

**Aristides (Art) Arvanites owns Harry's Bar on Verlinden Street
across from the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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5 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body Historical Team area business interviews. Today is March
6 29, 2006. The time is approximately 9:35. Uh, we are at Harry's Place
7 and today we will first introduce the team.
8
9 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
10
11 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
12
13 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [phone ringing]
14
15 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: And Marilyn Coulter. Today we are here with Aristides Arvanites. [0:30]
18 Can you please state and spell your name please?
19
20 Aristides Arvanites: A – my name is Aristides Arvanites, A-r-v-a-n-i-t-e-s and my first name is
21 known as Aristides and it's A-r-i-s-t-i-d-e-s, also known as Art, A-r-t.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [0:53] And the name of your business and the address please?
24
25 Aristides Arvanites: It's Harry's Bar and Grill at 404 North Verlinden, Lansing, Michigan.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [1:07] Um, Art, how long have you been a resident of the Lansing
28 area?
29
30 Aristides Arvanites: Ever since 1952.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: In 1952. [1:14] Now, um, you are, um, Greek, correct?
33
34 Aristides Arvanites: Yes.
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: [1:19] Um, can you tell me what did your parents do?
37
38 Aristides Arvanites: Well, my parents, they were farmers.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: They were farmers. And so you came here in '52. [1:28] Can you tell us
41 about your early days in Greece and what brought you here to America?
42
43 Aristides Arvanites: Well, in 1941, my dad was killed through the German invasion of Greece
44 and there was five of us in the family. My mother had a hard time raising
45 us, so I left and I went to stay with an uncle. And in 1951, I had gone to
46 Athens and I was fortunate enough to find someone to sponsor me to come

1 to the United States, so I came to the United States in 1952, and I've been
2 here, thank God, ever since.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [2:11] So, um, what was the economy like in Greece?
5
6 Aristides Arvanites: Devastating, terrible, you know, during the war everything was destroyed.
7 We had a very, very hard time. Uh, it was one of those things that when
8 you have wars, life, life is very, very difficult for everybody.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [2:40] So Art, how old were you when you...?
11
12 Aristides Arvanites: I was 17.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: [2:47] Seventeen, so it took at 17, what did you, did you have any
15 thoughts of what you were going to see when you came to America?
16 What were some of your thoughts of what America was like?
17
18 Aristides Arvanites: It was just like a dream. That's all I was dreaming, you know, an
19 adventurous dream America is.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
22
23 Aristides Arvanites: I was dreaming about the cowboys of Mexico, the cowboys of Texas. It
24 was a fantasy, you know. It was beautiful.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [3:17] So who sponsored you to come to America?
27
28 Aristides Arvanites: It was my grandma's brother.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [3:24] Can you tell us about how you got here?
31
32 Aristides Arvanites: Well, you want me to say that...?
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
35
36 Aristides Arvanites: I arrived in New York. That was July 10, 1952. After we left the Ellis
37 Island, we got into the train. We came to Detroit 24 hours later. My uncle
38 and my aunt supposed to waiting for me. I'm in the middle of the train, a
39 lot of the people on the train going to separate ways. Art is in the middle,
40 which way he's going to go, I did not know. There was a conductor. This
41 individual was nice, tall, black fellow with a nice head, nice-looking
42 gentleman. I spoke to him in Greek. There's my aunt and uncle outside
43 waiting to pick me up, which way should I go? This individual, that was
44 my first experience to see other than a Greek individual close enough, his
45 eyes opened wide and I can feel he said "What?" And I repeat, he left.
46 Few minutes later a lady came in to pick me up. I thought it was my aunt

1 but it wasn't. I spoke to her in Greek, again no response, but she picked
2 me up and she took me to my uncle and aunt that they were waiting at the
3 gate and there was such a great feeling to know now I was in good hands.
4
5 Male: [Inaudible 5:10].
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: Um, so. [tape clicking]
8
9 Aristides Arvanites: As I understand, Harry once, once Durant Factory was bought by GM, uh,
10 Harry reopened to serve food and accommodate the good people of Fisher
11 Body at that time and he did that until 1946 I'm pretty sure. In that time,
12 GM and United Auto Workers they had a little problem, which it wasn't
13 United Auto Workers yet but there was, came to unionize...
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
16
17 Aristides Arvanites: ...and Harry's became the headquarters of 602.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Really?
20
21 Aristides Arvanites: Did anybody know that?
22
23 Female: Uh-uh.
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: Hm, I didn't know that.
26
27 Aristides Arvanites: There was a soup line that was Harry's. In the parking lot that was for the
28 tents. If you go back to check with, no, you don't have anybody like
29 [Rocky Stones 6:24] or I think there was a gentleman by the name of, uh,
30 [Sentoro, Senturo 6:30] was the president back in the 40's.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
33
34 Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, because the front entrance of Fisher Body was right across the
35 street so that was very appropriate at that time...
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
38
39 Aristides Arvanites: ...that Harry, which he loved the working class people...
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
42
43 Aristides Arvanites: ...that was his kind of people...
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
46

1Aristides Arvanites: ...he turned his place for I think approximately of what I understand five to
2 six months.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: Five to six months.
5
6Aristides Arvanites: And that took about that long finally to settle so that was Harry's soup line
7 it was known then.
8
9Marilyn Coulter: Hm, [inaudible 7:16]. So, um, after that and the, you know...
10
11Aristides Arvanites: Well...
12
13Marilyn Coulter: ...the strike was, you know, they got the union in and everything and
14 [7:32] was it also used for the same thing when strikes and things
15 [inaudible 7:34]...?
16
17Aristides Arvanites: Oh...
18
19Marilyn Coulter: ...when they had strikes?
20
21Aristides Arvanites: Oh yes. We normally we used to have Harry's [inaudible 7:40] whenever
22 your guards come in, well, if anybody had to use the facilities, where they
23 going to go, right to Harry's, you know. We've always been what I call
24 two my good friends of Fisher, Fisher Body, 602 and GM.
25
26Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
27
28Aristides Arvanites: Because back then we served both.
29
30Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
31
32Aristides Arvanites: The hourly also some of the salary people they used to come in back in the
33 50s and 60s.
34
35Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
36
37Aristides Arvanites: And they, they were wonderful people. They were my kind of people.
38 The people that you really trust. The people that were honest.
39
40Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
41
42Aristides Arvanites: The people that were making a good living.
43
44Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
45
46Aristides Arvanites: And they pay their bills, good to be with.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
3
4Aristides Arvanites: No hypocritical way whatsoever about the people that worked at Fisher
5 Body.
6
7Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
8
9Aristides Arvanites: I mean, you love them. What can I say about them? You know, they're
10 wonderful people. I had tremendous experience with them. I love them,
11 you know.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
14
15Aristides Arvanites: There's many friends I found.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [8:42] So now are there any more, um, things about Harry and
18 Harry's, um, [inaudible 8:47] we need to know before you took it over?
19
20Aristides Arvanites: I'm sorry, what was it?
21
22Marilyn Coulter: [8:52] Was there anything else we need to know about outside of it being
23 the strike headquarters and things like that in, in the 40s that you, that you
24 remember any?
25
26Aristides Arvanites: Hm, no. There were...
27
28Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
29
30Aristides Arvanites: There were a lot of things Harry used to tell me but, you know, I
31 specifically I, well, yeah, there was one thing. Okay, back I think in about
32 1937, '38, Harry used to own the lot next door. He built a place with
33 another gentleman so more or less to expand but something happened so
34 they became two different places. There was Harry's at that time way
35 back then it just, it wasn't known as Harry's Place, it was known as Star
36 Café.
37
38Marilyn Coulter: Star Café?
39
40Aristides Arvanites: Star Café back in 1922 when it opened up, originally it was named after
41 the bestselling car that Billy Durant produced, that Durant Motors
42 produced, the Star Café...
43
44Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
45
46Aristides Arvanites: ...the Star, the Star car, so he named his restaurant the Star Café.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
3
4Aristides Arvanites: And the name of Harry's did not take place until I took over, when I came
5 here I think it was around 1960. I said, well, you have Harry's there, put it
6 on the books as Harry's Place and that's when we did it. Oh yes, and in
7 1938 they opened up but then it was known as Verlinden Café. This was
8 known as Verlinden Café. It was two different separate places so Harry
9 decided at that time you stay a restaurant and then he got his beer license
10 and he opened up his section as a tavern.
11
12Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
13
14Aristides Arvanites: So not to compete against one another. I think it was Mr. Tobias was
15 running the Verlinden Café which now it's the addition of Harry's.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
18
19Aristides Arvanites: So they worked together until 1961. In 1961, we had a U.S. steel strike
20 and at that time the U.S. steel strike, if I can remember correctly, which I
21 was still here myself, it lasted something like about six months and that
22 was devastating for the local businesses at that time, also for the United
23 Auto Workers and everybody else because they had no control. GM had
24 no control about the U.S. steel and I, if I remember, I think even President
25 Kennedy at that time intervened to tell those people to go back to work
26 because I think, I'm not, I have no facts on it, the whole country was
27 suffering.
28
29Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
30
31Aristides Arvanites: So at that time, Verlinden Café had to close and never opened up again.
32 We also at the same time we had the City of Lansing took all the off-street
33 parking away from around for business.
34
35Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
36
37Aristides Arvanites: That's when they put the parking meters out there. You cannot park for
38 any length of time around, so Verlinden Café for not having any parking,
39 you had a double hurt on it.
40
41Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
42
43Aristides Arvanites: Where Harry's had parking...
44
45Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
46

1Aristides Arvanites: ...even though we're using it for, strictly for the...
2
3Marilyn Coulter: The tents.
4
5Aristides Arvanites: ...the, the people that work at the plant, not for [inaudible 12:52].
6
7Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
8
9Aristides Arvanites: And it worked okay, so they worked all right until then, you know, and...
10
11Marilyn Coulter: [13:01] What about Sexton High School being down the street from you?
12
13Aristides Arvanites: Sexton High School has always been very supportive of Harry's and
14 we've been very supportive of Sexton. It's been good. In sometimes slow
15 times, we always had a good trade with them. A lot of kids came down to
16 Harry's. And that's another wonderful experience, knowing all these
17 young people and you see them later on to become the leaders of our city
18 or, you know, very successful people.
19
20Marilyn Coulter: Now what about you? Now you said you were 17 when you came and
21 you were living right on Butler. [13:36] Did you attend Sexton at all?
22
23Aristides Arvanites: Yes, I attend Sexton for I can say for probably about six months or so but
24 that was very difficult in those days to work and go to school.
25
26Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
27
28Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, at that time I had to come in and work a little bit for Harry but I
29 also was told I would be drafted in the army.
30
31Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
32
33Aristides Arvanites: And in 1957, I was fortunate enough to be drafted into the U.S. Army and
34 I had some wonderful two years with the U.S. Army.
35
36Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
37
38Aristides Arvanites: And I came back in 1959.
39
40Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
41
42Aristides Arvanites: And just like I said previously, ever since 1959, once I got together with
43 Harry, I've been here ever since and it's been a wonderful life.
44
45Marilyn Coulter: [14:35] How old were you when you got married?
46

1Aristides Arvanites: Well, I got married September '59, which makes me about 24 years old.
2 It's been a wonderful life. We've still been married, my wife and I, for
3 near 47 years now.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 14:53].
6

7Aristides Arvanites: We have three children, six grandkids. It's been wonderful, beautiful life,
8 dream life.
9

10Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 15:02] [15:03] let's fast forward to when Art took over Harry's.
11

12Aristides Arvanites: Well, Harry and I in [inaudible 15:14] 1959 when I came back to associate
13 with Uncle Harry Andros, he promised me that when he's ready to retire
14 he was going to sell me the business.
15

16Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
17

18Aristides Arvanites: And we did not agree for any price or anything, I just said just be fair so
19 whatever it is and see if I can afford it. If I cannot afford it, I cannot. If
20 you're fair, then there will be no hard feelings but there was one thing that
21 I also want to get to where we can stabilize Harry's a little better. Harry's
22 in 1960s and 50s had no liquor so I said at that time to Mr. Andros, Uncle
23 Harry, that the thing to do is apply for a liquor license. He says to me, I
24 made a good living without a liquor license, we don't need it. I said yes,
25 but then I'm going to have a family hopefully in the future, we need a little
26 more stabilization of Harry's. We need the liquor license. I could not
27 apply for a liquor license 'cause under the law I did not have five years'
28 experience in the restaurant business and that time required that in order to
29 have a liquor license you have to have experience in the food industry so
30 Mr. Andros applied and we were granted in 1961 the liquor license.
31

32 Under the Michigan law, you have to operate for three years, so in 1964,
33 Harry Andros called me upstairs, which he stayed upstairs. That was his
34 home upstairs from Harry's and he says to me, Art, I'm ready to sell you
35 the business and he told me exactly what he wanted to sell it for, how
36 much rent and what was my responsibilities because he did not want to
37 have no more responsibility. Nowadays they call it triple net and I thought
38 for about maybe 30 seconds and I said you got a deal.
39

40Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
41

42Aristides Arvanites: And I said can I go to the attorney and draw a contract. He says please do.
43 And two days later or so we applied to the Liquor Control Commission for
44 transfer of the license and the business and early 1965 the transaction took
45 place and I've been here ever since.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [18:08] Art, how did you meet your wife?
2

3 Aristides Arvanites: Well, I, I met her through the church. We are both Greek Orthodox and I
4 met her before I went in the service and I knew maybe two or three girls
5 that when I was in the military I wrote them letters. My wife never
6 responded. [laughter] I think I wrote her about three letters and I never
7 had an answer back. When I returned from the army, we saw one another
8 again and we started talking. And I don't know what it is, love at first
9 sight afterwards, whatever, we, uh, we had a lot of things in common and
10 in 1959, September 13, 1959, we got married. We got blessed with four
11 children, three of whom which they are alive. And, you know, you do
12 have a lot of ups and downs in life but thank God other than losing [Joni
13 19:27], our first child, life's been really wonderful. People of 602 have
14 been my best friends, not because I'm talking to the union people, I'm
15 talking from my heart that the people from 602 have been my best friends
16 that I ever knew and it's been a lot of them and I wish I could remember
17 all their names. There was a Doug Brown? Doug Brown. Remember
18 Doug Brown?
19

20 Doug Rademacher: Yes.
21

22 Aristides Arvanites: Summers.
23

24 Doug Rademacher: Bob Summers.
25

26 Aristides Arvanites: Ben Smith, president. You know, there were so many people. Ted
27 Hartman, okay, I call him Uncle Theo for Ted, Theodore.
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
30

31 Aristides Arvanites: Uh, so many people that really made my life so wonderful that what can I
32 say? I was very fortunate, very blessed.
33

34 Doug Rademacher: [20:31] Art, you're, uh, you were blessed with children, are they part of
35 your business at Harry's?
36

37 Aristides Arvanites: Yes, they are. Harea is here, she's been here ever since she could walk.
38 Tina, my other daughter, was the same thing. And they both married,
39 thank God, to wonderful gentlemen, they are members of 602. They have
40 at least 25-plus years with GM. And thank God for GM. What can I say?
41 It's been wonderful. They have wonderful lives. They have wonderful
42 families. I'm blessed. Thank God.
43

44 Doug Rademacher: Art, I'd like to take you back to I guess it would be the 60s. You were the
45 owner of Harry's Place at that time. There's a little place, a little lot, an
46 open lot behind your property here. [21:39] Can you tell what that was

1 used for? And what – you know, I have a story I want to hear from you
2 but I was a child in the neighborhood here and I know we played ball
3 there. Do you remember a time when we took out the back window of
4 your vehicle by hitting a ball? [chuckle]
5

6Aristides Arvanites: There was a vehicle, there was the upstairs, there was a little garage next
7 door, [chuckle] you know. I used to say, guys, you can use the lot, play
8 softball but use a little softball not a hard ball. But I guess, you know,
9 when you're young, when you're 10, 11, 12 years old, sure, you listen for
10 30 seconds and back to whatever. And then some of the guys, maybe
11 Doug you were the powerhouse there, you hit that ball maybe 250 feet,
12 bang, there goes the window. [chuckle] And then you guys say, oh, what
13 can we say? But that was wonderful. That was wonderful. I'm glad that
14 they used the lot for the neighborhood little recreation area, which now
15 we're using it for growing vegetables for the neighborhood, it's still there.
16

17Doug Rademacher: I want to, I want to ask you, you said at a certain point the Verlinden Café
18 closed permanently. [23:01] Did there come a time when there was a
19 tragedy with that building?
20

21Aristides Arvanites: Yes, I think that was early 1980s that building had a fire. And the thing is,
22 you know, go back that when I first bought Harry's my dream was to,
23 because Verlinden Café was closed, to merge those buildings together to
24 make one and serve the, the people of the neighborhood and Fisher Body
25 much better. And I tried to work with the owner at that time was Don
26 [Beebes 23:37] but I couldn't get together, you know, the price was
27 outrageous at one time but it would just could not get to the – funny, in I
28 think it was right after the fire they had, Mr. [Beebes 23:55] died and this
29 was awarded to his cousin. I got together with his cousin and I think it
30 was probably around late, uh, 1983 or '84 we agreed to the price and, uh, I
31 purchased the next door and by I think 1985 we merged both buildings
32 together, which now it's still in operation.
33

34Doug Rademacher: That's great. [24:30] That Mr. [Beebes 24:31], did he own that lot behind
35 the, the place too?
36

37Aristides Arvanites: Yes.
38

39Doug Rademacher: As I remember as a young man, he would come and chase us off from
40 playing there. Um, just so you know, the reason we used the baseball, Art,
41 was that if we could hit the parking lot it was a home run and if we
42 [laughter] could hit, and if we could hit the pole in the corner over by the
43 garage it was a grand slam, so now you know what we were aiming for.
44

45Aristides Arvanites: But then if you missed, you hit the windows.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: One more question before we go back into some others, you said Sexton
2 was a fountain of youth and they, they supported your business and you've
3 seen some of the kids grow up and go on to be community leaders and so
4 forth. [25:19] What about the people in the neighborhood that have gone
5 into the plant? Did you see any number of them?
6

7 Aristides Arvanites: Oh, of course, every day, every day they pass by, walk by, uh, they come
8 in. Uh, you know, it's such a great neighborhood, uh, [coughing] we had
9 a wonderful, uh, time with everybody, you know. Thank God I was
10 blessed to be, just like I said, in this area with these people. It's been
11 wonderful. It's been wonderful.
12

13 Doug Rademacher: So this wasn't a, as far as a factory neighborhood, this wasn't cracker box
14 houses or anything, this...
15

16 Aristides Arvanites: Not at all, not at all. We did not condone that. We did not allow anything
17 like that. That was a very family-run place and that was my dream always
18 to have a friendly place for everybody and not to be, uh, used for any other
19 purposes.
20

21 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith. [26:31] Art, could you go back and tell us, you were talking
22 about a community garden out back on this lot, could you tell us about
23 that?
24

25 Aristides Arvanites: Once springtime comes in, now the last few years, people, I'll say the last,
26 at least the last 10 years, uh, they, uh, they go and plant different produce
27 for the people that do not have their own gardens. And, uh, it's, it's, it's
28 really, excuse me, really wonderful to see the produce that they grow back
29 there. And I have on the other lot I used to do that but I haven't done it
30 lately because I do it at home but it's wonderful to see these neighbors go
31 out there, plant the things and water them and let, let them grow and come
32 in and pick up. I don't know if you've seen it back there, they got produce
33 that they grow. It's unbelievable. It's, it's wonderful.
34

35 Doug Rademacher: So there is still a sense of community.
36

37 Aristides Arvanites: Oh absolutely, absolutely.
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter. Art, Harry's has always been a place of service to Fisher
40 Body and [27:54] can you tell us about, um, the interaction with the
41 employees of Fisher Body? How did, um, Fisher Body affect your hours
42 for example?
43

44 Aristides Arvanites: We always from Day 1, Harry's was operating the hours to accommodate
45 the people from GM, Fisher Body. That was my goal. Whenever they
46 shortened their hours, Harry's shortened theirs. They extended their

1 hours, Harry's extended their hours. I mean, I was totally, uh, geared to
2 make sure that the people from Fisher Body were taken care of. They
3 were my bread and butter. I live and die the way that Fisher Body operate,
4 GM operated.
5

6Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [28:43] Did you have to, um, like when we were up and running
7 and had the large masses, how many employees did you have to have
8 here?
9

10Aristides Arvanites: There was, I think at the peak, at one time I had about 29 employees.
11

12Marilyn Coulter: 29?
13

14Aristides Arvanites: Yes. My philosophy was in business that because GM people they only
15 had very, very short time to have lunch [phone running] they had to come
16 in and accommodate them as fast as we can, so therefore I had to make
17 sure to station people at the right spots when people came in, out they go
18 quickly. We had to do it quickly, otherwise, you know, we could not
19 accommodate all your people.
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [29:34] Now did you also do phone orders and all that other stuff?
22

23Aristides Arvanites: Oh, absolutely. There was I think between 70% to 80% of our food sales
24 was take out. That's why we had the lines to come in, cash your checks.
25

26Marilyn Coulter: [29:53] You used to cash checks also?
27

28Aristides Arvanites: Oh, absolutely.
29

30Marilyn Coulter: So first [inaudible 29:57].
31

32Aristides Arvanites: [Inaudible 29:57] come over [inaudible 30:00] line [inaudible 30:02]. Oh
33 yes especially [tape click] as I understand Harry once, once, uh, Durant
34 Factory was bought by GM, uh, Harry reopened to serve food and
35 accommodate the good people of Fisher Body at that time and he did that
36 until 1946 I'm pretty sure. In that time, GM and United Auto Workers
37 they had a little problem, which it wasn't United Auto workers yet but
38 there was, came to unionize...
39

40Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
41

42Aristides Arvanites: ...and Harry's became the headquarters of 602.
43

44Marilyn Coulter: Really?
45

46Aristides Arvanites: Did anybody know that?

1
2Female: Uh-uh.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: I didn't know that.
5
6Aristides Arvanites: There was a soup line that was Harry's. In the parking lot that was for the
7 tents. If you go back to check with, now you don't have anybody like
8 [Rocky Stones 31:15] or I think there was a gentleman by the name of, uh,
9 [Sentoro, Senturo 31:22] was the president back in the 40's.
10
11Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
12
13Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, because the front entrance of Fisher Body was right across the
14 street so that was very appropriate at that time...
15
16Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
17
18Aristides Arvanites: ...that Harry, which he loved the working class people...
19
20Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
21
22Aristides Arvanites: ...that was his kind of people...
23
24Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
25
26Aristides Arvanites: ...he turned his place for I think approximately of what I understand five to
27 six months.
28
29Marilyn Coulter: Five to six months.
30
31Aristides Arvanites: And that took about that long finally to settle so that was Harry's soup line
32 it was known then.
33
34Marilyn Coulter: Hm, [inaudible 32:07]. So, um, after that and the, you know...
35
36Aristides Arvanites: Well...
37
38Marilyn Coulter: ...the strike was, you know, they got the union in and everything and
39 [32:23] was it also used for the same thing, for strikes and things like
40 that...?
41
42Aristides Arvanites: Oh...
43
44Marilyn Coulter: ...when they had strikes?
45

1Aristides Arvanites: Oh yes. We are normally we used to have Harry's it would be whenever
2 your guards come in, well, if anybody had to use the facilities, where
3 they're going to go? Right to Harry's, you know. We've always been
4 what I call two my good friends of Fisher, Fisher Body, 602 and GM.
5

6Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
7

8Aristides Arvanites: Because back then we served both.
9

10Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
11

12Aristides Arvanites: The hourly also some of the salary people they used to come in back in the
13 50s and 60s.
14

15Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
16

17Aristides Arvanites: And they were, they were wonderful people. They were my kind of
18 people. The people that you really trust. The people that were honest.
19

20Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
21

22Aristides Arvanites: The people that were making a good living.
23

24Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
25

26Aristides Arvanites: And they pay their bills, good to be with.
27

28Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
29

30Aristides Arvanites: No hypocritical way whatsoever about the people that worked at Fisher
31 Body.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
34

35Aristides Arvanites: I mean, you love them. What can I say about them? You know, they're
36 wonderful people. I had tremendous experience with them. I love them,
37 you know.
38

39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
40

41Aristides Arvanites: There's many friends I found.
42

43Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [33:33] So now are there any more, um, things about Harry and
44 Harry's, um, Bar and Grill that we need to know before you took it over?
45

46Aristides Arvanites: I'm sorry, what was that?

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: [33:44] Was there anything else we need to know about outside of it
3 being the strike headquarters and things like that in, in the 40s that you,
4 that you remember any..?
5
6 Aristides Arvanites: Hm, no. There were...
7
8 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
9
10 Aristides Arvanites: There were a lot of things Harry used to tell me but, you know, I
11 specifically I, well, yeah, there was one thing. Okay, back I think in about
12 1937, '38, Harry used to own the lot next door. He built a place with
13 another gentleman so more or less to expand but something happened so
14 they became two different places. There was Harry's at that time way
15 back then it just, it wasn't known as Harry's Place, it was known as Star
16 Café.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: Star Café?
19
20 Aristides Arvanites: Star Café back in 1922 when it opened up. Originally, it was named after
21 the bestselling car that Billy Durant produced, that Durant Motors
22 produced, the Star Café...
23
24 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
25
26 Aristides Arvanites: ...the Star, the Star car, so he named his restaurant the Star Café.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
29
30 Aristides Arvanites: And the name of Harry's did not take place until I took over, when I came
31 here I think it was around 1960. I said, well, we have Harry's there, put it
32 on the books as Harry's Place and that's when we did it. Oh yes, and in
33 1938 they opened up but then it was known as Verlinden Café. This was
34 known as Verlinden Café. It was two different separate places so Harry
35 decided at that time you stay a restaurant and then he got his beer license
36 and he opened up his section as a tavern.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
39
40 Aristides Arvanites: So not to compete against one another with – I think it was Mr. Tobias
41 was running the Verlinden Café, which now it's the addition of Harry's.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
44
45 Aristides Arvanites: So they worked together until 1961. In 1961, we had a U.S. steel strike
46 and at that time the U.S. steel strike, if I can remember correctly, which I

1 was still here myself, it lasted something like about six months and that
2 was devastating for the local businesses at that time, also for the United
3 Auto Workers and everybody else because they had no control. GM had
4 no control about the U.S. steel and I, if I remember, I think even President
5 Kennedy at that time intervened to tell those people to go back to work
6 because I think, I'm not, I have no facts on it, the whole country was
7 suffering.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
10
11 Aristides Arvanites: So at that time, Verlinden Café had to close and never opened up again.
12 We also at the same time we had the City of Lansing took all the off-street
13 parking away from around for business.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
16
17 Aristides Arvanites: That's when they put the parking meters out there. You cannot park for
18 any length of time around, so Verlinden Café for not having any parking,
19 you had a double hurt on it.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
22
23 Aristides Arvanites: Where Harry's had parking...
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
26
27 Aristides Arvanites: ...even though we're using it for, strictly for the...
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: The tents.
30
31 Aristides Arvanites: ...the, the people that work at the plant, not for [inaudible 37:44].
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
34
35 Aristides Arvanites: And it worked okay, so that worked all right until then, you know, and...
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: [37:53] What about Sexton High School being down the street from you?
38
39 Aristides Arvanites: Sexton High School has always been very supportive of Harry's and
40 we've been very supportive of Sexton. It's been good. In sometimes slow
41 times, we always had a good trade with them. A lot of kids came down to
42 Harry's. And that's another wonderful experience, knowing all these
43 young people and you see them later on to become the leaders of our city
44 or, you know, very successful people.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: Now what about you? Now you said you were 17 when you came and
2 you were living right on Butler. [38:28] Did you attend Sexton at all?
3

4 Aristides Arvanites: Yes, I attend Sexton for I, I can say for probably about six months or so
5 but that was very difficult in those days to work and go to school.
6

7 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
8

9 Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, at that time I had to come in and work a little bit for Harry but I
10 also was told I would be drafted in the army.
11

12 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
13

14 Aristides Arvanites: And in 1957, I was fortunate enough to be drafted into the U.S. Army and
15 I had some wonderful two years with the U.S. Army.
16

17 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
18

19 Aristides Arvanites: And I came back in 1959.
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
22

23 Aristides Arvanites: And just like I said previously, ever since 1959, once I got together with
24 Harry, I've been here ever since and it's been a wonderful life.
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: [14:35] How old were you when you got married?
27

28 Aristides Arvanites: Well, I got married September '59, which makes me about 24 years old.
29 It's been a wonderful life. We've still been married, my wife and I, for,
30 for near 47 years now.
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Amazing.
33

34 Aristides Arvanites: We have three children, six grandkids. It's been wonderful, beautiful life,
35 dream life.
36

37 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 39:53] [39:55] let's fast forward to when Art took over Harry's.
38

39 Aristides Arvanites: Well, Harry and I in [inaudible 40:06] 1959 when I came back to associate
40 with Uncle Harry Andros, he promised me that when he's ready to retire
41 he was going to sell me the business.
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
44

45 Aristides Arvanites: And we did not agree for any price or anything, I just said just be fair so
46 whatever it is and see if I can afford it. If I cannot afford it, I cannot. If

1 you're fair, then there will be no hard feelings. But there was one thing
2 that I also want to get to where we can stabilize Harry's a little better.
3 Harry's in 1960s and 50s had no liquor so I said at that time to Mr.
4 Andros, Uncle Harry, that the thing to do is apply for a liquor license. He
5 says to me, I made a good living without a liquor license, we don't need it.
6 I said yes, but then I'm going to have a family hopefully in the future, we
7 need a little more stabilization of Harry's. We need the liquor license. I
8 could not apply for a liquor license 'cause under the law I did not have
9 five years' experience in the restaurant business and that time required that
10 in order to have a liquor license you have to have experience in the food
11 industry, so Mr. Andros applied and we were granted in 1961 the liquor
12 license.
13
14 Under the Michigan law, you have to operate for three years, so in 1964
15 Harry Andros called me upstairs, which he stayed upstairs. That was his
16 home upstairs from Harry's and he says to me, Art, I'm ready to sell you
17 the business and he told me exactly what he wanted to sell it for, how
18 much rent and what was my responsibilities because he did not want to
19 have no more responsibility. Nowadays they call it triple net and I thought
20 for about maybe 30 seconds and I said you got a deal. And I said can I go
21 to the attorney and draw a contract. He says please do. And two days
22 later or so, we applied to the Liquor Control Commission for transfer of
23 the license and the business and early 1965 the transaction took place and
24 I've been here ever since.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [43:00] Art, how did you meet your wife?
27
28 Aristides Arvanites: Well, I, I met her through the church. We are both Greek Orthodox and I
29 met her before I went in the service and I knew maybe two or three girls
30 that when I was in the military I wrote them letters. My wife never
31 responded. [laughter] I think I wrote her about three letters and I never
32 had an answer back. When I returned from the army, we saw one another
33 again and we started talking. And I don't know what it is, love at first
34 sight afterwards, whatever, we, uh, we had a lot of things in common and
35 in 1959, September 13, 1959, we got married. We got blessed with four
36 children, three of whom which they're alive. And, you know, you do have
37 a lot of ups and downs in life but thank God other than losing [Joni 44:19],
38 our first child, life's been really wonderful. The people of 602 have been
39 my best friends not because I'm talking to the union people, I'm talking
40 from my heart that the people from 602 have been my best friends that I
41 ever knew and there's been a lot of them and I wish I could remember all
42 their names. There was a Doug Brown? Doug Brown. Remember Doug
43 Brown?
44
45 Doug Rademacher: Yes.
46

1Aristides Arvanites: Summers.
2

3Doug Rademacher: Bob Summers.
4

5Aristides Arvanites: Ben Smith, president. You know, there were so many people. Ted
6Hartman, okay, I call him Uncle Theo for Ted, Theodore.
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
9

10Aristides Arvanites: Uh, so many people that really made my life so wonderful. What can I
11say? I was very fortunate, very blessed.
12

13Doug Rademacher: [45:23] Art, you're, uh, you were blessed with children, are they part of
14your business at Harry's?
15

16Aristides Arvanites: Yes, they are. Harea is here, she's been here ever since she could walk.
17Tina, my other daughter, was the same thing. And they're both married,
18thank God, to wonderful gentlemen, they are members of 602. They have
19at least 25-plus years with GM. And thank God for GM. What can I say?
20It's been wonderful. They have wonderful lives. They have wonderful
21families. I'm blessed. Thank God.
22

23Doug Rademacher: Art, I'd like to take you back to I guess it would be the 60s, you were the
24owner of Harry's Place at that time. There's a little place, a little lot, an
25open lot behind your property here. [46:31] Can you tell what that was
26used for? And what – you know, I have a story I want to hear from you
27but, uh, I was a child in the neighborhood here and I know we played ball
28there. Do you remember a time when we took out the back window of
29your vehicle by hitting a ball? [chuckle]
30

31Aristides Arvanites: There was a vehicle, there was the upstairs, there was a little garage next
32door, [laughter] you know. I used to say guys, you can use the lot, play
33softball but use a little softball, not a hard ball but I guess, you know,
34when you're young, when you're 10, 11, 12 years old, sure, you listen for
3530 seconds and back to whatever and then some of the guys, maybe Doug
36you were the powerhouse there, you hit that ball maybe 250 feet, bang,
37there goes the window. [chuckle] And then you guys say, oh, what can we
38say? But that was wonderful. That was wonderful. I'm glad that they
39used the lot for the neighborhood little recreation area, which now we're
40using it for growing vegetables for the neighborhood. It's still there.
41

42Doug Rademacher: I want to, I want to, uh, ask you, you said, uh, at a certain point the
43Verlinden Café closed permanently. [47:53] Did there come a time when
44there was a tragedy with that building?
45

1Aristides Arvanites: Yes, I think that was early 1980s that building had a fire. And the thing is,
2 you know, go back that when I first bought Harry's my dream was to,
3 because Verlinden Café was closed, to merge those buildings together to
4 make one and serve the people of the neighborhood and Fisher Body much
5 better. And I tried to work with the owner at that time was Don [Beebes
6 48:28] but I couldn't get together, you know. The price was outrageous at
7 one time but it would, just could not get to be. Funny in I think it was
8 right after the fire they had, Mr. [Beebes 48:47] died and this was awarded
9 to his cousin. I got together with his cousin and I think it was probably
10 around late, uh, 1983 or '84 we agreed to the price and, uh, I purchased
11 the next door and by I think 1985 we merged both buildings together,
12 which now it's still in operation.
13

14Doug Rademacher: That's great. [49:21] That Mr. [Beebes 49:22], did he own that lot behind
15 the, the place too?
16

17Aristides Arvanites: Yes.
18

19Doug Rademacher: As I remember as a young man, he would come and chase us off from
20 playing there. Um, just so you know, the reason we used the baseball, Art,
21 was that if we could hit the parking lot it was a home run and if we
22 [laughter] could hit, and if we could hit the pole in the corner over by the
23 garage it was a grand slam, so now you know what we were aiming for.
24

25Aristides Arvanites: But then if you missed, you hit the windows.
26

27Doug Rademacher: One more question before we go back into some others, you said Sexton
28 was a fountain of youth and, and they, they supported your business and
29 you've seen some of the kids grow up and go on to be community leaders
30 and so forth. [50:10] What about the people in the neighborhood that have
31 gone into the plant? Did you see any number of them?
32

33Aristides Arvanites: Oh, of course, every day, every day they pass by, walk by, uh, they come
34 in. Uh, you know, it's such a great neighborhood, uh, [coughing] we had
35 a wonderful, um, time with everybody, you know. Thank God I was
36 blessed to be, just like I said, in this area with these people. It's been
37 wonderful. It's been wonderful.
38

39Doug Rademacher: So this wasn't a, as far as a factory neighborhood, this wasn't cracker box
40 houses or anything, this...
41

42Aristides Arvanites: Not at all. Not at all. We did not condone that. We did not allow
43 anything like that. That was a very family-run place and that was my
44 dream always to have a friendly place for everybody and not to be, uh,
45 used for any other purposes.
46

1 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith. [51:22] Art, could you go back and tell us, you were talking
2 about a community garden out back on this lot, could you tell us about
3 that?
4

5 Aristides Arvanites: Once springtime comes in, now the last few years, people, I'll say the last,
6 at least the last 10 years, uh, they, uh, they go and plant different produce
7 for the people that do not have their own gardens. And, uh, it's, it's, it's,
8 really, excuse me, really wonderful to see the produce that they grow back
9 there. And I have on the other lot I used to do that but I haven't done it
10 lately because I do it at home. But it's wonderful to see these neighbors
11 go out there, plant the things and water them and let, let them grow and
12 come in and pick up. I don't know if you've seen it back there, they got
13 produce that they grow. It's unbelievable. It's, it's wonderful.
14

15 Doug Rademacher: So there is still a sense of community.
16

17 Aristides Arvanites: Oh absolutely, absolutely.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter. Art, Harry's has always been a place of service to Fisher
20 Body and [52:45] can you tell us about, um, the interaction with the
21 employees of Fisher Body. How did, um, the Fisher Body affect your
22 hours for example?
23

24 Aristides Arvanites: We always from Day 1, Harry's was operating the hours to accommodate
25 the people from GM, Fisher Body. That was my goal. Whenever they
26 shorten their hours, Harry's shortened theirs. They extended their hours,
27 Harry's extended their hours. I mean, I was totally, uh, geared to make
28 sure that the people from Fisher Body were taken care of. They were my
29 bread and butter. I live and die the way that Fisher Body operate, GM
30 operated.
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [52:34] Did you have to, um, like when we were up and running
33 and had the large masses, how many employees did you have to have
34 here?
35

36 Aristides Arvanites: There was, I think at the peak, at one time I had about 29 employees.
37

38 Marilyn Coulter: 29?
39

40 Aristides Arvanites: Yes. My philosophy was in business that because GM people they only
41 had very, very short time to have lunch [phone ringing] they come in and
42 accommodate them as fast as we can so therefore I had to make sure to
43 station people at the right spots when people came in, out they go quickly.
44 We had to do it that way, otherwise, you know, we could not
45 accommodate all your people.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [54:25] Now did you also do phone orders and all that other stuff?
2

3 Aristides Arvanites: Oh, absolutely. There was I think between 70% to 80% of our food sales
4 was take out. That's why we had the lines to come in, cash your checks.
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: [54:44] You used to cash checks also?
7

8 Aristides Arvanites: Oh, absolutely.
9

10 Marilyn Coulter: So first [inaudible 54:48].
11

12 Aristides Arvanites: [Inaudible 54:48] come over [inaudible 54:51] line [inaudible 54:53]. Oh
13 yes, especially [inaudible 54:59]. [tape click]
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: [55:00] So Art, you said that you used to cash payroll checks here too?
16

17 Aristides Arvanites: Yes.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: [55:05] And that's for both the day shift and the night shift?
20

21 Aristides Arvanites: Of course. I accommodate my good people of Fisher Body.
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: Then that means on Thursday and Friday night there must have been a lot
24 of hustle and bustle.
25

26 Aristides Arvanites: Yes, that, that was our, I used to say, our money days. If we did not do
27 well those two days, then the whole week was kind of nonprofitable
28 'cause at that time I used to have a lot of employees.
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
31

32 Aristides Arvanites: You know, we used to have up to at the maximum 29 employees at
33 Harry's.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: Can...?
36

37 Aristides Arvanites: So there were people who depend on Harry's just like we depended on
38 Fisher Body.
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: [55:46] So on a good money day, how many Fisher Body checks would
41 you have cashed?
42

43 Aristides Arvanites: In those days, probably somewhere between 400 and 500.
44

45 Marilyn Coulter: [chuckle] That's a lot of business. That's a lot of money coming through
46 this building and, um...

1
2Aristides Arvanites: And you know what was the good thing about it?
3
4Marilyn Coulter: What?
5
6Aristides Arvanites: A lot of people, and Doug probably knows that, they used to come in at
7 Harry's, eat during the week and they cash their checks...
8
9Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
10
11Aristides Arvanites: ...and we take out their tab.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
14
15Aristides Arvanites: That was such a wonderful experience.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
18
19Aristides Arvanites: Such a wonderful, beautiful time then.
20
21Marilyn Coulter: So you were really a family bar.
22
23Aristides Arvanites: Absolutely. My big family, Fisher Body.
24
25Marilyn Coulter: Your Fisher Body family. [56:35] What would you say was your best-
26 selling item? What was the Harry's specialty?
27
28Aristides Arvanites: Well, we had what I call a Jumbo Double Double, great subs. The Jumbo
29 Double Double was two hamburger patties put together and we used the
30 quarter pounders and there were what I called the expanded quarter
31 pounders because it only took 30 seconds on each side to cook it because
32 of the quickness that we had to produce.
33
34Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
35
36Aristides Arvanites: You cannot put a half a pounder or any item that took a long time to cook.
37
38Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
39
40Aristides Arvanites: That was, we had to accommodate the people in a short time. We had
41 great subs. We got the Harry's Sub, the Art Sub, there was also, they're
42 still great and another item that we have that I think [inaudible 57:33] all
43 the time there was Harry's Wings.
44
45Marilyn Coulter: Harry's Wings.
46

1Aristides Arvanites: Harry's Wings, the buffalo wings, the regular wings. People that could
2 get food and go on the line and eat it on the line.
3

4Marilyn Coulter: [57:50] What was a Sarah Sub?
5

6Aristides Arvanites: Sarah Sub it was named after a lady that cooked for me for a long time and
7 was a friend, it was a neighbor. Uh, she was born on the corner of
8 Genesee and Verlinden and grew up and she was such, and she still is such
9 a great lady that I named it after her. All, all, most, most of our subs are
10 named after a great employee that worked for us.
11

12Marilyn Coulter: [58:23] So what's in a Harry, what's in a Sarah Sub?
13

14Aristides Arvanites: Harry's Sub. Sarah's Sub it was the what we call the cold meats. You had
15 your salami, bologna, and pastrami and we put it together and in each, in
16 each bun put a lot of lettuce, mayo, tomatoes, onion, you name it. It was
17 great and it still is great.
18

19Marilyn Coulter: I know you make an awesome veggie, veggie sub too. [chuckle]
20

21Aristides Arvanites: Veggie subs, great pizzas, you know, but the wings and the subs for to
22 accommodate the people from Fisher Body to eat on the line, they were
23 our main items.
24

25Marilyn Coulter: Um, now they came here during their lunchtime, [59:13] did they ever
26 have events, the employees bring in their personal events into your
27 facility?
28

29Aristides Arvanites: Of course.
30

31Marilyn Coulter: [59:21] What types of things would happen here?
32

33Aristides Arvanites: Well, I'll tell you, my thing was from the beginning, you have a birthday,
34 you have a retirement, you have anything that had to do with a function of
35 employees, what's happening in Fisher Body, we always came over and
36 Art was always willing to buy the first round of whatever they wanted
37 because of appreciation all through the years of faithful, uh, patronage to
38 our establishment.
39

40Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [59:59] What about UAW Local 602? Did you ever do anything
41 for them?
42

43Aristides Arvanites: I had told my kids and myself, whenever 602 had a function, they want
44 something, always provide for them whatever they wanted, do it. They're
45 our bread and butter. They're our friends. They're our family so if they
46 had to go to let's say a Lions game, we made sure we made their subs,

1 whatever they wanted. If they had a union function, they want to get the
2 beer, we always provide the beer at no more than what the cost to Harry's
3 was.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
6

7Aristides Arvanites: 'Cause our profit was made otherwise too. You know, you got to help,
8 one hand helps the other 'cause you people have been so good to us.
9

10Marilyn Coulter: [60:58] Um, what about, um, the picnics? Did you ever do anything with
11 the picnics? Were you invited to the picnics? Were, were you invited to
12 the 602 picnics?
13

14Aristides Arvanites: Oh, of course. That was my time to go and see some of the old retirees
15 that they were there and we more or less reminisce the good old days.
16

17Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
18

19Aristides Arvanites: 'Cause you go there and you, you see people that retired 10, 15, 20 years
20 and they, they still around, talk about the good old days.
21

22Marilyn Coulter: Well, I know that oftentimes we've had skilled tradespeople do things like
23 government jobs, special jobs for people using their skills. [61:41] Did
24 you ever have any skilled tradespeople do any jobs for you?
25

26Aristides Arvanites: I don't think so. I, I, I don't think I really had any of those people, not that
27 I can recall to tell you the truth.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: [62:00] Can you remember what might have been one of the funniest
30 experiences you ever had with Fisher Body or the Fisher Body
31 employees?
32

33Aristides Arvanites: Ooh, that's a tough one. That's a tough one. [chuckle] I don't know. I, I,
34 I think, to be very honest with you, just I can't remember really any funny
35 but I had such a great time with all of them just see them coming over,
36 enjoy and be so friendly and we joke but, you know, one unique
37 experience to come in my mind I can't recall. Maybe I got a little senior
38 moment right now, I don't know. [chuckle]
39

40Marilyn Coulter: We might come back to that if it comes back to you. [62:48] Um, what
41 about one of your happiest moments?
42

43Aristides Arvanites: Happiest moments, I think my happiest moment, very happy moment, was
44 marrying my wife and then my children coming along.
45

46Female: That's wonderful.

1
2Aristides Arvanites: I, I think that, that I was blessed.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
5
6Aristides Arvanites: Uh, and then, of course, being involved with Harry's, being involved with
7 GM people.
8
9Female: Yeah.
10
11Aristides Arvanites: Those I cannot put one because there were a lot of happy moments.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
14
15Aristides Arvanites: A lot of happy moments.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: [63:25] Um, [phone ringing] what about your past workers, like Gus, Bill?
18
19Aristides Arvanites: They were tremendous, tremendous people. Gus when I bought the place,
20 Gus was working at Fisher.
21
22Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
23
24Aristides Arvanites: He had a job, if I recall, by doing body work.
25
26Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
27
28Aristides Arvanites: His back was killing him so [inaudible 63:55] Greek he asked me if I can
29 do anything about it and I said Gus, come over, I need someone, honest,
30 truthful, hard worker. And, uh, and Gus worked for me from 1965 until
31 1983.
32
33Marilyn Coulter: [64:19] And then what happened to him?
34
35Aristides Arvanites: When he opened up, we used to have a building on the other side of the
36 factory and it was funny, in those days everybody was talking about Fisher
37 Body put a tunnel to merge Fisher with Oldsmobile.
38
39Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
40
41Aristides Arvanites: So Gus and I tried to be smart so we started purchasing property...
42
43Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44
45Aristides Arvanites: ...off Michigan Avenue, West Michigan Avenue. And we had I think
46 about 10 pieces of property at that time.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
3
4Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, we had a restaurant, which the people did not make it, so Gus we
5 decided to do something with it and, uh, we opened up Gus's Bar.
6
7Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
8
9Aristides Arvanites: And I told Gus, Gus, you run that one on the south side, I'll run the east
10 side. You take care of the people on the south side. I'll take care of the
11 people on the east side. And Gus and I we're still friends.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
14
15Aristides Arvanites: And, you know, we saw Gus put up the building. We separate because his
16 kids grew up, my kids grew up. Bill's, Bill's kids, another gentleman that
17 worked for me for many years, his kids grew up, so we divided the
18 properties...
19
20Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
21
22Aristides Arvanites: ...in equal amounts so got, Gus got his share, Bill got his share, and I still
23 have my share. I still have a house on that site, you know, [Kevin 65:46]
24 and Gus's and all that, they were part of what we used to call at that time
25 Arvanites Caliacatsos Properties.
26
27Marilyn Coulter: Oh. [chuckle]
28
29Aristides Arvanites: A, AC Properties.
30
31Marilyn Coulter: Arvanites, they have a lot of property. [66:01] Now, um, now Lansing has
32 always been called the capital of quality, how did you see it?
33
34Aristides Arvanites: I always admired when people that used to come in and say, hey, we had
35 from whoever was ranking Fisher Body as the top quality. I, it gave me a
36 great feeling 'cause the people I know from Fisher they were good
37 workers.
38
39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
40
41Aristides Arvanites: Very dedicated, good products, and they always helped one another.
42
43Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44
45Aristides Arvanites: They were always, as you people know, they were team workers.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
2

3 Aristides Arvanites: And the quality was always seen as – I used to tell people, if you think that
4 our quality is no good, what happens to the people from Flint...
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
7

8 Aristides Arvanites: ...or Pontiac? We're the #1. We're the greatest.
9

10 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. Now you are a neighborhood establishment. [67:09] Can you
11 tell us a little bit about your other neighbors? I mean, were the supervisors
12 living in the area? Did any, did you know any of the people who lived in
13 the area?
14

15 Aristides Arvanites: Well, I knew a lot of them by their faces. I knew them but their names I
16 cannot recall a lot of them. Uh, Mr. Owens was one of my best friends.
17 Uh, also there was another supervisor, I used to live right by [Jennison
18 67:39]. They used to make a little routine. Even the plant superintendent,
19 Mr. [Whithorn 67:45] used to stop in, get his cigar, get his pop. We had,
20 you know, a lot, lot of the GM people from Day 1, just like I said, with
21 like Billy Durant [coughing] until the end, we always had not only the 602
22 people but people working in the office. They'll stop in, they have a pop
23 or a sandwich or whatever and then they went to work.
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
26

27 Aristides Arvanites: But there was, just like I said, uh, Mr. Owens because with his son Gary
28 we were much better friends. Uh, we used to have also like the mayor
29 come in.
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
32

33 Aristides Arvanites: The mayor come in for many, many years, stop in at least once or twice.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: [68:41] Which mayor, do you remember?
36

37 Aristides Arvanites: Gerry Graves.
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
40

41 Aristides Arvanites: And even Mayor Bowerman used to come in. Uh, we had even in the old
42 days, uh, Councilman Ferguson used to come in.
43

44 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
45

1Aristides Arvanites: Uh, Magic Johnson and his brothers they used to come in. Magic's father,
2 which one of the, the most beautiful people you can meet, used to stop in
3 because he was a busy man, never had much time to spend at Harry's.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: But he was also an employee at Fisher Body.
6

7Aristides Arvanites: Yes.
8

9Marilyn Coulter: And two of his brothers. [throat clearing]
10

11Aristides Arvanites: Yes, yes. Two of his brothers, wonderful people, yes. Our neighbors, you
12 know, they were such great people, great people.
13

14Marilyn Coulter: So you've had amazing people come through your establishment.
15

16Aristides Arvanites: Oh, absolutely, all through the years. I remember one time the funny thing
17 was Governor Williams I think was maybe 1960.
18

19Female: G. Mennen.
20

21Aristides Arvanites: G. Mennen Williams...
22

23Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
24

25Aristides Arvanites: ...in 1960.
26

27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
28

29Aristides Arvanites: He was in front of Fisher Body. Uh, don't, don't quote me exactly the
30 same date, it could have been the same year. And they tried to convince
31 the people from Fisher Body to go to vote for G. Mennen Williams and
32 after the people went to work, G. Mennen Williams, the governor, came to
33 Harry's and says – I introduced myself. I used to know his son Gary.
34

35Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
36

37Aristides Arvanites: And, uh, we had a little chat. He says please serve the people a drink, you
38 serve them and then he tried to find no money to pay for it and he looked
39 at me and his assistant says, you know, I have no money. Here was one of
40 the wealthiest men, he had no cash in his pocket. And I said Governor,
41 don't worry about it, I'll take care of the bill. [laughter] You know, that,
42 that was, you know, you're talking about experience that I think that was
43 one of my key experience that I, you know, to [inaudible 71:01], anyway
44 that was fun.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [71:05] Art, you said that [throat clearing] Harry told you back when, uh,
2 Mr. Durant was working here and he used to come in and he would come
3 in and cook breakfast or lunch or dinner, now did he live in the
4 neighborhood also?
5

6 Aristides Arvanites: Yes, he did. He used to live just about five, six houses east from Harry's
7 on Shiawassee Street. Whenever he was in town that was his residence,
8 uh, and I don't know for how long he lived there. I never got the details
9 from Harry but I'm pretty sure for about 10 years that was his local
10 residence.
11

12 Marilyn Coulter: [throat clearing] [pause]
13

14 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. Art, there is – this was a very nice neighborhood.
15 You've got the Sexton High School. [71:58] Was there any occasion
16 where you supported anything with the Verlinden Grade School, the
17 children?
18

19 Aristides Arvanites: Again, you know, wherever there was a function in Sexton, Verlinden's
20 Grade School, whenever a flyer came around they wanted donations, they
21 wanted some kind of support, that was our neighborhood. That was our
22 people. If we don't support our people, what's the reason for working?
23 You know, that's your family.
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
26

27 Aristides Arvanites: If you take it over all, whoever you're involved with, they are your people.
28 You got to support them, not only me.
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
31

32 Aristides Arvanites: But all of us, it's our responsibility to support our neighborhood, support
33 our city, support our state, support our people.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
36

37 Aristides Arvanites: You know, if you're a Christian...
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
40

41 Aristides Arvanites: ...that's the key to it.
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44

1Aristides Arvanites: Don't be selfish. Share God's gift, whatever he gave you, for your health,
2 to be able to provide for the people that cannot provide for themselves,
3 you know.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: That's [inaudible 73:06].
6

7Doug Rademacher: [73:07] Art, on May 5, 2005, it was announced prior but that was the date
8 of the closing of the Fisher Body plant as we know it, Lansing Car
9 Assembly, what were your feelings and what are your thoughts here as we
10 see today they're starting to drop the building?
11

12Aristides Arvanites: Thinking back, Doug, I'll tell you, when I first heard about things that
13 might be happening around here that was I think in the middle 80s. Some
14 of the engineers from Warren that they were planners of GM have told me
15 eventually something is going to happen in the production of automobiles
16 across the street at Fisher Body. And I used to always question my local
17 leaders if they were the United Auto Workers president, vice president,
18 committeeman, if they've heard anything, anybody from the plant
19 [inaudible 74:20] engineers, whoever I have seen, what the future holds.
20 And everybody said, well, eventually, something is going to happen but in
21 my own thinking I never thought that the Fisher Body plant was going to
22 be totally closed. I thought eventually somebody else going to take over
23 and produce something different than other GM vehicles. I don't know,
24 maybe too naïve about it but that was my thinking. But once it happened
25 you got to [inaudible 75:02] reality.
26

27 And I look back and I talk with my wife, I talk with my kids, I say you
28 know something? GM, United Auto Workers employees, they were so
29 good to us. We had such a beautiful living. We made, we were blessed,
30 you know, and now they came to this. We should be thankful of what we
31 had, what we made, the kind of life that we were blessed with and not to
32 be bitter of the future, to move on so hopefully that Harry's as we know
33 now it has difficult times until what's going to happen across the street, we
34 don't know, but I told my kids if we can hold on. We're very thankful that
35 Harry's is paid up and that we will see what's going to happen and we're
36 going to try to serve the neighborhood and whoever else we can by trying
37 to keep it to something got to go across the street, housing, I don't know,
38 uh, something commercial, I don't know. I know the mayor. I spoke with
39 the mayor, previous mayors, Benavides, Bernero, the union, nobody really
40 knows, unless you people know something about it, nobody really – right
41 now we're all in the dark, right? But something is going to happen.
42

43Marilyn Coulter: Art, this has been a fantastic interview. [76:46] Um, is there anything that
44 we haven't touched on that you'd like to share that we haven't touched
45 on?
46

1Aristides Arvanites: Honey, you people have been so wonderful. I want to thank you.
2 [coughing] I want to thank you. Really, it's been great. I will never forget
3 this day. Okay? It's been wonderful to be just like you people always
4 been with me, anytime that I had a question, you guys have been so
5 forward and I'm glad that I got to meet all of you people all through the
6 years.
7

8Doug Rademacher: Well, Art, we thank you for sharing your life, your family, and letting us
9 be a part of that and, uh, accepting us as we are to be part of, uh, a
10 community family.
11

12Aristides Arvanites: Well, Doug, just like I said...

13

14Marilyn Coulter: Yes, thank you.
15

16Aristides Arvanites: ...thank you for you guys be so supportive of Harry's, so honest to
17 whatever you know that was going on to share it with us so we can plan
18 our days and our lives. Thank you.
19

20Doug Rademacher: Well, I hope you keep it as long as it's comfortable and I'll continue to
21 patronize your establishment, sir. Thank you very much.
22

23Marilyn Coulter: Thank you.
24

25Jerri Smith: Thank you.
26

27Marilyn Coulter: All right.
28

29Jerri Smith: Thank you.
30

31Aristides Arvanites: Thank you.
32

33Male: Thank you, Art. [Inaudible 77:54]. [throat clearing]
34
35
36/mlc