

1 **Aleada Lynette Daniels, an African American General Motor's nurse,**  
2 **talks about her experiences at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**  
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4

5Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Marilyn Coulter, Fisher Body Historical Team. It's August 24 at 10:39  
6 a.m. We're speaking with Lynette Daniels, who is a nurse at, um, the plant.  
7 [0:18] And Lynette, you wanna tell us a little bit about yourself and how  
8 long you've been, uh, you know, how long you been a nurse here and what  
9 some of your good memories have been about here?

10  
11Lynette Daniels: Okay, I came here February '85 shortly after nursing school. Basically all I  
12 knew is what they taught us in a book. When I came in and they were  
13 orientating me, it was like learning nursing all over again 'cause  
14 everything I learned about in the hospital did not even exist here. I had to  
15 learn to do things in a primitive way. Like make my own Q-tips. Make  
16 Steri-Strips. [laughter] There were a lot of things they didn't have, and  
17 then there were things that they used that made no rational sense on why  
18 they worked, but they did. So you – it was like learning a new kinda  
19 medicine.  
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [1:05] What was somethin' that they used that worked but didn't make  
22 sense [inaudible 1:08]?

23  
24Lynette Daniels: We had this jar of this brownish-green, greasy stuff called Iodex, and  
25 people wanted it on their joints and wrapped with an ACE bandage before  
26 they started work. When I looked up what Iodex was, it was Vaseline and  
27 iodine, and it had nothin' to do with joint pain, but the people could not  
28 work without it. [laughter]

29  
30Marilyn Coulter: It was a mental thing.

31  
32Lynette Daniels: It was. They would come in and get their knees greased, their hands  
33 greased, their elbows greased, and we'd wrap it up with tape, and then  
34 they're ready to work. We used to have'm lined up before the line would  
35 start.  
36

37Marilyn Coulter: For Iodex.

38  
39Lynette Daniels: For Iodex. They couldn't work without it. Then we had this concoction  
40 called rhubarb and soda. And we couldn't run on Mondays without  
41 rhubarb and soda 'cause it got rid of hangovers.  
42

43Marilyn Coulter: [1:57] Oh, really?

44  
45Lynette Daniels: And then there, there was nothing in a, in a prescription or medicine book  
46 that said it worked, but if we didn't have it, we gonna have a riot. There

1 were times when we were out of it, and they were like, we gotta call  
2 security get 'em outta here, 'cause they were upset. They needed their  
3 rhubarb and soda. So things like that where it was a different kind of  
4 medicine, here where certain things that made no sense worked.  
5  
6Marilyn Coulter: Maybe, so those are more just like grandmother's home, home remedies.  
7  
8Lynette Daniels: We did a whole lotta grandma's home remedies and lotta grandma's make  
9 your own equipment. You know, like, we were using Bunsen burners to  
10 make Steri-Strips to make them stick.  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 2:33].  
13  
14Lynette Daniels: We would sit when it was slow and take these wooden sticks and put  
15 cotton on'm and make our own Q-tips.  
16  
17Marilyn Coulter: Ohhh my God.  
18  
19Lynette Daniels: All...we didn't have packages of medication. We had to sit there and count  
20 it and put it in envelopes. It was [laughter] very primitive.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: Very primitive. [2:49] What would you say would be the biggest change  
23 since you been in the medical department?  
24  
25Lynette Daniels: The biggest change?  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
28  
29Lynette Daniels: Um, the biggest change, and I don't necessarily see it as a good change, is  
30 when I first came here, we worked under doctors orders, and we were  
31 more like practitioners. Where if you came in and you were hurtin', I could  
32 actually take care of you and give you the medication you need, order your  
33 physical there, refer you out to a doctor, you know, give you prescription  
34 meds, where now I'm treated like, I shouldn't say treated like. Now that's  
35 been taken away where when you come in now, all I can do is, 'okay  
36 Marilyn, I'm sorry you hurt, here's an ice pack, go back to work'. That's the  
37 biggest change to me.  
38  
39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. So...  
40  
41Lynette Daniels: And that's because of, you know, OSHA recordability has become so,  
42 such a big deal where it's hard for us to treat you like we did in the past  
43 where we used to try to take care of you so that you really could go back  
44 to work or get better in a few days.  
45  
46Marilyn Coulter: ...so government laws, things that are actually supposed to—

1  
2Lynette Daniels: Be good for you, have made–  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Made the process longer. [4:06] And which causes a lot of difficulty  
5 between you and the employees, I guess?  
6  
7Lynette Daniels: Yes, it has. 'Cause now they, there's, there's a, oh there's a certain group of  
8 employees that don't really know us that think that we don't know what  
9 we're doing as a result.  
10  
11Marilyn Coulter: Mm. I see.  
12  
13Lynette Daniels: So that's a sad change.  
14  
15Marilyn Coulter: That's a sad change. [4:22] Well, what's one of the good changes?  
16  
17Lynette Daniels: That we have new equipment that's up to date. That you don't have to look  
18 at a history book to figure out what the heck it is.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] Well, that's good. [4:32] Um, I know that now you, um, you  
21 guys – how long have you been with the union? I know you, you...  
22  
23Lynette Daniels: We unionized in '95.  
24  
25Marilyn Coulter: '95? [4:45] So that's like, 10 years after you had – was there big change  
26 once that came out?  
27  
28Lynette Daniels: Yes, all for the better.  
29  
30Marilyn Coulter: There's a smile there, so I'm...  
31  
32Lynette Daniels: Yes.  
33  
34Marilyn Coulter: [4:53] ...so what would you say was, probably was the best things that  
35 happened with you having the union come in?  
36  
37Lynette Daniels: Um, all of the nurses were treated equal, where before, it was, you know,  
38 if you weren't mommy's favorite or if you're mommy's favorite – there  
39 were no rules for us. Um, there could be situations where I have an issue  
40 outside of work, I take a vacation day. Another person has an issue outside  
41 of work, they were given excused time. It brought us together closer in  
42 pay. Gave us the same opportunities for continuing our education or  
43 certifications. It just brought about the equality that we needed in our  
44 department.  
45

1Marilyn Coulter: [5:31] Now, is there, uh, building rotation still with the nurses now? Or are  
2 all the houses – 'cause I know we have – at the Lansing site, the nurses  
3 used to rotate sometime from different buildings...  
4

5Lynette Daniels: Yeah, when we became unionized, and seniority counts, now you pick  
6 where you work and the shift you work by seniority.  
7

8Marilyn Coulter: ...so before you just went...  
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10Lynette Daniels: You went where they told you.  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: [5:55]...and could that change day to day or week to week?  
13

14Lynette Daniels: It could change day to day, week to week. And if you weren't mommy's  
15 favorite anymore. 'Cause they get to know you. This is an old regime that  
16 is no longer here, but they, they would get to know you, and they'd know  
17 your likes and dislikes, and when they wanted to punish you, they'd snatch  
18 one out the bag.  
19

20Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
21

22Lynette Daniels: And that, and but – when we unionized, they weren't able – so it made  
23 working conditions a lot better for us. Less stressful, and you can predict  
24 what was going to happen tomorrow, where before, [laughter]...  
25

26Marilyn Coulter: You didn't know.  
27

28Lynette Daniels: ...mm-mm. [laughter]  
29

30Marilyn Coulter: [6:35] So, um, you came out – you were in school, right, prior?  
31

32Lynette Daniels: Bas-, yeah, about, I was out of school maybe 6 months before I came,  
33 yeah.  
34

35Marilyn Coulter: [6:43] Ah, so you grew up here basically then, yeah?  
36

37Lynette Daniels: Mm-hm. I did.  
38

39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
40

41Lynette Daniels: Yeah, I learned most of what I know about nursing from the nurses that  
42 had been here previous years.  
43

44Marilyn Coulter: [6:51] Was there a nurse that was a senioritied nurse here that you might  
45 have said that was – you might have learned the most from, or helped you  
46 out the most, or taught you the ropes?

1  
2Lynette Daniels: Dr. [Spag's 7:02] sister, Mary Fabiano.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: [7:09] And she was a nurse and she taught you the most? Oh. So, and, and  
5 – well, I know, like working on the line we always have, like, [sniff] new  
6 hire initiations that people do for you or it might have been, eh, our own  
7 little subculture, on how we treated that. [7:23] How would you say yours  
8 was? [inaudible 7:25]  
9  
10Lynette Daniels: It was more like the new nurse or the baby nurse gets all the, 'scuse me,  
11 shit jobs. [laughter] Like, if a difficult patient came in, the nur-, the nurses  
12 that had been here for years, they'd like, 'oh it's time take a break', and  
13 they'd leave you out there. [laughter]  
14  
15 [laughter]  
16  
17Lynette Daniels: So, that's the – it was kind of a – and we still do that. [laughter]  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: So that still carries...  
20  
21Lynette Daniels: Oh yeah, it's a tradition.  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: ...what would you say, okay [inaudible 7:54]. Now, you said you came  
24 here right out of nursing school. [7:57] What made you come in here  
25 versus going to a hospital?  
26  
27Lynette Daniels: Now, that's a good story. When I was in nursing school, I worked in  
28 Sparrow's lab, you know, to make money, and it was drawin' blood. And,  
29 um, when I was learning to draw blood, they'd give you the easier patients,  
30 which are, like, uh, the pre-op where you get your blood work done before  
31 your surgery. So this woman came in. I drew her blood, and she was just  
32 chitting, chit-chatting with me asking me, you know, are you in school,  
33 what are you doin'. So when I told her I was in nursing school, she told me  
34 to come to GM and apply for a job. She said you will really like that type  
35 of nursing. And she said and you're really good with a needle, you should  
36 just check out industrial nursing. And I hadn't even gotten into the  
37 program yet, the nursing program, I was just working on my pre-  
38 requisites, and that stayed in my mind the whole time I was in nursing  
39 school, was that I'm gonna go to GM. So when I got my license, came  
40 right downstairs, asked for an application. They gave it to me, I filled it  
41 out, somebody took it, and maybe two, three months later, they called.  
42  
43Marilyn Coulter: Mm. [9:04] So, and I guess, when you said industrial nursing, um, is that  
44 some different type of schooling that you had to do versus regular school,  
45 or is it just called that?  
46

1Lynette Daniels: No, it was, it was just different as, uh, cardiology nursing, pediatric  
2 nursing, industrial nursing.  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: Okay, I didn't know if there was specifics that you had to know for that.  
5 Um, [9:17] now, [inaudible 9:18] say, can you tell me what might have  
6 been one of the – without naming names naturally, of course, what might  
7 have been one of the funnier cases you've ever had in the ho-, in, come  
8 through here, to your station?  
9

10Lynette Daniels: [sigh] Let me think. I, I really can't, right off the...  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Oh, okay.  
13

14Lynette Daniels: ...'cause sometimes, I mean, 'cause sometimes the things that are funny  
15 aren't really funny. You know how you can find humor in somethin' that's  
16 not funny?  
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.  
19

20Lynette Daniels: So, [laughter] not really. [laughter]  
21

22Marilyn Coulter: Oh, I see. That's ok, [inaudible 9:44]. Yeah, I know I used to work at  
23 [inaudible 9:47], 'cause I used to work at an emergency room for a minute,  
24 and some things were funny. People bring in whole branches and stuff like  
25 that. But, um, let's see, the other question I was going to ask you was,  
26 mmm. So, what would you say, um, I know sometimes we've had certain  
27 things go on here. Now, you guys have to go out on emergency staff  
28 sometimes. [10:15] Has that, have you had to do that before?  
29

30Lynette Daniels: Mm-hm.  
31

32Marilyn Coulter: [10:19] So what would you say would have been the worst?  
33

34Lynette Daniels: Yeah, I don't know if it was the worst, but it was trying to make the sit-,  
35 the one where I felt we had to make a bad situation work out was, um, a  
36 time when a guy was above the ovens using a shop vac to blow off some  
37 type of piping. The vac started to fall 'cause he was sitting on the edge,  
38 and his impulse was to grab for it, and when – and he wasn't thinking, and  
39 when he went to grab for it, he fell down on top of the ovens. And we had  
40 to, um – it was during a down time, so of course, they called, and we had  
41 to get him down to medical, and we had – and that was still when we were  
42 improving our equipment and still were working with things that were,  
43 like, what do you do with it. And we had a backboard with no straps.  
44 'Cause, you know, we – he had neck involvement, and we didn't know  
45 how we were gonna get him down, and we had, um, these areas where

1 stairwells weren't that wide, and they were really steep. And we had to  
2 carry him on a backboard with no straps. So I duct-taped him. [laughter]  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Ah, once again the many miracles of duct tape! [laughter]  
5  
6Lynette Daniels: I duct-taped his head up, he was like a mummy. And we duct-taped him  
7 down and carried him down like that.  
8  
9Marilyn Coulter: Awesome. [11:38] Well, um, can you think of any other things you'd like  
10 to share with us? Thank you for your time. Awesome.  
11  
12Lynette Daniels: Thank you. Do I need...  
13  
14  
15/hj