.
27
28Kirk Alexander: ...all the miserable stuff that bears think is a snack, you set downwind
29 from it, [laughter] you're about to puke your guts out while tryin' to shoot
30 a bear. Anyway, Don, he wanted to set by the swamp and I said oh, okay.
31 I said I'm goin' up on the edge a the mountain up there 'cause I'd seen
32 under the cherry trees lotta bear manure there. I said I'm gonna sit up
33 there but I said where you're down there, I'm gonna keep an eye on ya all
34 the time. Don could shoot good the first shot and then he couldn't hit a
35 bull in the ass with a snow shovel. He, he could shoot...
36
37Doreen Howard: [laughter]
38
39Kirk Alexander: ...all the way around the target but he could never hit it again. I had him
40 shootin' at a big cardboard box. Boom. He hit it the first time.
41
42Michael Fleming: [coughing]
43
44Kirk Alexander: Bang, boom, bang, boom. [laughter] You know, like this [inaudible
45 1:28:38]. I said if it's a bear and you wound him, I said you're lunch. So
46 I said I'm gonna be up on top a the ridge and that little thing ya see

1 stickin' outta the mountain, I'll be settin' on it. I said if you shoot a bear
2 and you wound it, I said do not, and I mean this, do not stand up. Lay flat
3 on the ground. I said there's gonna be enough fire power comin' in off a
4 the top a that mountain. You do not wanna stand up.
5
6Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
7
8Kirk Alexander: I said that aught-6 [inaudible 1:29:06] just screamin' up there. We never
9 saw a bear. The next year we went, I shot a bear [laughter] 'cause I got
10 [laughter] tired a goin' and smellin' that bait. Don was so excited that I
11 shot that bear it was unbelievable. He said boy, next year, he said oh, you
12 don't retire next year. And I said no, you're gonna. And he said well, in,
13 in a, in a couple a years, you're gonna retire. He said we're goin' west.
14 We're gonna hunt elk, we're gonna, you know, all this kinda stuff. And I
15 said okay, Don. And, um, he was retired a year and died.
16
17Doreen Howard: Hm.
18
19Kirk Alexander: And when I heard he passed, [inaudible] [geez] [inaudible 1:29:44], I
20 mean. He had a aneurysm. The Charlotte Hospital killed him. He had a
21 aneurysm on the aorta goin' into the heart. When he went into the
22 hospital, none a them people in there had the brains to run an EKG on him
23 to see what the hell was goin' on. They thought it was a heart attack, so
24 they pumped him full a Coumadin to thin his blood and the aneurysm on
25 the aorta burst...
26
27Female: [Inaudible 1:30:16].
28
29Kirk Alexander: ...and they give him 30 pints a blood and he bled to death.
30
31Doreen Howard: Hm.
32
33Kirk Alexander: He actually drowned in his own blood.
34
35Female: Hm.
36
37Doreen Howard: Hm.
38
39Kirk Alexander: Isn't that awful what some hospitals do? They just – brain dead when ya
40 t-.
41
42Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:30:25].
43
44Kirk Alexander: You know, a trauma place like that...
45
46Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]

1
2Kirk Alexander: ...you'd think they'd run a EKG 'cause he's talkin' about chest pain and
3 they didn't. They just filled him full a Coumadin to thin his blood...
4
5Doreen Howard: Hm.
6
7Kirk Alexander: ...and boom. He blew and that, that was the end of it.
8
9Doreen Howard: [tsk] Sad story.
10
11Kirk Alexander: That was the end of a, of a real good friend.
12
13Doreen Howard: You, you t-, touched based a couple different times on, um, the wagon and
14 lunch times and things l-, on that nature. [beeping] Um. Was there
15 anything special that you did at your lunchtime?
16
17Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
18
19Doreen Howard: Um. Or d-, any – as far as your lunches?
20
21Kirk Alexander: [laughter] I thought you...
22
23Doreen Howard: [Never 1:31:02].
24
25Kirk Alexander: ...broke wind there for a minute. [laughter]
26
27Doreen Howard: [laughter]
28
29Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
30
31Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:31:05].
32
33Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
34
35Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:31:08].
36
37Kirk Alexander: I thought maybe you was pinchin' them together tryin' to hold it back.
38 [brrr]
39
40Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
41
42Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
43
44Marilyn Coulter: Squeak, squeak, squeak.
45
46Doreen Howard: [laughter] Oh.

1
2Kirk Alexander: [sniffing] Ah.
3
4Doreen Howard: So going...
5
6Kirk Alexander: No-, nobody laugh...
7
8Doreen Howard: [laughter]
9
10Kirk Alexander: ...at somebody else, you know what I mean?
11
12Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
13
14Kirk Alexander: Thought he had an accident.
15
16Doreen Howard: [laughter]
17
18Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
19
20Doreen Howard: Go-, go-, going back...
21
22Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
23
24Doreen Howard: ...to General [laughter] Motors...
25
26Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
27
28Doreen Howard: ...[w-, what 1:31:27]...
29
30Kirk Alexander: I thought you were [laughter] gonna...
31
32Doreen Howard: [laughter]
33
34Kirk Alexander: ...faint [Mary 1:31:29] Coulter [laughter] [inaudible 1:31:30] coffee when
35 ya [laughter] took a sip [inaudible 1:31:32]...
36
37Doreen Howard: [laughter]
38
39Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
40
41Kirk Alexander: [laughter] 'Cause you almost sent it your way.
42
43Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
44
45Doreen Howard: [laughter]
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
2
3 Kirk Alexander: Hello. [laughter]
4
5 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
6
7 Doreen Howard: [laughter] Uh. Wagons, lunchtimes. Um. Did you do anything, uh,
8 special? I know there's a lotta people that would, you know, they'd either
9 go out to the neighborhood pubs or they would go watch football games
10 up on top a the roof or possibly have bible studies, EPG groups. Was, was
11 there anything that you did in particular durin' th-, that time?
12
13 Kirk Alexander: Went to Harry's and got a, a hamburger and a diet Coke. Came out and
14 ate it under a shade tree [laughter] in the yard. In the front yard out here.
15 One of'm that really put me out long time ago was they had a big water
16 tower out back a the plant right outside [it 1:32:20], right – oh, sorta
17 behind the paint department there when ya came out. There was a great
18 big water tower there forever. I musta knew 20 guys that ate their lunch in
19 the shadow a that water tower and they tore the damn thing [laughter]
20 down...
21
22 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
23
24 Kirk Alexander: ...and so then we had to find [laughter] another place. Hot, you know, out
25 there in the sun, you know. [Inaudible 1:32:37] be hot in the sun. That's
26 funny. Walked out there one day to eat and I said damn! They said what?
27 I said somebody stole the damn water tower!
28
29 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
30
31 Kirk Alexander: How the hell could they do that?
32
33 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
34
35 Kirk Alexander: That's big that thing up there, you know? It was huge. [beeping] Nobody
36 seemed to know. Watch it. Watch it.
37
38 Female: [Inaudible 1:32:55].
39
40 Kirk Alexander: I heard that bee again. [laughter]
41
42 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:32:57].
43
44 Michael Fleming: [sighing]
45
46 Doreen Howard: So...

1
2Kirk Alexander: You better go make your call, you know what I mean? They're just
3 gonna...
4
5Doreen Howard: [laughter]
6
7Kirk Alexander: ...keep buzzin' ya. I can see that.
8
9Female: [Inaudible 1:33:05].
10
11Doreen Howard: Um. Were you...
12
13Kirk Alexander: I'll keep accusin' ya a breakin' wind, so you better...
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
16
17Kirk Alexander: ...go make...
18
19Michael Fleming: [laughter]
20
21Kirk Alexander: ...that call. [laughter]
22
23Male: It may be a [inaudible 1:33:11].
24
25Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
26
27Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
28
29Doreen Howard: Were you ever involved with anything in the union or any activities
30 [inaudible 1:33:18] retirees or, or any involvement with the union at all?
31
32Kirk Alexander: Nah. [sighing]
33
34Doreen Howard: Hm.
35
36Kirk Alexander: Just strikes.
37
38Doreen Howard: Just the strikes.
39
40Kirk Alexander: [laughter] Yeah, that – I always picketed. I was first to go picket.
41
42Doreen Howard: What strike was – were you involved in? Do you recall...
43
44Kirk Alexander: Geez...
45
46Doreen Howard: ...anything about, about it?

1
2Kirk Alexander: Like about 4 of'm I think. [tsk] One was the biggie when we got the 30
3 and out. Oh, that was great. Wasn't that, wasn't that about '74 or
4 somethin'?

5
6Doreen Howard: Um.

7
8Linda Johnson: I think it was.

9
10Doreen Howard: S-, gonna say somewhere in there. Think, um, Dorothy Stevens had, had
11 touched on that too.

12
13Michael Fleming: Yeah.

14
15Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.

16
17Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

18
19Kirk Alexander: Dorothy Stevens. Oh, yeah. Sh-, I pick on her a lot.

20
21Linda Johnson: Did you?

22
23Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

24
25Kirk Alexander: She used to have a mafia car. Did you ever see that mafia car parked at
26 the union?

27
28Doreen Howard: [laughter]

29
30Kirk Alexander: I said that's a great car to have par-, parked at the union. A black caddy.

31
32Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.

33
34Doreen Howard: [laughter]

35
36Kirk Alexander: I said all you need's a couple bullet holes in that baby...

37
38Doreen Howard: [laughter]

39
40Kirk Alexander: ...and it'd look [laughter] just like the mafia. Oh.

41
42Doreen Howard: [laughter]

43
44Kirk Alexander: Ask Dorothy about that...

45
46Doreen Howard: [laughter]

1
2Kirk Alexander: ...sometime. She'll say you've been talkin' to that damn Shorty ain't ya?
3
4Doreen Howard: [laughter]
5
6Kirk Alexander: And she said that to other people. I heard...
7
8Doreen Howard: [laughter]
9
10Kirk Alexander: ...her say it.
11
12Doreen Howard: [laughter]
13
14Kirk Alexander: I always called that her mafia car. Now she's got like a gray – silver or
15 gray caddy. Told her that looks like crap compared to the other one. I
16 liked the mafia car better.
17
18Linda Johnson: [laughter]
19
20Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
21
22Doreen Howard: [laughter]
23
24Kirk Alexander: I told her I was gonna put them bullet holes on there and she said you
25 [inaudible 1:34:46] better shoot my car. I said no, ya go to the [Hummer
26 1:34:49] shop. You can get those little decals that goes on there. They
27 look so close to a bullet hole, uh, I-, it really looks like a bullet hole in
28 your car.
29
30Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: And it's just a little magnetic thing that sticks on your car. Uh, she told
33 me that I'd never set down again...
34
35Doreen Howard: Hm.
36
37Kirk Alexander: ...if I put them bullet holes on her car, so I didn't put'm on.
38
39Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
40
41Doreen Howard: D-, do you recall any a the other strikes that, that you were involved...
42
43Kirk Alexander: Well...
44
45Doreen Howard: ...with?
46

1Kirk Alexander: ...let's see. [sighing] The main one I know was the one for 30 and out.
2 That was the one where I really felt like we got somethin'.
3
4Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
5
6Kirk Alexander: Um. I was amazed to get 30 and out. I just figured you were gonna work
7 till you were 62 and ya just accept it, you know what I mean? That's just
8 what you're gonna do. Man, when they came up with 30 and out, I said –
9 well, I ain't much of a church person that hollers hallelujah but I said holy
10 shit. That's what I said. I am thrilled with that. Thirty years, I'm gone.
11 That's what I told'm. Then I stayed 6½ extra, you know what I mean...
12
13Female: [laughter]
14
15Doreen Howard: [laughter]
16
17Kirk Alexander: ...when I got there. But I went down to Social Security. They scared me
18 to death. Uh. Oh, y-, you've been down there have ya? Well, they'll
19 scare ya to death when you go down there.
20
21Male: Well, I just read that yesterday as a matter as a matter a fact [inaudible
22 1:36:03]...
23
24Kirk Alexander: Oh, did ya?
25
26Male: ...received in the mail. So I know...
27
28Kirk Alexander: That was sc-...
29
30Male: ...what you're talkin' about.
31
32Kirk Alexander: ...that was scary. I went down there and I said, uh, would it hurt me to go
33 out with 30 and out? And they said how old are ya? And I said well, I'm
34 about 47 but I'll be 49 when I get my 30 and out. I said I'm gettin' close.
35 Now I'm startin' to count the moments. And they said oh, you should
36 wait till you're 65 and I said well, I hate to tell ya this. That ain't gonna
37 happen. I said I ain't waitin' till I'm 65. No way. It don't matter if I have
38 to give up the whole damn social security. I am not waitin' till I'm 65.
39 And they said well, you should wait till you're 62. I said that sucks too,
40 lady. I ain't waitin' [laughter] for 62. I said 55 is a long ways away. I
41 said what's, what's 55? They said do not – she said do not ever retire one
42 day before you turn 55. I said why? She said you give up 46 percent of
43 your social security. They penalize you 46 percent if you go out 1 day
44 before you turn 55.
45
46Doreen Howard: Hm.

1
2Kirk Alexander: I said oh, damn. I know I shouldn't a come down here. I said you just
3ruined my whole year.
4
5Doreen Howard: [laughter]
6
7Kirk Alexander: Not my day, [laughter] my whole year. Oh, man. [laughter] I didn't
8wanna stay no extra time and I had 49 – I was 49, you know, when I was
9gonna go. I said that's an extra 6½. I said boy, that's a long time.
10[laughter] [Inaudible 1:37:37]. I said what's bad about that? I said you,
11you get in there workin' and – before ya got your time and some foreman
12gives ya a bunch a crap, you know, that ya didn't wanna really take but
13you think well, you know, you gotta, gotta take some. Ya gotta deal with
14it, you know what I mean. I said after ya get your 30 years and you knew
15damn well you coulda been outta this hole and you have to take that
16bullshit off a that guy, [laughter] I said oh, it's awful. I said it's just like a
17stake in the heart when ya – you have to stand there and take it and ya
18didn't have to. But, uh, she said don't retire one day before ya – I said
19okay. I'll go till I'm 55. Well, I'd a been 55 there in December and I
20decided to wait until May 30th. I wanted to make sure them sons a bitches
21weren't gonna say well, ya lost 3 months ba-, y-, you've heard a things
22like that before. I said we ain't playin' that game. I'm gonna [run her
231:38:35] another almost a half [laughter] a year, then I'm gone. But [tsk]
24oh.
25
26Male: How old are ya today?
27
28Kirk Alexander: Today? I'm 61.
29
30Male: Good thing ya didn't take her advice, huh?
31
32Doreen Howard: [Yeah 1:38:46].
33
34Kirk Alexander: Oh, yeah.
35
36Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37
38Kirk Alexander: Yeah.
39
40Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
41
42Kirk Alexander: I, I was surprised.
43
44Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:38:49].
45

1Kirk Alexander: I, I couldn't believe it, you know, with the, with the one day before ya turn
2 65 and they penalize ya that much? I mean, you know, I worked – I'd be
3 workin' 30 years here and I'd worked 4 or 5 years other places, you know,
4 and you've been payin' in all that time. You wouldn't think they'd
5 penalize ya for over 30 years. Half, almost half.
6

7Doreen Howard: Hm.
8

9Kirk Alexander: I said all right kinda quiet and low and snuck outta the office. [laughter] I
10 felt bad about what she told me. I did not wanna hear that. Oh,
11 [unbelievable 1:39:24].
12

13Doreen Howard: Y-, you've been here a long time and you've seen a lot of changes over
14 that time. Um. What was your reaction to the – all the name changes and
15 things that happened? It went from Fisher Body to BLC to [LCA
16 1:39:38]. How, how did you feel about that?
17

18Kirk Alexander: It was interesting. You could carry your camera with ya and take a picture
19 a the name on the building every day 'cause it was somethin' different. I
20 thought they ruined it when they took the big coach down. I really liked
21 the coach up there the best.
22

23Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
24

25Kirk Alexander: And I liked it when they had the coach out on the lawn in the front with
26 the flowers. That was really pretty. And th-, and they blew that off. More
27 or less give it a bleach burn or somethin'. It turned all brown and they
28 blew it away. But I couldn't believe it when they took that coach down. I,
29 I knew they'd put it in the – oh, what do you call that. Um. [sighing]
30 That...
31

32Female: [Inaudible 1:40:15].
33

34Kirk Alexander: ...that Oldsmobile – museum for [Olds 1:40:18] anyway.
35

36Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
37

38Kirk Alexander: I knew it'd be over there somewhere. I knew they'd save it. I knew they
39 wouldn't take it out to Granger.
40

41Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:40:24].
42

43Kirk Alexander: But I hated to see'm change the name to LCA. Everybody liked the name
44 a Fisher Body better. And it looked good on cars where they put that little
45 blue stamp, you know, [down] [inaudible 1:40:36] you'd open up a GM
46 car and, and there'd be Fisher Body on there. It was kind of a pride thing

1 sorta like. It looked nice. I thought it really looked nice in there. Oh, we
2 started out about cars one time too. Let's see. I got a...
3
4 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:40:52].
5
6 Kirk Alexander: [laughter] ...I had a '59 Ford 2-door sedan...
7
8 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
9
10 Kirk Alexander: ...green, Sherwood green.
11
12 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:40:58] yeah.
13
14 Kirk Alexander: Then I had a '64 Ford station wagon. It was Chantilly Beige. It was
15 meant to be a state police chase car. They didn't take it, so they had to fix
16 the little holes in the roof up there and if ya opened the doors, you could
17 see the blue paint yet for the state police. That was a hell of a car.
18
19 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
20
21 Kirk Alexander: It was a 428 horsepower with 2 4-barrels.
22
23 Doreen Howard: Hm.
24
25 Kirk Alexander: And it came with 2 Holley 4-barrels on it.
26
27 Doreen Howard: Hm.
28
29 Kirk Alexander: Ya had 3 passin' gears, 45, 65, and 85. You be doin' 85 mile an hour
30 down the highway and stomp it in passin' gear and lay rubber.
31
32 Doreen Howard: Hm.
33
34 Kirk Alexander: First thing I did was cut the wheel wells out and put them 2-foot slicks on
35 it 'cause you couldn't hold the road [inaudible 1:41:44] you burn all the
36 tires [off it 1:41:45]. Pass everything but a gas station. Got...
37
38 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
39
40 Kirk Alexander: ...6 miles to the gallon on the highway.
41
42 Female: [Inaudible 1:41:50].
43
44 Doreen Howard: Now, now they...
45
46 Kirk Alexander: Now I can tell ya the goofiest...

1
2Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
3
4Kirk Alexander: ...thing.
5
6Michael Fleming: Hm.
7
8Kirk Alexander: It's 70 miles an hour to go to – up the highway, the superhi-, once ya hit
9 the super. I used to go to Indian River, run around with some guys up
10 there, and it takes ya 4 hours from Lansing to get to Indian River. It took
11 me 2.
12
13Doreen Howard: [laughter]
14
15Kirk Alexander: I ran 140, 150 mile an hour goin' up there with that car.
16
17Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:42:15].
18
19Kirk Alexander: Highest I had it to was 170. It'd hold the road just like nothin' but ya had
20 to watch everything 'cause when you're hittin' cracks, she's only touchin'
21 the ground once in a while. You'd feel that baby floatin' like – it'd give
22 me a heart attack now but back then, you're on the razor's edge, you
23 know. It was exciting back then.
24
25Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:42:34].
26
27Kirk Alexander: Raced hydroplanes, blew boats up, and found [laughter] [me 1:42:37]
28 floatin' [in] [inaudible 1:42:37]. I did goofy things.
29
30Doreen Howard: Hm.
31
32Kirk Alexander: I did some awful [laughter] goofy things.
33
34Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:42:41].
35
36Kirk Alexander: Well, you hit a wave wrong, you let a wave lap over the front a your boat
37 at a high rate a speed with that hydro when you're racin' in them races,
38 it'll fly into the air and flip and disintegrate.
39
40Doreen Howard: [Okay 1:42:54].
41
42Kirk Alexander: All they pick up – well, they'd bring the divers out to get the motor and
43 they'd pick your ass up and drag it in the boat, you know what I mean?
44 Where you're knocked out. Yeah. Third time, I quit that shit.
45
46Marilyn Coulter: [Good 1:43:05] story. [Inaudible 1:43:06].

1
2Doreen Howard: Well...
3
4Kirk Alexander: [Inaudible 1:43:06].
5
6Marilyn Coulter: Did ya ever own a General Motors car?
7
8Kirk Alexander: [tsk]
9
10Marilyn Coulter: [I know] [inaudible 1:43:09].
11
12Kirk Alexander: Oh, let's see. [Inaudible] [in '59 – '64 1:43:10]. I bought a '66 Ford...
13
14Female: [Inaudible 1:43:15].
15
16Marilyn Coulter: But did ya ever own a [Chev- 1:43:16] – a [General Motors 1:43:17].
17
18Linda Johnson: Let him give me my list [here 1:43:18]. [laughter]
19
20Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
21
22Kirk Alexander: The next one was a '66 Ford 2-door hard top...
23
24Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
25
26Kirk Alexander: ...candy apple red. Beautiful car. Really pretty. Small engine. That was
27 after the biggie. Um. Well, I got caught comin' down the highway. I
28 came past Mount Pleasant, I'm runnin' 150, somewhere in there. I saw
29 some headlights come out on th-, behind me and I knew it had to be a cop
30 'cause they didn't disappear. Usually [bmm] they're gone, you know. J-,
31 'cause you [fwew] you go by there just like the wind. And so I said well, I
32 might as well slow down. So I slowed down, pull over to the side a the
33 road down near Ithaca. Two troopers finally lit me up. Came down there
34 and lit me up. Pull over. Well, he said I'm gonna give you a n-, a 90 in a
35 70. I said I'll sign that.
36
37Doreen Howard: [laughter]
38
39Kirk Alexander: He handed it to me and I signed it. I was doin' 150. Y-, you know
40 [laughter] what I mean?
41
42Doreen Howard: [laughter]
43
44Kirk Alexander: I didn't mind signin' that 90.
45
46Doreen Howard: Hm.

1

2Kirk Alexander:

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They went back to their car, threw their hats in the car. I didn't know what was happenin'. I was wishin' I had a shooter with me, you know? I didn't know what they were gonna do. They walk back up to the car and he said pull the hood. We wanna see what you got for a motor in this car, in this station wagon. And I said okay. So I pulled it. He lifts it up. He said how big is that? I said it's 428 cubic inch and it's got 2 4-barrels on it and they're both Holleys. He said this was supposed to be a state police car, wasn't it? And I said yeah, it was. I said you damn fools [laughter] didn't take it, so I did. He said when you passed us up there, uh, he said where was I? I said you were comin' out at Mount Pleasant. He said yeah, that's where I was. He said my partner says are you gonna light this guy up or you just gonna let him go? And he said I told him I've had it on the floorboard every since we came outta there. He's walkin' away! We can't go that fast. He said, um, if you ever go to sell this, I wanna buy it. He said I race what they call funny cars. I never heard of a funny car. It's a Nova with a rod stickin' outta the back of it so it can't tip over when they flip'm [up 1:45:28].

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Well, you remember when they used to ride [the gut 1:45:32] down here on Washington Avenue and they'd – everybody'd kinda tool through? Once in a while, they'd have races through town. I was one a those idiots that race through town. Um. They had the guys cut off all the lights so that nobody'd go across, you know. This Corvette pulled up beside me. He's on this side and he said, uh, got daddy's car tonight, huh? And I said yeah, I do. And he said, uh, ya wanna run it? And I said y-, you can't touch it. And he said let's make it interesting. He said we'll go 20 a gear. I said let's make it interesting. Let's go 100 a gear. I said what do ya got, a 4-speed? And he said yeah. I said well, we'll go the 4th speed and top end, you know, 3, 3 gears and top end, you know. Who, whoever passes Saginaw Street goin' the fastest gets all the money. And he said okay.

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So we got lined up. My buddy got outta the car. His girlfriend got outta the car and she had a little scarf around her neck and I said put a rock in that and drop it and when that baby hits the ground, we're comin' outta the hole. So she dropped it, you know, when we got ready. We come through town – I don't know how fast through town we was doin', you know, until we got to Saginaw Street but I, I dr-, I had a – you had your speedometer in your car and that w-, that wouldn't anywheres near touch how fast that car'd go so I had another speedometer put on the steerin' column and you could look right through the hole and see it there. And I was doin' 152 mile an hour when I crossed Saginaw Street but when I looked up at Saginaw Street, now he's on this side a me but he's back just maybe a car length or 2. He never took me comin' outta the hole or nothin'. I beat him all the way. A wall a cars is startin' to cross and nobody had Saginaw cut off. And in your mind, you're – it's quick-like. Oh, my god. You

1 know what I mean? But ya didn't know you was goin' to – gonna go
2 across it that fast. We were like a flash a light to them and I imagine they
3 all had heart attacks because there coulda been people, oh, moms and
4 dads, kids, you know, that kinda stuff, in them cars. I was sick after.
5 Boom, boom, you know, we went across and a course all them cars hit
6 their brakes but they'd already went through the intersection then.
7
8Doreen Howard: Hm.
9
10Kirk Alexander: We slowed down, I got outta the car and I laid on the ground out on the
11 grass and you felt like a hollow feelin' inside. I did. And the sweat was
12 pourin' off me then.
13
14Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
15
16Kirk Alexander: And, and ya lay there and your hands – you couldn't get your hands to
17 hold still. They were shakin'. The adrenaline was up there, you know,
18 and I told him, I said, uh, you ain't gotta pay me nothin'. I said, yeah. He
19 said no, I'll give your buddy the money. I said well, I'll ya what. I said I
20 ain't, I ain't gonna actually keep the money. I said the first charitable
21 place I come to, I'll stick the whole \$500 right in there.
22
23Linda Johnson: Hm.
24
25Kirk Alexander: I said I don't need the money. I said I'm gonna sell this car tomorrow.
26
27Linda Johnson: [Mm-hm 1:48:36].
28
29Kirk Alexander: And I said we coulda killed 30, 40 people right there on that corner and I
30 said I'll never do this again.
31
32Doreen Howard: [tsk] Yeah.
33
34Kirk Alexander: So I went right out to, uh, Max Curtis and bought that '66 Ford 2-door
35 hard top, candy apple red...
36
37Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:48:55].
38
39Kirk Alexander: ...with a – it had a V8 in it but it was a hog, you know what I mean?
40 [laughter] You could floorboard it and never skin the tires. [laughter]
41
42Doreen Howard: Hm.
43
44Kirk Alexander: [unh] Oh, I loved it. Oh, man, I loved – I got 20 miles to the gallon.
45 Couldn't believe I'd only got 6 with that other one.
46

1 Linda Johnson: [laughter]
2
3 Kirk Alexander: But the next car, let's see, that was a '66.
4
5 Cheryl McQuaid: [Where] [inaudible 1:49:17].
6
7 Kirk Alexander: Then I bought a '69...
8
9 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
10
11 Kirk Alexander: ...4-door, uh, Ford.
12
13 Doreen Howard: Hm.
14
15 Kirk Alexander: Candy apple red 4-door sedan.
16
17 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:49:27].
18
19 Kirk Alexander: And then I bought a '74 Ford station wagon. [laughter] That was a copper-colored one. I can't remember what it was called. Then I bought a 1985 Chevy Caprice Estate station wagon. [laughter]
20
21
22
23 Michael Fleming: Hallelujah.
24
25 Linda Johnson: Finally.
26
27 Kirk Alexander: The best one...
28
29 Doreen Howard: [laughter]
30
31 Kirk Alexander: ...they – uh, ever made, you know what I mean.
32
33 Michael Fleming: Hallelujah. You bought a Caprice.
34
35 Kirk Alexander: I'd – I always priced a Ford, a Chevy, and a Olds and new was new. What the hell, you know. New was new and I said I'd load'm up, uh, and the one with the best price, that's the one I'll take. And it was Ford, Ford, Ford, Ford, Chevy.
36
37
38
39
40 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:50:08].
41
42 Linda Johnson: What about the, the price cut we got for being GM employees?
43
44 Kirk Alexander: Added in. Everything.
45
46 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.

1
2Kirk Alexander: I even priced – well, I, I, I, uh, bought a – let’s see. It was a ’85 Chevy
3 Caprice wagon. I went out to Bud Kouts and was gonna get a pickup and
4 he said you gotta price – if you’re gonna price a Ford against a Chevy, he
5 said you gotta go a half-ton Ford and a ¾ Chevy. And I said why’s that?
6 And he said because a Ford is actually beefed up more than what the
7 Chevy is.
8
9Doreen Howard: Hm.
10
11Kirk Alexander: I said okay. Price’m. And he said I can’t touch it. He said the Ford’s
12 \$2000 cheaper than the Chevy. I said well, I’m gonna take it down and
13 I’m gonna get it all decked out. I’ll bring it back and show it to ya. He
14 said. So I brought it back and showed it to him. I had the runnin’ boards
15 split, you know, and the bug thing and the – oh, the topper, the whole deal
16 on it. He said I love this car. If I could buy a Ford, he [laughter] said, for
17 that price, I’d buy me a Ford and drive it down here to the Chevy
18 [laughter] dealership. But then I, um...
19
20Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 1:51:14].
21
22Kirk Alexander: ...then I bought 2 dinosaurs. Let’s see, I bought the ’90 Ford pickup and
23 then I bought a 1996, you’ll love this, Oldsmobile Silhouette minivan.
24 And then in 2000, I bought a 2000 Oldsmobile Silhouette minivan. I got 2
25 of’m settin’ in the driveway...
26
27Doreen Howard: [laughter]
28
29Kirk Alexander: ...and they’re both dinosaurs ‘cause they don’t make Oldsmobiles no
30 more. Geez, I said, shoulda known. I shoulda bought Fords.
31
32Doreen Howard: Well, our, our time...
33
34Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
35
36Doreen Howard: ...constraints here are, are getting limited, so I do have one last question
37 before we wrap it up here. Um.
38
39Kirk Alexander: If you don’t expect people to talk 2 days, you...
40
41Doreen Howard: [laughter]
42
43Kirk Alexander: ...shouldn’t invite’m over...
44
45Doreen Howard: [laughter]
46

1Kirk Alexander: ...you know what I mean?
2

3Doreen Howard: Um.
4

5Kirk Alexander: I don't punch a clock no more. [laughter]
6

7Doreen Howard: You have, um, retired now and you had, you know, quite a few years' experience in – with General Motors. What...
8
9

10Kirk Alexander: I can...
11

12Doreen Howard: ...what would you...
13

14Kirk Alexander: ...I can tell you what my exercise program is now.
15

16Doreen Howard: [laughter]
17

18Kirk Alexander: I walk from the house to the mailbox to get my check at the first a the month and other than that, I'm a couch potata.
19
20

21Doreen Howard: What...
22

23Kirk Alexander: [laughter]
24

25Doreen Howard: ...words of wisdom would you offer to someone that is just starting their career with Fisher Body?
26
27

28Kirk Alexander: Probably the best thing they could do, if I was gonna give'm real good advice, is to become a #1 suck-ass because I'm not kiddin' ya, it will move you right up the ladder. Now, they always told me that that wasn't [laughter] a good thing to do and yet, I watched'm movin' up the ladder. That's the thing to do and that's the one I always tell those guys that are movin' up the ladder, and they told me a suck-ass could get nowhere and look at you, you know, and that...
32
33
34
35

36Doreen Howard: [laughter]
37

38Kirk Alexander: ...eats'm up. [laughter]
39

40Doreen Howard: [laughter] Okay, well...
41

42Kirk Alexander: Other than that, I'd, I'd just...
43

44Doreen Howard: [laughter]
45

1Kirk Alexander: ...tell'm keep their absentee record, you know what I mean, really try to
2 keep it in line and, um, don't call your foreman the things that you'd like
3 to. Wait'll ya get to your car and then call him...
4

5Doreen Howard: [laughter]
6

7Kirk Alexander: ...all those things that you'd like to. But pranks, stick it to'm.
8

9Doreen Howard: [laughter]
10

11Kirk Alexander: You know, just [inaudible 1:53:36].
12

13Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
14

15Linda Johnson: [laughter]
16

17Kirk Alexander: I did a [lot of'm 1:53:38]. [laughter]
18

19Doreen Howard: [laughter] Okay, well, well, thank you...
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 1:53:41].
22

23Doreen Howard: ...so much for...
24

25Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
26

27Doreen Howard: ...spending the afternoon with us [inaudible 1:53:45].
28

29Kirk Alexander: Next time you got another tape that's longer, give me a call, you know...
30

31Doreen Howard: [laughter] Right.
32

33Kirk Alexander: ...what I mean?
34

35Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Shorty.
36

37Doreen Howard: Thanks a lot.
38

39Linda Johnson: Thank you, Shor- [recording ends]
40
41
42/ad