

**William Almy discusses his career as a skilled trades toolmaker
and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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I'm Cheryl McQuaid. I'm at the Lansing Car Assembly Labor Relations Conference Room. It's October 11, 2005 at approximately 12:30 p.m. Uh, we're about to interview Bill Almy. Bill, would you state your name, spell your last name, and your address also, please?

My name's Bill Almy, A-L-M-Y. I live at, uh, 5351 Schaeffer Road, Ionia, Michigan.

And we want to take a moment to acknowledge everybody else that's present in the room.

Doreen Howard.

Linda Johnson.

Marilyn Coulter.

Doug Rademacher, Fisher Body Historical Team.

[0:41] Um, Bill, do you remember – could you tell us what you're, um, [throat clearing] seniority date is and what you remember about your first day walkin' into this plant?

Uh, September 4, 1984, and I think what I remember the most is, uh, I didn't know my way around. People actually escorted me, uh, to different locations and, and I was kinda lost. I remember that. I was worried that I couldn't find my way around.

[1:11] What department and shift did you hire in at?

Uh, I hired in on, uh, afternoons, and, uh, I hired in on the body shop. My – I should probably back up a second because I actually have a, a broken seniority date. I hired in here first in '68, in 1968 after high school and worked in the old paint department. And, uh, and, uh, that was just, uh, same thing, I was lost in that area too. It took me a while to learn my way around there. And I'd worked there a year, and then I got drafted in the military. I was gone for two years.

And when I came back, I came back to paint department. Uh, uh, the area was a little more familiar then because I'd, I'd spent some time there so – and then, uh, I worked one more year and then, uh, decided I didn't care for General Motors and I quit. And, uh, and then I came back again in '84 with

1 a journeyman's card as a toolmaker. I was lucky, actually, to get hired back
2 in. And, uh, and that's – the plant had changed quite a bit in those 11, 12
3 years or so. And, uh, and once again, I was, I was kinda lost.
4

5Cheryl McQuaid: [2:28] What kind of changes did you see?
6

7Bill Almy: The structure. The, the interior of the plant. Uh, I – how they, they moved
8 things around. In the old paint days, the, uh, I believe the paint, uh, shop
9 was where the executive car garage is now. Somewhere in that area. I think
10 paint mix is where the, the shipping dock is now. So there was quite a few
11 changes, and I was used to kinda walkin' in that part of the plant. And then
12 when I hired back in in '84, uh, it was a new route of entry and, and it was
13 kinda different, so it took me a while to, uh, took me a while to, uh, find my
14 way around once again. And 'course, the body shop had completely
15 changed from the, from the 60s.
16

17Cheryl McQuaid: [3:15] The first time that you hired in, were you on the day shift or night
18 shift then?
19

20Bill Almy: I was also – I was on afternoons.
21

22Cheryl McQuaid: [3:21] And are you married? Do you have children?
23

24Bill Almy: Yes. I've been married for 33 years, and I have three children. Ages, uh,
25 31, uh, my oldest son. My daughter is, uh, 28, and my youngest son is, uh,
26 26. And I have two grandchildren as well.
27

28Cheryl McQuaid: [3:40] What was it like working on second shift with [throat clearing] young
29 children at home?
30

31Bill Almy: That's probably one of the most difficult parts is because you had to leave
32 home in, in the active part of the day when the kids are up and around and,
33 and, uh, and it, it was a tough part. Plus, in the summer, it was good
34 weather as well when you left, so it was kinda tough. I, I didn't like
35 afternoons anyway, so it made it rough.
36

37Doreen Howard: [4:11] Y-, you worked in the body shop area, you said, when you came in
38 here? What did you do in the body shop and describe, um, [coughing] a
39 little bit of the environment of the body shop?
40

41Bill Almy: Well, I, I hired in as a, a fixture repairman. And, uh, my job was to maintain
42 the tools and equipment and to keep it running and answer service calls.
43 And, uh, prevent-, I do preventative maintenance as well, so – and that
44 primarily was the body shop. That's where I spent most of my time, so the
45 underbody tools, the door tools, roof tools, uh, wheelhouse fixtures, every,

1 every, pretty much all the tools that were in that area, so it was, uh, a lot of
2 times it was mainly carrying a radio and answering calls.
3

4Marilyn Coulter: [5:05] So, Bill, now, what is it – when you first came in and you were a tool
5 person, um, were you readily accepted when you came in by the other
6 toolmakers and you came in from off the street with your journeyman's
7 card?
8

9Bill Almy: Yeah, for the most part. It, it was, it was a good team and, uh, everybody
10 got along quite well. We had a lotta new hires in the 80s because the plant
11 had been – was goin' through, I think it was the, uh, [GM X20 5:32] car. I
12 believe that's which one it was. So the plant had been cleaned out and they
13 were puttin' new tools in, so I came in and, uh, and worked on the pilot team
14 with new tools, so that was quite interesting. So for the most part, there was
15 a lotta new hires, a lotta new production and skilled trades in the plant. And
16 we got along pretty well 'cause we're all in the same, same situation, we – it
17 was new to us.
18

19Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
20

21Cheryl McQuaid: [5:57] The first time you hired in, [throat clearing] it was Fisher Body.
22 Second time when you hired in, was it Fisher Body then? Or...
23

24Bill Almy: I think that was the BOC transition in the 80s. I believe that was the next
25 move.
26

27Cheryl McQuaid: [6:10] How did you feel about that?
28

29Bill Almy: It was still Fisher Body to me. I – it didn't – to this day, you know, it hasn't
30 changed much. The signs change, but the people – we all seem to relate to
31 one plant.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: [6:25] You – Bill, you have, um, we have what's called a nontraditional job,
34 which are jobs that are different from regular operations inside the plant.
35 Now, have you and do you have those types of jobs?
36

37Bill Almy: Yeah, I was quite fortunate when I came to this plant because I noticed
38 they've had things like bulletin boards that had a lotta neat information and
39 union activities and, and, and, uh, opportunities such as job postings
40 available and nontraditional. And I spotted one, oh, about 1985 or '86.
41 They were looking for a, uh, technical trainer. So I signed that posting and
42 was interviewed. And it wasn't actually the job that I wanted, but it got my
43 foot in the door because I found out that they're also looking for, uh, health
44 and safety instructors. So – then a year and a half later, so I got on as a
45 safety trainer and – which, which was quite new as a nontraditional-type
46 job. So...

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: [7:26] And what kind of safety training did you do?
3
4Bill Almy: Every, everything that was in the course catalog. There was 40-some
5 classes and our staff, uh, facilitated every one of those. Some of us had
6 more classes than the others, but for the most part, we taught everything that
7 was required in health and safety.
8
9Marilyn Coulter: [7:49] So what types of – can you describe a couple of those classes for us?
10 What they might be like?
11
12Bill Almy: Well, the most popular one probably at once was the Safety Lockout
13 Training and Confined Space Entry Training. Uh, Hazard Communication
14 was a big one because that was dictated by the federal government and
15 they'd push. Uh, hazard materials classes, uh, industrial truck licensing,
16 flatbed scooter, arial lift.
17
18Marilyn Coulter: [8:18] So when you say safety lockout, what is that?
19
20Bill Almy: Safety lockout, that is, uh, the process of de-energizing a tool, a piece of
21 equipment to a point where it's safe to enter that tool and work, work. You
22 physically, you physically shut down the energy sources so you can work on
23 it without being injured.
24
25Marilyn Coulter: [8:39] Okay. And now, when did, when exactly did you say you started as a
26 trainer?
27
28Bill Almy: Uh, I, I was on and off several times over about a three-year period, so I
29 think I went on for a short period, uh, in 1986.
30
31Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
32
33Bill Almy: And, and I got called back or laid off, whatever you wanna call it, brought
34 back to my tools several times because of – there was kind of a tug a war
35 between the department wanting me on the tools and the, the safety
36 department wanting me to train, so that struggle went on for about a year
37 and a half, and, and I'm guessin' about '87 or so or '88, I went on as full time
38 as a trainer. Probably about '87, 1987. They quit yankin' me back and forth.
39
40Doreen Howard: [9:27] Was there any specialized training that you yourself had to receive
41 before [throat clearing] you could become [throat clearing] a certified
42 trainer? Or, or were you going to the same classes? I assume you had to go
43 through some of the same classes that you actually ended up teaching?
44 [Inaudible 9:44].
45

1Bill Almy: Well, they put you through, they put you through some orientations, some,
2 uh, pro trainer courses, um, a lot of vendor classes on stand-up skills and
3 course development and, uh, uh, things like that. And then you had to train,
4 uh, be taught or, or train or work with a seasoned or a qualified trainer to,
5 uh, understand the classes that you're gonna be teaching, so you had to study
6 it, learn it, work with a trainer, and then they would give the, uh, give the
7 blessing that you were far enough along to go on your own. Okay, so that
8 went on [pretty near 10:24] for every class that was in the, uh, course
9 catalog that was required in – until you'd achieved a status of qualified.
10 Then they'd – and you're on your own, so that could take six months to a
11 year to, to get that poin-, to that point.
12

13Marilyn Coulter: [10:42] So what other types of training have you done?
14

15Bill Almy: I did, uh, so I was on the health and safety staff [throat clearing] probably
16 for 13, maybe 14 years. And then I got a chance to, uh, uh, move to, uh,
17 [team build 11:00] training. So I did that for approximately a year and a
18 half to two years. And then that pretty much exhausted itself as the plant
19 was shutting down. And I got an opportunity to do some, uh, uh, needs
20 analysis and, and then, uh, uh, a chance came to be a scheduler and be on
21 the – part of the launch team for the Delta Township plant, so I moved in as
22 a, as a – they offered – wanted to know if I wanted to be a body shop
23 training scheduler, so that's what I'm doin' today.
24

25Marilyn Coulter: Good.
26

27Doug Rademacher: [11:35] Bill, you talked about hiring in back in the 60s or so when – in the
28 paint department. Can you share a little bit about your first hire [throat
29 clearing] in? Um, you say you came back and recognized opportunity on
30 the union boards and, and things, so what did you – when you hired into the
31 paint department, did you not see those opportunities then? Or – describe
32 what it was like to work in the paint department back in that – those
33 decades.
34

35Bill Almy: Well, I think I was basically lookin' for a job back then. I was outta high
36 school and I'd had a few part-time jobs and jobs that didn't pay well and, and
37 when I got a chance to come to General Motors, like most, most of the high
38 school kids were doin', it was pretty easy to get in and it was a good job, so
39 that was my first goal was to get in there, and I didn't really have any
40 motivation to go to college at the time. I'd tried college a couple times and
41 didn't care for it. And I didn't have a family, so about the only thing I
42 needed was, was a paycheck, and, and, and that fulfilled it, so I didn't look at
43 opportunities back then like I do now or even did in the 80s. So I think they
44 existed but, but I'm, I'm certain it wasn't as, as clear as it was in the 80s and
45 90s and now at this period, so...
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [12:53] Do you remember the job you did in the paint department?
2

3 Bill Almy: Yes. I, I worked on the line where they put in these, uh, sealer plates for
4 the, the water. After they went through wet deck and, and was washed, they
5 had to have a way for the water to get outta the floor pan, so they had these
6 holes, and then my job was to – after they'd been, uh, cleaned, I had to, uh,
7 put those plates in and seal around'm and drop'm in place. There was a
8 couple other parts to that job as well, but basically that was it.
9

10 Cheryl McQuaid: [13:25] Do you have a favorite boss that you worked for? Do any of'm stick
11 out in your memory?
12

13 Bill Almy: Oh, I've, I've had a lot of, uh, excellent supervisors over the years, so, uh,
14 uh, no. I wouldn't – I can't think of a favorite one.
15

16 Cheryl McQuaid: [13:48] Do you have a, a least favorite? [laughter]
17

18 Bill Almy: [Inaudible 13:54]. [laughter] [Inaudible].
19

20 Cheryl McQuaid: [13:56] Did, did you notice any difference in the management skills from
21 when you first hired in to say now?
22

23 Bill Almy: I, I think there was a big, a big change. Uh, it seems like in the, in the 60s, it
24 was a little more good ol' boys, uh, one-on-one-type friends and, and the
25 same with enemies. If the boss didn't care for ya, it was kinda adversarial.
26 And, and when I came back in the 80s, it seemed like it were more a team
27 concept. We worked together with production. I, I, I worked with
28 production and engineering and supervision, and it seemed like we were all
29 on the same team, and you didn't notice adversarial and, and anything like
30 that goin' on, any challenges, I mean, uh, uh, personality conflicts, I didn't
31 see it quite as much. So there was big, big changes in that period of time
32 when I was away from the corporation.
33

34 Cheryl McQuaid: [14:55] You live in Ionia now, have you always lived in Ionia?
35

36 Bill Almy: Um, I lived in the area. I went to school in Portland, so that's pretty close to
37 Ionia.
38

39 Cheryl McQuaid: [15:02] Do you have any relatives here in this plant or used to be here?
40

41 Bill Almy: I don't think so. Not that I can recall. I have relatives at the Oldsmobile
42 plants, but not Fisher.
43

44 Mike Fleming: [15:20] As a body shop, uh, trainer, no, excuse me, a scheduler for Delta
45 Township [throat clearing], you schedule people for classes [inaudible]
46 15:30], um, and whatever else that needs to be scheduled. Um, you spoke

1 about team build, I mean, a team build trainer, what is the difference
2 between the team build concept and the new GMS concept that we are, are
3 goin' through now and kinda explain some of that process?
4

5Bill Almy: Well, I think the, the team build concept that, that I was introduced to, uh,
6 several years ago, I think it was thought through and, and organized and
7 designed, but I, I don't think it was researched well enough to, to be a, a
8 proven, a proven, uh, procedure or process. I think they tended to throw it at
9 us and say, said, uh, this is what the corporation believes will work, let's,
10 let's do it. And as, and as I taught the class, I, I could see more. Uh, I could
11 see that clearly certain parts was not going to work and then therefore, when
12 you facilitate in front of an audience, y-, you know they're feeling it.
13 They're not stupid. They can pick up on that, so I don't think there was real
14 good buy-in, and I don't think it was researched well.
15

16 Uh, GMS, I, I think this is the second go around. I, I think it's a second
17 attempt to make, make this, this, this partnership work and, and I think it
18 had a little more time and effort put into it. It, it – I went through GMS and
19 it looks imperious that, that it's better organized and, and thought through a
20 little better and, and it is a proven concept. And I'm certain that 100 percent
21 of that's not gonna work either, but, but it looks like it's a better, a better
22 direction to go.
23

24Doug Rademacher: [17:18] Bill, you said that when you left in the 60s and then came back in
25 the 80s you noticed a difference in the way management did business. You
26 said, uh, uh, in the 60s [throat clearing] it was more adversarial or good ol'
27 boy, did you notice a change in the way union did business also?
28

29Bill Almy: Once again, I didn't, I didn't pay a lot attention to what was goin' on around
30 me in the 60s, although I, I, I knew who my committee person was and who
31 my supervisor was, but, uh, I, I guess I wasn't there with, with two years in
32 the military and then two years actually working on the line, you know,
33 maybe I didn't, I, I mean, I didn't tend to observe as well as I should've or
34 pay attention, you know, so I didn't, I didn't notice it quite as much, uh, in
35 the 60s as I did when I came back in the 80s.
36

37Marilyn Coulter: [18:13] Were you formally introduced to your committee representative or
38 did, did you just know who they were?
39

40Bill Almy: No, they, they did introductions. They came down. You knew who the
41 person was.
42

43Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44

45Bill Almy: And, uh, I never – on very few occasions did I have a need for a committee
46 call back in the 60s.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
3
4 Bill Almy: So...
5
6 Mike Fleming: [18:33] Working in [inaudible 18:35], [Bill], um, you get health and safety
7 background, you realize what, um, the plant makeup or environment should
8 look like [throat clearing], when you came in in the 60s versus up until now
9 in the year 2005, talk about the differences then as now and [throat clearing]
10 [inaudible 18:55] [faceless] this, this particular [inaudible 18:58] through to
11 get where it, where it is today?
12
13 Bill Almy: I think probably health and safety kinda jumps – safety conditions kinda
14 jump out compared to the – when you'd compare the 60s to the 80s. And
15 one thing that I, I didn't notice the first time I hired in that I did think about
16 later on in life was the lack of safety procedures and precautions, things like
17 guarding, proper guarding and, and, and, uh personal protective equipment.
18 Those things just kinda jump out at ya, but things that we didn't do back
19 then, the way we wash solvent from our hands and, and, you know, and that
20 probably helped, uh, start the Hazard Communication Program from OSHA
21 was the, the damages that people did to themselves, so you, you could see
22 paint mixers and, and people in paint repair washin' their hands in solvent,
23 you know, that was the way they removed the, the paints and the, and the
24 contaminants, you know, and it seemed like the thing to do. But later on in
25 life, we find out maybe it wasn't such a good idea.
26
27 So I think how we used chemicals was, was a, was a huge change and, and
28 mechanical protection and, and energy lockout. People didn't carry safety
29 locks. They didn't – they threw a disconnect back in the 60s and, and that
30 was good enough. They flipped a light switch off and that was good
31 enough, that was adequate, you know, so that was the probably the biggest
32 thing that, that glared out at me and, and...
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: [20:33] Um, Bill, as far as with union activities, were you very active in
35 your union at all?
36
37 Bill Almy: I was on the, uh, uh, education committee for two terms. Um, uh,
38 participated in, uh, uh, union awareness activities. Worker-to-worker
39 things. Uh, union picnics, things like that.
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: [21:05] And can you state what worker-to-worker is? Is that when – people
42 may not know what worker-to-worker means.
43
44 Bill Almy: I'm not certain I know what it means, tell you the truth. It, it seemed to get
45 dropped upon us and, and had great aspirations but it didn't seem to go
46 anywhere, so, uh, I'm not sure where it's at today. I'm not sure where it's

1 headed, but it, uh, it appeared to be a method of communication, uh,
2 between union and workers and, and it never really got off the ground too
3 well.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: 'Kay.
6

7Cheryl McQuaid: [21:36] Did you ever, uh, participate in departmental dinners or parties?
8

9Bill Almy: Mm-hm. Retirement-type dinners and holiday, uh, uh, special occasion-type
10 dinners. Fund raisers, yes.
11

12Cheryl McQuaid: [21:53] Were the, um, retirement dinners really like pot luck or did you
13 order out?
14

15Bill Almy: Uh, sometimes both. Most of the time, we just kicked in money and, and
16 ordered out.
17

18Cheryl McQuaid: [22:06] Do you remember any of – or were any pranks or new-hire
19 initiations [throat clearing] pulled on you or did you pull any on anybody
20 else?
21

22Bill Almy: I don't know if they were new-hire pranks. I remember guys got a little
23 carried away with the, uh, uh, pressurized water extinguishers. That seemed
24 to be a big hit. Takin' those off the wall and sprayin' people. Sometimes
25 they would, uh, haul guys around in them red – them orange gondolas
26 [laughter] and, and with a shop truck, and there'd be somebody inside with
27 one of them canisters sprayin' people. That was quite popular [laughter].
28

29Linda Johnson: Oh, I missed it.
30

31Bill Almy: That, that's...
32

33Cheryl McQuaid: I did too. [laughter]
34

35Bill Almy: ...those things happened on after [coughing] [inaudible 22:50]. [laughter]
36 But I know then security would run around and try to find out who emptied
37 the canister and... [laughter]. So security was always lookin' for us.
38 [laughter]
39

40Doreen Howard: That's funny.
41

42Cheryl McQuaid: [23:02] What do you think is your most appreciated bargain benefit?
43

44Bill Almy: Bargained? Bargain benefit? I, I would have to say the, uh, tuition
45 assistance. I, I – that's probably the...you know, I, I know it's not, but to me
46 it, it jumps out at me 'cause it's, it was an opportunity that people should

1 take advantage of and a lotta people don't. You know, and, and medical
2 benefits, certainly, is a, is huge. You know, the pension plan is huge, a huge
3 benefit.
4

5Doreen Howard: I...

6

7Bill Almy: You know, I think we tend to take, take for granted those things where the
8 educational benefits, I had to reach out and grab it and, and take advantage
9 of. The other ones just were kinda automatic, so...

10

11Doreen Howard: [23:50] I, I see on your, um, data sheet there that you had a degree from
12 Northwood?
13

14Bill Almy: Mm-hm.

15

16Doreen Howard: Um, did you use the, um, tuition assistance program to help fund your
17 education there? Or was that somethin' that you did prior to coming into
18 General Motors?
19

20Bill Almy: No, that, that's, that's why I, I mentioned it, uh, it's probably – was real
21 important to me because it was an opportunity I took advantage of. It was
22 about the time my kids were thinkin' about college.
23

24Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

25

26Bill Almy: And I thought, well, maybe I should go back to school and f-, so, yeah, I
27 used the tuition assistance for my degree.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: [24:31] So what, what do you have a degree?
30

31Bill Almy: In, uh, Business Administration from Northwood.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Good.
34

35Doug Rademacher: [24:40] Has, has a coworker impacted your, your personal life or your
36 family, family life?
37

38Bill Almy: Oh, I think many coworkers have done that. I think that – I can't site an
39 individual one if that's what you're lookin' for, but, but, uh, I think, uh,
40 throughout my time here, uh, there's been several people that have done
41 things or, or, uh, uh, give examples or, or just plain coached a little bit on
42 what to do and how to do it and, and certain things. I think we got such a
43 array of talent and individuals in our organization that can't help but learn
44 something or be motivated by an individual. I, I, you know, to site one
45 specifically, I probably can't but...
46

1Doreen Howard: [25:30] Do you have any special talents or hobbies or anything that, that you
2 shared with anyone?
3

4Bill Almy: Well, I've, I've always enjoyed hunting, so, so we constantly talked that
5 among, you know, fellow trades and other people that – hunting experiences
6 and, and that's always good for, uh, quite a long conversation and, and it's,
7 uh, comes back every year to repeat itself, you know, so you can bring it up
8 every year. I've, I've, uh, always belonged to a health club or the YMCA, so
9 I'm always running into people that, that like to do YMCA club activities, so
10 we're always sharin' those experiences and, and, uh, runnin' into people at
11 the clubs, health clubs.
12

13Doug Rademacher: [26:21] You were, uh, in the training arena, do you view the line worker as
14 your brother and sister?
15

16Bill Almy: Absolutely. Um, [throat clearing] we count on them to, uh, pretty much – at
17 least as a repair person or as a toolmaker, uh, to help us figure out what's
18 wrong with the equipment and even in some cases, how to fix it, you know,
19 they, they, uh, they look at the equipment all day long, they know it better
20 than anybody and they're an excellent resource, so lotta times when we
21 respond to a call, the person runnin' that piece of equipment's got a good
22 idea of what's wrong with it. It makes our job real easy, you know. I, I
23 think that was a major asset to General Motors and, and leadership took, uh,
24 took advantage of, probably in this, in the '83, '84, uh, the model change
25 they did that time, they incorporated the assistance of production and, and
26 actually listened to'm.
27

28Marilyn Coulter: Mm.
29

30Bill Almy: That was a big thing that I noticed.
31

32Doreen Howard: Did...
33

34Doug Rademacher: [27:28] Bill, they're talkin' about tearing this place down, the Fisher Body
35 building itself. What's your best memory of the Fisher Body plant?
36

37Bill Almy: Hm. I, I would think – I, I guess I think back in the 60s, uh, uh, getting
38 hired in, uh, it seemed like we were all in about the same age group, so it –
39 and I knew a lotta people back then and class mates that worked at the plant.
40 And we rode together and we carpooled, and, and, uh, I, I think it was just
41 the people that you knew in the plant. It was quite a friendly environment.
42 And in the 80s, I kinda came in here as a, as a lone soldier. I didn't know
43 anyone when I came in and I hired in her. Uh, I had to kinda make new
44 friends and, and I'd run into a few people that I knew, but for the most part,
45 uh, I, I didn't know anyone when I got here, so...uh, I guess the fondest
46 memories would be fellow workers and, and working together with them.

1
2Mike Fleming: [28:37] In, in the training arena, Bill, you, you trained people throughout
3 this area, not just the Fisher Body plant. Talk about some of the diversity in
4 the people that you trained and the regions that they'd come from, inner city
5 and whatever h-, h-, what did you see there?
6
7Bill Almy: I think probably the biggest thing I noticed was, uh, people that had moved
8 from other plants, locations. Lansing, the Lansing team, uh, seemed to be –
9 and it didn't matter what local it was in Lansing, they seemed to be, uh, uh,
10 quite receptive to training and, and, and, uh, you got to know'm after a
11 couple years 'cause they were in and outta class a lot, and they knew me and
12 they probably could remember my name before I could remember theirs.
13 But lotta times from the other plants, a person, uh, might've had to, uh,
14 transfer to their job, so they transferred to Lansing. Lotta times they came
15 in with, uh, they weren't happy about moving. They wanted to stay where
16 their, their home plant that they'd hired into so they had a bit of an attitude
17 that, uh, they had to adjust to, and, and we had to kinda help them get
18 through that.
19
20 So you had to kinda sell this training package, this why do we need safety
21 training, you know? You know, don't shoot the messenger but this is a good
22 thing. There, there's a reason we're giving this training. So, uh, it, it seemed
23 like the, the Lansing group was quite easy to work with, you know, the
24 Lansing teams, the Lansing locals and even the leadership and everyone. It
25 seemed like it was quite easy to work with. And I, I wasn't sure about some
26 of the transfers that came in, you know. But, I mean, uh, there's good
27 people everywhere but I just got the feeling that they weren't happy comin'
28 in. And I think it was just the fact that they were more or less forced to
29 move.
30
31Doreen Howard: [30:38] As this facility is winding down and you look out there and take a
32 look around and they're disassembling the [throat clearing], the plant, um,
33 gimme your feelings on, on, you know, you know, what, I guess, what do
34 you feel about that? How, you know, is that, um, a good thing as far as you,
35 you know, you know that you're gonna be going to someplace else or is it,
36 um, sad or, you know, what – I guess, what feelings are you, um...
37
38Bill Almy: I guess...
39
40Doreen Howard: ...getting from this?
41
42Bill Almy: ...I guess you'd have say it's kind of a bittersweet experience because, uh,
43 there's some side effects and, and some change that, that's not pretty or not
44 comfortable and, and leavin' this plant that, that, that's, uh, provided a job
45 for so many thousands of people for so many years has been a very good
46 thing and, and we're fortunate to get a new plant, so that, that's the upside of

1 it, I guess. So there, there's good and bad with the whole thing and we –
2 and, and, uh, with growth, you know, there comes change and, and we have
3 to continue to do that and, and especially in this technology it's, uh, it's a
4 highly competitive market. We've got to, we've gotta stay up with
5 technology and learn to grow in this, uh, I'm, I'm gonna miss this plant, you
6 know, but, but its, its time has come, I guess.
7

8 Doug Rademacher: [32:18] Bill, in the training arena, what's your thought on – how do you see
9 the interaction between, uh, yourself and the training arena plus women and
10 minorities? Is there a, a fair amount, equal amount? Has it grown over the
11 20 years you've been active in this now?
12

13 Bill Almy: Um, [throat clearing] I would say, I'd, I'd have to say in, in training that, uh,
14 it, it's probably not a fair amount. And, and for years I've often wondered,
15 uh, why there wasn't more, uh, women on the training staffs. Uh, I, for
16 years, for the 13, 14 years I worked in Health and Safety training, I, I recall
17 three, uh, female instructors. And, and I think currently, they're down to
18 two, so I, I don't know if, if it's not a desirable profession or, or I don't know
19 the specifics and – of that why, but it always seemed like there should be a
20 better balance than that in that area. Uh...
21

22 Doug Rademacher: [33:39] Did you ever go on strike?
23

24 Bill Almy: Yes. I can't remember the year it was. It was, it was in the 80s, I believe.
25 And, uh, [inaudible 33:43] a short strike. Seemed like it was four days or
26 five days, somethin' like that, so...it didn't last long. I had been on strike
27 years ago at my previous plant, so it wasn't nothing new to me. It was, was,
28 you know, it's kinda scary but – so, I'd been on the picket line before,
29 so...wasn't a totally new experience.
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: [34:10] [Inaudible] What plant did you work at before you came to General
32 Motors?
33

34 Bill Almy: I worked at General Tire in Ionia. I worked 11 years there.
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: Oh. And so you worked at a tire company and then you came into an auto...
37

38 Bill Almy: Mm-hm.
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: [34:21] Now, were you a, a skilled trades person there also? Or...
41

42 Bill Almy: Yeah. I hired in there, uh, in the 70s in, on production.
43

44 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
45

1Bill Almy: And was on production, inspection, and then got into an apprenticeship
2 program. That's how I got my toolmaker card, journeyman's card. They,
3 they actually produce fiberglass parts. They didn't produce tires.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [34:44] Do you find – did you find that many people, once you came to this
6 plant, that they used the apprenticeship program here?
7

8Bill Almy: Oh yeah. This – I, I was pretty impressed. Actually, I was the f-, I was the
9 f-, uh, one of the first apprentices at General Tire, so that was a new
10 program there. But when I came to Lansing, I found out they'd had
11 apprenticeship programs. When I came to GM and UAW shops, I found out
12 they'd had apprenticeship programs for years and years and years.
13

14Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
15

16Bill Almy: And, uh, I was pretty impressed with it. And as a health and safety
17 instructor, I was responsible for, uh, delivering, uh, they had 10 different
18 modules for apprentice training, so I had to – I, I was the apprentice health
19 and safety instructor. I got the luxury of doin' all those. I'm not sure why,
20 maybe it's 'cause I could relate to, relate to the guys that yes, I was an
21 apprentice once, so be patient and you'll graduate.
22

23Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] Yeah. Um...
24

25Doug Rademacher: [35:43] You view, uh, coworkers as brothers and sisters. I was curious,
26 have you developed friendships with any of your coworkers that now has
27 extended outside of the plant that you spend time with or do functions with?
28

29Bill Almy: I think so. There's quite a few of us that, that attend picnics and travel, uh,
30 to trade shows and, and Black Lake, and we seem to stick together pretty
31 good. And, uh, uh, uh, for the most part, yeah. There's several of us that,
32 uh, go to each other's house once in a while for an occasion or whatever,
33 yeah.
34

35Cheryl McQuaid: [36:25] Well, Bill, I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to you today. Is
36 there anything that we didn't ask that you'd like to add?
37

38Bill Almy: I can't think of anything?
39

40Marilyn Coulter: [36:38] For those people who may have nine, ten years of seniority, what
41 words of wisdom would you like to leave with them?
42

43Bill Almy: Uh, just, you know, I'd, I would recommend that they come to work when
44 they're supposed to and, uh, because it's a, it's an opportunity to, to work for
45 this corporation and be represented by, uh, this union because, uh, uh, it, it's
46 gonna be hard to replace that once they're gone, you know. I came from a

1 shop that, that was organized, but it was a constant struggle to, to maintain
2 what we had in our local agreement. And, uh, so I, I know what it's like at
3 one of those plants. And I come here and it's – there's a lotta opportunity here
4 and, uh, and we're well represented, so I would say come to work, keep your
5 job.
6

7Cheryl McQuaid: [37:29] Bill, do you remember one of the worst jobs that you've had here in
8 the plant.
9

10Bill Almy: I'd have to say the one that flashes back to me was in the 80s when I
11 worked, or excuse me, in the 60s, '68 through '72 when I worked in paint
12 department. When I came back from the service, I, I got a utility job and
13 quite often I'd have to go upstairs to spray the deadener in, in the rear of the
14 wagons. And, uh, I was at the right about the, the – just the right height
15 where my head would just about hit looking inside the wheel well. And,
16 and I remember the gentleman that taught me how to spray made it look
17 very easy, so I thought this's a piece of work. It's pretty – piece of cake, it's
18 easy. And the first couple times I did it, he said, "Well, you did a pretty
19 good job there, but now..." He took me outside and said, ..."now, look at the
20 side of the car," where I had not quite got all the deadener inside the wheel
21 well and part of it – the fan came out and sprayed the side of the car. So
22 now, a repair person had to wash the car. So it was quite an art to do that.
23

24 And, and then if you looked at the environment, it was always hot up there,
25 and it seemed like there was always a fan blowin' in the wrong direction, so
26 even though you thought you were clean, when you looked in the mirror
27 after about four hours, you, you had black speckles all over ya, and, and it
28 was hard to get off. So between the heat and the, and the difficulty of the
29 job, and the, and your shoes would get all gummed up, that would have to
30 be probably my worst job that I remember.
31

32Marilyn Coulter: [39:05] And so outside of your training job, what was one of your better
33 jobs?
34

35Bill Almy: Well, I always liked, um, I always liked hangin' paper on the cars. It, it
36 seemed like that was a – once you learned that art, it was a pretty nice job.
37 And we didn't have to do every job, you know. I had to put masking paper
38 on the back windows of certain models and run a couple screws, so that was
39 a pretty easy job. But then it'd depend on what production was doin' with –
40 quite often, it'd go the other way and you'd get a lot of bad jobs right in a
41 row, so the good ones didn't last that long. Probably the, the next best job
42 was, was getting' on skilled trades when I could – if I wasn't workin', I could
43 do what I wanted, basically relax, or sit in a chair, read the paper, so that
44 ended up probably bein' the best job.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [39:54] So can you, um, during your course and your time as a trainer, has
2 there been ever a time when teaching was real rewarding for you or one
3 maybe stood out?
4

5 Bill Almy: Well, I, I can – it seems like always when, when I got to a point where I was
6 s-, wondering if, if my quality of my instruction or facilitating was, was
7 headin' downhill or if I'd lost track, every now and then I would get, uh, an
8 evaluation from a student that would, uh, be really open and honest and,
9 and, and tell me what a good job I did, so kinda fired me up. So I thought,
10 "Well, maybe I'm still on track. Maybe I'm doin' okay." So the course
11 evaluations, I always looked at'm and, and for the most part, I, I, I tried to
12 follow what they – tried to make improvements accordingly.
13

14 Doug Rademacher: [40:42] So there were a lot of dummies but somebody finally got it right and
15 recognized your ability, right? [laughter]
16

17 Bill Almy: [laughter] Yeah.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] All right.
20

21 Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Bill.
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: Thank you, Bill.
24

25 Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you.
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: Thank you.
28

29 Doreen Howard: Thank you.
30

31 Doug Rademacher: Thank you.
32

33 Mike Fleming: Thanks, Bill.
34
35
36/tl