

**Mickey Casteel discusses his career as a production worker and  
UAW Member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5Doreen Howard: Okay. Um, it is October 14, 2005, approximately 9:45 a.m. [paper  
6 rustling] We're at the Lansing Car Assembly. Um, we are – This – I am  
7 Doreen Howard [background noise] and I will be interviewing, along with  
8 my coworkers, uh, Mickey Casteel. Um, [00:22] Mickey, could you please  
9 state your name and spell your last name and your address please?  
10  
11Mickey Casteel: Mickey Casteel, C-A-S-T-E-E-L. 189 South Main, Woodland, Michigan.  
12  
13Doreen Howard: Okay. Um, I'd like to go around the room, have anyone, everyone  
14 introduce themselves please.  
15  
16Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.  
17  
18Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
19  
20Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.  
23  
24John Fedewa: John Fedewa.  
25  
26Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming.  
27  
28Doreen Howard: Okay. Um, [pen clicking] we'll get out some a the [sigh] biographical data  
29 here. [00:53] Um, are, are you married and do you have any children? [pen  
30 clicking]  
31  
32Mickey Casteel: I'm married. I've been married for – [typing] It'll be 33 years the, uh – in  
33 December. I have 3 children; 2 boys and a girl 30, 28, and [snapping] 23.  
34 [snapping]  
35  
36Doreen Howard: And, [typing] um, do you have any, uh, formal education or...  
37  
38Mickey Casteel: No.  
39  
40Doreen Howard: ...any training?  
41  
42Mickey Casteel: Just, just high school.  
43  
44Doreen Howard: High school education? And any military service at all? [paper rustling]  
45  
46Mickey Casteel: No. No military.

1  
2Doreen Howard: Okay. Um, I wanna start out with, um, [pen clicking] your date of hire.  
3 [1:32] When did you hire in? And tell me about that first day. What, what  
4 was your impressions of Fisher Body?  
5  
6Mickey Casteel: Well, I've hired in twice. I hired in in 1973 [background noise] and  
7 worked for 5 months and then I got laid off because of the, uh, gas  
8 recession. The recession back in '73? And as luck would have it, both  
9 times I hired in, I hired in at the exact same spot, the exact same foreman.  
10 Uh, O. J. Richardson was the foreman both times. [typing] Both times on  
11 the day shift. And the, uh, – Where I hired in, it was called the, uh,  
12 wheelhouse assembly. And it was kind of an offline job so I got kinda  
13 lucky there. I hired right in on an offline job and they were pretty hard ta  
14 get back then. [typing]  
15  
16Doreen Howard: [2:24] Was this, uh, Body Shop?  
17  
18Mickey Casteel: In the Body Shop. [typing]  
19  
20Doreen Howard: [2:28] And what, uh – Did you work first shift...  
21  
22Mickey Casteel: On, on the...  
23  
24Doreen Howard: ...or second?  
25  
26Mickey Casteel: ...day shift.  
27  
28Doreen Howard: On the day shift?  
29  
30Mickey Casteel: Both times I've hired in, both times on the day shift. Uh, the first time, I  
31 only made it about 2 or 3 months and then I was put on the night shift –  
32 bumped on the night shift. And the second time, I stayed on the day shift  
33 for almost 4 years.  
34  
35Female: Oh.  
36  
37Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
38  
39Cheryl McQuaid: [2:49] W-, w-, when did you hire in...  
40  
41Doreen Howard: Yeah...  
42  
43Cheryl McQuaid: ...the second time?  
44  
45Doreen Howard: ...the second time?  
46

1Mickey Casteel: 1976.  
2

3Doreen Howard: Oh. Okay. So, Body Shop. [2:59] So explain about that first job that you  
4 were put on. What, what did you do? And what was, what did your day  
5 consist of? [typing]  
6

7Mickey Casteel: Well, I used ta build up the, uh, wheel housings in what they call a, a  
8 buck, where they brought all the components in and, and spot weld'm  
9 together. Well, then somebody would put that on a, a monorail and my  
10 first job both times was to spray deadener on the, uh – It'd be the outside  
11 of the, uh, wheel housing but it would be th-, the part that was inside a the  
12 car, inside a the fenders and, uh, quarter panels.  
13

14Doreen Howard: [3:38] And deadener is...  
15

16Mickey Casteel: It's just a, uh, uh, somethin' that, uh, quiets the road sounds and stuff like  
17 that.  
18

19Doreen Howard: So it's like the soundproofing...  
20

21Mickey Casteel: Sound...  
22

23Doreen Howard: ...agent?  
24

25Mickey Casteel: ... proofing-type things, yes.  
26

27Michael Fleming: So Mickey...  
28

29Mickey Casteel: Yes?  
30

31Michael Fleming: ...[3:52] you, you sprayed deadener in the Body Shop? [paper rustling]  
32

33Mickey Casteel: Yeah. It was a, uh...  
34

35Michael Fleming: [4:01] Did ya have a booth or anything...  
36

37Mickey Casteel: Yeah.  
38

39Michael Fleming: ...like that?  
40

41Mickey Casteel: It was, it was in a booth. There was a booth, uh, down in the, uh, Body  
42 Shop there. That's about all I can call it...  
43

44Michael Fleming: Uh, but...  
45

46Mickey Casteel: ...is deadener.

1  
2 Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 4:11]. I, I ask that question because it's just moved and I was  
3 wondering...  
4  
5 Mickey Casteel: Yeah.  
6  
7 Michael Fleming: ...if you did it, if you did it open air? [4:19] Was it, uh – What kind of  
8 equipment did you have to spray that?  
9  
10 Mickey Casteel: That was a spray gun. It was in a, uh, a booth that had, uh, water comin'  
11 down to catch all the overspray and, and the stuff that didn't get onto the,  
12 [typing]the wheel housings.  
13  
14 Michael Fleming: [4:35] What did ya think about [inaudible 4:37]? [pen clicking] [typing]  
15  
16 Mickey Casteel: Well, at first I didn't like it very well, but after a while, it – I got used to  
17 the job and it wasn't all that bad. [typing]  
18  
19 Doreen Howard: [4:47] Can you describe what [pen clicking] – like some of the dimensions  
20 of the booth and the actual environment and some of the protective  
21 equipment maybe that you had ta have in order to go into that booth to do  
22 your job?  
23  
24 Mickey Casteel: Well, back then, you didn't have ta have an awful lot of protective  
25 [laughter] equipment. [typing] It's, uh – Ya had gloves and, uh, glasses  
26 with side shields. You were pretty well covered [typing] as far as  
27 protective equipment. That was quite a while ago; 30 years ago.  
28  
29 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [typing]  
30  
31 Mickey Casteel: The size of the booth was approximately 16 foot long and then it was just  
32 wide enough for you ta spray on one side and then just turn right around  
33 and not hardly move at all and spray on the other side, so. Uh, the total  
34 booth was probably 8 foot wide but what I had to stand [typing] on was  
35 maybe 2 foot.  
36  
37 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. Now you said that there was water. [5:46] Was the, was that a  
38 [tapping] grating system in there? [typing] In the, in...  
39  
40 Mickey Casteel: Well, they pump the water up...  
41  
42 Doreen Howard: ...in...  
43  
44 Mickey Casteel: ...above [typing] and it run down the wall, so that, uh, all the overspray  
45 would catch. Y'know, the water would catch that and take it down in and  
46 then they would filter it out and just repump the water right back. [typing]

1  
2Doreen Howard: So, so the, the overspray was heavy and that would fall into the [snapping]  
3 water and then be...  
4  
5Mickey Casteel: Well, it would...  
6  
7Doreen Howard: ...it wouldn't be...  
8  
9Mickey Casteel: ...[shove 6:10] past the...  
10  
11Doreen Howard: ...in the air?  
12  
13Mickey Casteel: It would shoot past the, uh, wheel housing and would catch in the water  
14 runnin' down the wall.  
15  
16Doreen Howard: Oh, okay. Okay. [6:20] And how long did you do that job?  
17  
18Mickey Casteel: Uh, not very long. Maybe 2 months both times. [typing] It, uh, it was a  
19 popular job so a new hire didn't usually stay on that very long. [typing]  
20  
21Doreen Howard: [6:34] Was there [typing] any initial initiation that you went through when  
22 you first came in, in that particular job? Did they have any pranks that  
23 they'd pull on the person comin' in? [typing]  
24  
25Mickey Casteel: No. I – not really. Not, not on that job.  
26  
27Doreen Howard: Not on that particular one? Okay. Um, so 2 months there. Then where did  
28 you go to?  
29  
30Mickey Casteel: Well, I ended up where most everybody else ends up in the Body Shop, in  
31 the jungle. What they call a jungle. It, uh, it's spot welding. The, the cars  
32 run down the line and it, it kinda looks like a jungle with all the, the  
33 welders [typing] hangin' down. And [paper rustling] you've got certain  
34 welds that you have to [paper rustling] weld and you, you grab a gun and  
35 weld, y'know, maybe have a dozen welds on one part and push that gun  
36 back and grab another one. You might have 2 or 3 guns at each station.  
37 [typing]  
38  
39Michael Fleming: [7:33] Would you share that vision [typing] of, uh, when ya first saw it  
40 and someone else was workin' in there and those sparks were flying? What  
41 w-, were ya thinking when you were taken down ta that particular area?  
42  
43Mickey Casteel: [laughter] [typing] Well, I guess what I was hopin' is I was hopin' that, uh,  
44 I wasn't gonna get hit by too many of'm. But, uh, I learned real quick that  
45 everybody gets'm. Most of the time, you get'm from somebody else. The  
46 guy behind ya or in front of ya would be weldin' [typing] and if they've got

1 a little bit of dirt or the-, they spot weld or a little, y'know, oil or  
2 somethin', it, it shoots out and sometimes it gets you pretty good.  
3  
4Michael Fleming: [8:15] What exactly would get you? What d'ya mean, "get ya?"  
5  
6Mickey Casteel: The, uh, sparks from the, uh – That's basically molten met-, metal is what  
7 it is.  
8  
9Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
10  
11Mickey Casteel: And I've seen'm spark so bad that they blew a hole in the, the metal.  
12  
13Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 8:33].  
14  
15Mickey Casteel: And they'd have ta have somebody, uh, take, uh, like a bin welder and  
16 weld up that particular spot.  
17  
18Doug Rademacher: Now those jobs made you wear coveralls. [8:43] Didja ever have anyone  
19 start on – You ever seen anyone catch on fire? I know for, uh, a fact that  
20 people that had lon-, long hair or somethin, they were, uh, always in  
21 jeopardy down in there.  
22  
23Mickey Casteel: Well, they – I've seen several people catch on fire. [Inaudible 8:58]. One  
24 guy was – smoked and, uh, he had a packet of matches in his breast  
25 pocket.  
26  
27Doreen Howard: Oh.  
28  
29Mickey Casteel: The – He caught the matches on fire. [laughter] He did a dance [laughter]  
30 from that.  
31  
32Cheryl McQuaid: [9:16] So was he hurt?  
33  
34Mickey Casteel: Was it good?  
35  
36Cheryl McQuaid: Was he, was...  
37  
38Marilyn Coulter: Hurt.  
39  
40Cheryl McQuaid: ...he hurt?  
41  
42Mickey Casteel: Oh, no. He didn't. I didn't see too many people get hurt. Uh, it was more of  
43 a [typing] – Y'know, you, you've been through it and it's, y'know, kinda  
44 funny ta see somebody else dance around. You – It's not funny when it  
45 happens to you but it's real funny when it happens ta somebody else.  
46 [laughter]

1  
2 Doug Rademacher: [9:41] But it was all in a day's work, wasn't it?  
3  
4 Mickey Casteel: Yeah. It's...  
5  
6 Doug Rademacher: Happened every week? Happened pretty much every day?  
7  
8 Mickey Casteel: Happened every minute. [laughter] Somebody was dancin' around most  
9 every minute.  
10  
11 Doreen Howard: [9:54] Now how long did you work in that particular area? [typing]  
12  
13 Mickey Casteel: Um, maybe 3 or 4 months.  
14  
15 Doreen Howard: Oh. So you've been...  
16  
17 Mickey Casteel: Um, the one good thing that I've always enjoyed about, uh, GM is that if  
18 you don't like your job, put in a transfer and move on.  
19  
20 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. So...  
21  
22 Mickey Casteel: And I, I've done that quite a bit.  
23  
24 Doreen Howard: [10:21] So, so where'd you move on to after that?  
25  
26 Mickey Casteel: Well, I hung door hinges.  
27  
28 Doreen Howard: Oh, okay.  
29  
30 Mickey Casteel: And then I got bumped off from that job. I just – That job – When I hung  
31 the door hinges on – What it was is [typing] they would come in with a, a  
32 4 x 4 foot basket with hinges in it and you would take a front hinge and a  
33 rear hinge [typing] and go up to the car and, and loosely secure them with  
34 bolts that they supplied. Well, that was another job that somebody else  
35 wanted, so they bumped me off that and I ended up puttin' in trunk locks.  
36 [typing] And I probably was in the Door Department, uh, [throat clearing]  
37 – That first 4 years, I probably was in the Door Department 3½ of it. And I  
38 – And while I was in the Door Department, I ran the utility job. [typing] I  
39 hung doors, I, I, uh, y'know, did anything that was in the Door  
40 Department, uh, repair. If some – If, uh – A repair job consisted of if  
41 somebody couldn't get a bolt in or if, uh, the screw hole wasn't, um,  
42 tapped, they would either replace the, the – There's a little plate that's got –  
43 That they fasten'm to. They'd replace that or somethin' like that. [typing]  
44 Put a bolt in or change the doors. If the door got dented somehow, we'd  
45 change the doors. [typing] Uh, I never had that job per se – own that job.  
46 But I, I ran it while I was on utility quite a bit.

1  
2 Michael Fleming: When you were in that Door Department [typing] back then, and the doors  
3 were, I believe, probably much larger then than what we have in here  
4 now...  
5  
6 Mickey Casteel: Oh, yeah. They...  
7  
8 Michael Fleming: [12:21] Talk about the difference in the doors then, now. [sneezing] Talk  
9 about what's your, what, what your area looked like? What, what was goin'  
10 on up there?  
11  
12 Mickey Casteel: Well, back in the, uh, '70s we still had – we were still buildin' Toronados  
13 and they, they [typing] were about an 80-pound door.  
14  
15 Doreen Howard: Mm.  
16  
17 Mickey Casteel: So [typing] it – You didn't really wanna see Toronados [laughter] come  
18 very often. And we done that for a while and then, uh, they started gettin'  
19 into the ergonomics and they did – They got us some, uh, assists but you  
20 still had ta pick the door up outta the, the rack, [typing] which was [throat  
21 clearing] excuse me – Usually came with 13 doors in a, a rack. A fork  
22 truck driver would, uh, take the empty rack out and put a, a fresh rack in.  
23 You still had ta take the doors outta the rack to put 'em on the, uh, lift assist.  
24 [typing]  
25  
26 Doreen Howard: [13:22] Now what time frame [typing] was – did the ergonomics issues  
27 start, um, comin' into play? When was that?  
28  
29 Mickey Casteel: Well, I don't [inaudible 13:32] remember. [typing] Uh, probably '79, '80.  
30 Somewheres in there.  
31  
32 Doreen Howard: So early '80s? [typing]  
33  
34 Mickey Casteel: They started talkin' about it an' we used it a little bit. [typing] But it was –  
35 Most a the people, they decided they could do it better without 'em...  
36  
37 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
38  
39 Mickey Casteel: ...a lotta times.  
40  
41 Doreen Howard: Hm.  
42  
43 Mickey Casteel: It was [typing] hard ta get a lotta the people to switch over to the  
44 ergonomics because they'd been doin' it for so long. And back then, we  
45 were, y'know, quite a bit younger [typing] and thought we could do it  
46 quicker without the, the, uh, lift assist, so we could, uh, maybe read the



1 paper or do somethin' that we probably [typing] wasn't supposed to be  
2 doin' like throwin' gloves or... [laughter]  
3  
4Michael Fleming: [14:21] Um, did you perform that – You said about 4 years or 3½ years in  
5 the Door Department? [typing]  
6  
7Mickey Casteel: Yeah.  
8  
9Michael Fleming: Didja have the same supervisor? [typing]  
10  
11Mickey Casteel: Well, they, they would, uh, rotate their supervisors. But, uh – No, I, I had,  
12 uh, [snapping] Dick Dowler and, uh – Well, Dick Dowler's the one I  
13 remember. He, he was one that, uh, everybody remembered.  
14  
15Michael Fleming: Is there a particular reason why we remember Dick?  
16  
17Mickey Casteel: Uh, kind of a backstabber. [laughter]  
18  
19Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [throat clearing]  
20  
21Mickey Casteel: He would hide around the [typing] corner or get somewheres where he  
22 could see ya an' see if you were workin'.  
23  
24Doug Rademacher: Well, the line was runnin'. [15:09] Ya had ta be workin', didn't ya?  
25  
26Mickey Casteel: Well, sometimes [typing] they expected ya ta stay right there and not, uh,  
27 read your paper or anything. [typing]  
28  
29Doreen Howard: Hm.  
30  
31Doug Rademacher: [15:21 So did there come a time when you left the Body Shop and went to  
32 a different department? [typing]  
33  
34Mickey Casteel: I, uh, left the Body Shop and I went into the, uh, inspection group [typing]  
35 and I did that for approximately 7 or 8 months. I – What I did there was,  
36 uh, inspected the bodies to see if there was any dents or dings or, or stuff  
37 like that. [typing] And what that consisted of, they gave ya a mitt and you  
38 would rub your hand over the surface of the, the quarter panel and the  
39 doors and then you'd just record how many dents and dings you found  
40 and, and circle'm. [typing] And then the metal finish people would, uh,  
41 poke out the, the, y'know – Take a, uh – [tsk] I can't think what it's called,  
42 but it's a, a, metal rod is what it is. They'd reach inside the door and push  
43 the dent back out. Then they'd file it off and sand it off and make it smooth  
44 so they could paint the car. [typing] Get it ready for painting basically.  
45 And then I, uh, went from there. I had the opportunity to go in what they  
46 called the [fish bowl 16:42]. And that was in [snapping] the, uh – up in the

1 office. [typing] And we took all the, the data that these people were  
2 rubbin' the cars and, and recordin' the dents and dings. We would go  
3 through and, and count'm and condense this for the, the morning meeting  
4 for the, uh, supervisors and higher up [typing] for their morning meetings.  
5 I...  
6  
7 Cheryl McQuaid: [17:08] Why did you condense that information? Why did they want that  
8 [background noise] information condensed?  
9  
10 Mickey Casteel: Well, it'd be a lot easier ta, ta have one sheet of paper [typing] than a half a  
11 dozen [throat clearing] big sheets of paper ta go in there and, y'know, in  
12 the conference room and say, "Well, we've got, uh, 40 dings," or, or  
13 somethin' like that. That's just condensin' material. Taking raw material  
14 and makin' smaller, more useable.  
15  
16 Cheryl McQuaid: [17:41] Did you have any e-, training in that area of putting it in a  
17 simplified form for them?  
18  
19 Mickey Casteel: No. They just took us in a, a room and we kinda learned. The first, uh, 6 of  
20 us [typing] kinda learned our, uh, on our own, trial and error, what they  
21 wanted, what they didn't want. They'd tell ya if they didn't like what ya  
22 did. Then we just – If somebody else come in, we just gave'm a crash  
23 course a what they wanted, what they didn't want. [typing]  
24  
25 Cheryl McQuaid: Sounds like a preferred job.  
26  
27 Mickey Casteel: Yeah. I, I'm sure it was.  
28  
29 Doreen Howard: Hm. [18:21] And how long...  
30  
31 Mickey Casteel: I started out...  
32  
33 Doreen Howard: ...did you...  
34  
35 Mickey Casteel: ...uh...  
36  
37 Doreen Howard: ...do that?  
38  
39 Mickey Casteel: I did that, uh, about a year.  
40  
41 Doreen Howard: About a year.  
42  
43 Mickey Casteel: I started out with, with like 3½, 4 years, uh, and when they finally got – I  
44 got eliminated outta there, there was people with 25 years in...  
45  
46 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.

1  
2 Mickey Casteel: ...that bumped me out of it.  
3  
4 Doreen Howard: Hm. [18:47] So then where'd you go after that?  
5  
6 Mickey Casteel: Then I went back to rubbin' the cars on – That's when I went to the night  
7 shift.  
8  
9 Doreen Howard: So it's all been – So basically was in the, the Body Shop realm at that time.  
10  
11 Mickey Casteel: Yeah. I was still in the Body Shop. I, I stayed in the Body Shop...  
12  
13 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 19:02].  
14  
15 Mickey Casteel: ...for quite a while. Uh, then I didn't want ta be on nights, so I started  
16 lookin' around and I found a job that, uh – putting hinges back on. But, uh,  
17 they had a, uh, uh, what they called the door shuttle then. That's back –  
18 Approximately when the [background noise] uh, Grand Am came in, they  
19 had what they called the door shuttle. And there again, we loosely put the  
20 hinges on the doors this time and the doors went into this machine and  
21 they put a – Another person put a header [coughing] in the buck and the  
22 machine tightened down the hinges and, and welded the headers. And then  
23 somebody else took'm off the end of th-, that machine, put'm back  
24 [ratcheting] in the rack and they took them on down the line and, and  
25 put'm on the cars.  
26  
27 Doreen Howard: Mm. So moving forward, [snapping] um, where did you go after that last –  
28 After your QC inspection? Did – You said you went back and you did the  
29 doors...  
30  
31 Mickey Casteel: Yeah.  
32  
33 Doreen Howard: ...again for a while.  
34  
35 Mickey Casteel: Then I went [snapping] into the door shuttle.  
36  
37 Doreen Howard: And then...  
38  
39 Mickey Casteel: And then, uh, they eliminate that, eliminated that out and I went out on the  
40 line. And what they did was they, they got rid of the door shuttle and they  
41 moved that operation right out on the line. So then, uh, we had 2 people on  
42 each side a the line that would put the hinges on and affix the headers on.  
43  
44 Doreen Howard: Hm.  
45

1 Mickey Casteel: And we would rotate that job. I's do, [squeaking] y'know, like an hour  
2 [squeaking] on one part a the job and an hour on the other part a the job.  
3 [background noise] Then you'd finish weldin'. What it was is, uh, we'd  
4 both put hinges on, uh, on 2 racks, and then my partner, he would, uh,  
5 [snapping] put the door into the machine and put the header in and it  
6 would, [whispering] it would fix it or it would put it on or, uh, y'know,  
7 attach it. And then it would [shuttle 21:15] down and I would finish  
8 weldin' the header on and take it, all that, and put it in a, uh, another  
9 holder and, uh, we had somebody that would put the door on the car.  
10  
11 Doreen Howard: [21:29] Now your current position is?  
12  
13 Mickey Casteel: [background noise] City driver.  
14  
15 Doreen Howard: City driver. [21:35] And [background noise] can you explain what a city  
16 driver [typing] is and what your job entails?  
17  
18 Mickey Casteel: Well, the city driver is a, uh, basically [typing] a, a parts chaser. He, he, uh  
19 – If, uh – We just built the bodies here, so i-, if, uh, the main plant needed,  
20 uh, like a door rubber or door glass or a mirror or somethin' like that, I  
21 would [typing] get it from one of the docks here and take it over to  
22 Building 90 Repair, which would be final repair. They, they repaired  
23 everything on the car just before [coughing] [typing] they shipped it to the  
24 dealers.  
25  
26 Doreen Howard: [typing] So you were the, the, basically the gofer.  
27  
28 Mickey Casteel: Yeah. [typing]  
29  
30 Doreen Howard: If somethin' needed to be fixed, you'd come over here, grab it, and, and  
31 return it to them?  
32  
33 Mickey Casteel: They would, they would call, uh, the person over here that [typing] needed  
34 ta get it and he would radio me and I would come get it and take it over.  
35 [typing] And then part of my job was to be the backup driver for the body  
36 haulers. People that hauled bodies from Fisher Body [typing] or Plant 6  
37 over to the main plant, where they finished puttin' the, the, uh, interiors  
38 and the, uh, wheels and undercarriage and motors.  
39  
40 Doreen Howard: [23:08] So now in the city driver, what type of vehicle did you d-, actually  
41 drive in that job?  
42  
43 Mickey Casteel: I drive a 1-ton Chevy stake rack truck. Has about an 8-foot, 7 x 8-foot bed  
44 and it's a smaller truck, so I can get into the buildings. [typing] I deliver  
45 stuff to Building 32 and Building 90 and Building 150. 150 had, uh – is  
46 where they changed all the sheet metal.

1  
2Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [typing]  
3  
4Mickey Casteel: If you had a, a door yet, uh, dented up, they would take it off there and  
5 order a new, painted door and I'd take it over there and they would put the,  
6 the new one on so they could get it ready ta ship ta the dealer, ta the  
7 customer.  
8  
9Doreen Howard: [23:59] And how many people is there in your group? Is there just you or  
10 is there more people that are...  
11  
12Mickey Casteel: Well, in my group...  
13  
14Doreen Howard: ...city drivers?  
15  
16Mickey Casteel: ...there was, uh, um, [rustling] 7 of us but there's only 1 city driver. Our –  
17 The group consisted of all the [rustling] people that drove, which would be  
18 the mail – the person that delivers mail, and the – from plant to plant, and  
19 the Olds haul drivers that, uh – the body hauler.  
20  
21Cheryl McQuaid: [24:30] Mickey, why did you hire in to Fisher Body? Do you remember  
22 your...  
23  
24Mickey Casteel: Why?  
25  
26Cheryl McQuaid: ...reason? Yeah.  
27  
28Mickey Casteel: Benefits. [throat clearing]  
29  
30Linda Johnson: [24:37] Also for your job [typing] as a driver, didn't you have to have ta  
31 take some special driving classes? And did you do that on company time?  
32 Your own time? Did GM pay for it?  
33  
34Mickey Casteel: GM paid for it. I did it on company time. They paid me, uh, 40 hours to go  
35 to [typing] Battle Creek to, uh, LCC truck driving school. I, uh, I guess I,  
36 y'know, I guess you could call that formal education but...  
37  
38Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah, y'know?  
39  
40Mickey Casteel: ...uh...  
41  
42Cheryl McQuaid: [Inaudible 25:10].  
43  
44Mickey Casteel: ...I have a CDL, class A CDL.  
45  
46Doreen Howard: Okay.

1  
2Doug Rademacher: That's great.  
3  
4Cheryl McQuaid: Um, really, [rustling] I, I really wanna hear more about the Body Shop and  
5 your experience there. [typing] [25:22] Um, were you a part of any of the  
6 dinners or did you – I mean were there – Was it like pot luck dinners? Did  
7 you participate in all those? Could you tell me a little bit more about the,  
8 the Body Shop environment an' bein' out there with everybody? The  
9 camaraderie? [typing] You touched base on – Y'know, you'd kinda liked ta  
10 get a-, get those [coughing] doors hung so that you could read the paper  
11 and do things that you weren't supposed to do like throw some gloves.  
12 Could you tell me a little bit more about the environment that you worked  
13 in? [rustling]  
14  
15Mickey Casteel: Well, the [typing] environment in the, uh, Body Shop was – Pretty much  
16 everybody was in the same boat. They, they were – We were still young.  
17 Uh, there was quite a, uh, turnover as far as employees [typing] because,  
18 uh, you've – Go like 1946, when, when WWII was finished, [phone  
19 vibrating] a large people, a large number of people hired in and then they  
20 got their 30 years in and they retired. So there was, there was close to a  
21 thousand people when I hired in an' in a matter of maybe a year, year and  
22 a half that retired and more people hired in. So we were pretty much all  
23 same age and in the same, same boat where we were all pretty new and  
24 probly didn't know better. [laughter] Knew better, but we couldn't resist, I  
25 guess [laughter] you'd say.  
26  
27Linda Johnson: [27:04] So what was some a the pranks that you guys used to do to each  
28 other?  
29  
30Mickey Casteel: Oh, [throat clearing] [pause] we had one, one guy. He was kinda afraid a  
31 mice, so we'd cut a finger off [tapping] a dirty glove and put it in, just  
32 inside the car, so when he'd walk up ta the car, he'd see that and think it  
33 was a mouse. [laughter]  
34  
35Linda Johnson: Uh, there was a lotta mice runnin' around in this place. [laughter]  
36  
37Mickey Casteel: Well, that's, that's, that's what made it so good is because there was so  
38 mice, so many mice [typing] and rats runnin' around. It's – [yawning]  
39 People who don't always get all their food and stuff in the trash cans, so  
40 they have plenty ta eat around here.  
41  
42Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. Hm. So, um, between the Body Shop and city driver, [typing]  
43 [28:04] how did you transition from the Body Shop to the city driver?  
44 Wh-, what did you do in between that [inaudible 28:09] [typing]  
45

1Mickey Casteel: Well, I, uh, I went from puttin' hinges on the doors, or I'm doin' the doors,  
2 I went to what they call SPC and that's, uh, Statistical Processing, where I  
3 would go out and I would measure the gaps in the doors [typing] and, uh,  
4 then go back and talk ta the skilled trades and, and, uh, have them move  
5 the door in or out or up or down to m-, y'know, to make the fit better.  
6 [typing] We were getting', getting, uh, into the fits and finishes quite a bit  
7 then and that was a job I've probly had for the longest. I think I had that,  
8 uh, about 13 years. [typing] And that was a, that was a good job. It was a,  
9 it was a preferred job. it was one of the jobs that, uh, once you got on it,  
10 you couldn't be bumped because it was a, uh – They – You had, uh,  
11 [sniffing] [throat clearing] [typing] training. I, I didn't go to any schooling  
12 but it was training and in the plant to use what they call a [Data Mite 29:  
13 34] and that's, uh, just a, a data collection machine.  
14

15Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [29:41] What type of data did it collect?  
16

17Mickey Casteel: Well, the, the fits and finishes. The gaps in the doors. They, they wanted ta  
18 make sure the gap was, uh, [typing] consistent from the top of the door ta  
19 the bottom of the door. And then wanted to make sure that, uh, the front of  
20 the header was the same distance away from the body as the back of the  
21 header and the top of the door, uh. [typing]  
22

23Cheryl McQuaid: [30:03] Did you enjoy that job?  
24

25Mickey Casteel: [typing] Yeah. I, I did enjoy that job until it got to the point where they  
26 expected me to, to, uh, get things done that, uh, other supervisors –  
27 Supervisor level. They w-, they just, y'know – The supervisors – Our  
28 supervisors or my supervisors wouldn't, uh, use their – what I call clout, to  
29 go over and, and get other people to move things. [sniffing] And it got ta  
30 the point where they were expecting me ta, [rustling] ta move things and,  
31 uh, hollerin' because I wasn't gettin' it done and I [banging] y'know? You  
32 get to a certain point where [clicking] the supervisor just says, "No. I'm,  
33 I'm [typing] not gonna do it." And that's as far as I could take it.  
34

35Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
36

37Mickey Casteel: And I had ta h-, y'know, [background noise] somebody – A superintendent  
38 [typing] level would have ta go in there and they didn't wanna do that, so I  
39 moved on.  
40

41Doreen Howard: So you've...  
42

43Mickey Casteel: I used my, uh, transfer rights again and... [laughter] [typing]  
44

45Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 31:19] again.  
46

1Mickey Casteel: ...went to, uh, underbody repair. [typing]  
2  
3Marilyn Coulter: So Mickey, you moved around a lot.  
4  
5Doreen Howard: Yeah.  
6  
7Marilyn Coulter: [31:27] Um, during those different times, have you had a chance to, um,  
8 [typing] make long-standing friendships with any people? Do you interact  
9 with'm outside of the plant, or?  
10  
11Mickey Casteel: Oh, yeah. I, I have, uh, [typing] 3 or 4 people that I, I go hunting with and  
12 I ride motorcycles with and... [coughing] [snapping]  
13Marilyn Coulter: Y-, ...  
14  
15Mickey Casteel: ...you're bound ta [typing] [throat clearing] get a few people that you, uh,  
16 y'know, wanna see after you retire outta here. It's, it's not that, that I don't  
17 wanna see the majority [coughing] of the people. It's just that it's  
18 [coughing] not gonna happen. I, I know it's not gonna happen.  
19  
20Doreen Howard: Since you were in so many different areas, um, [32:17] give me your,  
21 your, um, ideas and feelings of what, what it's like to be an employee here.  
22 How, y'know how did the, um – I guess – What's the overall feeling of the  
23 GM employee? Um, you got ta see a lotta different areas. A lot more than  
24 a lot of other people ever worked in. And experience a lot of, um, different  
25 jobs. Can you, um, [whispering] explain a little bit about, y'know,  
26 [whispering] the culture as far as the people and, and their, um,  
27 [whispering] background and ways of doing things, I guess? [whispering]  
28  
29Mickey Casteel: Um, if I'm understanding your question, it's, uh, basically, y'know, people  
30 wanna do a good job in here. [background noise] [snapping] It's just, it –  
31 A lot of it depends on, uh, [sniffing] what Supervision'll let them do.  
32  
33Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
34  
35Mickey Casteel: It's, it's, uh [snapping] – Sometimes, as anybody that has worked here  
36 knows, it, uh – Sometimes [snapping] it, uh, um – Supervisors, they, they,  
37 uh, overs-, overstep their boundaries [snapping] and they, they, uh,  
38 [clicking] [coughing] seem to want to, uh, [clicking] remind everybody  
39 that they're in charge and in, y'know? Basically, everybody knows who's  
40 in charge and they just – And a lotta times, if they ju-, if you just let the  
41 people do their job, they do a good job. [sniffing]  
42  
43Marilyn Coulter: [34:12] M-, Mickey, were you ever involved in any of the union activities  
44 at Local [inaudible] 34:16]? [snapping]  
45



1Mickey Casteel: Um, unfortunately, I'd, I'd have ta say not very many. I did go to the union  
2 picnic and, and stuff like that. [rustling] But as far as bein' a, a member  
3 that went to the union hall all the time, I, I didn't seem to go to the union  
4 hall unless I had a problem...  
5

6Marilyn Coulter: W-,...

7

8Mickey Casteel: ...that I couldn't solve.  
9

10Marilyn Coulter: Was the picnic something that you enjoyed or looked forward to every  
11 year?  
12

13Mickey Casteel: Oh, yeah. They're, they're a lotta fun. Ya get ta – Y'know, even though I  
14 moved around a lot, there was a lotta people that, uh, you didn't see on a  
15 regular basis and you got ta see'm over there. It's...  
16

17Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
18

19Mickey Casteel: I, I'd have ta say I, I may not miss comin' ta work when I retire but I, I will  
20 miss a lotta the people that, uh, have either moved on or – I, I've know  
21 several people that's went down to [rustling] Shreveport, Louisiana, or, or  
22 to one of the other plants, and...  
23

24Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
25

26Mickey Casteel: ...likely as not, I won't s-, ever see them again.  
27

28Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
29

30Cheryl McQuaid: Did they use those transfer rights? [laughter]  
31

32Mickey Casteel: Everybody, [laughter] if they know what's good for'm, they'll use their  
33 transfer rights. [laughter] [throat clearing]  
34

35Doreen Howard: Now that our plant is closed and – [35:36] What, what's your feeling  
36 [tapping] on the closure of the plant and how has it affected, affected you  
37 personally?  
38

39Mickey Casteel: Well, it's kinda sad. It's, uh – This is – This place has been here longer  
40 than, uh, most of us have been [sniffing] alive. Double. Y'know, this is –  
41 I'm 50, a little over 50 years old and, uh, this plant's been here for a little  
42 over 100 years, so. And [rustling] my grandfather, he, uh, worked here for  
43 about 15 minutes the way he talked. He, uh... [laughter]  
44

45Cheryl McQuaid: What? [laughter]  
46

1 Mickey Casteel: ...he, he [laughter] was leav-, – He hired in here in, uh, sometime in the  
2 '30s.  
3  
4 Doreen Howard: Oh, my.  
5  
6 Mickey Casteel: And [rustling] he was doin' a job and the foreman come up an' wanted him  
7 ta work a little faster an' he said the foreman told him that, uh, "There's 50  
8 people out on the street that will take your job." He says, "Well, go find  
9 one." Went home. [laughter] So he was a farmer and he had, uh – He  
10 could make a living outta here, so he, he moved on too.  
11  
12 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 36:51].  
13  
14 Mickey Casteel: I guess he used his transfer rights. [laughter]  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: [36:56] Did you have any other family work here outside of your  
17 grandfather working here?  
18  
19 Mickey Casteel: Not in this plant. I had a, uh – My, uh, dad, he, he worked at Oldsmobile  
20 for [pause] – I don't know exactly how long he worked there. Uh, 3 or 4  
21 years nd then, uh, he used his transfer rights and moved on. He worked at  
22 Industrial Welding after that. And then my brother, he w-, hired right in to  
23 Oldsmobile a-, right outta high school. And then he went to [background  
24 noise] Vietnam...  
25  
26 Doreen Howard: Mm.  
27  
28 Mickey Casteel: ...and served 2 years in the, in the Army. Got drafted. And then he, uh,  
29 [sniffing] come back. He thought he could see greener pastures, so he  
30 moved on, left GM. I had an uncle that – He, uh, spent a little over 40  
31 years as a driver driving cars off the end a the line over at Oldsmobile.  
32 [snapping] He, he had a heart attack and died waitin' ta go ta work over at  
33 Oldsmobile. [sniffing]  
34  
35 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 38:06].  
36  
37 Mickey Casteel: Then I had, uh – It would be, uh – I guess it would be a, a second cousin  
38 that was my mom's cousin. He, he spent 40 years over at Oldsmobile  
39 [background noise] and he's retired an' doin' pretty good now. And then  
40 his son worked here in Fisher Body, what I call Fisher Body, uh, and he  
41 just retired here last year with 30 years.  
42  
43 Doreen Howard: That's a lot.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: So your family has quite a GM history. [murmuring] [Inaudible 38:34].  
46

1Mickey Casteel: Yeah. Well, as a matter of fact, uh, uh, the one that retired with 40 years?  
2 His dad and mom both worked here. His dad retired outta here and his  
3 mom just worked until they got things settled and then she, uh, stayed  
4 home with the kids, I guess.  
5

6Marilyn Coulter: Hm. Great.  
7

8Mickey Casteel: But that was a little bit before my time.  
9

10Doreen Howard: [38:59] Now are you going to be moving on to the Delta Plant?  
11

12Mickey Casteel: Yeah. I've, uh, put in my application to, to go out there.  
13

14Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. And will you be doing the same position?  
15

16Mickey Casteel: Uh, as, as of right now, they're not gonna have a city driver out there. And  
17 we're trying to talk'm into havin' city driver 'cause they're gonna need  
18 somebody ta chase parts.  
19

20Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
21

22Mickey Casteel: So hopefully we – They can see things my way and I'll have a city drive  
23 [laughter] job out there. [laughter]  
24

25Doreen Howard: Well, in...  
26

27Mickey Casteel: As of right now, we've still got [throat clearing] some talkin' ta do.  
28

29Doreen Howard: Well, in, in [snapping] wrappin' up here, [39:40] is there anything at all  
30 that, that you wanted ta talk about that we haven't touched on at all?  
31 Somethin' that you wanted ta, um, ta talk about?  
32

33Mickey Casteel: Oh, I, [murmuring] I don't think so. I d-,...  
34

35Doreen Howard: Pretty much done.  
36

37Mickey Casteel: Pretty much covered everything I think. [rustling]  
38

39Doreen Howard: Okay. Was there any, um – I know there'll be a lot of new people coming  
40 into the, the Delta Plant. Um, [40:07] is there any advice [background  
41 noise] that you could, um, offer [snapping] any of the new people coming  
42 into the plant?  
43

44Mickey Casteel: [sighing] Well, no. I don't think so. I, I think basically, uh, you're gonna  
45 have people, [rustling] no matter how old they are or how young they are  
46 – People are basically gonna d-, do a good job or they're not gonna do a

1 good job. And, uh, as a whole, I think I've seen most a the people that  
2 work here, they basically wanna do a good job. And I think that's why, uh,  
3 when GM has a new product, they always come to Lansing. They, they  
4 don't take it someplace else because they know that, uh, the workforce in  
5 Lansing's gonna do a good job and get their product out on the – in the  
6 public an', an', an', uh, have a good product out there.  
7  
8Doreen Howard: Yeah. The, the saying "the, the capital of quality." An', an' – okay. Well...  
9  
10Cheryl McQuaid: Well, Mickey, thank you...  
11  
12Doreen Howard: Thank you.  
13  
14Female: Thank you.  
15  
16Cheryl McQuaid:. ...for your time.  
17  
18  
19/lb