

1 **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY – SHAWN NICHOLSON**
2 **MICHAEL L. BOKOVOY DISCUSSES HIS CAREER AS A PRODUCTION WORKER**
3 **AND UAW MEMBER AT THE FISHER BODY PLANT IN LANSING, MI**
4
5

6Cheryl McQuaid: This is the Fisher Body Historical Team. Today is Monday, February 27,
7 2006. It's approximately 12:30 p.m. We're preparing to interview Mike
8 Bokovoy. First, let's introduce the team.
9

10John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
11

12Gary Judy: Gary Judy.
13

14Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.
15

16Jerri Smith: Jerry Smith.
17

18Cheryl McQuaid: And this is Cheryl McQuaid. [0:24] Mike, would you please state your
19 name and spell it for us, please?
20

21Michael Bokovoy: It's, uh, Mike Bokovoy – M-I-K-E B-O-K-O-V-O-Y.
22

23Cheryl McQuaid: [0:34] And could you tell us what your address is?
24

25Michael Bokovoy: 3616 West Saint Joseph's Street, Lansing, Michigan.
26

27Cheryl McQuaid: [0:43] And are you married? [0:43] Do you have children?
28

29Michael Bokovoy: Yes, I am. I'm, um, married. Um, I have 3 of my own and 1 stepson, um,
30 ranges in age from 32 to 23.
31

32Cheryl McQuaid: [0:57] And could you tell us a little bit about your education? [1:00]
33 Where did you go to school, if you've been to college?
34

35Michael Bokovoy: I graduated from high school, Waverly, in, in the year 1974. I had 2 years
36 of college. I have 2-1/2 years of college at Lansing Community and then I
37 didn't finish.
38

39Cheryl McQuaid: [1:20] Eh, where were you born?
40

41Michael Bokovoy: Lansing, Michigan, at Sparrow Hospital.
42

43Cheryl McQuaid: [1:25] And what did your parents do?
44

45Michael Bokovoy: Uh, my mom was a housewife and my father was factory. He worked at
46 Fisher Body also.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:37] What did you do before you hired in to Fisher Body? [1:40] Did
3 you just get out of college or...?
4
5 Michael Bokovoy: [When outta 1:42] high school, [tsk] I went into, uh – I was a wrestling
6 coach up North and then I went and I was a ASE Certified Mechanic at a
7 garage and then I wanted to better myself, [thumping throughout audio] so
8 I went in and hired in at GM.
9
10 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:59] What brought you to GM?
11
12 Michael Bokovoy: Well basically the life that I saw it gave my grandfather and my dad I
13 guess and, uh – I don't know – probably the money and the hours, you
14 know. A lotta my friends were going in, so [background conversation
15 throughout audio] I kinda seen what they were doing, so and I took a
16 chance at it. [engine humming throughout audio]
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: [2:19] Do you remember what your grandfather did in the plant?
19
20 Michael Bokovoy: Yep. He was a material sorter. He was a – I don't know. He put in about –
21 almost 32 years. His name was Mike also. But he, uh, he didn't like to talk
22 a lot about what he did. I mean even at home. I mean he made [even if it
23 was a big garden area 2:34] or whatever but the only thing I ever got out
24 of him was he took and he told me about chucking leather before
25 [inaudible 2:43] insect bites or if he had any barbwire marks or stuff like
26 that where they used to make [inaudible 2:49] and when he chucked in
27 leather palates and stuff. That's about the only thing I really got out of him
28 about it and then, of course, my dad worked in Material too, so.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: [3:00] And did you get any stories from your father about [inaudible
31 3:02]?
32
33 Michael Bokovoy: Oh, there's quite a few [laughter] from my dad. [laughter] I mean I could
34 probably talk a ton about it. I do know what he told me the first job he had
35 and it was kinda funny. He hired in on a, on a Valentine's Day. I think it
36 was in 1946 I think. And he told me his first job was he had to grab a rope.
37 He had to pull a job up a incline and after it got up to the top, he had to put
38 a door [inaudible 3:23] on it and that was every, every job. And the only
39 reason why he came in here was because of my grandpa forced him,
40 finally told'm well, if you're not gonna go to college or whatever, you
41 gotta couple weeks to get a job and so the next thing you know, of course,
42 my dad didn't get a job or he didn't go to school, so the next thing you
43 know, he's hired in the shop, [laughter] so. [background conversation]
44
45 That's basically how that happened and then, uh, [background
46 conversation] well I don't know. I guess it was probably about '65 or

1 something like that [clanking throughout audio] when grandpa went out
2 and then my dad [banging] retired in '81, so I don't know. I guess you add
3 it all up, it was almost 35 [clinking throughout audio] years for him. So
4 then I came in in '76, [tapping] which I'm still here now. Um, but I put in
5 all my time [squeaking] in Body Shop, so. But I, of course, I seen my dad.
6 I used to work – I worked for him a couple a times. That was fun.
7 [laughter] That was real fun. But then he, uh, he did miscellaneous jobs.
8 He was, um, anywhere from a, a laborer, I guess, in Material to, uh, being
9 a foreman to being a superintendent to back to being a, a salvage
10 coordinator, I think, [squeaking] is what his job was last one [inaudible
11 4:34]. [banging]
12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: [4:36] How old were you when you hired in?
14
15 Michael Bokovoy: I was 19, just gonna turn 20. I was on the ends – end of 19.
16
17 Cheryl McQuaid: [4:47] Do you remember the whole hiring process. [4:49] Do you...
18
19 Michael Bokovoy: Oh, oh, yeah.
20
21 Cheryl McQuaid: ...think your father helped you get a job there?
22
23 Michael Bokovoy: Well at first he told me when I first, um, got the application – I bugged'm
24 for a little while about it because, uh, like I said, some of my friends went
25 in and then he goes well, I don't really know'm, I don't really know'm and
26 then he brought me home a – it was a card is what it was and you filled it
27 all out and went in and, heck, it wasn't even 2 days and I got a call. And,
28 um, I remember the interview really well. The guy was [Jerry Brooks
29 5:16] [tsk] and it was, uh, upstairs in back of the cafeteria where we used
30 to have our [team room 5:23] in there for EPG, Employee Involvement,
31 and, um, [inaudible 5:27]. They went through an orientation. They told ya
32 you had to have boots, you had to have, uh, that they had to be leather
33 boots and [inaudible] [you want 5:36] and then side shields and all that
34 type a deal and coveralls.
35
36 It was kind of a quick process and then as soon as they got all done, he
37 wanted to know [laughter] if you wanted to go to work right away. But I
38 didn't go right in because I liked my boss where I was at, so I gave'm a
39 couple weeks' notice. And I was supposed to hire in in, um, cushion room
40 and that was days cushion room and I told'm I couldn't do it, so they put
41 me in on nights [tsk] in Body Shop, so I was working over at the gas
42 station being a mechanic during the day and then I was going in at Fisher
43 Body [whistling] at nights [laughter] and I did that for about 3-1/2 months.
44 And, um, of course, the next thing you know, we had all these [throat
45 clearing] Saturdays and, uh, the 9-4's and 10-3's and all that type a deal
46 and, uh, then I just – uh, I couldn't handle it anymore. He – my other boss,

he wouldn't find anybody, so I finally just said, uh, I had to go, so I got, [laughter] I gotta go. I gotta get some rest and stuff like that.

[6:33] Do you remember the first day that you walked in there and they took you to the Body Shop?

Yeah, I do. I still remember the guy's name too. His name was, um – I think it was Tom Lee and he was a pretty big – he was kinda – I think he was a general foreman back then, I think was – I know his last name was Lee. And he took me down through the Body Shop and I mean there was, um, conveyors all up in the air. They were all over the place. And everything was really tight and it was dirty and it was smoky. It was hot. And I'm like – the very first thing I'm saying to myself – of course, I'm only, you know, [being 7:05] almost 20 years old and I was walking through there and I used to always work outside being, you know, a mechanic and I was always an outside guy and I was like aw, my God, man, what did I get myself into here. [laughter] And he's walking me from department to department and I know [throat clearing] we talked to probably about 3 different people. And I don't really under-, I couldn't understand that. I guess in today's world, if they had an extra body, man, they'd latch right onto ya in a minute. But, uh, back then, I just kept going.

And then I ended up going in, um, in underbody and I stayed in underbody for a long time. My first boss was, uh, was Mike [Myers 7:39] and Joe [Shane 7:41]. And, uh, Joe [Shane 7:43], he ended up eventually being a, [rubbing] a general foreman throughout the years, you know, and stuff but I worked for Joe in a lotta different aspects, you know, when he was a first line boss and then all the way up. I stayed in underbody for quite a while. Um, I remember the first job I w-, had too. Um, it was, uh, welding a – the trunk and the floor pan together. It's what we used to call a kick-up weld. You used to have to weld your half plus weld the seat back on, which held the backseat in, and then you had to put a filler on and what it did is it went to the underbody on the rear pan that closed into the side frame and you had to seal that and seal around the back side and that was on the 88s and 98s and then, uh, if there was a Toronado coming in, you had to really hurry to catch the Toronado. [laughter]

And, uh, that had about, um, 3 spot welders and a MIG welder on it, which a MIG welder is like arc welding and, um, you used to have arc weld, um, [tsk] a seat bracket down on the floor pan and then you had to put the seat back on and you also had this great big spot welder that welded the front cowl area to the floor pan and that can – it seemed like – and every, every single Toronado job was hot. I mean they were just – the steel was huge and, uh, it was, it was tough. It was real tough. And then, um, [tsk] after you got rid of the Toronado, you had to hurry up 'cause you had an 88 or 98 behind it. So you either had to work hard to get to the Toronado and

1 then work hard after you got back to get to the 88 or 98 afterwards. I can't
2 remember how many an hour. I gotta th-, I gotta try to remember. I think it
3 was maybe about 36 an hour but still when you had about 4 spot welders
4 on a job plus sealer and stuff, you were moving pretty good. You were
5 moving pretty good.
6
7 Cheryl McQuaid: [9:32] So did you consider it a physical job?
8
9 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. It was, uh, it was, um, [tsk] it was hot. [papers rustling] You had to
10 be, um – you had to up and down b-, on the [buns 9:41] on these spot
11 welders. You had to open and [papers rustling] close and then you had
12 high heat and low heat trigger, um, location. And it seemed like every spot
13 welder too on a Toronado was always about 6 times the size of the ones
14 for the 88 and 98. I don't know if it was an ergonomic thing or whatever. I
15 mean, no, actually – no I can't even say ergonomics because there wasn't
16 any ergonomics back then but, um, maybe it was just, uh, the way they
17 could get it in to do the welding I guess. I don't know. But they were
18 huge. And you had - [part of them 10:13] you had to really manhandle'm
19 and stuff to get'm around. Um, you didn't have to build a million
20 Toronados, thank God, but, uh, I tell ya, it was, um – back in the ole Body
21 Shop days, it was really smoky. [tapping] You could come in. You just
22 seen a haze up in the air and, you knew, right then and there there wasn't
23 any air for the night, so it was gonna be hot the more as your time got in.
24
25 And then, uh, like I said, I don't know. I worked on, um, [tsk] I worked on
26 the line for – I don't know – it wasn't even thr-, it wasn't even 3 months. I
27 didn't have my 90 days in and I went on Utility and I worked Utility for a
28 long, long time. Um, it was kind of an undesirable job. And I actually got
29 bumped to days and outta my 30 years, I didn't work very much nights.
30 Um, a guy bumped me off Utility on nights and it bumped me to days.
31 And I think maybe I had a couple, three stents of nights. But, uh, it was –
32 just wasn't a job, uh, that people liked to do because when somebody
33 didn't come in or if they had a vacation day or if they got hurt or
34 whatever. But, um, you [just so 11:18] kinda like an extra [board 11:19]
35 person and I liked it because I h-, then I didn't hafta do the same job every
36 day. That's what I – I really did. I liked that. Then I went on and, um, [tsk]
37 let's see. I did, uh – [gutturals] let's see. I went from the Utility to, uh,
38 Relief. I used to run Relief until they went to mass relief. Then I went into,
39 um – I did, I did, uh, Relief, eh, eh, quite a while before I became a team
40 coordinator. And I was a team coordinator for about 7 years [before
41 11:50], uh, Delta plant.
42
43 Cheryl McQuaid: [11:52] Do you remember some of the people that you worked around
44 when you first hired in?
45
46 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. [And I still do 11:55].

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [11:56] And who taught you the job?
3
4 Michael Bokovoy: Um, [tsk] [it wasn't] [inaudible 12:01] man. It was usually an extra guy.
5 The [inaudible 12:05] man was – that was his job, was just to be around
6 for emergency purposes. They, they didn't [work then 12:10]. They just,
7 they never did. You know, it was just something that happened and I don't
8 know. It was total different than what it is now. Um, but I remember – but
9 it didn't take me very long either to learn a job. Everybody kept telling me
10 I had 3 days to learn a job but it didn't take me that long. And, uh, once
11 they knew you were halfway decent – I don't know – it just seems like
12 everything was kinda pushed through a little bit.
13
14 Um, but, s-, and still know the guy today that was across from me. His
15 name was Dan McDonald. He lives up in Ionia and, uh, he's been retired
16 now for probably about 9 years, [throat clearing] 9 years. The guy I'm
17 working with still is Terry [Soucier 12:51]. He was the Utility guy when I
18 was – when I hired in on the job. He's gotta – they had him on Utility and
19 – because he only had about 2 weeks on me, so they were apparently
20 looking for Utility people, somebody that knew how to [background
21 noises] run a lotta jobs. And then, um, [tsk] w-, I remember John [Willie
22 13:08], Frank [Ash 13:09]. John [Willie 13:11] was the [inaudible 13:11]
23 man. Frank [Cash 13:12] was the late relief man. Oh gosh, a ton of guys.
24 [Bancroft 13:16]. I mean, I, I remember a lotta them guys 'cause I worked
25 for'm – with'm for years.
26
27 Cheryl McQuaid: [13:22] Was it...
28
29 Michael Bokovoy: So...
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: ...hard to communicate with'm? I've always heard the Body Shop was a
32 noisy place to work.
33
34 Michael Bokovoy: It was loud but you just spoke up. Sometimes you had to repeat yourself.
35 Um, everything was, um – it was loud because it was all packed. It was
36 really packed and it was, um, crowded, dirty and hot. That's about all I can
37 say and, uh, you look forward to that every day. I mean that's just the way
38 it was. There was so much sealer and there was also lead paint and
39 everything else but there was always so much sealer on a job that, uh, if
40 you didn't throw Floor-Dry down, your feet got so heavy by lunchtime
41 that, uh, and you couldn't stand it anymore. It just filled the whole bottom
42 of your feet up. So you put [coughing] Floor-Dry down and it kinda ate it
43 off your feet and then it would just not stick to it and then the next thing
44 you know, you can move around [inaudible 14:10].
45
46 Cheryl McQuaid: [14:10] Ate what off your feet?

1
2 Michael Bokovoy: The sealer. Well what it was called, it was called red eye and I'll tell you
3 that stuff was un-, amazing. [scratching] I found it in my apartment one
4 time sitting on a – I was on – sitting on the couch and I looked down and it
5 was on my carpet and I always took my shoes off. But that was just how
6 that stuff [inaudible 14:25]. You got it on ya, it was on your lunch. It was
7 in – it w-, it was just – it was all over ya. It was a red sealer that you put
8 and it just – it was a common [use] [inaudible 14:35] back then and, uh,
9 man, I don't know. It just would get all over ya. [coughing] I guess it was
10 almost like [inaudible 14:41] up in Paint that was in, you know, Lansing
11 Car Assembly before we left.
12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: [14:46] So it was kinda like a putty-type stuff?
14
15 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. Well best I can say is it kinda looked like, uh, like a red stuff that
16 you would caulk out of a gun and what I – it kinda had an oily [scratching]
17 substance to it. That – they nicknamed her red eye and that was just what
18 it was. It was a nasty [laughter] stuff. [laughter] It was terrible.
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: [15:06] Now did you work in the jungle?
21
22 Michael Bokovoy: [tsk] I worked all over. At one time, [tsk] um, [tsk] I – I don't know if I
23 should really brag this up or what. I don't know. Everybody's tellin' me
24 about it 'cause there wasn't too many guys that could do it. But I at one
25 time on the, um, Cutlass line, 88, 98, Toronado line, I knew every single
26 job in both body shops [tsk] and except for solder. I didn't go into solder
27 booths very much. I'd only – I only went in a few times grinding and
28 finishing and I'd never really worked the torch and flowed all the solder in
29 and stuff like that but, uh, 'cause that was an art. That was one heck of an
30 art. There was a lotta guys that were in there that, uh, really had – you had
31 to know what you were doing because some – on some of them jobs,
32 especially the Toronado would be coming and then if there was a 98
33 coming behind it, they had a great big – it was – what they called it was a
34 [quarter] [inaudible 16:00] and if it didn't have a vinyl top, which back
35 then the [option 16:03] was [CO4] [inaudible 16:04].
36
37 They had solder and it would take [throat clearing] 2 solder pots to fill that
38 up, not just 1 like an 88 would or whatever or doing a front post would
39 only take maybe about half a pot. So you'd hafta kinda look up the line
40 and then you'd have to have someone help you because you'd have to put
41 all the solder rods in and it, it was a, it was a job to learn. And, eh, and I
42 never really got in there. I mean I did it a little bit with a guy one time and
43 then the guy come in late and then I kinda went down [there 16:34] and
44 [then I 16:35] was just like a grinder and a sander on it but you used to
45 hafta wear a hood in there and then they used to monitor ya. Well they
46 said they monitored you but, um, it wasn't a, a whole lot but they would

1 monitor you for lead content. You'd go down and get your blood taken and
2 if you were [inaudible 16:52] to it too much, then you had too much lead
3 inside your blood and you then you kinda had to go to another job for a
4 while until it kinda went away from ya. And no women were allowed in
5 there.
6

7 But, uh, that was a, [background noise] that was a heck of an area there. I
8 don't know. There were just certain people [background conversation] that
9 they had that went in there. Um, I, like I said, I started on the body. I, I
10 worked a lot in, uh – what were they called – um, body framing back then
11 was where the 2 side frames came in. I worked in side frames. And then
12 they welded the body together and then they went into a jungle area. And
13 the reason why they called it a jungle was because there were so many
14 cables hanging that, uh, it just remind you of being in a jungle, like a
15 whole buncha vines and they were all attached to welders anywhere from,
16 uh, C-Mars to gusset welders to, [tsk] uh, door openings, rollers. I mean
17 there was – it was unbelievable. There m-, there musta been s-, man, I
18 don't know. I gotta say 60 probably or s-, or more welders on each side of
19 the line, so you could imagine with all the transformers hanging in the air
20 and all on cables and balancers and guns. It was a big, big area.
21

22 And then I went into the arc booth and that's where they did brazing [tsk]
23 and then, uh, did a buncha arc welding inside of the job and, and long
24 spots where, uh, um, they didn't pick up where spotwelds or whatever or
25 they couldn't get a gun in. There was a whole buncha MIG welds. Um,
26 that kind of eventually went away as we started building different cars but
27 there was a period of time where arc booth was a pretty big area. There
28 must've been about [7 18:28] guys on each side welding. And, uh, of
29 course, the dash job. That was a, a, a MIG weld job where you u-, had to
30 put in a steering column and the radio bracket. I can still remember that
31 job. That was a hot job, a hot, fast job. You used to get burned up all the
32 time, um, sparks flying and you used to have to wear a weld hat and weld
33 gloves or you'd end up getting pretty well scorched on that. Body Shop
34 was just a – it was a – [tsk] I don't know. To stay there for 30 years, it's a
35 – it's something. It really is. Um, some people, just they'd be down there
36 for a few years and they just couldn't handle it...
37

38Male: Yeah.

39
40Michael Bokovoy: ...and they just says I'm outta here and, uh, they were gonna – either go to
41 Paint or they were going to Trim or something. But I liked it. Heck,
42 especially since I could be on days. I mean I seen so many people on and
43 going back and forth from nights to days in different areas and I said heck,
44 I can put up with Body Shop as long as I can keep up a normal life, you
45 know, and not have to go in at 4:30 in the afternoon. I mean that there, I
46 hated that with a passion. [laughter] Uh, that just – that wasn't my scene

1 but, um. Let's see. Then, uh, then I went to [throat clearing] metal finish. I
2 did a lotta work in metal finish. Uh, later on in my life, um, I went in and I
3 used to run the repair awl and, uh, then I run a lotta ding work up in,
4 [coughing] uh, Paint and a lotta, um, uh – well I was pre-, uh, pre-ding and
5 stuff like that was when, um, it was [inaudible 19:58] and, um, I did all
6 that. And then also I did, like I say, the ding work and we tried to, um, if
7 there was any kind of thing, we [inaudible 20:06] so we didn't break [paint
8 20:07] and that was up in Paint Repair. And I worked a lotta changeovers
9 too. Worked a lotta changeovers.

10

11 Cheryl McQuaid: [20:15] When, uh, you worked – when you hired in in '76, were there
12 many women or minorities working...

13

14 Michael Bokovoy: No.

15

16 Cheryl McQuaid: ...around you?

17

18 Michael Bokovoy: There wasn't. There was a, there was a few minorities. [tsk] Um, John
19 [Willie 20:26] was one and so was Frank [Ash 20:29]. Uh, and there was a
20 couple a Utility guys I remember and then, of course, they were spread out
21 different places too, you know. And it took me a little while to get to know
22 really basically where I was at and then I kinda after I went on Utility,
23 then I ventured out and then that's when I really started meeting a lotta
24 different people. But, um, women-wise, [tsk] my wife came in before I did
25 in '76 and she was in a batch of women that, um, was in that, uh, pre-
26 women's lib thing and, um – see Body Shop didn't hire a lotta women
27 personally because they had jobs that was undesirable, number one and
28 then number two, they had health restrictions if they were in baby years or
29 whatever and so General Motors and, and [they had 21:20] the UAW
30 probably, you know, they kept'm outta there so that, you know, they
31 didn't get sick.

32

33 But she came in a batch, I th-, I'm trying to remember what the magic
34 number was but there was 12 or 13 of'm. And they came in and they were
35 in, um, before some guys came in and, uh, she lasted all 30 in there in the
36 Body Shop and, um, and [I'd seen so much Delta 21:44] that were in her
37 group and think there's still 5 or 6 of'm. So that means that there was –
38 there's probably 7 of the original 12 or 13 that stayed 30 years in Body
39 Shop. That's very, very amazing. That's really amazing. Just 30 years is
40 tough in it for a man in Body Shop, let alone a woman.

41

42 Cheryl McQuaid: [22:06] So you met your wife in the plant?

43

44 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. Yeah. I met her. Matter a fact, she worked in underbody, so I – let's
45 see, uh, 30 years. I bet I probably have known her for about 26, probably
46 26 or 27 of the 30.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [22:23] How did you meet her?
3
4 Michael Bokovoy: Uh, she was a, [sighing] she was a line worker and we just all talked to
5 each other [when we were in 22:30] department. It was just the way it was.
6 It made the day go. Everybody's talking about this and that or they're
7 gonna go fishing or hunting and, and I don't know. She just was a
8 talkative person and so basically we just – I don't know. We'd meet. I
9 mean it just was the way it was. And when you go on a job if she was
10 across from me, you know, you talk to her and that type a deal.
11
12 Cheryl McQuaid: [22:53] Was it hard having a romance in the plant?
13
14 Michael Bokovoy: Uh, [laughter] I don't know if you – I don't think [background noise]
15 you'd call it a romance. Um, basically what we considered each other was
16 coworkers. That was just the way it was. We did our gig after work. If we
17 were gonna go have a drink or something after work and that's what we
18 did or whatever. When we hired in, [throat clearing] it was basically hi,
19 bye and whatever. I'd drop her off out front and, and then I'd go around
20 and I'd go to my area and that's the way it was. Um, I don't remember it
21 ever really being too tough. I, I was pretty busy. She was pretty busy. And
22 she did her gig and I did mine until after we got out.
23
24 Cheryl McQuaid: Eh, earlier you said that you knew just about all the jobs on the M line and
25 the C line...
26
27 Michael Bokovoy: Eh, yeah.
28
29 Cheryl McQuaid: ...in the Body Shop. [23:47] Was it easy for you to learn all these jobs?
30 [23:49] Was it easy for everybody to learn these jobs?
31
32 Michael Bokovoy: Um, no, I can't say it was easy. But I saw a benefit to me because I can
33 remember a couple times when I would go to get shipped out to an area
34 and if they were really short and had other guys coming, they knew I knew
35 how to run Relief if that was open, then I could get it. Most type a jobs, if
36 you could get just that extra 15-20 minutes during the day, it was
37 cherished, so I saw a benefit for me doing it. I don't think there was really
38 anything easy about it. It was, uh, more or less paying attention to what
39 was going on and willing to do it. There was guys [inaudible 27:26] Utility
40 that were terrible. [laughter] I mean that was just [laughter] bottom line.
41 They were just terrible.
42
43 Um, they just existed and, uh, they, uh – management really, really
44 worked around a lot of them guys. Some of'm they just, um, they treated
45 everybody different. If they called and somebody was [extra 24:43], they'd
46 ask if, um – say, uh, like Tom is a, a good one too. They'd ask if Tom was

1 busy or if I was busy or whatever and then the other ones, they, they, they
2 would tell'm to forget it; we'll get somebody [laughter] else 'cause they
3 [inaudible 24:56]. [throat clearing] But that – it wasn't a lie. You know?
4 But I'm just saying. But it was, um, [tsk] it was a task to learn'm and it
5 was just a pr-, just know just a process or whatever. A lot of'm kind of
6 mirrored each other if you really thought about it, you know. You just
7 kinda collated them together and the next thing you know, that's the way it
8 was, so.
9

10 Cheryl McQuaid: You also said earlier that you didn't spend much time on second shift;
11 most of your time was spent on the dayshift. [25:24] Are there any big
12 differences between dayshift and nightshift? [25:30] What are the
13 differences?
14

15 Michael Bokovoy: Uh, family, number one. It just seemed like, um, family life really, really
16 revolves after 4 or so or 5 at night. I mean it just – that's just the way
17 society is. [coughing] Excuse me. I don't really know if that's as much of
18 a case now as it was back when I was younger and trying [tapping] to raise
19 a family. Um, and another thing was, um, y-, your social life or, or any
20 type of anything. I mean like I'm a really big part of service organization
21 now and helping, uh, stuff. There is a few clubs now they have what they
22 call a daytime places, you know, like breakfast club or whatever for lines
23 but it was just society run when you got outta the – your shift and things
24 really started happening and that just – that's the way society was. Uh, me,
25 when I went in, of course, I couldn't play softball. I was a real athletic guy
26 and when I was on nights I couldn't do that.
27

28 Um, all my friends that were going here and there, um, I was sorta
29 [inaudible 26:34] engaged to my first wife at the time so, of course, you
30 know, she'd be coming home offa work and I'd be going down Michigan
31 Avenue headed to Fisher Body. That, of course, didn't make me feel very
32 good about the idea. And, uh, but then after you got in there, you know,
33 and – [tsk] I don't know. You know, just, it was, um, it was something,
34 you know. It was a dif-, it was a different way a life and then after you got
35 on days [papers rustling] and I don't know, you just seemed like your life
36 balanced out [and it's 27:02] everything went different. But, uh, there's a
37 lotta people that just, uh, they liked nights, you know. And, and that was
38 their lifestyle. It just wasn't part of my picture. I just [tapping] didn't think
39 it was something that, uh, [tapping] I never was like that. I never was a
40 night, you know, person to work. [tapping] [scratching]
41

42 Cheryl McQuaid: [27:21] Do you remember – I'm sorry.
43

44 Gary Judy: Gary Judy. [27:26] Did, did you have any, uh, pranks pulled on ya when
45 you hired in?
46

1Michael Bokovoy: [laughter] Oh, yeah. Yeah. The ole sealer in the gloves, uh, go and answer
2 the phone, it had sealer on it, um, water. Somebody'd walk up behind ya
3 and throw a cigarette in your backpack or your coveralls and the next
4 thing you know you'd be smelling something and then your butt was on
5 fire. Uh, [laughter] you know, it was just the Body Shop was – the Body
6 Shop, you know, you could catch on fire anyway, so when you smelt
7 something like that, you know, you, you just – you knew something was
8 wrong. [laughter] And you look and somebody threw a cigarette butt in
9 your pocket, you know, or you're inside, yeah, welding or whatever. Um,
10 [laughter] I mean all in fun. I mean I don't ever remember any pranks that,
11 that really nothing that made me mad because paybacks are always hell, so
12 you know.
13
14 But water balloons, they used – 'cause especially when it was a hot night.
15 Uh, people eating your lunch. I remember I had a guy always eating my
16 lunch. Um, he was just a big eater. I remember one time [laughter] he ate
17 my whole damn lunch and, uh, [laughter] he put a \$5 bill in it and told me
18 to go to Harry's and have lunch, uh, buy me something off the wagon.
19 That was something else I did too. I was growing pretty much. I used to
20 make 4 or 5 sandwiches a day and then still buy stuff off the wagon. That
21 was a big thing back then, the wagon, and they took that away. That was,
22 uh, that was a big thing. There's a lotta people that don't even know what
23 you're talking about when you say wagon.
24
25Cheryl McQuaid: [28:51] Why did they take wagon away?
26
27Michael Bokovoy: Well it was a, a contractual thing. It was an extra 12 minutes that the line
28 wasn't running, [coughing] so they [tsk] – um, there was a 6-minute break
29 in the morning and then there was a 6-minute break in the afternoon and
30 just that 6 minutes, uh, was, was something that people really looked
31 forward to and, uh, it just, uh, they run relief and everything, so you know
32 that was 6 cars that they weren't building 'cause back in, in the end, you
33 know, we're building 16 hours, so that was 6 vehicles, uh, you know in the
34 morning and 6 in the afternoon, so that was 12 vehicles they didn't get.
35
36Gary Judy: [29:26] Can you describe what a wagon was?
37
38Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. It was this, uh, cafeteria girl or, or guy or whatever had these little
39 carts and, uh, they used to have cans of pop on it and they had cookies
40 and, and sandwiches and fresh fruit and, and, uh, milk or whatever, you
41 know, you wanted and, uh, you'd go over there and y-, and you'd pay her
42 for whatever you had and then ya, you still had a little bit of time to go
43 over and sit down and, uh, and eat whatever you had. If not, you know,
44 you could take it back over and finish it up [behind 29:57] the line if you
45 had enough if y-, [coughing] if you were lucky enough to have a, a job
46 that you could finish it up on. [Yeah 30:02], those were a little bit far

1 between, uh, back then. You just didn't have time for that. You barely had
2 enough time to talk. [laughter]
3
4 Jerri Smith: [recorder clicking] [And go 30:18].
5
6 Cheryl McQuaid: [30:19] Mike, did you work any changeovers?
7
8 Michael Bokovoy: Yes. [In '74 30:22], let's see – out of, um – I probably worked 24 or 25
9 of'm and, um, the only reason why I didn't really work all the rest of'm
10 was they, uh, stopped taking supplemental help. Um, I worked a lotta
11 different shifts. I worked first. I worked second for a little while. Kinda
12 they got outta that. They gave you a choice and then I worked third and I
13 kinda got into that after a while. It took a little bit f-, to get used to. When
14 I first started out, I was a, um – I just was a Maintenance helper and, um,
15 you kinda bounced around down in there and then, um, finally they started
16 assigning you to places. Um, when, um – some of the bigger ones in that
17 and then the next thing you know, you were hooked up and you were
18 hooked up with millwrights and that was where I worked with a lot and
19 learning how to [tapping] use a torch. And, uh, I h-, I had to do a lot of arc
20 welding and, of course, I knew how to MIG weld already from Body
21 Shop. So kinda the rel-, the relationship was pretty, pretty much the same
22 except for one uses a wire and the other uses a – what they call a arc rod
23 and, uh, stick weld.
24
25 And, um, learned a lotta things in there. Um, got to the point where I just,
26 I just knew just about every square inch of the plant. Um, worked up in
27 Paint. Pulled chain before, um, build platforms, [inaudible 31:36] rail,
28 which is, um, was what the air hoses hung on and slid on, uh, throughout
29 the plant, uh, put up, uh, highway rail, which was the orange, um, [tsk]
30 safety, uh, rail that went all through the whole plant if some of it was
31 broken, um, just anything, um, that millwrights do. It was basically, I, I
32 w-, I just was kinda like a Maintenance helper. [tsk] Um, and then
33 eventually they didn't need anybody in millwrights and they knew I liked
34 to work so then they, uh, put me in the Pipe Shop for a while and I learned
35 how to use a, a rigid machine. That – that's what threads, uh, the pipe and,
36 uh, and hang pipe and, uh, put new, um, [tsk] fire-, fire line in. I did a lotta
37 that. Um, and that type a stuff.
38
39 I mean it gave me opportun-, I learned a lot and I, I use it a lot of it on, on
40 – today on the outside. Um, so with the training, you know, that I got from
41 UAW people and, uh, and GM, you know, the opportunity, man, I'll tell
42 ya, it was, it was there is you really wanted [rattling] to do it. I enjoyed it
43 too 'cause it got me a chance to meet a lotta different people in the
44 business. Um, it was, uh, it was real interesting. [rattling] Built, built line –
45 I used to – I built tracks before, um, pulling chain. That was, that was a,
46 that was a different experience there. That was real dirty and, uh, and hot

1 but, uh, it was, you know, it was part of business. That's what you had to
2 do. The chain wore out and you had to replace it. But, uh, that, that was a
3 whole n-, 'nother, plus too, uh, it kinda helped me pay bills after I got a
4 divorce. You know, it kinda helped me pay my support and keep things
5 going and, and, uh, it was just easier for me to do that and, uh, I had the
6 opportunity, so I did it.
7

8Cheryl McQuaid: [33:20] So did you meet any – what was your relationship with [rubbing]
9 skilled trades employees?
10

11Michael Bokovoy: Uh, matter a fact, to this day right now, one of my best friends [throat
12 clearing] that I hunt and fish with was a millwright [tsk] and he came outta
13 Livonia plant. And, um, [tsk] in his plant, they just – they did him well.
14 Um, they knew how to read blueprints and they knew how to shim molars
15 and, [pen clicking] uh, and stuff. But they had what they called a
16 maintenance welder and we used to have that and I worked underneath
17 them one time when we, uh, retooled from Cutlasses and 98s and 88s to go
18 to our, um, our, uh, front wheel drive care there. I think it was called the X
19 car or whatever it was, um, that, uh, Grand Am and that when we went to
20 that. Uh, but I met him, um, [tsk] it was about 10 years ago and we was on
21 third shift and a, a, a boss in there – his name was Paul [Urlick 34:15] –
22 and he was a millwright boss [scratching] and Mike meet Mike. Uh, Mike
23 knows how to read, uh, blueprints. He's a, um, a skilled trades and, uh,
24 Mike, he's a production maintenance helper and he knows how to weld
25 and, uh, next thing you know, uh, to this day – he lives in Pinckney and,
26 uh, got a cabin up North and we hunt and fish together and, uh, have a
27 really good relationship.
28

29 And I – I would say like, uh, one, one of my best buds. And, uh, then of
30 course too, you know, I got a, a ton of'm that are still in there that I know
31 and if I need something or if I, I, you know, whatever. But, um, [tsk] my
32 whole Maintenance experience was good. I, I don't remember any-,
33 anything bad about it. I mean there were some jobs that you didn't like
34 and, of course, there was certain bosses, you know, that had a different
35 style, you know. [laughter] Some of'm called'm birddogs and some of'm
36 would assign you a job and, uh, long as you got that job done, you know,
37 and there wasn't any, uh – you didn't, you didn't hafta hear from'm
38 anymore. But, uh, most of my experience in Maintenance was really good.
39 I, uh, I had a lotta fun doing it and, uh, learned a lotta different things.
40

41Cheryl McQuaid: [35:27] So do you feel that if you hadn't worked the changeovers and [pen
42 clicking] met the Maintenance people, would it have been harder to have
43 done your own job? [35:35] Were they a lot of help in oh, lockers or
44 things that you needed as a Body Shop employee?
45

1 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. Especially after, um, [throat clearing] I, uh – when we, uh, got into
2 Employee Involvement, um, that helped me tremendously. That took a
3 lotta red tape out because, um, you used to have to fill out a ton of
4 workorders and these guys that I got to know, if it wasn't really too big a
5 job and if I needed something, [tapping] um, I'd use to just go up to them
6 and I'd tell'm, I'd say hey, Jim or Mike or Dave or, or, um, you know,
7 [Scrubby 36:10] or whoever it was, you know, and, um, they'd – sure,
8 Mike, I get a chance, you know, I – I'll make that up for you or I'll go
9 move this fan a little bit, you know, maybe it got bumped by a [inaudible
10 36:20] truck or something. You know, it just was – [tapping] just that
11 inside track that you needed to get through the bureaucracy that was inside
12 of the plant, you know.
13
14 And, uh, and it, it was, it was really interesting. And it really actually got
15 to the point where there was a lotta people knew that I knew people like
16 that, so they came to me and say hey, Mike, uh, you think maybe you
17 could get somebody to help me to this or whatever. And I don't – I'll f-,
18 truthfully I don't think I ever got turned down by'm. You know, they
19 would tell me if they were too busy and, um, and if I'd – they didn't get it
20 done in a couple days to remind'm and I didn't have to remind'm very
21 often. They went and got it done for me, so. But, uh, yeah, that was, uh,
22 that was a good experience. That was a real good experience.
23
24 Cheryl McQuaid: So let's talk about, uh, supervisors now. [37:05] Um, do you have a
25 favorite supervisor, a least favorite? [37:09] How did supervisory
26 techniques change from [tapping] when you hired into when...
27
28 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah.
29
30 Cheryl McQuaid: ...they closed the plant?
31
32 Michael Bokovoy: I had an opportunity to talk to quite a few people. I used to work for my
33 dad when he was one and, um, I don't know. I guess, I j-, I'd n-, I only h-,
34 I only worked for'm for a couple times when he was a, when he was a
35 boss but, um, I liked people that were people for the people. You know,
36 they didn't, um, come in just to please their boss, I guess, and, um, you
37 could tell, you could tell those people real easy. Um, the hardnose, there
38 was some of them. There was quite a few of them. Um, it was their way
39 and that's just the way it was. So when you went to work for them, you
40 pretty much knew how to handle yourself or whatever. You knew what
41 you had to do. But then there was some that'd communicate with you and
42 stand there and they'd like to talk to you. They'd pretty much cared about
43 ya and, and I think that that's really what makes a supervisor probably
44 more successful than the other guy, is if, um, if you really kinda take care
45 of your troops and they like ya, I think they probably do you a lot better

1 job than somebody who is kinda rubbing their thumb down on you all the
2 time, maybe thought that they breathe better air than you or whatever.

3
4 But, um, I, I worked for an awful, awful lotta supervisors and – I don't
5 know – I had an awful lotta good ones. I don't know if I could ever
6 pinpoint 1 person. But I did have one and I, I gotta tell ya this. And this
7 guy, his name was Bill [Remschneider 38:42], and that man – [papers
8 rustling] and he worked in underbody and he's the only boss when y-, you
9 w-, and I used to get my check, hand it to me before I went on, um, and
10 got a payroll deduct-, you know where they'd put it in the back for ya.
11 He'd hand you your check on Friday and you'd tell him thank you and
12 he's stop me right there and he'd say no, no, thank you, thank you for the
13 job that you did for me and that you're doing for me. That's really the only
14 boss that I ever knew that took time personally to tell me that.

15
16 Um, most the other ones, a few times I'd, uh – they'd did say okay, you
17 know, or someone would, would appreciate a job for you or whatever and
18 they'd say thanks for helping me or whatever. But most of'm if you ever
19 went to their area, um, you'd work for'm all day and, and, uh, you just,
20 you – I don't know. Some of'm would just leave you alone or whatever
21 and none of'm would come over and acknowledge [scraping] ya or
22 whatever. But, uh, I worked for a lotta different ones. And I think the most
23 successful ones though [throat clearing] that were liked were, were peop-,
24 you know, that liked people and liked to talk to people and communicate
25 to people. Um, the ones that were not liked very much were the ole school
26 guys. They were, [tsk] uh, pretty tough to work for. They were pretty
27 tough to work for.

28
29 Cheryl McQuaid: [40:02] What about jobs? [40:02] Do you have a best and a least favorite
30 job?

31
32 Michael Bokovoy: [sighing] Let's see. Utility was a favorite of mine for a long time and that
33 was just something because I didn't have to go in and do the same thing
34 every day. When I, uh, became a part of Employee Involvement, I really
35 got to see a different side of the business and trying to get people involved
36 in, in the aspects of work. Um, that was fun until it started getting pretty –
37 I g-, it started getting pretty stressful. Um, a lotta things was mistaken I
38 guess. I don't know. Um, but, uh, um, I, I, I liked my, um, my Relief job.
39 That was a people-pleasing job and all you had to do was just go a little
40 extra and, uh, that that, uh – the time went by pretty good there. You
41 know, reaming around [rattling] and giving people relief.

42
43 And then when they, uh, run, uh, mass relief and stopped the line, then I
44 had to move on to something. I'd go back in Utility and I was getting old
45 and I didn't – I couldn't – [tapping] I c-, I didn't like that anymore because
46 I was getting too beat up – arthritis, um – I don't know – carpal tunnels

1 [laughter] and, and [throat clearing] tendonitis and, and stuff like that, you
2 know, started creeping up on me and, uh, I said man, I gotta do something
3 different than that.
4
5 And I got into, um, what they used to call a, a Team Coordinator. Now it's
6 called a Team Leader. And, uh, there's some good, there's some good a-,
7 opportunities in that. Um, but [inaudible 41:32] people, a [lotta times]
8 [inaudible 41:34] people [inaudible 41:35], um, really, really good group.
9 Um, that m-, that'll make it a lot easier for ya. But, um, as far as my
10 favorite, I probably have to say Relief. I, uh, I really enjoyed that. That
11 was probably about one of my best jobs I ever I had in there besides
12 working changeovers. I mean I like millwright work. I, I really like that. I
13 shoulda had a career in it but I'm not gonna go into that. [laughter]
14
15 Cheryl McQuaid: [41:58] Can you tell us a little bit about department dinners and
16 department activities? [42:02] Did you get involved...
17
18 Michael Bokovoy: Eh...
19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: ...in any of that?
21
22 Michael Bokovoy: A ton. A ton of'm. Um, back years ago, there was not a Thanksgiving or
23 Christmas that went by that we didn't have a department dinner and now
24 they were all homemade. Um, everybody's, um, wife or significant other
25 or whatever would bring in something and, uh, everybody would share the
26 gig. And, uh, if you had a really good boss, um, they would do something
27 for ya on the holiday. Um, some of'm did – sometimes they'd buy the meat
28 and, uh, [beeping] some of'm would give you a gift. [background
29 conversation] Um, now it kinda went away a little bit for a while, uh, but
30 then, uh, there was some departments I was in, like in Metal Finish, it
31 seemed like about every week, we had something. You know, we had, um,
32 [tsk] a lunch or a breakfast of some sort and most of the times it was on a
33 Friday and, uh, it was a good get-together for everybody.
34
35 Um, depending on the season too, we'd, we'd make it if it was corn was
36 coming and we'd, you know, g-, a bunch of farmers worked in there too,
37 you know, so they'd bring in sweetcorn and someone'd say okay, well
38 having BLTs [inaudible 43:09], uh, you know, somebody had a buncha
39 tomatoes on their garden and it was just, uh, them types of deals. Um, but
40 like I say, it was about every, um, u-, unless somebody too had a birthday.
41 Every once in a while there'd be a birthday [tapping] party. But, uh, most
42 generally it was around a holiday, every Thanksgiving and Christmas.
43
44 Cheryl McQuaid: [43:29] How about bowling leagues or softball tournaments?
45

1 Michael Bokovoy: [Okay 43:32], um, I was, uh, in a bowling league [scratching] for, uh – I
2 started out in '76 'cause I can remember it. Um, if you rolled a 200, they
3 gave ya a red, white and blue patch and I was on that league and it was –
4 of course, I was on nightshift then. And I lasted, um, a few – probably
5 about 4 different years of, um, bowling but bowling got to the point where
6 it was so long. It was a terribly, terribly long season. Um, and that was
7 sponsored by the UAW. [tsk] And, uh, then I got outta that and then I
8 started into a golf league and I played on the UAW golf league for
9 probably about 18 years and we bounced around different courses and
10 stuff. That was a really good time.

11

12 And, uh, then softball. Um, to this day, um, I was part of, um – through
13 Employee Participation was what we called, it was the EPG. Um, we run a
14 65 team double in the nation tournament [tapping] and we did it all in 1
15 day and, to my knowledge, I don't think there's another one bigger that's
16 been in 1 day in, in Michigan. Um, at one, eh – a lot of the umpires had
17 told me that umpired that and, um, that was for [Inaudible 44:49] Special
18 Olympics and that – man we made a ton a money that day. [tapping] But
19 we got, we got fields – let's see. We, we got fields from Delta Township.
20 We got fields from Waverly High School. They had a couple here in the
21 city and we had just about every softball diamond you could think of
22 [inaudible 45:05] and that was a double elimination. That was [rattling] all
23 people from the shop.

24

25 Male: [Hm 45:09].

26

27 Michael Bokovoy: And they had all different kinds a names and it was fun and, uh, that, that,
28 um, softball, that's about as far as I got into that in there. Um, there was a
29 – some leagues when, um, [tsk] when I was a Conservation and Rec Chair,
30 I, uh, remember some teams that, um, come and got entry fees and stuff
31 and they used to run leagues but, uh, not as much as when, um, when they
32 were younger. The workforce started getting older and things just wasn't
33 the same. Um, they didn't, um, play ball like they did back when they
34 were young and stuff. But, uh, that's, that's about the recreation. There
35 was, um, um, there's a bow-, there used to be bow shoots and stuff like
36 that but those are pretty much, um, done on the outside, you know, and if
37 they need a little support, whatever for targets or something like that, they
38 used to come to Recreation. But, um, that was the, the events that I was
39 involved in with the union and, uh, as far as recreation.

40

41 Cheryl McQuaid: [46:08] Were those events mainly for charity?

42

43 Michael Bokovoy: The EBG one was. Um, all the other events that we had [scraping] as far
44 as the golf league and the, um, and the bowling, there was a kitty for that
45 and w-, and the money that went into that went into the year-end banquet.
46 Now if there was money left over, it would go to some – you know, I can't

1 remember all for sure because that was quite a few years ago but I kinda
2 remember some going to Cristo Rey and some money going here or there,
3 a foodbank or something like that when it first started and, and stuff but,
4 uh, most of the other ones were kinda – they had a kitty and it just – all the
5 extra money went in for the year-end banquet.
6

7Cheryl McQuaid: [46:53] Mike, as we close this interview, is there anything that I've not
8 asked you that you'd like to talk about.
9

10Michael Bokovoy: Uh, no, not really. Um, just, uh, being a third generation and having the
11 opportunity to work there, I guess, um, see what it did for, you know, my
12 grandpa and my dad and, uh, I can't believe 30 years have gone by as fast
13 as it did because I can remember it just seemed like a little while ago it
14 was, um, I couldn't believe I had like, um, 20 years and I only had about
15 10 more to go. And I remember I had this boss and she was a really good
16 one too – her name was Barb [Melena 47:29] – and she gave me my 25-
17 year award and she goes the next thing you know, she goes you're gonna
18 have 30. You know and, and really that only seems like a few days ago
19 and, uh, and just, um, I've seen, eh, eh, the place go a lotta dif-, you know,
20 it's – it changed a lot from, um – I don't know. It was just – there was no
21 involvement part. Um, what it was is you were just a number. They gave
22 you a hammer and, uh, and, uh, you know, some gloves and a pair of
23 coveralls and stuff down in Body Shop and told you to go to work. Now in
24 this business that we're in nowadays, they kinda ask about ya. You know,
25 they ask you your opinion and stuff, so, um, that's changed a lot.
26

27Cheryl McQuaid: [48:14] So you think there's definitely a lot more employee involvement?
28

29Michael Bokovoy: Eh, and it's, eh, it's an unmeasurable thing and how I say that is, is, um,
30 because it used to be measured by how many people came to a meeting
31 back when I was, um, in EPG, Employee Involvement [coughing] and that
32 number by somebody coming to a lunchtime meeting didn't have any
33 indication at all about how much involved the person was. I mean,
34 because...
35

36Cheryl McQuaid: Eh...
37

38Michael Bokovoy: ...you know, if you had 8 guys or 9 guys in there just 'cause they didn't
39 choose to come and sit with you at lunchtime didn't mean they weren't
40 involved. And, um, I had some really, really good people [tsk] that just
41 didn't give up their lunch hour. They didn't believe in it. [laughter] But
42 that didn't mean that they didn't care [throat clearing] about what we were
43 doing because after they'd come back, they always wanted to know what
44 you talked about or, [laughter] or whatever, [laughter] so. But, um, now I
45 think, um, business has changed dramatically compared to what it used to
46 be before. You, um, you pretty much had to run everything by your boss

1 and, uh, now, um, there's a lot more experience too. This workforce is a lot
2 more experienced than, uh – and also they just, um, they're more involved
3 than what it used to be, you know, as far as [outgoing 49:31] involvement
4 they can see.
5
6 Cheryl McQuaid: Now I'm gonna take a moment to ask the other team members if they have
7 any questions for Mike.
8
9 Earl Nicholson: Uh, [throat clearing] yeah, Mike, this is Earl Nicholson. I know you've
10 been involved in the union quite a bit. [49:45] Could you list all of your
11 union, uh, activities, your appointments, uh, and so forth?
12
13 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah. That was another good opportunity, you know. And I, eh, I'm
14 surprised that I didn't say anything about that because, um, I'm awful
15 UAW oriented and anybody that knows me, um, I'm really pro American
16 and I, I really dislike, um, foreign cars. That's probably my big pet peeve.
17 Um, I, uh, had the opportunity, um, eh – one of the utility guys I knew too
18 in a relationship that I didn't mention previously to this that I met and I
19 used to do a lotta hunting and fishing with the guy from a production
20 level, not from the maintenance level, was Frank Stone. He got me the
21 very first opportunity and experience to learn what the United
22 Autoworkers meant and what it did. And I got a – first I started out, I was
23 an alderman alternate and then I was elected alternate [coughing] and I
24 can't remember exactly what year that was in. [tsk] Um, but I also had an
25 opportunity because he w-, he, uh, run Zone quite a bit, so that meant that
26 you were an active, you know, a lot more than what a [inaudible 51:00],
27 you know, alternate would do.
28
29 So that meant I really kinda got my feet wet in the [inaudible 51:06]
30 procedure process and, uh, you know, the Civil Rights aspect of it and, uh,
31 and the whole deal, you know, and the contract language and, and, uh, that
32 type a deal. So I got into that and then, um, uh, of course, I went to
33 Committee School and then I was a committeeman for a while and then,
34 um, then I, I ran, um, when I was an Employee Participation Advisor, uh, I
35 kinda thought well, I mean, I'd like to do something else 'cause I always
36 kinda liked to be involved in stuff. So I run in, uh – I run for recre-,
37 Conservation and Recreation [papers rustling] and I was, was, like I said,
38 a, a outdoor person and a hunting person and a fishing person and that
39 type a thing and I really liked the outdoors and I liked sports. So I said to
40 myself well, man, that sounds like something cool. So I ran for that and I
41 got elected to that and I served 1 term in that. So I got to see the executive
42 board position and, um, and, um, the leadership of, uh, the, the local
43 union.
44
45 And, um, so I really actually as far as, um, covering some of the, the
46 aspects of union, I, I covered pretty much of'm, you know. The alderman

1 alternate and then, uh, that – so that was an appointed job actually. I had, I
2 had said before that I didn't have an appointment but that's by the
3 committeeperson, you know. They, they, they talk and, um, they pick
4 somebody usually probably between the committee and the alternate to
5 make that. And then the alternate position got – really got my feet wet
6 pretty good into it and then I was District for a term and then I was also 1
7 term on the Executive Board. And, uh, I think that gave me, um – and I
8 also went to Black Lake. I had an opportunity to do that. That was a very,
9 very beautiful experience. I went up on a [Inaudible 52:52] convention for,
10 uh, Conservation and Rec. I met a lotta people from all over the United
11 States. Um, so, uh, I have nothing but a positive for that. And, uh,
12 everybody has an opportunity to do that. Not everybody, um, wants to do
13 that or, uh, you know – and some like to criticize people for doing it but,
14 um, it sure gave me a different side of the business, a different side of the
15 business.

16
17 Earl Nicholson: [53:19] So tell me, uh, community activities, um, right now actively,
18 which – what type of activities are you involved in for community outside
19 of, uh, the UAW [coughing] or outside, I should say, outside of the
20 factory? [coughing]
21

22 Michael Bokovoy: Um, I have about 5 of 'm that I'm real active in. [tsk] Um, I, uh – number 1,
23 I guess it'll go right along with being, uh, in conservation, I, uh – I'm a
24 mi-, Michigan United Conservation Club, uh, member. That goes right
25 along with my Oldsmobile Outdoor Club. Um, that was a club that was
26 founded some 55 years, I think it is now, over in Oldsmobile [tsk] and
27 now it's called, uh, GM of Lansing Oldsmobile Outdoor Club. Um, that
28 Oldsmobile name's still got a lotta personal value to a lotta people that
29 built Oldsmobiles for years but we named it – now we've just added GM
30 Employee, GM UAW Employees of Lansing's Outdoor Club. Um, I've
31 been a member of that for 22 years. Um, I was the very first person invited
32 of [group 54:25] from Fisher Body when, uh, they came [sniffing] over
33 and, uh, wanted to expand their roots a little bit and make the club a little
34 bit bigger. And, um, I'm currently sitting on the Executive Board on that.
35 I'm, I'm the only 602 member that, that sits on that. I am, um, uh, co-
36 secretary. And, um, that, uh, that club right there for what it offers for little
37 money, um, I just can't believe that, um, more people don't take advantage
38 of it but today's world, I mean, eh, at one time Fisher Body had more
39 people than Oldsmobile and they kinda got [inaudible] [for'm 54:59].
40 They couldn't believe it.
41

42 But it was a trend and a lotta those people that are outdoor people were,
43 were kinda a little bit older people and then they ended up [flowing 55:09]
44 and retiring. They're still members but they're, eh, kind of like what we
45 would call'm at large. You know, we just give'm a lifetime membership.
46 So then, um, [tsk] w-, I'm in Lions Club. I've been in Lions Club for 25

1 years. [Inaudible 55:23] here in Delta Township. Um, my dad invited me
2 into that. Uh, do a ton a activities on that. I'm – I, I, I take that back. I am
3 an Executive Board member of that too. I'm a co-treasurer 'cause a guy's
4 gonna, um, move. And I've filled every position of that. I, I, uh, was the
5 president all the way down and I love doing that. And, um, [tsk] I'm also a
6 hunter safety instructor, so I, I work with the DNR. And then also, uh,
7 right now too, I got the opportunity to, uh, um, work with, uh, [Inaudible
8 55:58] at Waverly High School and I'm having a really good time. I'm in
9 my fourth year doing that. So I stay pretty active. [tapping]

10

11 Jerri Smith: [recorder clicking] [Go 56:11].

12

13 Cheryl McQuaid: [56:12] Mike, could you tell us, do you have a, a happiest moment or a
14 saddest moment in the plant?

15

16 Michael Bokovoy: Yeah, I got both. Um, the happiest one'll probably be when I got my 25-
17 year watch because my grandpa had one and my dad had one, so I could
18 put 3 of'm together and, uh, say that's, uh, 75 years of service. And, uh,
19 the saddest part kind of is a twofold. Probably when the Fisher Body
20 symbol came down off the wall and we had to start being called about 40
21 different names and then, and then when the placed closed. It never really
22 sunk until the very last day when I walked outta there that I was never
23 gonna go back in there. I was, um, I was going in and outta there. My
24 grandpa was in and out of there. My dad was in and out of there. And then
25 all of the sudden when I walked out that last day, I kept turning around
26 and just kinda gl-, glimpsing things that I would never see again and
27 saying goodbye to some people p-, that I'd never work for and never work
28 with again.

29

30 Um, that was a big, big low and it took a while. Um, it took a while, um,
31 for me to get over that. Uh, the Fisher Body thing I – th-, th-, that's a sad
32 thing but that'll never go away for me. I have a lotta Fisher Body
33 memorabilia, you know, with my grandpa and my dad and that. So those
34 are probably about, about the s-, the best and the saddest, um, just leaving
35 that place. You know, it was pretty, pretty tough.

36

37 Cheryl McQuaid: [57:33] And how did you feel about the name changes when it went from
38 Fisher Body to BOP to BOC to LCA to...?

39

40 Michael Bokovoy: [sighing] You just never knew. But, you know, when you went to –
41 somebody asked you were you worked and you just told'm Fisher Body,
42 they knew. They, they didn't go by the [inaudible 57:50]. They didn't go
43 by Lansing Automotive Division. They didn't go by BOC, you know. So,
44 uh, they didn't go by Lansing Car Assembly. Oh, Fisher Body. Okay. And
45 they would write Fisher Body down and I said that, [tapping] that makes
46 me happy because that's what it still is to me today. And, uh, that coach

1 not being on, on the car, man, that's – that was, that was a big deal, man.
2 That was really big deal. A lotta people looked for that on the rocker and
3 the – so. But, um, to me it still is. I'm, I'm, you know, one of them. I'm the
4 third one, so I still call it that no matter what.
5
6Cheryl McQuaid: Well, Mike, I really appreciate you taking time out to talk to us. Thank
7 you very much.
8
9Earl Nicholson: Thank you very much, Mike....
10
11Male: Thank you very much, Mike.
12
13Earl Nicholson: ...[inaudible 58:30] appreciate it.
14
15Michael Bokovoy: You're welcome. [throat clearing] [tapping] [recorder clicking]
16
17
18/lo