

**Russel Dahlstrom discusses his career as a production worker and  
UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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3  
4  
5 Doug Rademacher: [recorder clicking] Good morning. I'm Doug Rademacher with the Fisher  
6 Body Historical Team and we are at the Frank Dryer GreenHouse, and today  
7 we are going to be interviewing Russel Dahlstrom. [0:17] Russel, would you  
8 please say your name, spell your last name, and your address, please?  
9  
10 Russel Dahlstrom: Russel Dahlstrom, D-A-H-L-S-T-R-O-M, uh, 11694 Tompkins Road, Rives  
11 Junction, Michigan 49277.  
12  
13 Doug Rademacher: Thank you. I'm gonna go around the room and identify everyone that's in  
14 the room.  
15  
16 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.  
17  
18 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.  
21  
22 Doug Rademacher: It is January 3rd, 2006 at approximately 8:50 in the morning. [0:55] Russel,  
23 would you please, uh, tell me, are you married?  
24  
25 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
26  
27 Doug Rademacher: [0:59] Do you have any children?  
28  
29 Russel Dahlstrom: No.  
30  
31 Doug Rademacher: [1:05] Do you have any education background?  
32  
33 Russel Dahlstrom: Just 12 years a high school and the military.  
34  
35 Doug Rademacher: [1:10] And which high school did you go to?  
36  
37 Russel Dahlstrom: Gibraltar High School, Fish Creek, Wisconsin.  
38  
39 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [1:14] And did you have any military service?  
40  
41 Russel Dahlstrom: 4 years in the Marine Corps.  
42  
43 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Thank you. We want to talk about the history of Fisher Body. [1:25]  
44 Do you remember your hire-in date?  
45  
46 Russel Dahlstrom: 8/7/78.

1  
2Doug Rademacher: [1:30] And do you remember that first day?  
3  
4Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, I do.  
5  
6Doug Rademacher: [1:34] Could you share with us the, uh, uh, what brought you to Fisher Body  
7 and your getting employed here? How did you find out that there was a job  
8 available in Lansing?  
9  
10Russel Dahlstrom: I was in the military in California. Uh, my wife at that time was [Ernie  
11 Reiss's 1:54] daughter, which was the superintendent in the Body Shop, and  
12 he – I made connections with him in order to get a job here before I got  
13 outta the Service. That was when I got outta the Service, 'cause I had a job  
14 waitin' at General Motors.  
15  
16Doug Rademacher: [2:11] S-, uh, let me ask you then, you got out of high school, went into the  
17 military?  
18  
19Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, I got outta high school in '70 and worked for a while, and then I went in  
20 the military in '74.  
21  
22Doug Rademacher: [2:21] What'd you do prior? What was your other type of work that you do  
23 before...  
24  
25Russel Dahlstrom: Um...  
26  
27Doug Rademacher: ...going into the military.  
28  
29Russel Dahlstrom: ...a butcher, meat cutter.  
30  
31Doug Rademacher: Okay. [2:29] And that was somewhere here [car engine] locally around  
32 Michigan or?  
33  
34Russel Dahlstrom: No; Wisconsin.  
35  
36Doug Rademacher: Wisconsin.  
37  
38Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
39  
40Doug Rademacher: [2:34] And, uh, then you went into the military?  
41  
42Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
43  
44Doug Rademacher: And you got married...  
45  
46Russel Dahlstrom: In the military.

1  
2Doug Rademacher: ...in the military.  
3  
4Russel Dahlstrom: Right.  
5  
6Doug Rademacher: And, uh, and your wife's father was, uh, helpful...  
7  
8Russel Dahlstrom: [Inaudible 2:45].  
9  
10Doug Rademacher: ...in finding you some j-, some work. So you...  
11  
12Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, he was.  
13  
14Doug Rademacher: ...so you came to Lansing, Michigan. [2:49] Talk about, uh – did you have  
15 to stand in line to get hired?  
16  
17Russel Dahlstrom: No.  
18  
19Doug Rademacher: No.  
20  
21Russel Dahlstrom: No. There was a mailed in – they were doin' that for Service people, as far  
22 as I know.  
23  
24Doug Rademacher: Okay. That's interesting. [3:03] Would you please then share, uh – you'd  
25 never seen any auto assembly. Talk about your first day on the job.  
26  
27Russel Dahlstrom: Um, they had a lotta orientation. Uh, a lotta stuff they were talkin' about, I  
28 didn't have any idea what they were talkin' about till we go up, got out on  
29 the floor and, uh, a lotta the stuff that the motors and stuff were usin' at  
30 Fisher Body here is what I used as a structural mechanic in the military. So I  
31 knew about the drill motors, driver motors. Um, it wasn't a heck of a lot  
32 different than the military. Uh, [Lonnie Duke 3:40] was the supervisor. He  
33 was excellent. Uh, [Farmer Pete 3:42] was the old Pickup Man. And, I don't  
34 know, it, it was great.  
35  
36Doug Rademacher: [3:48] Now, was Farmer Pete his name or is that just what, what he was  
37 called?  
38  
39Russel Dahlstrom: That's just what he was called [inaudible 3:53].  
40  
41Doug Rademacher: [3:53] Just a big fella named Pete, huh?  
42  
43Russel Dahlstrom: [laughter] I don't think I remember what his real name is.  
44  
45Doug Rademacher: [3:57] And you say he was a Pickup Man. What was...  
46

1 Russel Dahlstrom: Right.  
2  
3 Doug Rademacher: ...that?  
4  
5 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, he did minor repairs and stuff at the end a the line, covered, uh,  
6 bathroom calls, Committee calls, stuff like that, so.  
7  
8 Doug Rademacher: [4:08] Would ya share a little bit about – you s-, what was your hire-in date?  
9  
10 Russel Dahlstrom: 8/7/78.  
11  
12 Doug Rademacher: [4:14] And did you, uh, were you introduced to the union at the same time  
13 ya were introduced to the Plant?  
14  
15 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, I believe they were down at the table, um, down in Employment. Um,  
16 again, I don't think anybody knew what as goin' on, but we found out quick.  
17  
18 Doug Rademacher: [4:31] Was there a, were you, uh, how do they call it, herded out to the  
19 Assembly, Assembly Line? Did a supervisor come and pick you? How  
20 would that go?  
21  
22 Russel Dahlstrom: A supervisor came in, **Lonnie Duke** came in, and, um, pointed his finger,  
23 "You, you, and you. Let's go," and away we went, up in a part a the  
24 building. The second day when I came into work, I didn't even know where  
25 the heck I was the first day, so. It's just, ya know, ask, ya know, and that's  
26 the way ya learn.  
27  
28 Doug Rademacher: And – uh, Marilyn...  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.  
31  
32 Doug Rademacher: ...Coulter.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [5:10] Do you remember, uh, what your first job was and who taught it to  
35 you?  
36  
37 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, I think that was, that was **Farmer Pete**, and that was, uh, loading seats,  
38 loading the rear seats off the conveyor.  
39  
40 Marilyn Coulter: Mm. [5:27] Did it take you – what was it like to learn the job? How long did  
41 it take you to learn the job?  
42  
43 Russel Dahlstrom: 'Bout an hour. I had 4 days in the Plant, I had the whole area learned. Um, I  
44 was there for the first day, I did that job plus one other job boltin' in the s-,  
45 b-, uh, the seats, and they asked me if I wanted to be a Utility, and I said,  
46 "Well, is that more money?" They said yeah, I said okay. So it took me 4

1 days and I learned all the jobs, and 17 days later, they asked me if I wanted  
2 to be on Repair, and I asked'm again, I said, "Well, is that more money?"  
3 They said yeah. So they loaded me in one a the body trucks and sent me  
4 over to Chasse, and that's where I spent my first 2 and a half years.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: [6:10] So you spent your – Marilyn Coulter – you spent your first 2 and a  
7 half years at the Oldsmobile plant?  
8  
9Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, I was here for 17 days, then I was over there.  
10  
11Marilyn Coulter: And then you were over there for 2 years.  
12  
13Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, mm-hm; 2 and a half years.  
14  
15Marilyn Coulter: [6:23] Um, what was it like, what were the people like during your first 17  
16 days at Fisher and then what were they like when you went over to Chasse?  
17 Was there any differences that you saw?  
18  
19Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah. The people that I, that I was with up in [3X Second 6:41], um, there  
20 was one regular employee there; all the rest of us were all new employees.  
21 It's like four jobs in each direction from where I was. So and nobody knew  
22 what was goin' on, ya know. We got over at Chasse, we worked Repair at  
23 the end a the line, and those were all 20 to 30-year people; everybody knew  
24 what was goin' on.  
25  
26Marilyn Coulter: [7:08] So what was it like workin' with twen-, those thir-...  
27  
28Russel Dahlstrom: [Inaudible 7:13].  
29  
30Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. How'd they treat you as a new hire?  
31  
32Russel Dahlstrom: Real good. Real good. [Ted 7:15] Ol-, [Ted Oliver 7:15] and [Larry Wright  
33 7:17], um, [Tim Sheenan 7:19], [Bob Crater 7:20]. They were all good.  
34 [Jim, Jim Beck 7:23].  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
37  
38Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, we had a good time over there.  
39  
40Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [7:29] Russ, were you still a 602 member working at the  
41 Repair hole at 1, or was it 150 then or?  
42  
43Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, it was 32 and 150, yeah.  
44  
45Doug Rademacher: Yeah?  
46

1Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
2  
3Doug Rademacher: [7:39] And those were buildings? That's what they were...  
4  
5Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, Building...  
6  
7Doug Rademacher: ...just the numbers?  
8  
9Russel Dahlstrom: ...#2 and, uh, uh, C Line and A Line.  
10  
11Doug Rademacher: [7:46] So you were gaining Fisher – you were always a Fisher employee.  
12  
13Russel Dahlstrom: Yes. Yes.  
14  
15Doug Rademacher: Okay. [7:51] Uh, which shift did ya hire onto?  
16  
17Russel Dahlstrom: The second shift.  
18  
19Doug Rademacher: [7:54] And how'd that work for ya?  
20  
21Russel Dahlstrom: Great.  
22  
23Doug Rademacher: [7:58] You were married but you had no children, but you were, uh, you  
24 found the second shift a workable shift?  
25  
26Russel Dahlstrom: Right. I've been on second shift, except for right now, all except for I think  
27 26 months outta 27 years.  
28  
29Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
30  
31Russel Dahlstrom: So.  
32  
33Doug Rademacher: And you prefer that?  
34  
35Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yeah, definitely. I don't get along with the alarm clock. I had the same  
36 thing in the military.  
37  
38Doug Rademacher: They got ya up, though, with Revelry, right?  
39  
40Russel Dahlstrom: Nope.  
41  
42Doug Rademacher: No?  
43  
44Russel Dahlstrom: Second shift.  
45  
46Doug Rademacher: Second shift in th-, in the military too, huh?

1  
2Russel Dahlstrom: You betcha. [door opening]  
3  
4Doug Rademacher: Okay. [coughing] [door closing] Marilyn Coulter.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: Um, just to go back so that people who will listen to that know that Fisher  
7 Body Plant and Oldsmobile, which is also known as Chasse, was one a the  
8 last places that started a ve-, the vehicle in one plant, put it on a body truck,  
9 and sent it to another plant to get finished, and that's why you would go to  
10 the other side to do the Repair from our plant into another plant.  
11  
12Russel Dahlstrom: Do Fisher Body repair at Chasse, right.  
13  
14Doug Rademacher: Otherwise known as the dinosaur, the last dinosaur plant in North America.  
15  
16Marilyn Coulter: Exactly.  
17  
18Doug Rademacher: [murmuring] [9:05] Was there a time where you were ever laid off?  
19  
20Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, in '81 I believe it was. I was off for, [papers rustling] uh, 7 months, and  
21 that was back when we drew TRA, so that was great.  
22  
23Doug Rademacher: [9:25] And can you explain what TRA was?  
24  
25Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, Trade Reassurance Adjustment [door opening] Pay, and I don't  
26 remember [background noises] how much it was per week, and it didn't kick  
27 in right aw-, or it kicked it right away, but we didn't receive the checks for  
28 like a couple a months. [background movement] So when th-, we finally  
29 [banging] got'm, I had 17 checks [background noises] come in the mail at  
30 one time. [laughter]  
31  
32Doug Rademacher: [9:47] Do you remember what that program was all about?  
33  
34Russel Dahlstrom: Something about the import, importing vehicles from overseas. I don't  
35 remember exactly what all it was, but.  
36  
37Doug Rademacher: Okay. That, uh, I remember that myself. [10:04] Um, and did you, uh, ever  
38 have your seniority break ever?  
39  
40Russel Dahlstrom: No. [door opening]  
41  
42Doug Rademacher: You worked right on through.  
43  
44Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
45

1 Doug Rademacher: [10:11] Were you, [throat clearing] were you familiar with, uh, any strikes?  
2 Was there ever a strike when you worked for 20?  
3  
4 Russel Dahlstrom: Noth-, nothin' at our plant, no.  
5  
6 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.  
7  
8 Marilyn Coulter: [10:24] Can you tell me, what was it like, what was the environment like  
9 inside? [coughing] Uh, take us through a day working inside the Plant. What  
10 was it like? What were some a the things you did? How did you get along  
11 with your people? What types a things did you do to pass time? Were there  
12 any pranks pulled?  
13  
14 Russel Dahlstrom: [coughing] I don't know so much about any pranks we had pulled.  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: [10:46] Did you pull any pranks on anybody?  
17  
18 Russel Dahlstrom: I don't think there's many I should talk about. No. [laughter]  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: [10:51] Is there one that you can?  
21  
22 Russel Dahlstrom: Um, yeah, we had, I don't know, we had perma-gum fights, we had water  
23 balloon fights, we had, uh, somebody happened to urethane [Paul Grant's  
24 11:02] telephone [coughing] receiver. Um.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: [11:08] Um, so that the people have an idea of what that is, can you tell'm  
27 what perma-gum and urethane is, actually?  
28  
29 Russel Dahlstrom: Perma-gum's just a sealer, like a putty, a black putty. Um, it was good for  
30 water leaks, minor stuff, uh, for black out. Um, urethane was what held the  
31 windshield, the glass in, and you didn't wanna get that on you, 'cause you  
32 wore that off, and back then, I don't even think they had – they had oleum to  
33 clean it with, and that only did half a job. Um.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: [11:44] So for somebody to urethane somebody's phone is a bad thing.  
36  
37 Russel Dahlstrom: Just for the person who's on the receiving end of it. [laughter] For the rest of  
38 us, it was quite good. [laughter]  
39  
40 Marilyn Coulter: [11:54] And Paul Grant was a supervisor at that time...  
41  
42 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, he was.  
43  
44 Marilyn Coulter: ...wasn't he?  
45  
46 Russel Dahlstrom: Yup. Excellent supervisor. Mm-hm.



1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: [12:00] So what was a – I mean, did you guys have dinners? Um, was  
3 anything special that you remember about workin' as far as the people that  
4 you worked?  
5  
6 Russel Dahlstrom: Back then, not so much dinners. Um, not that I remember, anyway. It was  
7 good workin'. Uh, it was enjoyable to come to work, 'cause you could talk.  
8 Everybody, everybody talked [car engine] up and down the line [car engine]  
9 all day long. We had a good time. Like holidays, deer huntin' season, uh,  
10 summer projects, what's everybody doin', places to go. There's always  
11 somethin' to talk about. Radio's goin', good music.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: [12:36] So what type of music did you normally listen to inside the Plant?  
14  
15 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, mostly country, as far as I remember.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: Mostly country?  
18  
19 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm. Country and, well, back then it wasn't oldies; they're oldies now.  
20 [laughter]  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: [12:51] S-, so, um, while you were doing that when you were talking about  
23 all the different things, did you develop any long friendships that even  
24 extended outside of the Plant?  
25  
26 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah. There's a few people. Um, [Dwayne Barker 13:08], um, there's a  
27 couple – I don't remember who the heck all.  
28  
29 Marilyn Coulter: [13:20] So did you vacation together or hunt...  
30  
31 Russel Dahlstrom: No.  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: ...together?  
34  
35 Russel Dahlstrom: No, hunted together and stuff like that. Ya know, nothin' major. Just, uh,  
36 played softball, softball games and stuff, uh, hunted, uh, worked at his place,  
37 worked at my place, so.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [13:36] S-, so did you play on any of the Fisher Body UAW...  
40  
41 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yes.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: ...[fall 13:39] softball teams?  
44  
45 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yes, oh yes. Uh, we were – matter a fact, I think it was – man, I don't  
46 remember what year it was, but we were champions, anyways.

1  
2Marilyn Coulter: [13:51] Uh, and that was with other members...  
3  
4Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: ...that you worked with?  
7  
8Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm, mm-hm.  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: [13:56] And was this – this was a yearly thing that...  
11  
12Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: ...went?  
15  
16Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: I can't remember the name a your team either, but I remember.  
19  
20Russel Dahlstrom: [Inaudible 14:02]. [background movement]  
21  
22Doug Rademacher: Russ – Doug Rademacher here.  
23  
24Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
25  
26Doug Rademacher: Could you talk about – you said you were a butcher...  
27  
28Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
29  
30Doug Rademacher: ...at one time.  
31  
32Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
33  
34Doug Rademacher: [14:17] What, uh, why'd ya hire into Fisher Body? I know your wife's  
35 father had that opportunity, but why did you, uh, choose [background  
36 noises] the auto industry over going back into your, uh, meat cutting ex-,  
37 expertise?  
38  
39Russel Dahlstrom: [chair squeaking] Um, security, job security. Um, my father-in-law told me  
40 that there was a lotta people, uh, they were hiring in a lotta people and I  
41 figured, well, if I can get in here, I can get in on the ground floor,  
42 [background noises] and, uh, I don't know, have a job the rest of my life, I  
43 hope, ya know, until I could retire. And I was at, uh, it was at a time when I  
44 needed to get something as far as retirement going, get it started anyway,  
45 'cause I was 26 years old, so.  
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Marilyn Coulter had asked you about a day in the Plant. [15:15] Can  
2 ya talk about getting' ready for work, showin' up? How did the day go?  
3 What was a, what was a day at the factory? Can you walk us through a day?  
4

5 Russel Dahlstrom: Um, well, just gettin' up and comin' into work, make sure you knew where  
6 you were goin'. Uh, check in with the boss, see who's here and who wasn't  
7 here, when I was on Utility. Um, cover that job, good job, bad job, whatever  
8 it took, but that's where ya were for the day. And when I was on Repair over  
9 at Chasse, that was excellent. You checked, you check in with the boss and  
10 he made sure you were there, you had your 2 or 3 stalls out there where  
11 they'd pull the cars in that you'd work on and you start at the beginning a  
12 the shift; when your 8 hours are up, or if they wanted ya to work over,  
13 [clicking] whenever they wanted you outta there, you were done, ya went  
14 home. It, it doesn't get any better than that.  
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn...

17

18 Doug Rademacher: So.

19

20 Marilyn Coulter: ...Coulter. [16:07] Did you carpool? Did you drive by yourself?

21

22 Russel Dahlstrom: No.

23

24 Marilyn Coulter: How'd you get to work?

25

26 Russel Dahlstrom: Drove by myself.

27

28 Doug Rademacher: How f-, Doug Rademacher. [16:17] How far was it to come to work?

29

30 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, Grand Ledge I think is, what, 12 miles, somethin' like that.

31

32 Doug Rademacher: Okay.

33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [16:24] And if had, don't know if I had, we had asked this before – Marilyn  
35 Coulter – now, did your wife work in the Plant also?  
36

37 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, no. Uh, I divor-, we got divorced 'bout 15 years ago, and I remarried a  
38 gal that did, does work in the Plant, or did work in the Plant; she's retired  
39 now.  
40

41 Marilyn Coulter: [16:45] So a workplace romance. You wanna tell us about that? How was  
42 it...  
43

44 Russel Dahlstrom: Eh.

45

1 Marilyn Coulter: ...how was it to have a relationship in the Plant, ya know, working with that  
2 person that you're fallin' in love with and then once you married her, what  
3 was that like to work every day with your spouse in the same – did you guys  
4 work in the same department?  
5

6 Russel Dahlstrom: We worked one job away from each other.  
7

8 Marilyn Coulter: And how did that go?  
9

10 Russel Dahlstrom: Excellent.  
11

12 Marilyn Coulter: Really?  
13

14 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, it was great.  
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: It was great.  
17

18 Russel Dahlstrom: You betcha. We were, we were our own best friends. We could, anything.  
19 Everything and anything, we did everything together. Still do, except she's  
20 retired.  
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: But she's retired. [sniffing] [17:25] So, um, how was it th-, [thumping] d-,  
23 how did the coworkers react to you two [chair squeaking] when you started  
24 your romance?  
25

26 Russel Dahlstrom: Eh, a little hemmin' and hawin' here and there, but, uh, most of'm pretty  
27 much keep their mouth shut. [laughter]  
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: S-.  
30

31 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [17:50] Russ, did you have any other family members  
32 that work at the f-, [coughing] Plant?  
33

34 Russel Dahlstrom: I had a brother-in-law that's, uh, [Dwayne Reese 17:56], was a supervisor in  
35 the Shop, and a nephew, which was [Bobby Reese 18:02], which was his  
36 son, worked in Trim too.  
37

38 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Now, talk a little bit about – now, you said you found your love a  
39 your life and your romance, uh, right there in front a you on the, on the line.  
40 [18:17] Can you talk about what it was like to work around women and  
41 minorities? How did that impact you? [chair squeaking] Were you f-, were  
42 you comfortable with that or was that something you had to learn?  
43

44 Russel Dahlstrom: I don't think it impacted me very much. Um, I'm pretty much  
45 straightforward. Um, [sniffing] I don't much care who I'm talkin' to, man,  
46 woman, black, white, I could care less. Uh, everybody's the same, especially

1 in that environment. Y-, you have to get – treat a people, treat the people  
2 like human beings and they'll treat you great. I've never had a problem with  
3 that. They need their back scratched, I need mine scratched. Everybody  
4 scratched each other's back in there and it's a good working relationship.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: [19:05] Did you ever find...  
7  
8 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: ...did you ever find that the people that you worked with became a work  
11 family for you...  
12  
13 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 19:13]?  
16  
17 Russel Dahlstrom: To a point, yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah. But that takes a while to get that too.  
18 That's not somethin' you just step into. That – you get a group that will  
19 work like that together, that's few and far between.  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: [19:28] Have you ever had the opportunity to work with a group like that?  
22  
23 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yes, yes.  
24  
25 Marilyn Coulter: [19:32] Does...  
26  
27 Russel Dahlstrom: Yup.  
28  
29 Marilyn Coulter: ...how does a, how do the two different types of work family to non-work  
30 family, how does that affect your day? How did that affect your day?  
31  
32 Russel Dahlstrom: Very much. Uh, um, [clicking] if you have a group – I had'm up in Door  
33 Panels. Everybody knew everybody's job, everybody knew how, how to do  
34 the jobs, everybody knew what was expected of'm; everybody knew  
35 everything about everything in that group. Um, as long as they stuck  
36 together and everything was out on the table, it was great. If management  
37 could get ahold a one person, um, to do something for them or play  
38 favoritism, your whole group was, you, you've lost it, you've lost what you  
39 had as far as everybody – you've lost the honesty of it, you know, and the  
40 communication, and without that, um, it's back to just goin' in and workin'  
41 for a livin'; it's not goin' into laughin' and havin' a good time. And, ya  
42 know, everybody was on their toes, everybody watches what they say,  
43 everybody watches what they do, ya know.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: [20:52] So, when we say things like that, so, what are the different types a  
46 th-, you knew a lotta supervisors, you had, a...

1  
2 Russel Dahlstrom: [Inaudible 20:59].  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: ...a cousin and a brother-in-law and...  
5  
6 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm, mm-hm.  
7  
8 Marilyn Coulter: ...a father-in-law that was, were in upper management, and what, what was a  
9 person who made a good supervisor and a bad supervisor to help you rday  
10 go along?  
11  
12 Russel Dahlstrom: Um, honesty. Some supervisors in there, um, would tell you part of a story,  
13 they tell you part of what's going on. Another supervisor would just come  
14 right out and say, "Hey, word's comin' down from the top. This is the way it  
15 is." Uh, you learn to respect that person, uh, for telling you [car engine]  
16 exactly where stuff is coming from and how it's happening. Paul Grant  
17 would come around every payday, shake your hand, tell you, "Hey, thanks  
18 for a good week." Ya know, stuff like that. You don't see that anymore. You  
19 don't see any a that anymore.  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: [21:48] You've had time, and now we have, um – supervisors used to come  
22 up through the rank in [plants 21:54].  
23  
24 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: Right from the line, and they, and they graduated up to supervision. Now, as  
27 we come to a close on Fisher Body, as we do it, and we get more people  
28 who are like contract supervisor who come in straight from college or  
29 maybe straight from Burger King...  
30  
31 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: ...and now they're supervisors. How had that impacted the automotive  
34 industry to you?  
35  
36 Russel Dahlstrom: It's pathetic. [laughter] You got people in there, um, they'll tell ya right  
37 straight out, "Contract supervisor, I've never worked in a production area  
38 before." [tapping] They don't have the slightest idea. They don't have the  
39 slightest idea what the contract book says, ya know, what the rules are on  
40 the shop floor. They get told only what their seniors want them to know and  
41 do. Our area used to tell the su-, contract supervisors when they came – we  
42 went through 4 of'm in about a year and a half. We'd hand'm the contract  
43 book first thing. "You got any questions, start readin'." Ya know, "Hey, it's  
44 all in there." [sniffing]  
45  
46 Marilyn Coulter: [22:56] So, your title when the line went down was what?

1  
2 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, TC, Team Coordinator.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: [23:05] And Team Coordinator did what?  
5  
6 Russel Dahlstrom: It was kind of a middle man between the line worker and, uh, supervisor.  
7 Um, cover bathroom calls, painting calls, uh, went to meetings,  
8 troubleshooting, uh, problem solving, um, communications person for, for  
9 the supervisor to the people if he didn't wanna take time to do it. Um, since  
10 we got the contract supervisors, we more or less ran the groups 'cause the  
11 supervisor didn't know how.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: [23:40] So, now, you're doing that...  
14  
15 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: ...in 2005, 2006 timeframe. How has that employee impact changed from  
18 1978 when you hired in?  
19  
20 Russel Dahlstrom: In seven-, '78 when I hired in, if a supervisor came to – well, let, let me put  
21 it this way: I was up working on a job when I was breaking in hanging, or  
22 punching door panels, punching out switches and the window cranks, and I  
23 stuck a left-hand door in a right-hand fixture and I slammed it and made a  
24 pretty big mess out of it. Uh, instead a having someone holler at me, I took it  
25 up [inaudible 24:16]. So I looked around me and said, "Who's gonna know I  
26 did it?" 'Bout 10 minutes later, Lonnie Duke come walkin' back through  
27 there with that door panel in his hand. He says, "Who in the hell did this?" I  
28 raised my hand, "I did." He said, "Do it again and you're fired." He said,  
29 "Why did you do it?" I said, "'Cause I didn't [tapping] figure anybody'd  
30 catch it." I ain't gonna lie to'm. And that's when he said, he says, "Do it  
31 again and you're fired." No problem, won't happen again. But that's the  
32 way [inaudible 24:43], ya know.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [24:47] But has it evolved through where now employees – did you ever,  
35 first of all, ever think that an hourly line employee would have the impact  
36 and the input on production that you do now?  
37  
38 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, no. But we still only had a certain amount. You can tell them and show  
39 them anything you want to, but what the bottom line is is when they stand  
40 up there and say "Turn that line on and let's go," that's it, so. Which they  
41 do; they take a lotta your input, they do, but [inaudible 25:27], ya know,  
42 when they say build cars, it's build cars, so.  
43  
44 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [25:33] You had said something a little bit ago about the  
45 job duties of, that you had at the time of the Plant going down. You said can

1 call. Uh, you've said bathroom breaks and can call. Can you explain what  
2 can call is and do you really, can ya go back to where that came from?  
3

4Russel Dahlstrom: That was there before I started. Um, can call's just when somebody's gotta  
5 go to the bathroom between reliefs, then the line's running, and they won't  
6 shut the line down for ya, so you holler at me and I'll do your job as long as  
7 you're gone to the bathroom. You come back, I'll go to someone else or do  
8 somethin' different, so. The same thing with committee calls. When the  
9 line's runnin', somebody's got a committee call, when the m-,  
10 committeeman comes out, you do the job while he takes care a business, so.  
11

12Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.  
13

14Cheryl McQuaid: [26:23] Russ, did you ever, did you ever know of anybody or did you just  
15 turn your back and say, "I'm not coverin' them for a can call?" and did you  
16 know anybody that ever did somethin' like that and what did that employee  
17 do?  
18

19Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, I don't think I ever did. I don't believe I've ever done that. Um, I've  
20 known people that have done it. [Inaudible 26:50] still it happens, you hear  
21 about it. Um, I know one person got 3 days or a week off. Um.  
22

23Cheryl McQuaid: [27:00] For doing that to...  
24

25Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
26

27Cheryl McQuaid: ...another employee?  
28

29Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah. But he had done it enough times that [background movement] finally  
30 the employee brought it to the supervisor's attention and they kinda set him  
31 up [papers rustling] so that the supervisor just happened to be there when  
32 she asked for one and then he told her to where to get off, and boom, out the  
33 door he went. [papers rustling] But it, it's stupid. If, if you've got a problem  
34 [car engine] like that, that's what a supervisor's for; go talk to'm. Ya know,  
35 if you believe someone's, uh, doin' ya wrong, hey, go talk to the boss. Ya  
36 know, they're, they're there for everything. That's their job.  
37

38DR: Russ, in – Doug Rademacher – in the position you had, uh, each week, you  
39 said the supervisor would bring over your check, and a good supervisor  
40 [papers rustling] [door opening] would thank you for the work you did the  
41 week before. [background noises] [27:38] Can you talk about things that  
42 happened like [door closing] the, uh, check pools? Did you ever run a check  
43 pool? What, and exactly what is that?  
44

45Russel Dahlstrom: I didn't run a check pool, but I was in on one for quite a while. Yeah, you  
46 take, uh, either your last three of your check number or change, um,



1 sometimes ya ran a wild, wild number for a wildcard, play it like a card  
2 game. Yeah. We had a lotta those goin'. It was fun. I don't, I don't  
3 remember ever winning one, but [laughter] I remember bein' in there. I  
4 donated a lot.  
5  
6 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.  
7  
8 Marilyn Coulter: [28:34] Um, [papers rustling] do you remember what was one of, one of  
9 your most happiest and your saddest moments in the Plant?  
10  
11 Doug Rademacher: [28:57] D-, do you remember, did you ever have a opportunity where you  
12 could help – this is Doug Rademacher – uh, [clicking] where you could help  
13 an employee? Did you ever do somethin' where someone was struggling  
14 and you actually had an impact and, and made a, a good day for someone  
15 else or something that was rewarding where you, you, uh, made a difference  
16 in another person's, another coworker's...  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: Uh...  
19  
20 Doug Rademacher: ...workplace?  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: ...try to do that on a daily basis. Part of being a Team Coordinator, uh, watch  
23 the people. Everybody in there has a bad day. Everybody has a good day. If  
24 someone is havin' a bad day, ask'm if there's somethin' you can do for'm.  
25 Um, tell'm to take a break. Um, everybody does that for everybody. As far  
26 as a good day and a bad day, the best day and the worst day? [background  
27 conversation] Wow. Right off hand, I can't think of it.  
28  
29 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 29:56].  
30  
31 Doug Rademacher: [29:56] Well you spoke of a great job over at 150 or doin' the Repair job.  
32  
33 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
34  
35 Doug Rademacher: Was that your best favorite job and what was your worst job you ever got  
36 put on?  
37  
38 Russel Dahlstrom: That's, that's the best job I ever had was doin' Repair over at Chasse, yeah.  
39 Worst job, uh, I would have to say was when I got laid off and brought back  
40 into the Body Shop, [background conversation] working for [Alex  
41 Villanueva 30:22] spot welding in tail panels on the Eighty-Eights and  
42 Ninety-Eights. I had never had such a job in my life, and the day they said I  
43 could get outta there, by golly, that might a been the best day, when they  
44 said, "You got your return rights comin' through" and I was outta there.  
45  
46 Doug Rademacher: [30:40] Return rights. What does that mean?

1  
2 Russel Dahlstrom: Back in, back into Trim, because they laid people off and they didn't have  
3 seniority to hold it. [background conversation]  
4  
5 Doug Rademacher: [30:47] Knowing that you worked [coughing] in what you just said, that  
6 worst-job environment, had the opportunity to go back to the Trim  
7 Department where it was somewhat cleaner and, uh, probably quieter, could  
8 ya tell me, did ya think much in the 27, 28 [background noises] years you've  
9 been there now about the people that worked every day down in that Body  
10 Shop?  
11  
12 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, there's a lotta people that liked it. The person I was workin' alongside  
13 of doin' that tail panel job, he loved it. He was, he walked around like he  
14 was half-asleep all night long [laughter] and I was just bustin' my butt tryin'  
15 to stay up the line, but everybody's got their way a doin' things. Um,  
16 [background movement] everybody's got a different job, everybody likes a  
17 [door opening] different job. There's a lotta jobs in there, and they all get  
18 [door closing] filled.  
19  
20 Doug Rademacher: [recorder clicking] [sniffing] Doug Rademacher. [31:40] Russ, would you –  
21 [background conversation] uh, you were just talking about, um, escaping  
22 from the Body Shop, um, and we talked about [clicking] the people  
23 [clicking] that chose to work down there and made it look easy. So can you  
24 elaborate about the different areas a the Plant that you worked in and, uh,  
25 about what it's like to work an assembly line?  
26  
27 Russel Dahlstrom: Well, I worked in Body Shop, when I was down there on tail panels. That  
28 was I believe the worst job ever put on Earth. But then again, I got – went  
29 back to Trim and I got reduced back into Body Shop again. [background  
30 conversation] Um, I had, uh, three spot welders and a make welder, and I  
31 loved that job. I could, [car engine] after I was there for about a week or so,  
32 I could do most a the jobs. A Pickip Man come over, [papers rustling] over  
33 by my stuff, [papers rustling] my equipment there, my welders. So he would  
34 do repairs on vehicles when I wasn't usin'm. Uh, I got good enough where I  
35 could do part a his repairs and, I don't know, made the night go by. Um,  
36 there were gals in there I bet didn't weight 125 pounds; I betcha the spot  
37 welder they were runnin' was 180 pounds, and they made it look like child's  
38 play [background conversation] where other people were in there, they'd be  
39 musclin' everything around, they'd be so tight and sore when they walked  
40 outta there at night, I don't know how they ever made it outta there.  
41 [sniffing]  
42  
43 Um, [background conversation] worked in Paint. [background conversation]  
44 Uh, didn't care for any a that. The smell up there was enough to – I think  
45 that was my main thing. The jobs were fairly easy, but I didn't, I didn't care  
46 for that. Most – I like Trim. [background conversation] Just, uh,

1 [background conversation] even if it was hangin' door panels or, um,  
2 throwin' carpets or regulators, anything; it was, that was the place to be.  
3 [coughing] If you didn't like your job, you got to see everybody else's job;  
4 put a transfer in and move. Ya know? There's jobs for everybody.  
5

6 Doug Rademacher: [33:43] Would you please share about the working conditions from when  
7 you hired in and the envir-, the environment? Was there, uh, good lighting?  
8 The air? H-, what was it like to work, uh – and again, what, you were  
9 building a car a minute? Can you share – that's pretty busy, isn't it?  
10

11 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, yeah. We've come a long way as far as how the jobs are. They're,  
12 they're a lot easier now than what they were then. There was a lot more I  
13 guess what you'd call manual labor; heavy lifting, bending, twisting. [car  
14 engine] Um, everything now, all those doors come down the line now, they  
15 aren't even hooked to the, hooked to bodies anymore. Ya know,  
16 everybody's in an upright position and they come a long way on that, but yet  
17 they keep addin' the work to it too, ya know. It, it works out about the same,  
18 but it's a lot cleaner and a lot quieter. There's no comparison as far as noise.  
19 Used to be if it wasn't the equipment makin' the noise, it was the page  
20 system all day long, "bong, bong, bong," ya know? But it – yeah, we've  
21 come a long ways. But it's still no picnic. [background conversation]  
22

23 Doug Rademacher: [34:58] How did you, uh, spend your lunch breaks?  
24

25 Russel Dahlstrom: Generally, just sittin' on the side a the line until one day a guy asked me if I  
26 wanted to go over to Harry's and grab a hamburger, [tapping] and after that,  
27 it was [throat clearing] not so much the hamburgers anymore but a couple of  
28 ice cold beers. [laughter]  
29

30 Doug Rademacher: [35:17] And what is Harry's?  
31

32 Russel Dahlstrom: Harry's is the bar across the street. They have sandwiches and shrimp and  
33 [coughing] fish and pizza and [coughing] beer and. But it was good.  
34

35 Doug Rademacher: [35:33] There's been talk of this Harry's place, uh, [clicking] goes way  
36 back, uh, many, many years. I guess there was even a strike, you'd go there  
37 for strike pay and sign up with that back in the '40s, they had pictures of it.  
38 So this has been a stable for the Fisher Body Plant. What was it like to walk  
39 into Harry's at lunchtime?  
40

41 Russel Dahlstrom: Busy. If you want a drink, you better get up there and get it, because you  
42 didn't have much time to waste there. I never saw so many people get  
43 served in s-, so short a time in my life. And there were people over there, he  
44 had his little file boxes behind the, uh, [coughing] bar back there, a little,  
45 held the little I think 4x6 cards.  
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Like a recipe card.  
2  
3 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, there ya go, with everybody's bar tabs on it. You'd see people in there  
4 on payday shuckin' the money across the bars and, oh man, if you needed  
5 money, go to talk to'm. He'll give you money. Be a little interest involved,  
6 but oh yeah. [car engine] He did everything for everybody, as long as there  
7 was a dime to be made. [background conversation]  
8  
9 Doug Rademacher: [36:36] So you say he did everything. Are you referring to payday? What,  
10 what'd he do on paydays?  
11  
12 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh, he'd cash all your checks, they'd put in a separate b-, uh, separate bank  
13 window in there and they'd take the change from your checks, they'd charge  
14 ya for cashin' your check, um, you'd pay your tabs, everything. Uh, he had  
15 his own little bank set up in there.  
16  
17 Doug Rademacher: [37:03] Um, I guess do you wanna share a story about something they used  
18 to call The Wagon? Was that there when you hired in?  
19  
20 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes, it was. Uh, came around [background noises] at least twice a day.  
21 Didn't mess with it much in the early part a the day, but the evening one was  
22 nice. Came around I believe it was 12:12 was when the wagon came. They  
23 got chips and, uh, pop and milk and [car engine] there was 7 minutes you  
24 could go up there and sit, kick back and relax. There was an extra break  
25 time, that we eventually lost. But that, was, yeah, that was, that was nice. It  
26 was a nice little break. [car engine]  
27  
28 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: [37:48] Now, I know that they also had employees who did vending. Um,  
31 will you tell us a little bit about the employee vendors and did you partake in  
32 any of their goods and services?  
33  
34 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yeah. The one that brings to mind is [Darryl Mangles 38:01]. He'd go  
35 around in the summertime, sweatin', and he'd have the sweat runnin' off a  
36 him sellin' ice cream bars up and down that line as fast as he could go. I  
37 don't see [laughter], I don't know how they ever didn't thaw out on him, but  
38 I betcha by the time he got to the end, he got, they were awful soft. Oh yeah.  
39 And they had, uh, I don't remember his name, but a guy that worked  
40 upstairs in the wiring area brought in burritos just about every morning. I  
41 believe his wife made'm during the night and he'd bring'm in with him. It  
42 was a dollar a burrito, and they had potatoes and ham and eggs and, uh,  
43 buck apiece. Best breakfast you could ask for, that and a tube a hot sauce.  
44 That was great.  
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [38:49] Were there any other types of crafts or anything like that that you  
2 ever purchased or?  
3

4 Russel Dahlstrom: No, not right off hand.  
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: [38:58] Um, just digressing a little bit – and actually, I know you came in  
7 from the military, and then you came into the Plant, um, and you said that  
8 you were a structural in-, mechanic? How did what you learned in the  
9 military affect what you did in the Plant and was there any similarities  
10 between working in the Plant and bein' in the military? [sniffing]  
11

12 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, there's a lotta similarities. Uh, the tools we used. Uh, we had the same  
13 thing in the military as what they had here at Fisher Body. Um, it was just  
14 like clockin' in; you were on their time, uh, 8 hours. Um, I was, uh, in the  
15 Service, I was a Collateral Duty Inspector, which is same thing as you buy  
16 stuff off there when you're workin' on the helicopters and fixed-wing  
17 aircraft, the same thing as when you buy stuff off here in, uh, in the Shop as  
18 a Repairman. Um, it was so similar I couldn't, I couldn't believe it, 'cause  
19 they had, there were a few people in there, you'd hear'm grumblin', bitchin'  
20 about how stuff was done. They'd say, "Don't you have a problem with  
21 that?" "Heck no, I just come outta the military. This is the same thing. I  
22 been doin' this for the last 4 years," ya know? And it was, it was very easy  
23 for me. [sniffing]  
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: [40:14] Have you always – what shift did you work on?  
26

27 Russel Dahlstrom: Second shift.  
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: [40:17] And did you always prefer that?  
30

31 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
32

33 Marilyn Coulter: Was that your preferred shift?  
34

35 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes. In the new plant they're gonna be firing up, I got third shift, so. [car  
36 engine]  
37

38 Doug Rademacher: [40:27] So you're – Doug Rademacher – you're moving off to the new  
39 plant. Uh, talk about the final days at Fisher Body and what's your thoughts  
40 about the closing of the Fisher Body Plant? [clicking]  
41

42 Russel Dahlstrom: [papers rustling] I hate to see it closed. Um, had a lotta good memories  
43 there. [background conversation] But the people, for the last [car engine] 2  
44 years probably, with the contract supervisors, um, short on help, uh, not  
45 caring about quality, "Just get these jobs built and get'm up the end a the  
46 line," um, there was a lotta mad people, upset, totally mad. Uh, no backing

1 from the union, management doin' whatever the hell they wanted to do. Um,  
2 [car engine] didn't bother me too much [inaudible 41:19] just "Hey, shut the  
3 doors, fine. That's all you want, that's all you got. We're outta here."  
4

5Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [41:27] I worked those final 2 years you're speaking of.  
6 Uh, I just wanted to share that we, [sniffing] due to the seniority, our  
7 seniority, um, they took high seniority were the only ones left in the Plant,  
8 and those people had progressed from the low-end jobs to what were  
9 considered, uh, quality preferred jobs. Uh, as time progressed, though, and  
10 we started to close the doors and eliminate lines and shifts, people got stuck  
11 on jobs that were completely out of their, their whole, uh, [sniffing] [throat  
12 clearing] realm. [throat clearing] So that caused a lotta conflict. Did you  
13 have that in your area?  
14

15Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, we had, we had, uh, [tapping] [car engine] Team Coordinators, at  
16 least half of'm were on the line every day, and yet they expected the one or  
17 two that weren't on the line to do all the repairs and everything, uh, which is  
18 not the way the contract is set up, but, uh, nobody seemed to care. Like I  
19 said, [car engine] they just get 'er done. Uh, anybody that wasn't on a  
20 particular job [tapping] on that line was more or less classified as Utility and  
21 you'll go wherever, wherever we sent ya, so. Yeah, there's quite a lotta  
22 people I know of that got put in the street for disobeying direct orders, and  
23 they said they didn't care anymore. But I can see their point.  
24

25Doug Rademacher: Marilyn...

26

27Marilyn Coulter: [42:55] Um...

28

29Doug Rademacher: ...Coulter.

30

31Marilyn Coulter: ...and it's, it's away from what you were speaking about and it's kinda back  
32 to – I know you said at lunchtime you might a went to Harry's, you went  
33 from sittin' on your job goin' to Harry – if somebody was to come into the  
34 Plant, and some people would be at Harry's and maybe some people would  
35 be at McDonald's, what were some a the other things a person coming  
36 through the Plant might during, uh, a break or a lunchtime might see people  
37 doin' in the Plant?  
38

39Russel Dahlstrom: [How do you mean 43:23]?  
40

41Marilyn Coulter: Were there people playin' cards? [car engine]  
42

43Russel Dahlstrom: Oh.  
44

45Marilyn Coulter: Doin' crafts?  
46

1 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
2  
3 Marilyn Coulter: What type...  
4  
5 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yeah.  
6  
7 Marilyn Coulter: ...what are some a the kinds a things that they saw?  
8  
9 Russel Dahlstrom: There were card games, dice games, uh, uh, [car engine] football pools, [car  
10 engine] uh, basketball pools, um, um, lotta card games.  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: [43:44] Did you find people doing crafts at all? Knitting?  
13  
14 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah, a few here...  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: Stuff like that?  
17  
18 Russel Dahlstrom: ...and a few there.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
21  
22 Russel Dahlstrom: Few here and a few there. Uh, I stuck around over where the cards games  
23 and stuff were. I wasn't watchin' [laughter] the rest of it.  
24  
25 Marilyn Coulter: [43:57] So – now, there, there was said tell the, that some people even had  
26 bible study groups in there. Is that true?  
27  
28 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes. Yes. I didn't see too many of'm early when I was working there, but  
29 towards the end here, yes. Yes, there was quite a few of'm, actually...  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
32  
33 Russel Dahlstrom: ...in the break rooms.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: So there were a lotta things goin' on inside...  
36  
37 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yeah.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...the Plant.  
40  
41 Russel Dahlstrom: It's like its own little city. Yeah.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: It's a little city inside.  
44  
45 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah. Mm-hm. [car engine]  
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [44:20] Russ, ya hired in in the '70s. Here we are in  
2 2006. Can ya walk me through the decades? What it was like when you  
3 came in and did ya see changes every 10 years? [background conversation]  
4

5 Russel Dahlstrom: At least every 10 years. Um, we hired in, [clicking] like I said before, when,  
6 when I hired in and [background conversation] there was something wrong,  
7 a supervisor came to the person and asked them what their problem was  
8 because that supervisor knew every job in there. He knew what had to be  
9 done. When there was a problem, he knew where it was comin' from and he  
10 knew how to take care of it, and the line – person on the line, um, didn't  
11 take'm long to recognize that, that if that boss come, come to you with a  
12 problem that you were screwin' up, he knew he had you and you knew you  
13 were doin' wrong. [sniffing]  
14

15 Uh, not too long after that, we got into the QWL, Quality of Work Life,  
16 [background noises] and there was a few changes here and a few changes  
17 there, and we gotta work a little more together and a little more here and do  
18 this a little better and not quite, [door opening] ya know, quit your hollerin'  
19 and stuff and let's work. [background conversation] I got to the GM 20  
20 Pilot. They started [door opening] listening more to the hourly and, uh,  
21 [background movement] everybody workin' hand-in-hand with the  
22 [background movement] hourly and management [background movement]  
23 and, uh, Engineers and – [background movement] so that changed some.  
24 [background noises] Uh, GM X130 it changed again.  
25

26 Um, but towards the end here, it's kinda like management is taking over and  
27 the union is slacking off. Uh, we don't, we don't hear much anymore  
28 [coughing] about what's going on. Um, it's just kinda different. Back when I  
29 hired in, if you called a Committeeman, that supervisor pretty much put his  
30 head down and walked the other direction, 'cause he knew if he was wrong,  
31 the same thing as when he came to you. If you knew you were wrong, you'd  
32 put your head down 'cause you knew you'd been caught, and he knew the  
33 same thing, ya know. And it isn't like that so much anymore. Management  
34 more or less does what the heck they want to now. Which I'm sure it'll take  
35 a little while, but it'll change when we're in the new plant too, so. But  
36 there's been a lotta changes. [clicking]  
37

38 Doug Rademacher: [46:57] Did you ever utilize the Skilled Trades group? How did you work as  
39 an assembly line worker with the Skilled s-, Trades? Uh, can you talk about  
40 that relationship?  
41

42 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, we worked with the Skilled Trades, uh, anytime we had, uh,  
43 [background conversation] um, reduction in, uh, line speed, changing jobs  
44 around, moving racks, um, putting in ramps. They weren't the fastest group  
45 in the world. [background conversation] But they were generally pretty good



1 to work with, as long as you didn't touch any a their work. [car engine]  
2 We'd get along pretty good. [background conversation]  
3  
4 Doug Rademacher: [47:48] Would you talk about just the changing of the names of the [papers  
5 rustling] building in which we worked? There came a time when, uh, they  
6 started changing the names of the company [papers rustling] that we worked  
7 for. What is the building to you?  
8  
9 Russel Dahlstrom: Well, that building'll be Fisher Body. [car engine] That's what it was when I  
10 hired in, that's what it'll be until they tear it down. There was about a 10-  
11 year stretch in there I wasn't sure what they called it, but I didn't worry  
12 about it. As long as my check came, hey, I just walked [tapping] in the front  
13 door just like everybody else. [background noises] I don't understand what  
14 all the different name were, BOC, LCA, uh, [door opening] like I said,  
15 [background movement] long as I got my paycheck, they could call it  
16 anything they want. [background movement]  
17  
18 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: [48:36] Um, [door opening] Russ, you said you're originally from  
21 Wisconsin and it, you came here because of your father-in-law who was a  
22 Superintendent in the Body Shop.  
23  
24 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: Um, [door opening] had you ever heard anything about Fisher Body,  
27 Lansing before you came in or did you ever know anything about Bodies by  
28 Fisher?  
29  
30 Russel Dahlstrom: I had, I had seen the name plate on the silt plate in different [inaudible  
31 49:01]. Other than that, I didn't know a thing about it. And they had the  
32 coach on the silt plates and.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: Mm. [49:01] Did you have any preconceived notions of what a factory  
35 worker was?  
36  
37 Russel Dahlstrom: No.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [49:15] Or what – what would you say is probably the biggest  
40 misconception about what people believe is of factory workers?  
41  
42 Russel Dahlstrom: They think it's a piece a cake. You walk in that building, you don't do a  
43 heck of a lot, you're in outta the weather. [car engine] Um, you just went  
44 and sit down or do a job or be part of a job, they have no idea what goes on  
45 in that building.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [49:40] During your time working there, did you get a chance to meet many  
2 people in there who extended their education [car engine] as far as you who  
3 utilized the, the tuition assistance programs and went on and got further  
4 education?  
5

6 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, I haven't, I didn't do any of that, yeah, but there was a lotta people that  
7 did. Uh, [Deb Harms 49:58] right now is in school again, soon as last, uh,  
8 layoff here. There's a lotta people in school. Lotta people takin' advantage  
9 of it.  
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: So ac-...

12

13 Russel Dahlstrom: Smart move.  
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: ...so actually the education level is a lot higher than what a lotta people  
16 had...  
17

18 Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yes.  
19

20 Marilyn Coulter: ...perceived?  
21

22 Russel Dahlstrom: Yes.  
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: Um.  
25

26 Russel Dahlstrom: There's a lotta school teachers in there, um, lotta people with engineering,  
27 uh, skills, ya know, [papers rustling] that can't find jobs out in town.  
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: So they come into [Fisher 50:24].  
30

31 Russel Dahlstrom: You got it.  
32

33 Marilyn Coulter: [papers rustling] Mm.  
34

35 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [50:30] Russ, what's your most appreciated bargained  
36 benefit that you've come to appreciate?  
37

38 Russel Dahlstrom: Vacation time. Is that one of'm?  
39

40 Doug Rademacher: That's a wonderful thing. [laughter] Yeah, I don't think they were handin'  
41 out vacations. I think they, uh, [laughter] that union did go in and bargain  
42 for those, uh...  
43

44 Russel Dahlstrom: You got it.  
45

46 Doug Rademacher: ...particular, uh, days off.

1  
2Russel Dahlstrom: Yes. That is the best one. That and healthcare.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: [51:03] Russ, is there anything that we talked – that you wanted to talk  
5 about that we haven't talked about?  
6  
7Russel Dahlstrom: Not really. This is kinda like [papers rustling] the first day comin' in the  
8 Shop. I didn't know what you were gonna ask. [laughter]  
9  
10Doug Rademacher: Okay. [throat clearing]  
11  
12Russel Dahlstrom: I know there's been a lotta good, good supervisors, good people. Um, it's  
13 been good.  
14  
15Doug Rademacher: Russ, I'm gonna ask one more question. Doug Rademacher. [car engine]  
16 [51:38] You're almost done and able to hopefully have the s-, pension that  
17 you've worked all these years for. For someone that's listening or reading  
18 about the auto industry in the 2000s, what was it, what is it like to work in  
19 an auto factory? What would you tell someone that's considering hiring into  
20 a, an assembly plant? Do ya have any words of advice for people about  
21 havin' a go at it?  
22  
23Russel Dahlstrom: Pay attention. Um, they have their – well, like we have our lunchtime  
24 meetings, our group meetings, uh, supervisor meetings. Go to all of'm [car  
25 engine] and listen, listen to what's goin' on. Uh, they're, i-, if you don't  
26 mind just standing there on the line doin' a job, fine, don't worry about it,  
27 but there are good jobs in there, real good jobs. When you pay attention,  
28 you'll find'm, you'll get a chance at those good jobs. So, ya know, keep  
29 listenin', keep your eyes open. Don't go in there like, like you're sleepin'.  
30 Heck, I was, uh, I worked on the line, actually a line worker, for maybe 2  
31 years out of 28 years. Ya know? That's unheard of. And I enjoyed it.  
32  
33Doug Rademacher: Well, with that smile I'm lookin' at, yeah, you musta enjoyed it and you're...  
34  
35Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
36  
37Doug Rademacher: ...you're hopin' to, uh, finish up.  
38  
39Russel Dahlstrom: Get my time in and get outta here.  
40  
41Doug Rademacher: [53:24] So you have been to the new facility yet?  
42  
43Russel Dahlstrom: Oh yes, that's where I'm at right now.  
44  
45Doug Rademacher: [53:27] And what do ya think about that? What do ya think about our  
46 future?

1  
2 Russel Dahlstrom: Uh, with the money they've got invested, I hope they have the people that  
3 know what's goin' on to run it, 'cause if they run it like past practice, they  
4 might as well just shut the doors now, but if they're willin' to do what's,  
5 what it's gonna take to get it done, hey, listen to the people, ya know?  
6 Because if ya don't, hey, ya know, [tapping] big waste a money.  
7  
8 Doug Rademacher: [53:54] On that subject right there, Lansing's been known as the Capitol of  
9 Quality. People have ordered cars from all over the world from Lansing  
10 because it was called just that.  
11  
12 Russel Dahlstrom: Mm-hm.  
13  
14 Doug Rademacher: What's the reason for the title "Capitol of Quality"?  
15  
16 Russel Dahlstrom: Because the people pay attention to what they do. People like you, like  
17 quality here. That's been preached since the day I walked in the door  
18 [coughing] and up until, oh, last couple years, we've always had good  
19 quality, but now it seems like it's that almighty dollar. Ya know, to heck  
20 with the quality. I'm kinda wondering if that's what we just didn't give up  
21 our dollar-some-cents a raise, is that so that we don't have to put the quality  
22 into it anymore; we just go in there just to do the job. Ya know, you don't do  
23 the extra 5 or 10 seconds on every job, ya know. Makes ya wonder.  
24  
25 Doug Rademacher: Well, Russ, uh, glad to have had this opportunity to interview you. It's, uh,  
26 been a pleasure. I'm glad you found ya, the love a your life and was able to  
27 work in front of her and...  
28  
29 Russel Dahlstrom: Yeah.  
30  
31 Doug Rademacher: ...you guys ride to work every day and, and, uh, hopefully you enjoy the  
32 final, the final years in your retirement together. It's been a pleasure  
33 interviewing you.  
34  
35 Russel Dahlstrom: Same here. Get 'er done.  
36  
37 Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Russ.  
38  
39 Russel Dahlstrom: Yup.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: Thank you, Russ.  
42  
43 Russel Dahlstrom: You're welcome.  
44  
45 Jerri Smith: Thank you.  
46

1 Russel Dahlstrom: Thank you. [recorder clicking]

2

3

4/rt