

**Eldridge Cook, African American GM Manager,  
discusses his career at the Fisher Body Plant in Lansing, MI**

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4  
5 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body Historical Team interview with Mr. Eldridge Cook, otherwise  
6 known as Cookie. The date is Tuesday, January 10. We're in the UAW Local  
7 602's Frank Dryer Greenhouse. Uh, my name is Marilyn Coulter, and the  
8 other team members are...  
9  
10 Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.  
11  
12 Gary Judy: Gary Judy.  
13  
14 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.  
15  
16 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter. [00:26] Um, Mr. Cook, could you please say and spell your  
19 name for me, please?  
20  
21 Eldridge Cook: My name is Eldridge Cook. E-L-D-R-I-D-G-E C-O-O-K.  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: [00:40] And could you give us your address, please?  
24  
25 Eldridge Cook: My address is 3725 Alpine Drive, Lansing, Michigan 9-, 48911.  
26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: [00:52] Um, are you married?  
28  
29 Eldridge Cook: No.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: [00:55] Do you have any children?  
32  
33 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: [00:58] Um, where were you born?  
36  
37 Eldridge Cook: I was born in Houlka, Mississippi.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [01:03] Houlka, Mississippi?  
40  
41 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: [01:05] And, um, your education?  
44  
45 Eldridge Cook: I have a bachelor degree in bidnis education. Taught school 2 years in  
46 Mississippi before I came to General Motors. I taught, uh, 9<sup>th</sup> grade English,

1 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, uh, bookkeepin', typin', and shorthand  
2 for 2 years before I came to General Motors.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: [01:30] Were you ever in the military?  
5  
6 Eldridge Cook: No, never went [through 1:32] the military, uh, I was kept out of the military  
7 to teach school in Mississippi.  
8  
9 Marilyn Coulter: [01:39] Okay, so you were a teacher, and first of all, what brought you to  
10 Lansing, Michigan?  
11  
12 Eldridge Cook: Uh, more money.  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: [01:45] More money?  
15  
16 Eldridge Cook: Yeah, I was comin' to Michigan durin' the summer working at General  
17 Motors and goin' back teaching school in Mississippi, so after 2 years of doin'  
18 that, I was makin' more money durin' the summer in General Motors than I  
19 was teachin', so I decided to come to General Motors full time.  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: [02:06] So now, how did that happen? How did you happen to come up to  
22 Michigan for...  
23  
24 Eldridge Cook: Hm.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: ...how did you find out about that?  
27  
28 Eldridge Cook: Well I had a brother here goin' to school at Michigan State and he was  
29 workin' at Oldsmobile part time and goin' to school at State.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
32  
33 Eldridge Cook: So...  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: [02:22] So, uh, when [pen clicking] did you first started working here?  
36  
37 Eldridge Cook: Ahh, I first started workin' at GM in 196-, May of 1963. Yeah, from May to  
38 September a '63 and went back and taught school from September to May of  
39 '63 and '64, came back in '63 and '64 May again, and taught from – worked  
40 at GM from May to September.  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: [02:49] So when you worked there, were you an assembler?  
43  
44 Eldridge Cook: Yes, I was on the assembly line puttin' in body wires.  
45  
46 Marilyn Coulter: [02:56] So what'd you think when you first came in there?  
47

1Eldridge Cook: Well, it was somethin' different. It started off at 2.35 an hour and that was  
2 very strange. I used to work all day for less than \$3 from sun to sun. So it was  
3 quite different. Yeah.  
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [03:12] So what, what's your, what was your actual seniority date when you  
6 first...  
7

8Eldridge Cook: My actual seniority date when I came back was May the 17th, 1965. The first  
9 2 time I was 2 days short of 90 days, and in '63, I was 2 days short, and '64, I  
10 was 1 day short, and I didn't have no idea about the 90-day [established 3:34]  
11 seniority rule, so I cut myself 2 years short from GM.  
12

13Marilyn Coulter: Oh...  
14

15Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
16

17Marilyn Coulter: [03:40] So now, when you were coming in in the summers to work and then  
18 leaving, how did the employees treat you knowing you were comin' in and...  
19

20Eldridge Cook: Well...  
21

22Marilyn Coulter: ...gonna just be here...  
23

24Eldridge Cook: Well...  
25

26Marilyn Coulter: ...for a short moment and leave?  
27

28Eldridge Cook: Yeah, at that time, uh, [Gerald Brook 03:55], was the personnel director down  
29 in Personnel, and he was lookin' for somebody he said that really wanted to  
30 work, and I explained to him my situation that I was teachin' school and, uh,  
31 that I'd be goin' back in September to teach school, and he kinda went along  
32 with that for 2 years, and the third time I told'm I was gonna stay. He said  
33 well good, we'll be glad to have you, and I stayed.  
34

35Marilyn Coulter: [04:20] So actually, at that time, they used to have a lotta teachers who would  
36 come and work...  
37

38Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
39

40Marilyn Coulter: ...inside the plant  
41

42Eldridge Cook: Right.  
43

44Marilyn Coulter: ...during the summertime, during downtime...  
45

46Eldridge Cook: Right.

1  
2Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 4:26]?  
3  
4Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: [04:28] So 1965...  
7  
8Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: ...you came in and you stayed?  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: Yes, I did.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: [04:34] Earl?  
15  
16Earl Nicholson: Uh, Earl Nicholson. [04:37] At that time, with you, with you coming up to the  
17 factory up in Michigan, could you tell me whatchu, what, what your opinion is  
18 of what the percentage of African Americans...  
19  
20 [coughing]  
21  
22Earl Nicholson: ...and Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans were working in in the  
23 factory, at that time?  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Yes, it was very few. I think we had 1 African American supervisor. At that  
26 time, I think it was Cleve Stepter. He was, I think, the first black African  
27 American on supervision at that time I came here. Yep.  
28  
29Earl Nicholson: [05:11] Any Mexicans?  
30  
31Eldridge Cook: None.  
32  
33Earl Nicholson: [05:13] Any Asians?  
34  
35Eldridge Cook: Uh, none.  
36  
37Earl Nicholson: And...  
38  
39Eldridge Cook: At that time.  
40  
41Earl Nicholson: [05:17] ...and how many African Americans were workin' on the floor?  
42  
43Eldridge Cook: Hm. Quite a few.  
44  
45Earl Nicholson: [05:22] Quite a few?  
46

1Eldridge Cook: Yeah, but it's – it was, the ratio was maybe 4:1, you know, [whether 05:27]  
2 they're putting that man in [inaudible 05:30].  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: Earl brings up a good question. [05:39] In terms of climate in the 60s inside  
9 the plant versus in, in school, what was it like as far as culture in terms of  
10 being the way you're treated?  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: It was, it was different, very different, but like I said, from being from the  
13 South, I had adapted to all type a different situation from the way I was  
14 brought up down South. It was very different.  
15  
16Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [06:06] So you're hired in, you're on the line...  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: ...do you remember what department you first started in?  
21  
22Eldridge Cook: Yeah, I was in, uh, the Paint Department down in wet sand.  
23  
24Marilyn Coulter: [06:16] And so – and what was wet sand?  
25  
26Eldridge Cook: Uh, they were sandin' the bodies and runnin' water on it to, uh, keep it cool, I  
27 guess, but that's what they was...  
28  
29Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
30  
31Eldridge Cook: ...doin'.  
32  
33Eldridge Cook: You have to wear rubber boots and stuff like that to keep your feet dry.  
34  
35Marilyn Coulter: [06:32] So when you were working in there after being – how would, how did  
36 working in the Paint Department versus working in the Trim Department  
37 where you were runnin' wires?  
38  
39Eldridge Cook: Uh, no comparison. [laughter] Trim Department was a piece a cake as far as  
40 job situation and everything else. It was b – I was more adapted to that type of  
41 work than workin' in water and wet sand.  
42  
43Marilyn Coulter: Hm. [06:53] How long did you work in paint?  
44  
45Eldridge Cook: Um, but I only worked the one summer that I was here, which was 8 or, about  
46 9 or 10 weeks I worked and then I went back. When I came back the second

1 time, I was in Trim Department layin' body wires and that was much better  
2 work, and work – much better workin' condition also.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: [07:14] So in the working conditions, how were the people? Were there any  
5 pranks that were pulled? What types of things did you do?  
6  
7 Eldridge Cook: Yeah, it was, it was jokes pulled on ya, but like I said, coming from the South  
8 I was used to all that type a situation, so really, it didn't bother me.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: [07:31] So...  
11  
12 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: ...are you saying that you were more less – they were more or less racial-type  
15 jokes?  
16  
17 Eldridge Cook: It was, it was a lot of'm, but like I say, I knew where I came from and I knew  
18 what my situation was...  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.  
21  
22 Eldridge Cook: ...so I just heard it and didn't hear it and kept going. My main objective was  
23 to stay at General Motors and earn a good livin', so that my main purpose for  
24 bein' there, so the jokes didn't really bother me.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: [07:58] So did you find that to be so in the Trim Department also?  
27  
28 Eldridge Cook: Uh, yes.  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: Well.  
31  
32 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [08:07] So, um, Cheryl McQuaid?  
35  
36 Cheryl McQuaid: [08:12] Cookie, did – were the jokes somethin' that happened – the racial  
37 jokes, were they something ta lighten up the air between coworkers or were  
38 they hurtful and mean spirited?  
39  
40 Eldridge Cook: Well, they – I think they were meant to be hurtful, but like I said, wit my  
41 background, my Christianity background, I just overlooked it. But like I said  
42 earlier, my main focus was being there to work and earn a livin', you know,  
43 and that's what I really concentrated on, that's what I focus in.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: [08:53] So, 1965...  
46

1Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
2  
3Marilyn Coulter: ...what was it like in the Trim Shop in 1965? Can you describe what the plant  
4 was like for us back then?  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: Yes, it was, it was 10 hours a night and that was good in a sense. [laughter]  
7 You know, it kept me busy. I'd work all night, sleep all day, get up and come  
8 back to work the next day. Yep. Mm-hm.  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: [09:12] And so you were doin' that for 2.35 an hour?  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: Yeah, 2-, I started out at 2.35 an hour.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: [09:18] And, um, do – how long did you do wires?  
15  
16Eldridge Cook: Uh, for 3 years I laid body wires, and then I, uh, got to be a pickup [inaudible  
17 09:29] relief man, and from there, I went on timekeepin'. In 1969, I was  
18 timekeeper for, uh, maybe 6 months and after that we – promised me a raise,  
19 and I didn't get that, so I told him I was goin' back on the line, which I did.  
20  
21Marilyn Coulter: [09:48] So Cookie, can you...  
22  
23Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
24  
25Marilyn Coulter: ...tell me, number 1, what's a relief person, and then number 2, what was a  
26 timekeeper and how did you get that?  
27  
28Eldridge Cook Uh, the relief person, they needed extra people, and I, like I say, I had been  
29 there for a while and other people was goin' on relief, and I aksed my  
30 supervisor, "Why can't I have a relief job?", you know, I have some seniority,  
31 a little bit but not much, but I had as much seniority as some a the people they  
32 was puttin' on relief, so he said, "I give ya a try". So he did.  
33  
34Marilyn Coulter: [10:17] And a relief person did what?  
35  
36Eldridge Cook: Uh, relief – uh, we had 7 or 8 people. We had to go around and give'm breaks,  
37 [either 10:24] 10 or 12 minute 3 time a day. Yeah.  
38  
39Cheryl McQuaid: And...  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: Cheryl.  
42  
43Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
44  
45Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [10:32] Could you walk us through body wires? What is body wires and what  
2 did you do ta, to perform that job?  
3

4 Eldridge Cook: Well, body wires, you had a option sheet on the front a the automobile when it  
5 was comin' down the line, and it had option on it, what type a electrical  
6 equipment went inside the car, so you had to match [sound of paper tearing]  
7 that up wit the right body wire so it would perform those, uh, you know, those  
8 functions. Yeah.  
9

10 Cheryl McQuaid: [10:59] So did you plug the body wires into somethin'?

11

12 Eldridge Cook: No, ya just laid it on the floor and clipped it in and routed it through the door  
13 openin's and all the way back to the backseat openin' up. You had power for  
14 the rear door. You had to route the wires through the hole in the center post  
15 and through the door openin'. So when you put your door glass, the regulators  
16 in, we plugged in.  
17

18 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.  
19

20 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
21

22 Jerri Smith: Um, not to get ahead of you on this, because a lotta [inaudible 11:27] won't  
23 know that you were a supervisor in that same area.  
24

25 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26

27 Jerri Smith: [11:31] Did that help you understand how the workers felt about the job and  
28 how they...  
29

30 Eldridge Cook: [Inaudible 11:34].  
31

32 Jerri Smith: ...handled the job?  
33

34 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
35

36 Jerri Smith: Because you had done it before?  
37

38 Eldridge Cook: Yes, it did, and it made – to me it made my job much easier. I went on  
39 supervision in 1971, and it really made my job easier because I had been there  
40 and done what the employees on the line is doin', and I knew how difficult  
41 some a the jobs were.  
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [11:56] Um, but – so can you tell me once again, what is a timekeeper?  
44

45 Eldridge Cook: Uh, the timekeeper was, uh, – you had – well, I had the body shop at that time,  
46 but anyway, a timekeeper was you had to go out and collect the timecard. At



1                   that time, people had to punch in and punch out, so you had to go at the end a  
2                   the day and collect the timecards, take'm back to the office and add up their  
3                   time and record it, so they would get a proper check [near 12:23] the end of  
4                   the week.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: [12:24] And was that a job of an hourly person or salary?  
7  
8Eldridge Cook:   No, that was salary. That was...  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
11  
12Eldridge Cook:   ...strictly a salary employee job.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: [12:31] So now was that an increase in pay for you?  
15  
16Eldridge Cook:   It's 'spose ta had been but it – after 3 months it wasn't, so I told'm I was goin'  
17                   back ta the line, which I did.  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: So,  
20  
21Eldridge Cook:   Mm-hm.  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: And – did you have a question Earl?  
24  
25Earl Nicholson:   Ahh, yeah, before we start. I was, uh, hoping to get this before we got to the  
26                   supervision questions.  
27  
28Eldridge Cook:   Oh, okay.  
29  
30Earl Nicholson:   [12:51] But, uh, were you ever on strike?  
31  
32Eldridge Cook:   Yes. Yeah, I was in that 1970 strike, and I was devastated. I had just a gotten  
33                   married at '66 and had a 2 kids, and I was gettin' ready to go down and sign  
34                   up for the welfare and everything else, and after we ended that strike in 1970,  
35                   and went on supervision in 1971.  
36  
37Marilyn Coulter: [13:17] Do you remember what that strike was about?  
38  
39Eldridge Cook:   Uh, I think it was about 30 an hour. It's what I think it was about. Yeah.  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: [13:25] During your time as an hourly employee, were you active or did you  
42                   participate in your union activities?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook:   Yes, I went to the meetin's. Everytime we had a union meetin', I was over  
45                   there at the union hall.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
2  
3 Eldridge Cook: But as far as being a membership – I mean, uh, active member of the u, within  
4 the union, no I was never, uh, official member. Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
7  
8 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
9  
10 Earl Nicholson: [13:51] Now when you s-, when you say that you were never official member,  
11 I mean you were, uh, you were [a or UAW 13:55]?  
12  
13 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
14  
15 Earl Nicholson: [13:57] You just weren't active in as...  
16  
17 Eldridge Cook: Right.  
18  
19 Eldridge Cook: ...a union, uh-oh, like a committee [inaudible 14:02]?  
20  
21 Eldridge Cook: Right. No, that's what I really meant.  
22  
23 Earl Nicholson: Okay.  
24  
25 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: [14:05] So, you went out, ya did strike, you did timekeeper...  
28  
29 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: ...you came back.  
32  
33 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: ...then in 1971...  
36  
37 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...you became a supervisor?  
40  
41 Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: [14:16] Now, how were you – um, was that somethin' that you applied for or  
44 were you, um, quartered to do that? How?  
45

1Eldridge Cook: Well, [help 14:26], uh, a year after I had gone on supervision – I, I mean  
2 before I went on supervision, I applied for supervision, and I was told that if –  
3 I couldn't pass the test and that was really amazing to me after bein' a  
4 schoolteacher for 2 years and had a bachelor's degree in bidnis education and  
5 they told me I couldn't pass the test, so I just kind of swept that under the rug.  
6

7Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Okay.  
8

9Eldridge Cook: So in...  
10  
11 [pencil writing]  
12

13Marilyn Coulter: Go ahead.  
14

15Eldridge Cook: Yep and, uh, I took the test and theys told me I didn't pass, so I just kinda  
16 swept – to me, I just swept that under the rug and there's just another strike  
17 against me, so I was satisfied just goin' back on the line. So in 1971, the, uh,  
18 they passed this law that they had ta have so many more minorities on  
19 supervision, and I guess they went back and checked my record and found out  
20 my, uh, background in bidnis education and d-, degree that I had and ,uh,  
21 [Dick Spark 15:40] was the superintendent at the time, and he had me to come  
22 in, said I was goin' on supervision. I told him I didn't want it. He said, yep,  
23 we gonna put you on. I said, I don't wanna go on supervision. I just took the  
24 test while back and no one said I passed, so why are you sayin' I'm goin' on?  
25 He said, well Cookie, I'm goin' to tell ya, you goin' on whether you want it or  
26 not. You'll be on supervision. This was on a Tuesday afternoon, and he said  
27 on Monday you will be on supervision whether you want it or not. I said,  
28 well, I'm tellin' ya now, I don't want it. He said, we could care less what you  
29 want. You will be on supervision Monday. So, that's how I got on.  
30

31Marilyn Coulter: [16:20] So, and you were how old when you bec-when you came into the  
32 plant?  
33

34Eldridge Cook: It was '71. When I came in the plant, I was 25.  
35

36Marilyn Coulter: In so '71. Yeah.  
37

38Eldridge Cook: 31.  
39

40Marilyn Coulter: 31.  
41

42Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
43

44Marilyn Coulter: [16:31] So, you went on supervision under duress [laughter].  
45

46Eldridge Cook: Yeah, I did.

1  
2Marilyn Coulter: [16:36] You was [strung16:36] [held in 16:37].  
3  
4Eldridge Cook: Yeah. Mm-hm.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: [16:38] Do you remember the first area that you were...  
7  
8Eldridge Cook: Yeah...  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: ...supervisor in?  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: ...the first area I had was up in [3X 16:43], uh, puttin' in seats. Yeah.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: So, and you were in there, in the, in the Seat Department. [16:52] My first  
15 question, how did your employees react to having you as a supervisor?  
16  
17Eldridge Cook: Well, some reacted real good and some could tell that's who I was and I had  
18 some refuse to take their paycheck from me because I guess my race. They  
19 wouldn't take their paychecks from me. I had to mail them, so that didn't  
20 bother me either.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: [17:16] So, was there any type of training that you received prior to becoming  
23 the supervisor or did they just throw ya out to the wolves?  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Yep. From Tuesday I was told I'll being on Monday, and Monday I went on  
26 with no training, no nothing. Here it is, it's yours. So...  
27  
28Marilyn Coulter: [17:33] How did that work for you?  
29  
30Eldridge Cook: Well, I guess bein' a Christian like I am, I put God first and that's who was  
31 my trainer.  
32  
33Marilyn Coulter: [17:43] So, what was required of supervisors in 1971?  
34  
35Eldridge Cook: Well, our main objective was ta keep the line. That was number 1. Keep the  
36 line runnin'. Number 2 was build a good, uh, A-1 product, but number 1,  
37 keep that line runnin', and that's what our goal were.  
38  
39Marilyn Coulter: [18:02] So, when you were an hourly worker, what made a good supervisor  
40 for you?  
41  
42Eldridge Cook: A good supervisor to me was takin' care of his employees. Catering ta their  
43 needs, not no one else need but theirs, you know, so.  
44  
45Marilyn Coulter: [18:22] And being the factor that you had been on the line, did ya feel that that  
46 made you a better supervisor?

1  
2Eldridge Cook: I know it did. Because like I said earlier, you know, I had been there and done  
3 that, so I knew – I can understand what they was goin' through and I could  
4 kinda deal with it, better than not knowin' what they go through.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: [18:42] S-, so, being supervisor, did you work dayshift, did you work  
7 nightshift, how did that go?  
8  
9Eldridge Cook: Well, it – when I went on, we was doin' 12 weeks night, 12 weeks days, so I  
10 went from dayshift to nightshift. Basically went to nightshift every 12 weeks.  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: [18:57] And how did it work for you?  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: It...  
15  
16Marilyn Coulter: [18:59] And your family?  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: ...it, it worked good for me because when I worked in days I could stay home.  
19 I mean when I was workin', yeah, days, I'd be at home wit my little kids at  
20 night, and so on the week that I went to, uh, night, we had to get a babysitter  
21 to be at home with the kids.  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: [19:18] So, you said because the laws had changed...  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: ...they had ta put more...  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Blacks.  
30  
31Marilyn Coulter: ...blacks on...  
32  
33Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
34  
35Marilyn Coulter: ...um, how many supervisors do you, do you remember who all got put on?  
36  
37Eldridge Cook: Uh, yes. I went on. [Robert Thorne 19:34] went on. [Walt Benefield 19:36]  
38 was put on. [Sandra Coleman 19:38] was put on. [Lynn Hill 19:40] was put  
39 on. [Inaudible 19:43] and I don't know how many up in the paint shop, you  
40 know.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: [19:48] And now, um, what about women?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: Yeah, we had some women. We had Sandy Coleman and Lynn Hill was  
45 women. Yeah. [door shutting] They were the only two black women, I think,  
46 we ever had in trim.

1  
2Marilyn Coulter: [20:07] Now...  
3  
4Eldridge Cook: Lynn Hill. Sandy Coleman.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: ...now they came in later years, right?  
7  
8Eldridge Cook: Real later. Yeah, they came in the late 80s or the mid-80s.  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: Yep.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: [20:16] So, um, as the supervisor and as a lineworker, can you tell me some –  
15 now you, you're retired now?  
16  
17Eldridge Cook: Yes. [laughter] Yes. Yes.  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: And...  
20  
21Eldridge Cook: Definitely retired. [laughter]  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: [20:32] How many years did you retire anyway?  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Uh, 37 and a half.  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: [20:35] Thirty seven and a half?  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
30  
31Marilyn Coulter: [20:37] So in 37 and a half years, can you walk us through what life was like  
32 for a supervisor in there? What are some of the big changes that you had in  
33 there...  
34  
35Eldridge Cook: Uh, life was...  
36  
37Marilyn Coulter: ...that you noticed?  
38  
39Eldridge Cook: Yeah, in 37 years there and 31 as a supervisor, life had really changed. It  
40 went from a little authority to, uh, a much more authorities in the later years,  
41 but it was still touch and go. You know, ya still you knew you had so much  
42 ya could do and so much ya didn't dare do. You know, the main objective  
43 was just to get a good quality [outkeep 21:16] line, uh...  
44  
45Marilyn Coulter: [21:18] Can you share what you wouldn't dare do?  
46

1Eldridge Cook: Yeah, number 1, you didn't dare talk back to your supervisor. That was  
2 number 1. Rather you were right or wrong, you didn't dare ta cross him. No.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Earl.  
5  
6Earl Nicholson: Oh, uh. Uh, did, um, Earl Nicholson. [21:40] Um, at what point in your  
7 career – I mean, uh, that you told me that, uh, that, uh, the , uh, the white  
8 employees wouldn't accept checks from you...  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: Right.  
11  
12Earl Nicholson: ...you had to mail them. At what point did that change?  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: Well, it never...  
15  
16Earl Nicholson: [21:54] What year?  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: Uh, that was back in the late 80s I believes. No, the late 70s. They refused to  
19 take a check from me, and it didn't bother me. I just took it back down to  
20 payroll.  
21  
22 [Inaudible 22:09].  
23  
24Earl Nicholson: [22:09] Yeah, but, but when, when did they, when did they start taking,  
25 accepting them?  
26  
27Eldridge Cook: Uh.  
28  
29Earl Nicholson: [22:12] When did, when did, when did that come to an end?  
30  
31Eldridge Cook: In the early 80s. They was okay with it, I guess, but, you know, ya, ya still  
32 could tell that they didn't want ta be bothered with ya, but you had to go on  
33 because I had a job to do 'cause regardless of their feelin', I knew I had a job  
34 to do, and I did it to the best of my ability. I also knew I had a family, a wife,  
35 and 3 kid to support, so I knew where my meal ticket was [door screeching],  
36 so I had ta do the best to my ability ta make sure I didn't lose my job.  
37  
38Marilyn Coulter: Cookie, [throat clearing] Marilyn Coulter.  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: [22:49] What were some of the things that you were able to help change in the  
43 plant?  
44  
45Eldridge Cook: Well, one thing is being a black supervisor, I could relate ta a lotta people  
46 problems, and I tried to help them anyway I could, you know. You have to be

1 sensitive to their needs because I- life were more than just Fisher Body. You  
2 have a personal life also, so you have to be sensitive and cater to some of their  
3 needs, and I know people that worked for me on the nightshift that had  
4 families and kids and activities, and they couldn't go to see some of their kid's  
5 activities, and I used to get around that by hey, go see your daughter  
6 basketball game or your son basketball game, come right in after the game is  
7 over. Don't go to MacDonald. Don't go to Burger King. When the game is  
8 over, get yourself in here and work and, uh, that worked for me, and the  
9 employee that I did that for, they respected that and they – when the game was  
10 over, they'd hustle right in to work, and I appreciated that too. Yeah, uh.  
11  
12Earl Nicholson: Um, I'd like to talk a little bit about health and safety.  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
15  
16Earl Nicholson: [24:11] Uh, when you first in, first hired in, uh, how safe was Fisher Body,  
17 and in 1970, how safe was Fisher Body, and in 1980, how safe was Fisher  
18 Body?  
19  
20Eldridge Cook: Well, from the safety standpoint of view back in the 70s, I know we had to  
21 wear steel-toe shoes, and we got away from that in the later part of the 80s.  
22 You didn't have to – steel-toe shoe wasn't the requirement. You also had to  
23 wear safety glasses, but we still had to wear safety glasses, but the number 1  
24 issue, the steel-toe shoes had gone out. But other than that, everything was  
25 still safe. [screeching]  
26  
27Earl Nicholson: [24:50] How many people had been hurt? Say like in 1970 as opposed to  
28 1980?  
29  
30Eldridge Cook: Hm. I can't give ya that number 'cause I really don't know.  
31  
32Earl Nicholson: [24:59] Do – did you ever work 'round anybody that had been seriously hurt?  
33  
34Eldridge Cook: No. Uh-uh. [screeching] No.  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: [25:05] Cookie...  
37  
38Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
39  
40Marilyn Coulter: ...you were there in the 60s...  
41  
42Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
43  
44Marilyn Coulter: ...you're there in the 70s – Marilyn Coulter.  
45  
46Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.



1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: you were there in the 70s, you were there in the 80s...  
3  
4 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: you're there in the 90s...  
7  
8 Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: ...can you tell me how the plant population changed, um, in terms of your  
11 employees?  
12  
13 Eldridge Cook: Yes, uh, in the 80s, we start gettin' more younger people in and they had their  
14 own mindset, you know, no one – they – I shouldn't say all of'm, but most  
15 of'm was lazy, just lookin' for a handout and didn't wanna really work to earn  
16 what was bein' offered to'm. Back in the 60s and the 70, people really  
17 appreciated their job, and they gave you a hundred percent, and that's the only  
18 different that I could see between the generation gap. The 60s and the 70  
19 people really appreciated their job and wanted to work. Where those in the  
20 80s and the 90s was not as ambitious as they were back in the 60s and 70s.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: [26:16] Um, what would you attribute that to?  
23  
24 Eldridge Cook: Uh, they in it all with the money they had, and the money they had given them  
25 everything, and not being out on their own, earnin' their own way. That's  
26 what I contribute it to.  
27  
28 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [26:32] Did you as a supervisor – were you able to weed  
29 out some of these lazy people or was that somethin' that you had no , no  
30 control over?  
31  
32 Eldridge Cook: No control over it whatsoever. Yeah, that was [papers shuffling] did through  
33 the unemployment office. [Inaudible 26:49].  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: [26:50] S-, so, do you feel that, um, when General Motors issued by Lansing  
36 gave the hiring practices over to the employment office versus the inhouse,  
37 um, when...  
38  
39 Eldridge Cook: Referral.  
40  
41 Marilyn Cook: ...referral where they went – and they actually came and stood in the plant  
42 and our, um, employment office hired'm in?  
43  
44 Eldridge Cook: Well, I think, uh, the referral system was much better because if I had  
45 employee and he had a sister or brother that wanted to get in, it, you know,  
46 and the employee that came to me was a good worker, so yes, I recommended

1 that, uh, they would hire sister or brother, which I had about, hm, 6 people that  
2 I recommended down in the employment office. They hired'm just because  
3 their sister or their brother was, uh, employee of mine, and they was good  
4 worker and they, and they hired their brother or sister, [paper ripping] and  
5 they turned out to be good workers. I think that's when we really loss control  
6 of the plant when we stopped doin' that, you know.  
7

8Marilyn Coulter: [27:58] So, do you think some of that was because, just because they didn't  
9 have it grandfathered down to them like the importance of the UAW, the  
10 importance of General Motors and what it had to offer?  
11

12Eldridge Cook: Well, the UAW was still important to'm, but like I say if you workin' well,  
13 been employee for 4 years, and if he was a – he or she was a good employee,  
14 if they had a sister or brother that wanted to come work for GM based on their  
15 work relationship, you would, you know, say hey, give'm a shot. His sister,  
16 his brother was a very good employee, and I think that's where we lost a lotta  
17 good employees, when they went away from that.  
18

19Marilyn Coulter: Earl.  
20

21Earl Nicholson: Uh, Earl Nicholson. [28:43] Uh, you ever fire anybody?  
22  
23 [laughter]  
24

25Eldridge Cook: No, they fire themself. [laughter].  
26  
27 [laughter]  
28

29Earl Nicholson: [28:51] Could you, could you, could ya elaborate on that a little bit?  
30

31Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Well, I think durin' my time, I, uh, let 2 people go, and it was for  
32 violation that they had been warned and warned and warned on, and they  
33 never corrected it, and so we had to let'm go.  
34

35Earl Nicholson: [29:09] So, then you felt that they deserved that then?  
36

37Eldridge Cook: Well, I shouldn't say they deserve it, because every man or woman needed a  
38 good job, but they just wouldn't step up to their responsibility to what they  
39 needed to correct, and they did not. So, therefore, we had ta, uh, let'm go.  
40

41Marilyn Coulter: [29:27] Um, Cookie – Marilyn Coulter. What would you say just from being  
42 on the [inaudible 29:32] what w-, what was the thing that – what were some  
43 of the things that people primarily got fired for? And...  
44

1Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Well, usually it was drinkin'. That was number one. Drinkin'.  
2 Was drugs, but, uh, number one was a to me was main reason that ya had to  
3 let somebody go 'cause they couldn't, couldn't do their job. [chair squeaking]  
4

5Marilyn Coulter: But now, just so people understand about work was – [screeching] it's not  
6 easy to just totally dismiss somebody. There's a lotta steps that you had ta go  
7 through. [30:07] Could ya tell us a little about the steps that you had ta go  
8 through as a supervisor before you did dismiss or [clanking] discipline  
9 someone?  
10

11Eldridge Cook: Well, you had ta go through the proper procedure. You had ta go through  
12 labor relation and have the interview and they determine what their gonna do,  
13 uh, and you put them on probation and give'm a chance. They come back.  
14 They on probation for x amount of time. If they didn't break their probation  
15 durin' that period, they were safe again for, you know, and some of'm would  
16 just go back and break their probation...  
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
19

20Eldridge Cook: ...so just what I [inaudible 30:41].  
21

22Marilyn Coulter: [30:42] Now, uh, some things that, depending on what it was...  
23

24Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
25

26Marilyn Coulter: ...sometimes ya got what was called a v-,v-, a verbal warning?  
27

28Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
29

30Marilyn Coulter: And then a written reprimand?  
31

32Eldridge Cook: Right.  
33

34Marilyn Coulter: And then they got three days off.  
35

36Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
37

38Marilyn Coulter: Then it was...  
39

40Eldridge Cook: A week.  
41

42Marilyn Coulter: ...a week and then...  
43

44Eldridge Cook: Two weeks.  
45

46Marilyn Coulter: And then?

1  
2Eldridge Cook: Four weeks.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Four weeks and then?  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: That's all [laughter] [they get 31:03].  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: [31:04] So they had a...  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: ... lot of opportunities...  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: Yeah. Right. [Inaudible 31:06].  
15  
16Marilyn Coulter: ... that the UAW GM gave them before they actually did see the street?  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: [31:11] And then what did you think about? I know that ya said some people  
21 had substance problems, um, I know we also had an EA...  
22  
23Eldridge Cook: P.  
24  
25Marilyn Coulter: ...P program...  
26  
27Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
28  
29Marilyn Coulter: ...that, uh, Employee Assistance Program. [31:23] How did ya feel about that  
30 program as a supervisor?  
31  
32Eldridge Cook: I thought it was a wonderful program and it – I felt like most people shoulda  
33 took advantage of it that didn't. It was right there for'm ta use and they  
34 didn't.  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: [Earl 31:38] Earl Nicholson.  
37  
38Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson. [31:42] Um, whatta ya think about the team concept?  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: I loved it. I loved it. To me, it was just too late comin'.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: [31:48] Can ya please explain the team concept?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: Yeah, uh, you had ta employee that was – you picked out. Well, I shouldn't  
45 say you picked out but that was chosen to have six or seven employees that he  
46 had ta cater to all their needs and I re- – it took a lotta stress off the supervisor

1 because he couldn't cater to 30,000, 40 employees, but if ya had a team  
2 leader, he knew his responsibility was this group. Not only that group, but if  
3 he saw another group in trouble, he had the, uh, capability of goin' up assistin'  
4 another group.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: [32:24] And how large were those groups?  
7  
8 Eldridge Cook: Uh, the whole group was – I had, uh, some like 30 people and I had 4, I think,  
9 TC leaders or team leader that took care of 7 or 8 people in his own group.  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [Inaudible 32:38]. And, um, like I said, once ya – you were there  
12 for many, many years...  
13  
14 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: ...and in your 37 years...  
17  
18 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: ...there were many programs that were developed...  
21  
22 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: ...that involved employees. [32:52] Can you tell us about some of those  
25 programs? One of'm was Quality Work Life and Employee Participation  
26 Groups. How did ya feel about those things as a supervisor?  
27  
28 Eldridge Cook: I thought they was wonderful. Any time ya can give people more knowledge  
29 or help'm understand their job better, I think it's a wonderful thing. We were  
30 just too late doin' it, you know, I think [inaudible 33:11].  
31  
32 Marilyn Coulter: [33:12] Do you feel that there was some supervisors who...  
33  
34 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
35  
36 Marilyn Coulter: ...um, fought those programs?  
37  
38 Eldridge Cook: Mm, I, I can't answer that because I know I loved'm, and I participated in all  
39 of'm. Yep.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: Cheryl.  
42  
43 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
44  
45 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [33:31] Um, at one time Fisher Body had a salary parking lot...  
2  
3 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
4  
5 Cheryl McQuaid: ...and a salary dining area...  
6  
7 Eldridge Cook: Right.  
8  
9 Cheryl McQuaid: ...were you – did ya go to these places? What did ya do for lunch?  
10  
11 Eldridge Cook: I went to it at the time. They had salary parkin'. I parked in the salary  
12 parking lot and the salary dining room. I ate in the salary dining room, but to  
13 me, it was, uh, a thing sayin' that I'm better than you. I park here and I eat  
14 there. Why can't we all eat in the same place and park in the same place?  
15 That was my thing, you know, I, I never felt like I should be in a certain place  
16 and you be in a certain place. We both workin' at the same place and we both  
17 workin' to accomplish the same goal. Give, give General Motors a good  
18 quality job and, and your paycheck and that was it.  
19  
20 Cheryl McQuaid: [34:22] So, it didn't bother you at all....  
21  
22 Eldridge Cook: It didn't bother me...  
23  
24 Cheryl McQuaid: ...when they took those things away?  
25  
26 Eldridge Cook: No, not one bit.  
27  
28 Cheryl McQuaid: [34:26] Was there, eh – did ya hear much from other supervisors that didn't  
29 care for it?  
30  
31 Eldridge Cook: Some mumble and grumble, but like I said, it didn't concern me as long – my  
32 main objective, like I said, was, uh, supportin' that wife and family. Yeah. I  
33 had a good job, so I [laughter] did everything I could ta keep it. Yeah.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: Cook-, Cookie. Marilyn Coulter. [34:51] I know you said that some of the  
36 employees had a problem with you and didn't want ta accept the checks and  
37 things like you – how did ya fellow supervisors take you in [inaudible 35:01].  
38  
39 Eldridge Cook: Uh, well at that time, it wasn't that many black supervisors at all [door  
40 creaking] you know, and really that didn't, didn't bother me in a sense, yes,  
41 but, uh, that as, as a whole, it didn't bother me.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: [35:15] But how was your relationship with the other supervisors? The white  
44 supervisors?  
45

1Eldridge Cook: It was good. It was good. I, I work with them along with anybody, you know,  
2 ya put God first, employees second, and, uh, to me I was always last, and  
3 that's what carried me all the way through life. Yeah.  
4  
5 [Door opening].  
6  
7Earl Nicholson: Uh, Earl Nicholson.  
8  
9Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
10  
11Earl Nicholson: [35:38] How was your relationship with upper management?  
12  
13Eldridge Cook: It was good. Yeah, they was – they kinda loved Cookie. Everybody kinda  
14 looked out for Cookie and everybody loved Cookie, and so, I respected 'em  
15 because who they were. I respect them as their position, who they were. As  
16 long as ya do that, you won't have no problem with nobody. All they deserve  
17 and respect and ya give'm that respect, so ya don't have no problem with.  
18  
19Earl Nicholson: [36:05] Ya gonna tell me who your favorite plant manager is?  
20  
21Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Uh, oh, oh, uh, I did – well, my favorite plant manager...  
22  
23Earl Nicholson: No, no wait, wait be-, before we go to that...  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26  
27Earl Nicholson: Uh, you were workin' at Fisher Body when [Amy Firmer 36:17] came there...  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
30  
31Earl Nicholson: ...and that was the first female plant manager.  
32  
33Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
34  
35Earl Nicholson: [36:23] Was – did that, that have any effect on you at all?  
36  
37Eldridge Cook: None, none whatsoever. I treated her [clicking] just as a plant manager and  
38 not as a gentleman. To me, she was plant manager and, and I know ya have to  
39 be re-, regardless who it is, ya gotta respect the position first, male or female.  
40 Respect the position and everything fall in place.  
41  
42Earl Nicholson: [36:41] And did she live up to that reputation of plant manager?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: To me she did. I had no problem with her. None whatsoever.  
45  
46Earl Nicholson: Okay, now we go back to my other question.

1  
2Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
3  
4Earl Nicholson: [36:49] Who was your favorite plant manager?  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: [Jim Zonkas 36:52].  
7  
8Earl Nicholson: Jim Zonkas.  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: Jim Zonkas.  
11  
12Earl Nicholson: He's also mine too.  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: Jim Zonkas to me was, uh, a people person, and he cared about his employees.  
15 To me, he cared about his employees. Yeah.  
16  
17Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [37:07] Did you ever have any, um, super-, management or  
18 hourly people that played a big, significant role in your life to help ya through  
19 your day? I mean some of those days when the employee is not gonna take a  
20 check from you. That had ta have been hard. It doesn't matter who it is. I  
21 mean that had ta have been hard.  
22  
23Eldridge Cook: Yeah, uh...  
24  
25 [coughing]  
26  
27Cheryl McQuaid: [37:31] Was there anybody that just, you know, hey, keep your chin up  
28 Cookie?  
29  
30Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
31  
32Cheryl McQuaid: Just anybody that...  
33  
34Eldridge Cook: Well, the super of the, uh, my supervisor at that time was [Floyd Jackson  
35 37:40]. I don't know whether ya all remember Floyd Jackson or not, but he  
36 alway would come tell me, he said, Cookie, keep your chin up, and he treated  
37 me just like his own, and I respected Floyd for that to the day he died and  
38 always will because he'd always would come and see how I was doing.  
39 [George Canell 38:00] was another supervisor that always wantin' ta know  
40 how Cookie was doin', you know. So, I mean that go a long way with me.  
41 Yeah.  
42  
43Marilyn Coulter: Cookie.  
44  
45Gary Judy: Gary Judy.  
46



1Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
2  
3Gary Judy: Cookie, now you were a supervisor in several areas.  
4  
5Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
6  
7Gary Judy: Trim, body shop, uh...  
8  
9Eldridge Cook: No, never been in body shop. Just trim.  
10  
11Gary Judy: [38:26] Wasn't you, wasn't you on the body shop? I thought you were in the  
12 body shop.  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: I was timekeeper up there.  
15  
16Gary Judy: All, okay.  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
19  
20Gary Judy: [38:33] Um, so just, just the trim area [clanking] that was the only place you  
21 were a supervisor?  
22  
23Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
24  
25Gary Judy: Okay. I was thinkin' you were in the body shop, and I was gonna ask you  
26 which area you had felt was the easiest to...  
27  
28Eldridge Cook: Trim.  
29  
30Gary Judy: ...to, uh...  
31  
32Eldridge Cook: Trim.  
33  
34Gary Judy: ...to uh manage...  
35  
36Eldridge Cook; Yeah.  
37  
38Gary Judy: ...but I guess that doesn't apply.  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: But actually it does apply [chair squeaking] because trim has a lotta different  
43 areas in it. We do a lotta different things. [38:54] Can you tell us which one  
44 of those departments was your favorite area to supervise?  
45

1Eldridge Cook: Well, I had to, uh, the year we started doin' vinyl tops, I really enjoyed the  
2 vinyl top, puttin' on vinyl tops, and do a family area.  
3  
4 [talking in background]  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: Those was my two favorite areas. Yeah. Mm-hm.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: [39:14] And, what made it so? What made...  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: Uh...  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: ...them your favorite area?  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: ...I had some good employees. I, I loved the employees, and they were very  
15 pleasant to work with and [door shutting] I think them just, just the, the  
16 employees. So, made my job much easier.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: Uh...  
19  
20 [squeaking]  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: [39:31] So, um, what are some of the things that made your [footsteps] uh, t-,  
23 what made a bad area for you?  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: What made a bad area?  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Well, the nightshift was one time in the bad area because the younger like I  
30 said in after '84, ya started gettin' all the younger employees in. They didn't  
31 really want ta work, they just wanted to come in and get a paycheck, and they  
32 didn't live up to their responsibility as the older people did, my age group and  
33 what have ya, Somewhat more difficult with the younger generation than it  
34 [papers shuffling] was with the older generation.  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: [40:17] Um, can you tell me what types of things, um, you did as a supervisor  
37 to help, um, pull the area together? Were there dinners? Were there, you  
38 know, special occasions?  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: Well...  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: What type of things did you guys do for that?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: ...well my main thing was the better you treat somebody, the easier your job  
45 gonna be, and I made it my point of business everyday ta go up ta each  
46 employee and chat with'm and see how you doin', how ya day goin', or

1 anything that I can help ya with and let them know that if they did have a  
2 problem or somethin' that they wanted ta talk about, I was there ta listen to  
3 me. Not sayin' I'd resolve all their problem, but at least I went around  
4 everyday ta let'm know that I was there if they needed some help.  
5  
6Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.  
7  
8Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
9  
10Earl Nicholson: [41:13] Do you know for you – do you know the phrase goin' postal?  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: No.  
13  
14Earl Nicholson: Where that the post office employee comes in with a gun and goes crazy and  
15 starts shootin' people.  
16  
17Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
18  
19Earl Nicholson: [41:24] Have you, have you ever known of anybody ta ever come bring a  
20 weapon into work?  
21  
22Eldridge Cook: Yes, I do. Yeah.  
23  
24Earl Nicholson: And what was the end result to that?  
25  
26Eldridge Cook: Well, eventually, he confessed to me that he didn't like me, and, uh, he  
27 brought a gun in on Saturday to kill me, and he said when he got up ta me, he  
28 couldn't pull the gun outta his hand. Somethin' just held his hand...  
29  
30Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 41:50] Mm-hm.  
31  
32Eldridge Cook: ...and so after he told me that, I went to the superintendent and told him, and  
33 he said do ya wanna have him [footsteps] [door opening] fired. I said no, I  
34 don't wanna have him fired 'cause evidently [screeching] somebody was  
35 lookin' out for me that he couldn't carry out the act that he wanted to, and so  
36 we didn't discharge him, and after that, he's alway come up to good  
37 [inaudible 42:11]. I thank you for savin' my job. I said well, hey, you know,  
38 I didn't save your job, the good Lord saved your job because the good Lord  
39 kept you from doin' the act on me, so, therefore, I just reversed it back to you.  
40  
41Earl Nicholson: [42:25] So, do you believe that, that, that was a, that mighta been racially  
42 motivated?  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: Uh, I don't know. I can't say for sure whether it was racial.  
45  
46Earl Nicholson: [42:32] He just, he just didn't like you?

1  
2Eldridge Cook: Right. He just didn't like me.  
3  
4Earl Nicholson: [42:36] And, uh, after that, af-, after all that, was he a changed man?  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: Yes, he was. Yes, he was.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: [42:42] Uh, Cookie, was that in the early part, mid, or the latter part of ...  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: That was...  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: ...bein' supervisor?  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: ...that was in the la-, the early 90s. That was right before I retired. Yeah. It  
15 was in the 90s. He did. Said he brought a gun into kill me one Saturday  
16 night. He just couldn't pull it out his pocket. [Inaudible 43:03].  
17  
18Earl Nicholson: Wow.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 43:05]  
21  
22Earl Nicholson: That's amazing.  
23  
24Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
25  
26Earl Nicholson: [43:08] So are you aware of any other events where people have brought  
27 weapons in?  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. No. Their the only one that I know about that the guy came up and  
30 told me about it, so [inaudible 43:19] I was thankful that the good Lord kept  
31 his hand around me. Yeah.  
32  
33 [screeching]  
34  
35Marilyn Coulter: Cookie,  
36  
37Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
38  
39Marilyn Coulter: [43:27] Do you have, um, any other relatives that work inside the facility?  
40  
41Eldridge Cook: Yes, I have one daughter worked there at General Motors.  
42  
43Marilyn Coulter: [43:37] And I take it this is one of the persons you referred to re-, get the job?  
44  
45Eldridge Cook: Uh, yes, I referred my daughter ta the top. Yeah.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [43:46] Can you, um, tell me what was one of your – two things. Number 1,  
2 what was one of your best times or best memories in the plant and what was  
3 one of your worst? I'm assuming that one mighta been [inaudible 44:00].  
4

5 Eldridge Cook: Well, let's see. Uh, I had a lotta good times, and like I said the only bad time  
6 was when I, I just told you about.  
7

8 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
9

10 Eldridge Cook: But I had a lotta super good times in the plant, so the good outnumbered the  
11 bad, so.  
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: [44:17] Can, can you tell me, um, what did they do for holidays?  
14

15 Eldridge Cook: In the plant?  
16

17 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
18

19 Eldridge Cook: We only had dinners. We ate out there. We fed'm and worked'm hard, and  
20 we got out a good quality. [laughter]  
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: [44:35] So...  
23

24 Eldridge Cook: [laughter]  
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: ...as a supervisor, what did...  
27

28 Eldridge Cook: Um...  
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: ...you do? Did ya do it personally? Did ya cook or what did ya do?  
31

32 Eldridge Cook: Hm. No, we just kinda had potlucks. Everybody would bring in a dish ta  
33 pass. We ate good every day. Bring donuts in, and I made coffee in my office  
34 every day and people come by wanted a cup of coffee. You get a cup of  
35 coffee and donut or whatever.  
36

37 Marilyn Coulter: [44:57] Now that's something that, um, changed over the years because wi-,  
38 with the plant policy, yes?  
39

40 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
41

42 Marilyn Coulter: [45:05] And they – was there use – there used to be a lot of cooking right on  
43 the line.  
44

45 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Is that right?  
2  
3 Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
4  
5 Marilyn Coulter: [Okay 45:11].  
6  
7 Eldridge Cook: Yeah. We used to cook. We used, we used to c-, cook in the oven. Bring a  
8 roast in, put in the paint ovens, and [laughter] cook it.  
9  
10 [laughter]  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: [45:23] And it was, and ya could...  
13  
14 Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Ah Lord, yeah.  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: ...in the paint ovens?  
17  
18 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yes, set'm in the paint oven and 'bout the time, the lunchtime, 5  
19 hours, that roast was done. Mm-hm. Yeah. [laughter]  
20  
21 [laughter]  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] [45:39] So, um, was there anybody in the plant that you, uh,  
24 developed a friendship that extended outside of the plant?  
25  
26 Eldridge Cook: Hm. Not really. Not really. [Inaudible 45:52]  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: [45:55] Um, did you, um [screeching] [papers shuffling] – I know that you say  
29 that, um, I hear ya refer to, um, your belief...  
30  
31 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: ...a lot.  
34  
35 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
36  
37 Marilyn Coulter: [46:06] Were there, um, bible study groups or anything like that ya  
38 participated in?  
39  
40 Eldridge Cook: It was bible study group in the plant, but I used to sit in my office and read  
41 mine, but I never did participate in the groups there in the plant, but that's the  
42 only thing that kept me goin' was my faith and my belief and my upbringing'.  
43  
44 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
45  
46 Eldridge Cook: Those, those are things I never will get away from.

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: Now they always call Lansing Fisher Body, the capital of quality even during  
3 the turbulent times of the late 80s and the 90s when the culture started ta  
4 change. [46:52] What do you attribute that to?  
5  
6 Eldridge Cook: Uh, like I said earlier, to the older employees that appreciated their jobs and  
7 knew they had a good job [clanking] and they did it the best of their ability to  
8 make sure they gave the best quality.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: And – but the quality awards, even though some of the younger ones, not all,  
11 but some of them may not have appreciated the job to the fullest...  
12  
13 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: ...we always, even though it was an older facility that, um, built a plant, built  
16 a job in two different facilities, still noted to be the capital of quality.  
17  
18 Eldridge Cook: Yeah. Quality.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: [47:31] So, the workforce as a whole still?  
21  
22 Eldridge Cook: Well, even had good quality, then I think Fisher of Lansing – I almost said  
23 Fisher Body. I think Lansing alway be known as General Motors number 1  
24 qualities ‘cause any week, we had the people that really build some good  
25 quality here in Lansing, and I was proud to be a part of it.  
26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: [47:56] What did ya think or did it affect you? We went from Fisher Body to  
28 BOC ta Lansing Car Assembly. What did ya think ‘bout all the name  
29 changes? How did that affect you at all?  
30  
31 Eldridge Cook: Well, it didn’t because like a say our main objective was to build a number 1  
32 quality. That was our paycheck. That was our livelihood. [beeping] And  
33 that’s what we had to focus on, but the name change didn’t affect us at all.  
34 Sure you hate to lose Fisher Body, Body by Fisher. We hated ta, ta lose that,  
35 that symbol said Body by Fisher, but the quality stayed the same. We didn’t  
36 slip in the quality.  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [48:40] When you came to Lansing Fisher Body and you said we have that,  
39 um, did you live in close proximity to the [coughing] plant at all?  
40  
41 [coughing]  
42  
43 Eldridge Cook: Yeah. I lived over on Magnolia Street over on the eastside about 8 miles  
44 away. Didn’t know my way around. Had to walk home every night ‘cause I  
45 didn’t have no ride but, uh, didn’t know how ta catch the bus. At that time of  
46 night, there wasn’t no bus runnin’ anyway, but after 10 hours, I came through

1 that front door and headed down Verlinda, Michigan, down to Kalamazoo and  
2 all the way cross town to the eastside right before you get to 496 bypass. I did  
3 that every night until, uh, pay. [laughter] I sure did. Catch the bus to work  
4 in the daytime but walk home every night.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
7  
8 Eldridge Cook: Thought nothin' of it.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: [49:35] But what did the community that you lived in think of Fisher Body?  
11  
12 Eldridge Cook: They thought Fisher Body the best thing that ever happened to Lansing, and  
13 they still do. Everybody grump and moan about Fisher Body closin', you  
14 know, and we gonna be devastated, but, uh, we still gonna go out and [deal  
15 49:55] with the plant and build the same good quality we did here in Lansing.  
16 I believe that.  
17  
18 Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.  
19  
20 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
21  
22 Earl Nicholson: [50:02] When did you buy your first car?  
23  
24 Eldridge Cook: I bought my first car in 1976. Yeah, and I hired in in '65.  
25  
26 Earl Nicholson: [50:13] What was the fir-, what was the first car that ya bought?  
27  
28 Eldridge Cook: Uh, a 1976 Cutlass Oldsmobile.  
29  
30 Earl Nicholson: [50:19] And that was a product that you were makin'?'  
31  
32 Eldridge Cook: A product that we were makin'. Mm-hm. Yeah. It sure was.  
33  
34 Earl Nicholson: [50:26] So I – you know that ya could – motor coach symbol...  
35  
36 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
37  
38 Earl Nicholson: ...is a symbol that you'd been, you'd been...  
39  
40 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
41  
42 Earl Nicholson: ...raised with all your life and it's a tradition?  
43  
44 Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
45  
46 Earl Nicholson: [50:32] Would you like ta see that symbol come back?



1  
2Eldridge Cook: I would. I would. I'd like ta see that symbol Body by Fish-. I hated to see  
3 that leave. Yeah. I hated ta see that symbol leave. Body by Fisher.  
4  
5Marilyn Coulter: I have to ask [inaudible 50:48].  
6  
7Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
8  
9Marilyn Coulter: [50:51] You walked to work for all those years?  
10  
11Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. From work.  
12  
13Marilyn Coulter: You...  
14  
15Eldridge Cook: I caught the bus in the daytime but at night, yeah.  
16  
17Marilyn Coulter: And so for 5 years, did you ride [inaudible 51:01].  
18  
19Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
20  
21Marilyn Coulter: and you walk?  
22  
23Eldridge Cook: Walk. Yeah. Every night.  
24  
25Marilyn Coulter: An [inaudible 51:08], I think that's why he expected so much [laughter] of his  
26 employees. [laughter]  
27  
28 [laughter]  
29  
30Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
31  
32 [laughter]  
33  
34Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
35  
36Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
37  
38Cheryl McQuaid: [51:16] Cookie, there were a lotta things that supervisors allowed employees  
39 to get away with...  
40  
41Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
42  
43Cheryl McQuaid: Um, but wasn't always what salary wanted the employees to do, and what I'm  
44 thinkin' about is check pools, playin' cards, gamblin', uh, football pools...  
45  
46Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.

1  
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [51:33] How did ya – did ya see any of that going on and how did you, did  
3 you – were you the type that just turned your head and walked away?  
4  
5 Eldridge Cook: Yeah. You, you saw it every, every football season. You saw it to football,  
6 pool goin', you saw the check pool every payday, and sometimes ya just have  
7 ta look the other way. You know what I mean?  
8  
9 [sniffing]  
10  
11 Eldridge Cook: You see and ya don't see. Ya hear and ya don't hear, and ya just look the  
12 other way and hope things go smooth. Yeah. Yeah.  
13  
14 Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson. [52:11] Cookie...  
15  
16 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
17  
18 Earl Nicholson: ...um, you retired...  
19  
20 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
21  
22 Earl Nicholson: ...and ya stayed in Lansing, Michigan...  
23  
24 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 Earl Nicholson: ...no, no desire ta return to...  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: Mississippi.  
29  
30 Earl Nicholson: ...Mississippi?  
31  
32 Eldridge Cook: Not yet. [laughter] No. No. My kids is here. My dad died last year in  
33 January. My mom passed in 1998, and so I don't have any ties in Mississippi  
34 now, just my cousins still, but my kids is here, and I like it here. I'm used to  
35 the weather. That was the biggest thing I had to get used to, the weather.  
36 Where I came from, a cold day was 55 degrees. [laughter] That was cold.  
37  
38 Earl Nicholson: Well, that's, that's another good question.  
39  
40 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
41  
42 Earl Nicholson: [52:55] When was the first time that you'd ever seen snow?  
43  
44 Eldridge Cook: When I came here, I came up here in 1958 to visit my brother and we got –  
45 they got I should say maybe a foot of snow, of snow, and I didn't know, I  
46 didn't know. Man, what is that stuff out there? What is it? And he said that's

1 snow. What is snow, you know. But, uh, I've seen plenty though since I've  
2 been here.  
3  
4 Earl Nicholson: Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Eldridge Cook: [laughter]  
7  
8 Marilyn Coulter: So... [laughter]  
9  
10 Eldridge Cook: [laughter]  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: [53:22] Cookie, um, in being a supervisor, um, there had ta been, um, – what  
13 are some of the other programs that you felt was good for the employees,  
14 [paper ripping] and how did it, how did it help to better the, uh, the  
15 management-employer relations?  
16  
17 Eldridge Cook: Uh, we had, we had a lotta good program to help better management, uh,  
18 supervisor and employee relationship, but it was so many, I – it'd been so long  
19 there, and I can't name'm all, but we had several good emp-, good program  
20 that I thought was very useful and very helpful. Yeah.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: [54:09] So, um, [humming] when you're workin' here in the plant – oh, sorry  
23 Gary Judy.  
24  
25 Gary Judy: [54:16] Um, Cook, did you see anything that management could have did  
26 differently or better or any programs that shoulda stook with, stuck with that  
27 woulda made things even better as far as quality and, uh, improvement of the  
28 process?  
29  
30 Eldridge Cook: Well, I think some of the program that we started, initiated'm, and run'm for 2  
31 or 3 weeks or more, and then you don't hear no more about it.  
32  
33 Gary Judy: The flavor of the month program...  
34  
35 Eldridge Cook: Yeah. Yeah.  
36  
37 Gary Judy: ...is what they would call'm.  
38  
39 Eldridge Cook: Right. Yeah.  
40  
41 Gary Judy: [54:46] Was there anything...  
42  
43 Eldridge Cook: Yes.  
44  
45 Gary Judy: ...that you felt that they, that they shoulda stuck with that they didn't?  
46

1Eldridge Cook: Uh, I can't recall particularly right now, but like I said, and once another  
2 program we – before we got the employee participating in the help settin' up  
3 the, the jobs, help settin' the operation. That helped a whole lot 'cause they  
4 had input, you know, in help settin' it up because there's a team leader when  
5 we implemented that program. The team leader had a lot ta say about what  
6 goes where and w-, will this work or will that not work, and that helped us a  
7 whole lot down in [inaudible 55:26] we were settin' up the new jobs. And  
8 that was a good program, I thought.  
9

10Marilyn Coulter: Cookie...

11

12Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.

13

14Marilyn Coulter: ...um, workin' the plant, one of the things that used to help get a lot of  
15 employees through the night was their radios.  
16

17Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.

18

19Marilyn Coulter: [55:46] Can you tell us how ya felt about radios?  
20

21Eldridge Cook: They was fine along as they wasn't too loud because [laughter] uh, I learned  
22 in, in early, in my early stage of bein' on supervision, a happy employee is a  
23 good employee. If he want ta play his radio like that, keep it down to a  
24 minimum. As long as he happy, I'm happy, you know.  
25

26Marilyn Coulter: [56:11] And, um, at times we had things that were called the radio wars. How  
27 did ya deal with those?  
28

29Eldridge Cook: Well, ya go tell the employee ta turn it down. You had ta go 3 times and  
30 tell'm ta turn it down. The next time, you'd confiscate it, uh, have'm turn it  
31 off, which... [paper shuffling]  
32

33 [coughing]  
34

35Marilyn Coulter: [56:30] Um, being a seasoned supervisor...

36

37Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.

38

39Marilyn Coulter: ...and it's not for the inside Fisher Body, but bein' a seasoned supervisor, one  
40 of the things that their gonna say that we can't do [screeching] is have no  
41 radios. How do ya think it's gonna affect the employees?  
42

43Eldridge Cook: Gonna affect them bad. His attitude and work ethics. Yep. Like I keep  
44 sayin' and I learnt this early on, a good, a happy employee is a good  
45 employee. Keep'm happy you can get anything outta the world from'm, and  
46 they do ya a good job if their happy, but if they mouthin' off, they're not

1 happy, they could care less about you and the operation, so that po- – give'm  
2 some of their little needs and wants.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Talkin' about needs and wants. One of the things that changed the  
5 needs and wants, it wasn't just something that, um, Fisher Body did, it was  
6 somethin' the city of Lansing did...  
7  
8 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: ...and that was a band on smoking. [57:30] How did it affect your  
11 employees?  
12  
13 Eldridge Cook: Uh, when I was – before I retired, they had not put that in force.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: Ah,  
16  
17 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. But me with my condition, and I mean my heart condition, it's, it's  
18 a good thing for me, but as far as I can't say what it does to someone else  
19 because I never smoked see, so I can't say how it would affect you if you had  
20 to stop smokin'.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
23  
24 Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 Earl Nicholson: Uh, Earl Nicholson. Uh, sick leave and worker's comp. [58:07] How do ya  
27 feel? How did ya feel about sick leave and how did ya feel about worker's  
28 comp?  
29  
30 Eldridge Cook: [laughter]  
31  
32 Earl Nicholson: How did ya feel about protected employees?  
33  
34 Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Sick leave. [laughter] I knew it was negotiated in the contract, so  
35 ya have ta live with it. Ya have ta grin and bear it, and I'll leave it at that.  
36 [laughter] Yeah. Mm-hm.  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [58:27] What about...  
39  
40 Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: ...injured workers?  
43  
44 Eldridge Cook: Hm.  
45  
46 Marilyn Coulter: Those of us who have been injured?

1  
2Eldridge Cook: Yeah, well, again, it was negotiated in the contract, and you couldn't go  
3 against the contract, so again, ya had to grin and bear it.  
4  
5Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
6  
7Eldridge Cook: Yeah.  
8  
9Marilyn Coulter: Um, and I say that because some of the things were engineering problems.  
10  
11 [screeching]  
12  
13Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm. Yeah.  
14  
15Marilyn Coulter: [58:49] How did you try ta help your employees when they had those  
16 engineering problems? What types of things did ya have to do?  
17  
18Eldridge Cook: Well...  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: Try ta make it better for your employees.  
21  
22Eldridge Cook: One thing...  
23  
24Marilyn Coulter: To keep that happy employee.  
25  
26Eldridge Cook: ...yeah. One thing I tried to do would go ta the, to management and let them  
27 know ya either you can't do it that way or ya gotta have an assist to help'm  
28 instead of keep poundin' and poundin' the employee ta keep doin' it, keep  
29 doin' it. Ya see it injurin' them, so, therefore, ya need a tool to assist them ta  
30 do it.  
31  
32Marilyn Coulter: [59:21] Now, one of the things when the – many of the programs that they had  
33 initiated was P-D-T, which was Product Team Representative.  
34  
35Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
36  
37Marilyn Coulter: Representatives for the development. And having an hourly employee get it  
38 active and actual engineering of a car, how did you feel that affected?  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: It – I think it was a good program b-, because like again, like I said...  
41  
42 [papers shuffling]  
43  
44Eldridge Cook: ...you get your hourly employees involved in the product. They the one that  
45 gotta put the parts together. They the one that gotta do the assembly. To get  
46 them involved. See what all the difficulty it is doin' it and we go from there.

1  
2Earl Nicholson: Um, I think that the, the, abbreviation is V-M-E. [60:15] Could you – do you  
3 know what that is?  
4  
5Eldridge Cook: Uh-uh.  
6  
7 [Inaudible 60:18]  
8  
9Earl Nicholson: It's uh, V, uh, it was, it was somethin' that, uh, it was, it was, uh, on the  
10 [inaudible 60:22] on the, on the, on the vehicle that the manufacturing...  
11  
12Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
13  
14Earl Nicholson: ...and a lotta supervisors lived by this, that little chart. Lotta senior  
15 supervisors.  
16  
17Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
18  
19 [door squeaking]  
20  
21Earl Nicholson: [60:34] And I was wondering if you were aware of that? Because I re-, I  
22 recall several senior supervisors mentioning that, uh, they, that they didn't  
23 view these...  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26  
27Earl Nicholson: ...before.  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Well...  
30  
31Earl Nicholson: So, no?  
32  
33Eldridge Cook: I don't remember ever doin' any of those.  
34  
35Earl Nicholson: Okay.  
36  
37Eldridge Cook: No.  
38  
39 [Inaudible 60:52]  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: Um, that's about it. Um, let me see. [61:00] Cookie...  
42  
43Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
44  
45Marilyn Coulter: ...is there anything that you'd like ta share with us that we have not touched  
46 on?

1  
2Eldridge Cook: No, I think ya all touched on just about everything. [laughter]  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Yeah.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: [61:11] Well, inside the plant...  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: [laughter] Hm.  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: ...what are some of the things that, um, you've done in the community?  
13  
14Eldridge Cook: Well, like I said, I'm active in my church, in the community, and right now I  
15 go up to the West Southside Community Center and sit and talk with some of  
16 the people and next summer, I, I told'm that I would, I got some thing that I  
17 will do for them, next summer as far as helpin' the West Southside  
18 Community Center develop a plot.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: [61:48] A plot for what?  
21  
22Eldridge Cook: Yep. That they wanna do a gardenin' last, this last year now. They only had a  
23 little plot about from 4 feet by 6 feet, and they dug it up with a shovel, and I  
24 told'm next year I would plow it up for them and make'm a big plot with my,  
25 uh, tractor.  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: [62:08] Now, what it is that ya do for your church?  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: I am assistant superintendent right now, and I go on trips. We take the kids on  
30 Sunday School trips to Cedar Points. We've been to the mall outside of  
31 Milwaukee, the one up, uh, I can't remember the name of it right now, but  
32 we've taken'm up there, and we go to Cedar Point. We have been to the mall  
33 in Chicago. Diff'rent places. We took'm in Toronto one summer, so we do a  
34 lotta things with the Sunday School kids.  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: [62:43] Now, being an ex-employee of yours, I know that you do have a  
37 certain few sportsman-type hobbies that...  
38  
39Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: ...did – some of us didn't get ta partake in, I would say...  
42  
43Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
44  
45Marilyn Coulter: ...and you are an avid hunter.  
46



1Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
2  
3Marilyn Coulter: And fisherman.  
4  
5Eldridge Cook: Yes, ma'am.  
6  
7Marilyn Coulter: [63:03] And now, did you ever fish or hunt with any of your coworkers?  
8  
9Eldridge Cook: Uh, no. Never, never did, uh, I – yes, I do. I take that back. I hunt, I mean I  
10 hunt. I fish with one, [Ed Duckett 63:14] He's my fishin' buddy. We go  
11 fishin' a lot. We go down to, uh, Lake Erie fishin'...  
12  
13Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
14  
15Eldridge Cook: ...so I enjoy that. We go to the local lakes here fishin' and we, we really have  
16 a good time doin' that. Oh. Mm-hm.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: And I know you often play cards...  
19  
20Eldridge Cook: [Inaudible 63:36]  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: ...with the coworkers?  
23  
24Eldridge Cook: Yeah. I played this with – can't find nobody ta really challenge us, so...  
25  
26Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]  
27  
28Eldridge Cook: ...my buddy and I, I think we gonna kinda hang that up. We can't get no  
29 takers.  
30  
31Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. Well, you're...  
32  
33Earl Nicholson: Just a parting shot, I know the, the interview – Earl Nicholson.  
34  
35Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
36  
37Earl Nicholson: I know the interview is comin' to an end. [63:58] Um, just, uh, one thing, one  
38 more question from me and that would be how you feel about General Motors  
39 and the gent of the situation General Motors is goin', goin' through right now.  
40 This is, uh, this is 19-, this is 2006...  
41  
42Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
43  
44Earl Nicholson: ...and we know that General Motors is in a little bit of trouble...  
45  
46Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.

1  
2Earl Nicholson: uh, does that bother you?  
3  
4Eldridge Cook: Yes, it does because it affect me. [laughter] I still have a paycheck comin'  
5 from General Motors too, but you gotta look back in hindsight. General  
6 Motors has been good to a lotta people for a long, long time.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: And ya ain't gonna find another job anywhere in the United State that treat  
11 their employees like General Motors does, and so, you know, General Motors  
12 had been I think, and, um, speakin' to myself right now too, I think General  
13 Motor been too good to a lotta people for too long, and I really truly mean  
14 that. But we also deserve everything that we've gotten from General Motors  
15 also that – General Motors in trouble now, and we gonna have ta bite the  
16 bullet and give up a little bit ta keep some of the stuff that we have.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: Cookie,  
19  
20Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: Was there anything else? [65:18] As we come to the end of the interview, I  
23 would like ta say on record...  
24  
25Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: ...being a past employee of yours...  
28  
29Eldridge Cook: Mm-hm.  
30  
31Marilyn Coulter: ...yes, you were a good supervisor...  
32  
33Eldridge Cook: Hm.  
34  
35Marilyn Coulter: ...and I wanna say thank you not only for being a supervisor but thank you for  
36 helpin' me through the times when my father passed away 'cause you were an  
37 excellent supervisor to have durin' that time and thank you for taking time for  
38 this interview.  
39  
40Eldridge Cook: You're more than welcome.  
41  
42Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Cookie.  
43  
44Earl Nicholson: Thanks Cook.  
45  
46Jerri Smith: Thank you, Cook.

1  
2Eldridge Cook: Anytime.  
3  
4Gary Judy: Thank you, Cook.  
5  
6Eldridge Cook: Thank you.  
7  
8Gary Judy: Good seein' ya.  
9  
10Eldridge Cook: Yep.  
11  
12  
13/ls