

1 **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY – SHAWN NICHOLSON**
2 **ORA CALHOUN, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN, DISCUSSES HER CAREER**
3 **AS A UAW PRODUCTION WORKER AND GM PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR**
4 **AT THE FISHER BODY PLANT IN LANSING, MI**
5
6

7Marilyn Coulter: [0:01] Uh, Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team interview with Miss Cora
8 – Ora Calhoun [rubbing] [tapping]. Um, Ora Calhoun, uh, December 5,
9 2005, at UAW Local 602 conference room at 9:10 a.m. Ora, before we get
10 started, we're going to, uh, introduce all the team members. My name is
11 Marilyn Coulter.
12
13Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
16
17John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
18
19Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
20
21Michael Fleming: And Michael Fleming.
22
23Marilyn Coulter: [0:28] Okay, [tapping] Ora, [papers rustling] can you tell us a little – we're
24 gonna ask you a little bit about yourself. [0:32] Um, now are you –
25 [clanking] can you say your name and spell it for us, please?
26
27Ora Calhoun: Ora, O-R-A, Calhoun, C-A-L-H-O-U-N.
28
29Marilyn Coulter: [0:41] And are you married?
30
31Ora Calhoun: No.
32
33Marilyn Coulter: [0:44] Children? [popping]
34
35Ora Calhoun: Yes.
36
37Marilyn Coulter: [0:47] And you have what – boys, girls?
38
39Ora Calhoun: Two daughters. [tapping]
40
41Marilyn Coulter: [0:49] Two daughters?
42
43Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
44
45Marilyn Coulter: All right. [0:51] Um, and now can you say your address, please, for us
46 also?

1
2Ora Calhoun: 207 Chanticleer Trail and that's in Lansing, Waverly District.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [tapping] [1:01] Now, Ora, can you tell us when you hired in, in to
5 Fisher Body Lansing and what you thought of it? [1:07] Can you tell us a
6 little bit about your first day?
7
8Ora Calhoun: [tsk] I hired in. They originally assigned me to the Sealer line and I was
9 walking up and down the Sealer line with one a the supervisors [tapping]
10 and all a sudden Ralph [Antclear 1:24], which is another supervisor, came
11 and got me and told me I was going to Main Color and I thought I was
12 gonna pass out. [laughter] What's Main Color? 'Cause I've never been
13 inside of a plant before.
14
15Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
16
17Ora Calhoun: So he took me over there and got me some coveralls and took me around
18 and introduced me to people, showed me where the bathrooms and such
19 was and I went in a booth and they put me with this guy that was [tsk] a
20 little different. And he was supposed to show me how to spray. And he
21 was showing me how to spray and as he was grabbing the hoses, I had no
22 idea what he was doing. He never explained to me how he knew what
23 color to paint that car. And I go what are you doing? And he goes well,
24 I'm painting. What do you think I'm doing? And I says well how do you
25 know what color to paint that car? He says oh, didn't I tell ya? [laughter]
26 [thumping] See those numbers up there and...? Yeah. Well [tapping]
27 that's the color number. We paint by numbers. I go okay. And after my 3
28 days was up, I still didn't know head nor tails of what I was doing because
29 he taught me nothin'. So then the Relief men, when they got done with
30 Relief, [tapping] they come back in the booth and worked with me and
31 showed me how to paint. [tapping] You want me to name those relief
32 men? [laughter]
33
34Marilyn Coulter: [2:47] Well do, do you still remember them?
35
36Ora Calhoun: [Stanley Meme 2:48] and Sam Pendleton.
37
38Marilyn Coulter: All right. [2:51] Now [laughter] and, uh, what year was this that you came
39 in?
40
41Ora Calhoun: D-, October 5, [thumping]1978.
42
43Marilyn Coulter: Oh. So and they showed you how to spray paint. [2:59] Was that
44 [inaudible 3:00]?
45
46Ora Calhoun: That was a lacquer back then.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: [3:02] A lacquer paint?
3
4 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [3:05] [clanking] So that was your first day and so what, what'd
7 you think about that?
8
9 Ora Calhoun: Well [laughter] it was different than from what I was used to doing and I
10 thought oh, my God, this is how you do it. Never had an i-, didn't have a
11 clue how you put a car together, how you paint, how you did [tapping]
12 anything. [thumping] So someone later on took me down in the Body
13 Shop. It was awesome. [laughter] It was j-, it was awesome. And I'm
14 standing down there just in amazement and, you know, with the spot
15 welders going and, you know, the [tapping] car moving on the conveyor.
16 And, I mean I was just amazed. And I went home and I just never stopped
17 [clanking] talking about how they put this car together, you know, and I
18 was just amazed.
19
20 Marilyn Coulter: [3:51] So what brought you in to Fisher Body?
21
22 Ora Calhoun: [3:55] Seriously?
23
24 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
25
26 Ora Calhoun: Money.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: [3:57] Money?
29
30 Ora Calhoun: Yes. Absolutely. I [inaudible 3:58] single parent, divorced, 2 children. The
31 children were getting older. As the children get older, the needs are more
32 expensive [clanking] and so that's why I went there.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: [4:10] So where did you work at prior to coming in here?
35
36 Ora Calhoun: American Sunroof.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: [4:14] Oh, so you worked? [4:14] You were used to plant life prior to
39 coming?
40
41 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [4:17] So [papers rustling] do that make it – did that make your transition
44 into Fisher Body a little bit easier, already having been [tsk] at a...
45
46 Ora Calhoun: Well at...

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: ...assembly plant of some kind?
3
4 Ora Calhoun: ...American Sunroof, the car was already put together.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [clinking]
7
8 Ora Calhoun: And at American Sunroof what you did was you kinda dismantled the car,
9 the interior, you know, the seats and such and cut out the sunroof. So we
10 did the sunroofs for General Motors until General Motors [clanking]
11 decided to do their own.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [clanking]
14
15 Ora Calhoun: Yeah.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [4:44] So you came here?
18
19 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [4:45] So, um, [thumping] how long have you worked at Fisher Body?
22 [clinking]
23
24 Ora Calhoun: I worked at Fisher Body since no-, October 5, 1978.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [4:55] And are you still currently working?
27
28 Ora Calhoun: I'm retired.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [4:57] You're retired now?
31
32 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [5:00] So, um, have – did you work in the Paint Department for
35 [your whole 5:03]...
36
37 Ora Calhoun: My entire 20-some years at [tapping] Fisher Body.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [5:06] So how many different jobs did you work in at Fisher Body?
40
41 Ora Calhoun: My-my. Um, as an hourly?
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [5:13] As an hourly. [papers rustling]
44
45 Ora Calhoun: I [tapping] started out in, uh, spray booth and then the [tapping] – back
46 then they called'm general foremans. Keith Ward, he came in. He used to

1 stand over me with his keys in this pocket [tapping] and rattling his keys,
2 which used to get on my nerves and I go why does he do that and people
3 said, well he do that to get on your nerves. And I thought okay. So I went
4 to spray and I sprayed him and he didn't do that anymore. [laughter]
5 [thumping] And after that, he put me on Utility. And I says why you
6 putting me on Utility and he says because I have been observing you
7 [papers rustling] and he says, uh, as a w-, as a female, I like the way you
8 work. He says I like the way you handle that spray gun. I said well why
9 didn't you just say so. You know?
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
12
13 Ora Calhoun: And so he put me on Utility and from that... [clanking]
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [6:09] And for those who don't know [tapping] what Utility is, can you
16 tell us what Utility is?
17
18 Ora Calhoun: You go around [throat clearing] and take over jobs of [banging]
19 employees that are absent or on vacation or whatever the case may be,
20 employees [inaudible 6:24] work. You go and you replace them.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: Now how long – [rattling] I know you made, you made the statement that
23 you did it as hourly. [6:31] How long were you an hourly employee
24 [inaudible 6:34]?
25
26 Ora Calhoun: From '78 to '83.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: [6:38] And during that time from '78 to '83, did you, um, uh, were you
29 involved in a lot of the changes that took place in your department or were
30 you involved in some of the, [papers rustling] um, groups [tapping] that
31 [clicking] started there? [tapping]
32
33 Ora Calhoun: Back when I was on hourly was when they started EPG, which is
34 Employee Participation [tapping] Groups and I was one of the first to go
35 through the class. And back then, it was [Rus McPherson 7:10], which
36 was salary, and [Bruce DeLand 7:13], which union hourly. And, oh, my
37 gosh, I can't even tell ya [tapping] how long the class was but that's when
38 things started to change at GM, was when they brought in EPG.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [7:26] And was that a good change, a bad change? [7:29] What was it?
41
42 Ora Calhoun: It was good. [tapping]
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: [7:31] And what was good about it?
45

1Ora Calhoun: [sighing] They had started to give the employees some say-so in their jobs
2 and in, uh, eh, you know, how the jobs are set up and, and those kinds of
3 things. It was, it was, it was good.
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [7:50] So you got active in that process?
6

7Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
8

9Marilyn Coulter: [7:52] Were you an EPG leader or just a team member or...?
10

11Ora Calhoun: Just a team member.
12

13Marilyn Coulter: [7:56] Just a team member?
14

15Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
16

17Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Um, so you had those [tapping] types of projects. [8:02] What was a
18 day like for you [tapping] back as an hourly employee?
19

20Ora Calhoun: A day?
21

22Marilyn Coulter: [8:06] A day? [8:06] What types of things did you do to get you through
23 the day? [8:08] I mean what type of things did you do for camaraderie,
24 lunches? [8:11] How did you have lunch? [8:12] How'd you come to
25 work? [tapping] [8:13] What are [those] – [tapping] [some] 8:14] things
26 you did?
27

28Ora Calhoun: [tsk] I drove myself to work. Didn't like riding with anybody 'cause when
29 it's time to go, I like to go. [laughter] As far as lunch, I didn't like going
30 out to lunch. I always stayed in. People used to try to get me to go out to
31 lunch. I go no; if I go out, I wouldn't wanna come back. So I, I, I made a
32 habit of not going out to lunch. And I would sit and do crossword puzzles
33 or read a book or something like that at lunchtime 'cause I wasn't much of
34 a lunch eater. So I just kinda stayed in and stayed to myself.
35

36Marilyn Coulter: [8:44] So did they have like holiday dinners or...
37

38Ora Calhoun: Oh...
39

40Marilyn Coulter: ...group dinners [inaudible] 8:48]?
41

42Ora Calhoun: Oh, absolutely. [laughter]
43

44Marilyn Coulter: [8:50] So what were those like in, in the Paint Department? [clanking]
45

1 Ora Calhoun: [tsk] Oh, well, you know, you had to be careful of where you set the food
2 up because of, [tapping] you know, the paint and such. But back in the
3 lacquer days, it wasn't [throat clearing] so bad. Uh, everyone would bring
4 in – most of the time, the supervisor [thumping] would supply the meat
5 and each hourly person would bring in a dish to pass. And boy I'm gonna
6 tell ya, there was some good cooks up in that place. I'm here to tell ya.
7 You know? So and that's what we did.
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: [9:16] Did you [clinking] get any lasting friendships from being in the
10 plant or any close people that you still keep in touch with?
11

12 Ora Calhoun: I still keep in touch with, uh, with some a the peoples. A lot of'm I meet
13 up with at the [Inaudible 9:28], you know, and we stand and talk, talk for a
14 hour or whatever, you know, and, eh, like we did that day. We – yeah.
15

16 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
17

18 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
19

20 Ora Calhoun: Yeah.
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: [9:38] [Yeah 9:38], Michael?
23

24 Michael Flemming: You know, I wanna go back when you, uh, first came into the Paint
25 Department and you were spraying, um, [tapping] you ended up being an
26 EPG leader. Eh, there was – had to be [thumping] some type of protective
27 clothing or...
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 9:57].
30

31 Michael Flemming: ...some type of, uh, evolution of health and [coughing] and safety from
32 when you came in until now. [10:04] Uh, can you talk about [coughing]
33 the, the health and safety? [clanking] [10:07] Who was your safety rep
34 maybe and, [coughing] and the types of things that went along with, with
35 spraying a, a car and what, what did you spray [background noise] on the
36 car in [tapping] in Main Color? [10:16] What did you actually
37 [background noise] spray?
38

39 Ora Calhoun: Back when I hired in, I sprayed door jambs [tapping] and back then we
40 were making 88s and 98s.
41

42 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
43

44 Ora Calhoun: Those were some pretty big cars.
45

46 Michael Flemming: Yes.

1
2Ora Calhoun: And I mean the door openings, which, which you call door jambs, the door
3 openings [rubbing] were very large.
4
5Michael Flemming: Yes.
6
7Ora Calhoun: And we had a lotta 4 doors and I had to spray both.
8
9Michael Flemming: [Mm-hm 10:39]. [laughter]
10
11Marilyn Coulter: [Uh-huh 10:40].
12
13Jerri Smith: [Mm-hm 10:14].
14
15Ora Calhoun: Back then you did not necessarily have to wear [clanking] protective
16 clothing. It was your choice. If you knew how to spray, you could go in
17 there with these clothes on because the lacquer [tapping] was not like your
18 basecoat clearcoat. You didn't get all the lint and stuff into the lacquer like
19 you do the basecoat clearcoat. So if you were a good sprayer, you can go
20 in there and spray with your regular clothes on. Well I got pretty doggone
21 good. I'm here to tell ya. [laughter] And they'd give you like a little air
22 nozzle and at the end of the night, you just kinda, you know, spray your
23 arms and stuff off and [laughter] you'd be on your way, you know, and it
24 was, it was great back then. Then [throat clearing] when EPA came in,
25 then they had to change, you know, the, the paint system and we went
26 from lacquer to basecoat clearcoat.
27
28Michael Flemming: [11:38] The EPA being the Environmental...
29
30Ora Calhoun: Protection Agency.
31
32Michael Flemming: ...Protection Agency?
33
34Ora Calhoun: Yes.
35
36Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
37
38Ora Calhoun: Yes.
39
40Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
41
42Ora Calhoun: And then we had to go to the basecoat clearcoat because of the
43 environment.
44
45Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
46

1 Ora Calhoun: That's when the protective clothing came in. Everyone working in the
2 paint booth had to wear coveralls whether you wanted to or not. You had
3 to wear coveralls. As far as safety, they [papers rustling] highly
4 recommended earplugs or the head, uh, covers – uh-huh.
5

6 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
7

8 Ora Calhoun: And, me, I have sensitive ears, so I couldn't do the earplugs so good.
9

10 Michael Flemming: Yeah.
11

12 Ora Calhoun: So when [laughter] the supervisor come in I'd have mine out and he says
13 well, what are you doing and I'd say well, I'm spraying and he says well,
14 where's your ear protection and I says I can't wear those [thumping]
15 things; they hurt my ears. So he sent me down and got a pair – a
16 headphone.
17

18 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm. [clanking]
19

20 Ora Calhoun: Well by me wearing glasses, [laughter] they s-, crushed, you know, the,
21 the horns on your glasses, always made my ears [banging] sore. So I had a
22 heck of a time with the safety issues in there as far as, you know, the ear
23 protection. So he says what I recommend you do, he says [throat clearing]
24 why don't you wear them for a couple a hours and then take'm off for
25 about a half an hour [clanking] and I go okay; that might work. And sure –
26 it did. It did. So that's how I got over [tapping] as far as [laughter] wearing
27 ear protection. Uh, you had to wear gloves, you know, or course. They had
28 back then what they called pigskin gloves.
29

30 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
31

32 Ora Calhoun: And they were a l-, you know, they were stiff [and] [inaudible 13:03] but
33 you had to get used to'm and – 'cause you had to wear the ear, the
34 earmuffs. You had to wear [clanking] the, the gloves and you had to wear
35 coveralls, so. [tapping]
36

37 Michael Flemming: [13:13] Did this present any type of problem in the summer months when
38 you had to put all this extra clothing on?
39

40 Ora Calhoun: Kinda sorta, [laughter] you know.
41

42 Michael Flemming: [13:23] As far as temperature and whatnot?
43

44 Ora Calhoun: Yeah. Yeah. It wasn't – I'll tell ya, [tapping] they had air in the booth but
45 it wasn't exactly air conditioned.
46

1Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
2

3Ora Calhoun: They would allow you to kinda, [thumping] you know, open up here and
4 you, you could wear clothes underneath'm or you didn't have to. The
5 choice was yours. Whatever way made you cool but you had to have, you
6 know, had to have the coveralls on.
7

8Michael Flemming: [13:51] So it didn't affect the amount of relief that you got at all?
9

10Ora Calhoun: [No 13:53]. [tapping]
11

12Michael Flemming: Okay.
13

14Ora Calhoun: Well as far as?
15

16Michael Flemming: [13:57] As far as being relief for a longer amount of time because it was
17 so warm or not or [inaudible 14:01]?
18

19Ora Calhoun: They came up with [throat clearing] to call heat relief...
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [Oh 14:05].
22

23Ora Calhoun: ...and that would give people extra relief outta the booth because it was
24 so, you know...
25

26Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
27

28Ora Calhoun: ...undesirable as they say.
29

30Michael Flemming: [14:13] Uh, do you remember the times when they had, um, relief in, in
31 certain, um, types of, uh, refreshments would come along? [14:22] Uh,
32 were you around when they had the wagon?
33

34Ora Calhoun: Oh, yeah.
35

36Michael Flemming: [14:26] Can you talk about that for us?
37

38Ora Calhoun: Um, that was there when I hired [clinking] in. We would get a wagon like
39 at 9, 9:05 in the morning and that was like for 7 minutes and then you
40 would get another wagon at like 1, 1:05 in the [tapping] afternoon and that
41 was for an additional 7 minutes that was above and beyond your
42 [thumping] normal relief that you got during the course of a day.
43

44Marilyn Coulter: [14:53] Um, Ora, just to go back real quickly, since we were talking about
45 safety equipment, did you have to wear any type of breathing equipment
46 to protect your lungs at all [inaudible 15:02]?

1
2 Ora Calhoun: No. You didn't, eh, eh, back then you didn't have to but they did
3 recommend that you wear a, a mask...
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
6
7 Ora Calhoun: ...and they had like the, uh, dust mask...
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
10
11 Ora Calhoun: ...back at that time. [tapping] And then there were some people that were
12 concerned about their own health...
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
15
16 Ora Calhoun: ...and they wanted the – [tsk] oh gosh – the, the other kinda mask that you
17 have to go down to the hospital and, and, and get fitted for it.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
20
21 Ora Calhoun: So it was their choice if they wanted to wear that kind. Me, I wore a dust
22 mask because it was very light, you know, and of course you'd slip it up
23 and the supervisor would come in and catch you with it up on your
24 forehead and, [clinking] you know, make you pull it back down type
25 thing, you know.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: [15:45] So primarily during your time as an hourly worker, were you a
28 spray painter, eh, and, eh, d-, did you just do your Utility inside the spray
29 booth or was it [inaudible 15:53]?
30
31 Ora Calhoun: No. All over the Paint Shop.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [15:55] All over the Paint Shop?
34
35 Ora Calhoun: Yeah.
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [15:56] Now where was your favorite area in the Paint Shop to
38 work in? [tapping]
39
40 Ora Calhoun: Eh, you know...
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 16:02].
43
44 Ora Calhoun: ...I, eh – you know, to be honest [knocking] with ya, the spray booth was.
45
46 Marilyn Coulter: [16:07] And why was that?

1
2Ora Calhoun: Because it was more challenging to put that paint on that car and get it
3 right.
4
5Marilyn Coulter: Hm. [16:14] Because what, what were some of the things that you had to
6 be careful of in doing that? [clanking]
7
8Ora Calhoun: [16:18] In spraying [knocking] the car?
9
10Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
11
12Ora Calhoun: Not to sag the paint, which means – sag means putting on too much paint
13 where it [coughing] it just kinda run off, you know, down the side. That
14 was one of the, one of the things you had to be careful of. And you had to
15 make sure that you got [clinking] enough on where you would cover the
16 metal, [rubbing] you know.
17
18Marilyn Coulter: So [tapping] now [rattling] you were a woman. [16:40] Were there
19 [clanking] very many women spraying in the spray booth?
20
21Ora Calhoun: No. [laughter]
22
23Marilyn Coulter: [16:45] And can you tell us what it was like? [16:46] Was Paint – did they
24 have a lot of women? [banging] And then I know that, that you're an
25 African-American woman. [16:50] Were there many people of color?
26
27Ora Calhoun: Paint had a lot of female employees because of the Sealer line, the cleanup
28 jobs, those kinds of things and as [tapping] they h-, and, and a lotta the
29 women were hired in the booth but as new employees come along, they'd
30 transfer out to a different job and they would put the newer females into
31 the booth.
32
33Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [17:17] And so were there very many, um, African-American
34 females or African-American...
35
36Ora Calhoun: In the booth?
37
38Marilyn Coulter: ...or – were in the Paint Department period?
39
40Ora Calhoun: Oh, in the Paint Department. [throat clearing] Oh, absolutely.
41
42Marilyn Coulter: All right.
43
44Ora Calhoun: I can't give you a figure but there was a lot.
45
46Marilyn Coulter: [17:27] And in '78 when you came in...

1
2Ora Calhoun: Yes.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: ...there were a lot?
5
6Ora Calhoun: Yes.
7
8Marilyn Coulter: [17:30] So that was a fine transition for you?
9
10Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
11
12Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible] [coming in there 17:32]. [17:33] Um, now are there any other
13 family members of yours working here?
14
15Ora Calhoun: [Inaudible 17:37] not at this particular plant. No. S-...
16
17Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 17:43].
18
19Ora Calhoun: Used to but not – but transferred to Pontiac.
20
21Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [17:47] Um, [clinking] so what were your reactions to, um,
22 [thumping] [clanking] the name changes?
23
24Ora Calhoun: As far as GM?
25
26Marilyn Coulter: [17:54] As far as Fisher Body, BOC...
27
28Ora Calhoun: To me...
29
30Marilyn Coulter: ...Lansing Car Assembly [sighing] [inaudible 17:58]?
31
32Ora Calhoun: To me it will always be Fisher Body and Oldsmobile. That's the way I felt
33 about it. They come in with LAD, which means Lansing Auto Division.
34 [thumping] Then they came up with BOC, which is Buick, Olds and
35 Cadillac, which at that time we never did get a Cadillac. Then, uh, they
36 came up with LCA, which means Lansing Car Assembly. So I said I don't
37 care what you call it; to me it's Fisher Body [coughing] and Oldsmobile.
38 [laughter]
39
40Marilyn Coulter: [18:24] And why was that?
41
42Ora Calhoun: I don't know. It was just, you know, ever since I can remember it's
43 Oldsmobile and Fisher Body and changing that name just didn't do it for
44 me. You know...
45
46Marilyn Coulter: [Hm 18:32].

1
2Ora Calhoun: ...it just – yeah.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: [18:33] And now you said that, um, you weren't always an hourly and so
5 now you're management now?
6
7Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
8
9Marilyn Coulter: [18:42] And when did you make that transition [thumping] and what made
10 you go to, um... [clanking]
11
12Ora Calhoun: You don't want this on tape. [laughter] [tapping] [clanking]
13
14Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [gutturals] [18:52] When did you...
15
16Ora Calhoun: No. I, I went...
17
18Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 18:54]?
19
20Ora Calhoun: I went on – well my s-, superintendent at the time [tapping] was African-
21 American and he...
22
23Marilyn Coulter: [19:06] So that was [Inaudible 19:06]?
24
25Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
26
27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
28
29Ora Calhoun: ...asked me about going on salary and I said eww, I don't know; my
30 temper's too bad. I, I, I really don't, [laughter] don't wanna do that and I
31 said [and it's 19:17] what I've seen some of your upper management do to
32 your supervisors, I said I know I couldn't handle it, so I better not, you
33 know, do it at this time. So they kinda okay, you know, and let me go and
34 a couple weeks later, he came back again [throat clearing] and approached
35 me again and, in fact, they called me in the office. Then I got nervous
36 'cause [laughter] I didn't know what they wanted. [thumping] So I walk in
37 the office. There was 4 of'm in there [clanking] and, uh, they says have a
38 seat and I look around and go well I don't know if I wanna sit down or
39 not; I'll just stand for now. And so he approached me again about going on
40 salary. [tsk] And, uh, I said well I'm still not sure whether it's what I
41 wanna do or not. And he says w-, what, what, what's the problem? Why,
42 why, why – what's – what – you know, what's your, what's your, you
43 know, problem with – I said because I have seen your assistant plant
44 manager talk to some of your supervisors and I didn't like what I saw.
45

1 And I said because they're very – [clanking] if he ever did it to me, I'd lose
2 my job and I know I would, so may-, you know, maybe [laughter] I better
3 not go on. So he said well tell me what it w-, and I told him exactly what I
4 saw and I said so if he ever did that to me, I'd probably break his hand and
5 then I'd lose my job. [laughter] So he sat there and he go okay. [coughing]
6 And, uh, [papers rustling] I said, you know, [sighing] not that I don't feel
7 that I can do the job. It's just that you have to let me do the job the way I
8 know that I can do it and I said I don't like public humiliation and that's
9 what he does to people and I says and I, I can't deal with that and I said
10 you know I'll give it a shot. I says but the first time you guys humiliate me
11 out there on that line in front of the employees that are working for me, y-,
12 you know what you can do with your job. And I'm gonna tell you, from
13 that day on, I never had a problem with anybody.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [21:17] [tsk] So you took the job?
16
17 Ora Calhoun: Yeah.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [21:20] And then so what was it – were there many female supervisors?
20
21 Ora Calhoun: One, two – [Joy 21:30], [Jerri 21:31]. No.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [21:34] So was that [inaudible 21:34]?
24
25 Ora Calhoun: Not in the Paint Shop anyway.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: In the Paint Shop. [21:37] So how was that transition [background noise]
28 for you going to a place where there were very few female supervisors and
29 how were you treated by your employees and your upper management?
30
31 Ora Calhoun: Very well as a matter a fact because the hourly people, you know, they
32 knew me and they knew where I was coming from and I didn't have any
33 problems outta anybody and as far as management, [tsk] they helped me
34 just – you know, helped me a lot. They helped me out as much as they,
35 you know, as much as they could to help so the transition was, you
36 know...
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: [22:08] So as a supervisor, what would you say is something that you're
39 most proud of [papers rustling] during your time as being a supervisor?
40 [clanking]
41
42 Ora Calhoun: Working with and helping the hourly people because people tend to forget
43 where they come from when they go off that line and go into the
44 management aspect of it. They forget where they come from. [throat
45 clearing] I never forgot where I came from. I came from that paint booth. I
46 never forgot that. And anything that I could I do and probably anybody

1 that worked for me could tell ya that I did everything that I possibly could
2 to help the hourly people. John can even tell ya that.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [Inaudible 22:54]. [22:55] So, [clanking] um, [papers rustling]
5 during, um, [tapping] during your time as a, a [clanking] supervisor, um,
6 were there any major changes that took place?
7
8 Ora Calhoun: As far as?
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [23:11] In the Paint Department, what changed?
11
12 Ora Calhoun: The, [sighing] the biggest change was when they went from – you know,
13 changed the paint.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [banging]
16
17 Ora Calhoun: Then, of course, [throat clearing] your, your managers change. Some start
18 to retire, [clanking] get transferred to other places and they [papers
19 rustling] bring new ones onboard, some that had never worked in a paint
20 shop.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: [23:39] How did that work?
23
24 Ora Calhoun: [A- for 23:41] – [laughter] not too good sometimes. [laughter]
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: Cheryl?
27
28 Cheryl McQuaid: [23:49] Ora, what shift did you hire in on and what shift did you prefer?
29 [thumping]
30
31 Ora Calhoun: Uh, I hired in on nightshift and [clanking] I'm not a night person. I prefer
32 working days because of my, my daughters. I, I – they were young at the
33 time. They were 11 and, and 13, right at that age when they need mama
34 home. [clanking] And I hired in the nightshift. Thank God for my sister.
35 You know, I had my sister to, [clanking] you know, to help watch them
36 while I worked [clanking] nights and I was on nights for [papers rustling]
37 a couple a years and then I got to go to days [and but 24:28] I s-, went to
38 the – [tapping] I had to get off Utility [thumping] and take a job in the
39 booth in order to get to days and I was willing to sacrifice [background
40 noise] my Utility job in order to get to days so I could be with my
41 daughters. [tapping]
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [24:44] Um, now how did that work for you when you became a
44 supervisor because don't supervisors switch shifts and...?
45

1 Ora Calhoun: Yeah. I kinda – at first I kinda had the same problem but [thumping] then
2 there were supervisors that did not like working days.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
5
6 Ora Calhoun: And [clanking] I have to admit, my bosses were pretty good about putting
7 me opposite of someone that did not like working days.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [25:09] [Really 25:09]?
10
11 Ora Calhoun: So I lucked out.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Now, Ora, I personally know about you that you were a very active person
14 and you [laughter] used to play a lot of sports and things like that. [25:19]
15 Did you get involved in a lotta the sports and the committees and groups
16 that they used to have in the plant? I know some of the tournaments you
17 used to play in.
18
19 Ora Calhoun: I – softball, played, uh, a [tapping] lotta softball [but I actually 25:31] – I
20 [thumping] played softball – city softball before I hired in to Fisher Body
21 and I played city softball for 10 years. [clanking] Then when I hired in at
22 [popping] Fisher Body, [tapping] [throat clearing] when they started the
23 EPG, Employee Participation Groups, is when they started getting the
24 employees involved in sports [tapping] and I played, um, a softball – a
25 league there for a couple a years. [tsk] And then, uh, I got into bowling. A
26 couple of the girls that, uh, you know, I knew pretty well, they s-, 602 had
27 – they started a bowling league. So then I got involved in bowling and I
28 got involved in golfing. So I bowl, golf and play softball. [laughter]
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [26:14] And [inaudible 26:14] in the 602 [inaudible 26:17]?
31
32 Ora Calhoun: Eh, as far as the bowling, yes. [tapping] The golfing, no. [banging]
33 [tapping]
34
35 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.
38
39 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [throat clearing]
40
41 Jerri Smith: [Inaudible 26:26].
42
43 Doug Rademacher: [26:28] One, about, uh, when you were on the [throat clearing] assembly
44 line working and then as you became a supervisor, [papers rustling] what
45 was your, uh, contact with skilled trades? [26:39] How did that, uh –
46 [tapping] have you got some stories you could share. [26:42] Was there a

1 helpful time when you were, uh – where you needed a tradesperson or just
2 what was the, uh, the relationship in the 2 different positions?
3
4 Ora Calhoun: You know, [tapping] [throat clearing] skilled trades were some very, very
5 good people. I never had any problems with not one skilled tradesperson
6 when I wanted something because I knew how to go and ask for what I
7 want. I didn't go being demanding and says I gotta have this; [banging] I
8 want this. Eh, eh, you know, there's a-, [laughter] there's always a way to
9 get what you want and with skilled trades. I never had a problem with the
10 hourly skilled trades nor the supervisors, never have. [banging] Anything I
11 want, I got it. It's that simple. [laughter]
12
13 Doug Rademacher: [27:30] Could you share a moment of something that happened where they
14 were helpful for you?
15
16 Ora Calhoun: [tsk] Okay. Up in [21-2 27:36], [clanking] Finesse and Polish area...
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [Oh 27:40]. [clanking]
19
20 Ora Calhoun: Up there [tsk] because of the, [tapping] because of the setup, the way the
21 conveyor was and people polishing and, you know, eh, when the jobs
22 come up from downstairs, they finesse and polish and then on the back
23 line [thumping] they would pick up spots that, you know, [was on 28:00]
24 the main line and you had to adjust a lotta platforms. [clanking] There was
25 not one time that I needed a platform adjusted that I didn't get it. And I'm
26 one of the few that didn't have to write work orders for what I wanted and
27 I was lucky. I'm tellin' ya. And then before they put the counter up there to
28 tell you how many jobs was going down the FF line and how many was in
29 the Trim bank, [throat clearing] the electrician was up there was just
30 awesome. [thumping] We used to have to walk that line at the end of the
31 day to count the jobs on the FF line, which means Final Finish, and how
32 many jobs was in the [banging] Trim bank, [papers rustling] so he and I
33 used to sit there and try to figure out what to do so you wouldn't have to
34 do that.
35
36 So he – [papers rustling] very intelligent individual. He was electrician
37 and he came up with the idea [tapping] of putting that counter in so that it
38 would count the jobs for you. As the jobs dropped down [thumping] on the
39 Final Finish line, it would register on that counter, you know, as it's going
40 down and how many jobs was in the bank. And that was one of the most
41 [knocking] memorable things and he wrote a suggestion and they didn't
42 wanna pay him for it. [clanking] They told'm it was part [background
43 noise] of his job. So I went to my boss and my boss was not happy and he
44 made sure that he got his Suggestion Award, [tapping] which was max.
45
46 Doug Rademacher: [29:35] Oh, he got the maximum [pay 29:35]?

1
2 Ora Calhoun: Oh, absolutely.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [29:37] And that would be?
5
6 Ora Calhoun: 20.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: [29:38] The \$20,000?
9
10 Ora Calhoun: Yes.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [Hm 29:39].
13
14 Ora Calhoun: Yes.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: [29:41] And you were infl-, influential on him receiving that?
17
18 Ora Calhoun: Oh, absolutely. [laughter]
19
20 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 29:44].
21
22 Ora Calhoun: He deserved it. [29:47] Do you know how much time he saved me at the
23 end of the shift when I wanted to go home? [laughter]
24
25 Doug Rademacher: [29:50] Oh, you know, huh? [laughter]
26
27 Ora Calhoun: Yes. [laughter] Yes.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: Um...
30
31 Ora Calhoun: So that was one of the memorable things.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [29:58] I'd like to ask you when you were, uh, an active worker on the
34 line, did you participate and get active in your union at all? [30:07] Did
35 you...
36
37 Ora Calhoun: Never missed a union meeting.
38
39 Doug Rademacher: ...know your union rep?
40
41 Ora Calhoun: Never missed a union meeting. Used to get out and solicit people to go to
42 union meetings and it used to, [sighing] it used to irritate me because
43 people would [thumping] sit in there and complain about what the union
44 does, what the union doesn't do and, you know, blah-blah-blah. [tapping]
45 And I said well why don't you go [clicking] to union meeting? Well I
46 don't have time. I go then why you complaining. It's only for an hour,

1 hour and a half at the most on a Saturday. If you can't give up an hour or
2 an hour and a half to go to your union meeting when you supposedly got
3 something to complain about, [snapping] then you don't deserve to be
4 heard.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
7
8 Ora Calhoun: And that's the way I felt and I still feel that way. Like I say, [laughter]
9 even on salary, I used to still used to encourage people to go to union
10 meetings. Honestly, I did that. [tapping]
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [Okay 30:55]. That's great. Um, Cheryl?
13
14 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [31:01] Ora, did you ever see any pranks played on...
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 31:04].
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: ...people when – a new hires either as a new hire yourself or as a
19 supervisor? [31:10] Any kind of horseplay going on?
20
21 Ora Calhoun: [sighing] Yeah. There was a lotta different horseplay going – I, I was
22 never [throat clearing] into horseplay. [throat clearing] You know, there
23 was a g-, [laughter] [rattling] when I was on hourly, [throat clearing] been
24 in the booth, the line used to – back then the line used to break down a lot.
25 [coughing] [pen clicking] And [sighing] I don't know if, eh, you, you
26 remember a metal wall in the [background conversation] booth. Back then
27 the water was inside a that wall and it used to be nice and cool and
28 [tapping] when the line would break down, you know, you'd kinda lean up
29 against that wall and oh, it was so cool. It used to feel so good because you
30 had the coveralls on. [tapping] The, the Relief man that I was telling you
31 about [throat clearing] used to love to horseplay with those guys in the
32 booth and there was only a couple females in there. So they'd come in
33 there, you know, and do their little karate kicks and, you know, and all that
34 kinda stuff and, you know, boot the other one in the rear and that kinda
35 stuff.
36
37 Eh, so the line broke down [tapping] one night and I was standing there
38 [laughter] leaning against the wall. You know, it felt so good. And then I
39 happened to look down. My shoe [thumping] come untied. So I put my
40 foot on the back of the [thumping] body truck to tie my shoe and this
41 young kid went to raise his foot to boot me in the rear. [laughter] So I
42 stood there. I go I wouldn't do that if I were you and he says and why not.
43 I says well I'll like to see you explain to the boss how you got your foot
44 broke. [laughter] [tsk] Well after that, there was no more horseplaying for
45 Ora. Nobody ever – I swear to you [throat clearing] no – the word got
46 around [background conversation] and I didn't tell ya all that I said

1 because [laughter] [inaudible 32:44]. [laughter] [throat clearing] You
2 know. [laughter] And, eh, [background conversation] I never had any
3 problems with people horseplaying but I didn't like horseplaying because
4 people – a lotta people don't know when to quit and then that's when
5 people get hurt.
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: Michael Flemming?
8
9 Michael Flemming: Hi. Ora, um, when y-, [clicking] and from '78 to '83...
10
11 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
12
13 Michael Flemming: ...you were hourly. [33:08] Back at that time and even as you became a
14 supervisor, were you involved in any of the s-, any strikes or layoffs that
15 were significant at, uh, Fisher Body?
16
17 Ora Calhoun: Oh, yeah. [laughter]
18
19 Michael Flemming: [Okay 33:19].
20
21 Ora Calhoun: In s-, '79 was a big layoff. [tsk] We had – the first year – no. '79 was the
22 big layoff. I worked changeover during that layoff – during that downtime.
23 When we went back to work – back then you had longer changeovers –
24 [writing] when we went back to work in August, I worked for a couple a
25 weeks and I got laid off. Well, of course, I wasn't happy that I got laid off
26 and I was in the booth at that time. So I was laid off from August
27 [knocking] to March. Went back to work March 7th.
28
29 So I'm back in there spraying door jambs again. Right? So then this girl –
30 [laughter] she was a nice girl – she, uh, says oh, Ora, while we were off I
31 got me a new car and I'm all happy, you know, that she laid off and, you
32 know, still able to get her a new car and I go oh, what kinda car did you
33 get. She go a Scirocco. I go a what. She go a Scirocco. Then I got mad. I
34 go you mean to tell me I've been laid off for 7 months and you go out and
35 buy a foreign car? I sprayed her all night. [laughter] She had to go, she had
36 to go out [clapping] [laughter] and get the supervisor to get me off of her.
37 [laughter] I swear to you. Ev-, every time I opened that door, I sprayed
38 her. Oh, she was crying like a baby. I – [laughter] um, I'm not kidding.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 34:52].
41
42 Ora Calhoun: [Inaudible] [Click 34:53] was the supervisor. [laughter] I sprayed her all
43 night.
44
45 Michael Flemming: Oh. Okay.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Well that's different.
2
3 Michael Flemming: Um... [laughter]
4
5 Ora Calhoun: I'm out 7 months. She go buy a foreign car. Oh, that [laughter] [inaudible]
6 35:02].
7
8 Michael Flemming: [Can we s- 35:04]...
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [35:04] [Can you explain 35:04] what's a changeover?
11
12 Ora Calhoun: Huh?
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: [35:06] Explain what is a changeover? You changeover. [35:08] What's
15 that?
16
17 Ora Calhoun: Changeover, uh, back then [coughing] was when the models would
18 change. You would be done making the previous year say 2005. You go
19 down in July. [clanking] You were off from anywhere from a month, you
20 know, or better [thumping] and when you go back, you will be making the
21 new model year.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [Hm 35:32].
24
25 Ora Calhoun: So that's what changeovers were. They don't have those anymore.
26
27 Michael Flemming: And in your ch-, Mike Flemming – in your changeovers, uh, when you
28 were an hourly, uh, certainly that was [background noise] a way to make
29 extra money if I'm not mistaken.
30
31 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
32
33 Michael Flemming: [35:45] Uh, quite a few people took advantage of that. [35:48] Um, how
34 many changeovers did you work? [35:50] Do you know?
35
36 Ora Calhoun: One.
37
38 Michael Flemming: [35:51] One? [laughter] [35:52] And that was enough? [laughter] [35:53]
39 C-, can you explain a little bit about that one [inaudible 35:55]?
40
41 Ora Calhoun: That changeover I worked, [laughter] oh – [thumping] can I tell you a
42 little story? [laughter]
43
44 Michael Flemming: Sure. [clanking]
45
46 Marilyn Coulter: Please. [laughter]

1
2 Ora Calhoun: Back then [tsk] females and males alike wore their hair braded with the
3 beads. Okay? And I had a lotta braids [clanking] in my hair and I had
4 beads [clanking] in my hair. So we went down to th-, I was assigned to
5 Sanitation. So we go down to the Sanitation Office and the supervisor says
6 okay, you know, you sit here; you sit there and blah. Okay. So then when
7 he [laughter] got ready to get his crew together, you know, and there
8 wasn't only a couple, three females, [tapping] you know, that are working.
9 I'm like oh God, I betcha he's gonna put me to work with all these guys,
10 you know, like that. [thumping] So he told Joe Blow, you know, come on
11 you go with me; you go with me; you go with me [tapping] and these are
12 all guys, right. I thought oh God, here we go, watch, here we go. He turns
13 around and he looks at me, he goes come on. I go but you got all guys and
14 he looked at me like okay. [laughter] So...
15
16 Michael Flemming: [Inaudible 37:07].
17
18 Ora Calhoun: I'm serious. [laughter] [thumping] And I gets up and I follow along. So we
19 get to the men's bathroom. He's explaining what he wants clean and I said
20 – shh, oh God, okay. You know, the urinals. [laughter] So then he goes to
21 tell everybody if you hafta to go [tapping] to the bathroom, you just, you
22 know, go to the bathroom. I go oh, [banging] nobody go to the bathroom
23 and he turned around and he looked at me. I says I need a ladies room. His
24 face got as red as that [banging] cup [laughter] because he thought I was a
25 guy...
26
27 Michael Flemming: Oh, yeah, because of the...
28
29 Ora Calhoun: ...because I, you know, uh...
30
31 Michael Flemming: ...braids.
32
33 Ora Calhoun: ...guys wore beads and braids back then too. [laughter] So I said to him, I
34 go, you know, I done realize I don't have a lotta chest, I said, but dang.
35 [laughter] Oh, [banging] [coughing] I swear to you, within 5 minutes it
36 was all over that plant. [laughter] I mean people [banging] were harassing
37 him for a week. [laughter]
38
39 Michael Flemming: [38:04] Ora, [laughter] Ora, could you [thumping] talk about, um, eh,
40 you're – now you're, you know, you're a, a supervisor; you got your own
41 department.
42
43 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
44
45 Michael Flemming: ...been there for a while...
46

1 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm. [background noise]
2
3 Michael Flemming: ...talk about, eh, beginning the day, you need to run, [knocking] how you
4 got that thing moving from day to day.
5
6 Ora Calhoun: [Oh, man 38:21].
7
8 Ora Calhoun: Well [tsk] you take roll. You have a list [tapping] of your employees.
9 [thumping] You have a book. You know who's supposed to be on
10 vacation [background conversation] and who's supposed to be there. So
11 vacation was vacation for – people got a 5-day excused absence and they
12 could take a day anytime they got ready [tapping] as long as they let the
13 supervisor know that they were gonna take the day off and the vacation
14 schedule allowed that to happen. And some of'm – and sometimes, you
15 know, it, eh, it was – couldn't be helped that, you know, people took a day
16 off and [tsk] for the most part, for the most part, my employees came to
17 work but if they didn't, [tapping] they would call [tapping] and they would
18 call me [tapping] a-, because I got – always got to work early and they
19 would call in in plenty [tapping] enough time for me to let the boss know
20 so and so is not gonna be here I only got X number of Utility people, so
21 I'm gonna need, eh, another person or 2 people or whatever in order to run.
22
23 Well if I didn't have enough Utility people to cover, then, uh, the team
24 coordinator [thumping] would have to cover the line or the [SBC 39:45]
25 person and after a while, that happened a lot. You know, uh, it was hard to
26 get the line covered. Sometime I'd hold the line. You know, they didn't
27 like for you to do that but I did [rattling] what I had to do, you know, and a
28 couple times I got on the line myself, which [wasn't, uh 40:02] –
29 [laughter] but, you know, and, and, and hourly people never, [banging]
30 you know, really they never said anything because they know I wasn't
31 gonna be there long. You know? And they would send me some help or, to
32 be honest with you, they wouldn't do it for everybody but for me, they
33 would double up. They wouldn't do it for everybody. They would double
34 up until I got some help. That's how – that's the kind of rapport that I had
35 with my people. I can tell ya, [banging] they do that. They'd do it for me
36 but they wouldn't do it for everybody else [clanking] because of the way
37 you treat your people.
38
39 Michael Flemming: Certainly.
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.
42
43 Michael Flemming: It, it sounds as though you, you had a unique department.
44
45 Ora Calhoun: You know, I did and each – [clapping] [tsk] I, I, I [coughing] moved
46 around a lot, you know, in the Paint Shop. In fact, I worked every

1 department in the Paint Shop from the Sealer line to, uh, cleanup jobs
2 prior to, uh, uh, booth, uh, s-, sanding before I went into Main Color. I
3 worked Finesse and Polish and I also worked Repair. Repair was a piece a
4 work. [thumping]
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: [41:07] Ora, [clicking] being a supervisor, [throat clearing] what would
7 you say surprised you most when you became a supervisor, something
8 [clanking] that you didn't think was gonna be, [tapping] uh, turned out to
9 be so?
10
11 Ora Calhoun: Nothing really. Honestly.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: [41:20] You – it was...
14
15 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: ...pretty much what you thought it would be? [tapping]
18
19 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [tapping] [41:23] My other question is they have – I know they
22 have a lotta different rules and regulations and I know – h-, how did the
23 smoking ban change or affect the Paint Shop at all [banging] [inaudible
24 41:32]?
25
26 Ora Calhoun: [41:33] By them not smoking in the, in the plant?
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
29
30 Ora Calhoun: Not good. [laughter]
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: [41:41] And that was because? [tapping]
33
34 Ora Calhoun: Because as far as I was concerned, people were messing with my civil
35 rights. If I chose to smoke, that's my business. But, yes, they had a right to
36 tell me that I couldn't smoke in that plant. That was their house and they
37 had a right to tell me that I couldn't do that. So and, and – [sighing] what
38 really irritated me, by me being on salary, I could come and go as I please.
39 The hourly people couldn't do that. Somebody had to relieve them in order
40 for them to go outside and smoke and [laughter] a few times I relieved
41 some of'm and let'm go outside and have a cigarette.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
44
45 Ora Calhoun: I did that.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [42:21] [Because of that 42:21]?
2
3 Ora Calhoun: Yes.
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: I know, um, [that 42:24]...
6
7 Ora Calhoun: Now I don't smoke anymore.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: Well [clanking] [laughter] that's good. But there were some other
10 [banging] bans that people had [throat clearing] because being in the Paint
11 Department there were certain products that people could wear, [clanking]
12 could not wear.
13
14 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [42:35] How was that?
17
18 Ora Calhoun: Deodorants was one of the big issues. Deodorants and hairsprays because
19 [sighing] the deodorants, especially like your Secret, uh, certain
20 hairsprays, like Hold, and, you know, I mean Final Net, you know, the
21 hairprays-, sprays that people don't even use anymore, uh, a lotta those
22 things affected the Paint Shop and if you had on the wrong deodorant or
23 even the wrong hairspray, the Repair line would be full for days on ends...
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
26
27 Ora Calhoun: ...because – and it's hard for me to explain a [banging] crater to you
28 [banging] because you have to see it to – in order to know what it is. It
29 was kinda [tapping] like – and even th-, someone called'm fish eyes. That
30 – that's hard to explain to ya but y-, these defects, you'd have to see them
31 in order to understand what, you know, I – I'm telling ya. And so those
32 things affected the Paint Shop. [tapping] Usually when people knew
33 employees [throat clearing] coming to the Paint Shop, they'd have to be
34 tested. [tsk] If they had on the wrong stuff, then [tapping] we'd have them
35 leave the Paint Shop, go take a shower, go home change clothes, whatever
36 and have them, you know, change their clothes. Some of'm we couldn't
37 trust, so we made'm go down in the shower room and, and, uh, take a
38 shower down there, you know, and give'm new coveralls. Some of'm, it'd
39 take 3 or 4 times, you know, to take a shower in order to get the, the
40 deodorant and stuff out of their, uh, off their skin, you know.
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 44:09].
43
44 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
45

1Michael Flemming: [44:11] Uh, [background noise] Ora – Mike Flemming – when you talked
2 about craters, could it best be described as a separation in the paint?
3
4Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
5
6Michael Flemming: Usually you would spray paint and you would want it to be a, a f-, a f-, a
7 fluid – f-, a flush surface and it flows very well but when you get craters,
8 it, it creates holes and it separates...
9
10Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
11
12Michael Flemming: ...the paint and that's from the chemical from whatever the, uh, person
13 was wearing caused it to do that [in the 44:34]...
14
15Ora Calhoun: Silicone in the, in – in your...
16
17Michael Flemming: [44:36] It's the silicone that did it?
18
19Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
20
21Michael Flemming: Okay. [tapping] Yeah.
22
23Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
24
25Marilyn Coulter: [44:39] Um, out of – and it's kind of away from the paint now but now out
26 of the benefits [sniffling] that you received as an hourly person...
27
28Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
29
30Marilyn Coulter: ...and, um, what would you say would be your most appreciated
31 bargained benefit that you had?
32
33Ora Calhoun: Your health insurance especially if you had, you know, a family, you
34 know, had children, your health insurance, your dental, your vision. Uh,
35 you can't beat it.
36
37Marilyn Coulter: [45:05] Did you take advantage of any of the tuition assistance programs
38 that we have?
39
40Ora Calhoun: No. [clicking]
41
42Marilyn Coulter: [45:10] [You did 45:10]?
43
44Ora Calhoun: No. [tapping]
45
46Marilyn Coulter: All right. [background noise] [45:14] Um... [clanking]

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [45:18] Following up, [sniffing] you say you didn't
3 take advantage [throat clearing] of those, uh, [papers rustling] the, uh,
4 education but the – w-, were you able to use those for your children?
5
6 Ora Calhoun: No. [clicking] By the time my children got up to graduating, m-, I was on
7 salary [popping] and I did [inaudible 45:33] sent them to school and did
8 that on my own. [writing] [clanking]
9
10 Michael Flemming: [45:41] Um, eh, I guess I was gonna ask about, [clinking] uh, y-, your
11 department [thumping] [inaudible 45:48] were you a r-, vacation
12 replacement at some point in your area in the Paint Department, that's
13 why you went from so many different departments?
14
15 Doug Rademacher: Mike Flemming.
16
17 Michael Flemming: Mike Flemming. [clanking] I'm sorry. [45:57] You went to so many
18 different departments, [clanking] you were called – what they called a
19 vacation replacement, right?
20
21 Ora Calhoun: Yeah but a-, as far as a vacation replacement supervisor, [clanking] that
22 didn't last very long for me because you really had to flip-flop, you know,
23 back and forth from nights to days. So I only did that like for a couple a
24 months and – but even – not even as a vacation replacement supervisor,
25 eh, management would still take you and move you to a new area because
26 they felt the employees needed something [clanking] new.
27
28 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
29
30 Ora Calhoun: You know? And needed, uh, as they say new blood, you know, and, uh, a
31 lotta times that's how you got switched.
32
33 Michael Flemming: And in, in, in your [throat clearing] time at Fisher Body, we, we know
34 you've had some g-, good times and some bad times. [46:42] Could you
35 talk about maybe [banging] s-, the best time that you can remember
36 having there and maybe one of the worst times [throat clearing] or one of
37 the lowest points that you're – in your career at Fisher Body? [clanking]
38 [tapping]
39
40 Ora Calhoun: You know, [sighing] gosh. Low points. [tapping] You know, I really,
41 really cannot recall any really low points that I had. I really can't. Any job
42 is what you make out of it.
43
44 Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
45

1Ora Calhoun: And that was [papers rustling] one thing I was taught growing up, you
2 know, from my parents, [tapping] is any job you do is what you make out
3 of it.
4

5Michael Flemming: [Inaudible 47:23].
6

7Ora Calhoun: It can be good and it can be bad. It can be easy or it can be hard. It's all
8 depends on you and I always kept that in the back of my mind and when I
9 go to – when – and every day when I went to work, [background noise]
10 you know, I can make this [clanking] easy, you know, and that's what I
11 did. Even on salary, [clanking] I, you know...
12

13Michael Flemming: [47:39] Can you think of a day that would be considered one of the best
14 days? [47:42] Maybe it was a surprise party for you or somebody or
15 something similar to – along those lines [tapping] or just, you know, just a
16 day you came in, you could've, eh, you could've saved someone's life or,
17 or someone may have tragically been, eh, injured in your department?
18 [47:58] Any, any of those things? [tapping]
19

20Ora Calhoun: No one was really injured in my department because they knew how I felt
21 about safety, so people didn't do that and they didn't horseplay because
22 they knew they could get hurt and they knew what I would do [tapping] if
23 they did because I would tell'm if you get hurt and don't die, I'm gonna
24 kill ya, [laughter] you know, and, and – really. I'm serious. And, and so I
25 didn't, I didn't have that, you know, [I didn't 48:16]. I, I, I just didn't have
26 that.
27

28Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
29

30Ora Calhoun: And, [banging] you know, eh, the last couple a years that I worked,
31 [background conversation] I raising my grandchildren. Okay? And I have
32 4 grandchildren. And the superintendent and all the bosses there knew that
33 I was raising my grandchildren. [papers rustling] And you know how we
34 select a family every year at Christmastime, you know, and do something,
35 [tapping] you know, for a family? [tapping] And one of the supervisor's
36 son had been in a serious, almost deadly accident in Atlanta. [tsk] He was
37 walking across the street and got hit by a drunk driver, [thumping] so the
38 one Christmas we took up the money and we suggested giving it to him,
39 you know, because the expenses, you know, and all that stuff. [tapping] So
40 then the following year, you know, nobody [said a- 48:07], didn't have a
41 clue, so the following year and th-, and, and they would always give us a,
42 a luncheon, you know, nice, nice dinner, you know, at lunchtime...
43

44Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
45

1Ora Calhoun: ...and [tapping] we're sitting there eating and then all of the sudden, you
2 know, they come up with this envelope and said okay, our person this
3 year, you know, that we selected for our Christmas thing is Ora [tapping]
4 Calhoun and I almost fell off the chair. And I go wait a minute, I can't take
5 that. They go why not. I said beco-, I, I have a job. You know, give that to
6 somebody, you know. [Said well 49:36] you're raising 4 grandchildren at
7 your age and with your health, you know, they just on and on and on
8 [thumping] and that was one of the highlights of...
9

10Michael Flemming: Absolutely.
11

12Ora Calhoun: Yeah. Yeah.
13

14Michael Flemming: [Inaudible 49:45].
15

16Ora Calhoun: And it was quite a bit.
17

18Michael Flemming: [Yeah 49:46].
19

20Ora Calhoun: Yeah.
21

22Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 49:47].
23

24Ora Calhoun: Yeah. [background noise]
25

26Michael Flemming: Eh, eh, and, and it really shows the, the spirit that we have at, uh, Fisher
27 Body and, uh, the people, [all type a 49:54]...
28

29Ora Calhoun: Oh... [sighing]
30

31Michael Flemming: ...people [inaudible 49:55].
32

33Ora Calhoun: I – you know, from hourly to salary, you know everybody have their
34 qualms [tapping] and, and, you know, their problems and their issues but
35 when push [thumping] comes to shove and somebody needs help,
36 [thumping] boy, I tell ya, you can't beat General Motors for helping people
37 when people are needing help.
38

39Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
40

41Ora Calhoun: You know, and it's Christmastime [clanking] now and I miss being at
42 work because we always selected somebody that, you know, to, to help at
43 Christmastime...
44

45Michael Flemming: Mm-hm.
46

1Ora Calhoun: ...and I, [clanking] I miss that.
2
3Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 50:25].
4
5Marilyn Coulter: That says, um – kinda goes hand in hand with the next question. Marilyn
6Coulter. They've always called this the Capital of Quality.
7
8Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm. [rattling]
9
10Marilyn Coulter: [50:33] [tsk] What do you attribute, um, Fisher Body's success to and, and
11how we got that title?
12
13Ora Calhoun: The people, the hourly workforce. Okay. When anybody says the hourly
14workforce made gen-, made GM, you know. If it wasn't for them, who
15will make the cars.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
18
19Ora Calhoun: You know, and there are really, really some good employees at General
20Motors. They [rubbing] care about their work. They care about the quality
21of their work, [rubbing] uh, and [sighing] I'm gonna tell ya, they did an
22excellent job and you have some intelligent, educated people working on
23that line. They're no dummies just because they work in a factory.
24[background conversation] There's some educated people work in that
25plant and they're good.
26
27Marilyn Coulter: [51:26] For the people [rubbing] who have like 10 years in here, because
28we don't have too many young people, what would be the best advice
29you'd give someone who is coming in here to work on the line? [clanking]
30
31Ora Calhoun: Just go in there and do the best that you can do and, and, you know, don't,
32don't, don't make any waves with anybody. Just go in and just do your
33job. And if you can't do it, you tell'm you can't do it and hopefully they'll
34put somebody with ya and, and train you to do it. I did it. You know, I –
35somebody would tell me oh, I just can't do this. Okay. Then I'd get
36somebody and have'm work with'm for a day and, [clanking] you know,
37they were okay.
38
39Marilyn Coulter: [Yeah 52:01].
40
41Ora Calhoun: And I know everybody's not like that but that's...
42
43Marilyn Coulter: [Yeah 52:03].
44
45Ora Calhoun: ...that's what I would recommend. [background conversation]
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: The Fisher Body that w-, as we know it is gone.
2

3 Ora Calhoun: Mm-hm.
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: Um, we're getting ready to go to a new facility. [52:12] How does that
6 make you feel knowing that this place will be no m-, no longer?
7

8 Ora Calhoun: [tsk] [clanking] I never thought I would see the day that Fisher Body
9 would be gone. I never in a million years would've thought that they
10 would close this plant. But, you know, [sighing] you, [clanking] you, you
11 would get some people on any given day [sighing] that would have an
12 attitude. You know, you guys knew Flint. You knew what happened in
13 Flint, how they closed all those plants down. [And say well 52:43], you
14 know, guys, if we don't, you know, be concerned about our plant, they'll
15 close it down and put this work someplace else. Oh, no, they'll never close
16 this plant down. Of course, I had the same [thumping] attitude. [rubbing]
17 You know, uh, oh, they'll never close this plant down. I go don't be so
18 sure. You know, we're talking a big company here and they have a lotta
19 places that they can move this work [scratching] and [scratching] here we
20 are. But I never thought I'd see the day when they would actually close it.
21 When I heard it on – [laughter] although I'm retired, when I heard it on the
22 news that they was closing this plant down, I about fell outta my chair. I
23 go they can't do that. But they can. [clanking] You know?
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.
26

27 Ora Calhoun: They can.
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: And luckily we have...
30

31 Ora Calhoun: Absolutely.
32

33 Marilyn Coulter: ...a new facility...
34

35 Ora Calhoun: Absolutely.
36

37 Marilyn Coulter: ...to go to.
38

39 Ora Calhoun: Absolutely.
40

41 Marilyn Coulter: It's a blessing.
42

43 Ora Calhoun: Absolutely. [clanking] And then, you know, they closing down the other 2
44 plants. Then you gotta lotta people outta work. [background conversation]
45 [tsk] That's the part that bothers me the most because there's so many
46 young people that have went out and purchased things that they're not

1 going to be able to pay for because they don't – they won't have a job. So
2 that, that kinda bothers me. You know?
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
5
6 Ora Calhoun: But [thumping] I'm fortunate I'm stable, you know, but everybody's not as
7 fortunate.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
10
11 Ora Calhoun: Some of you guys are still working, [clanking] you know. Hopefully you'll
12 be here and be around for a while, you know, [clanking] with the new
13 plant. Hopefully you'll be here.
14
15 Michael Flemming: [Mm-hm 53:59].
16
17 Ora Calhoun: You know? [clanking]
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [Yeah 54:01].
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Ora, I'd like to say thank you for an awesome interview. [54:05] Is there
22 anything else [tapping] that you'd like to talk about that we missed?
23
24 Ora Calhoun: No. Not unless there's something else you wanna ask me. [laughter]
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: Ora, I'd like to say...
27
28 Ora Calhoun: Off the record. [laughter]
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: Ora, I'd like to say thank you and...
31
32 Michael Flemming: [Yes 54:15].
33
34 Ora Calhoun: [Inaudible 54:15]. [laughter]
35
36 Doug Rademacher: Yes, thank you.
37
38 Jerri Smith: Thank you, Ora.
39
40 Michael Flemming: Yes, Ora, thank you very much for coming.
41
42 Ora Calhoun: [Sure 54:19], [laughter] you're welcome.
43
44 Michael Flemming: [Inaudible 54:19]. [recorder clicking]
45
46

1/lo