

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

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2
3
4
5 Doug Rademacher: Hello. My name is Doug Rademacher. I'm here with the Fisher Body
6 historical team and we're interviewing Frank Dryer today. It is September
7 13th, 2005. Uh. I'd like the team to identify themselves.
8
9 Michael Fleming: Uh. Michael Fleming.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
12
13 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.
14
15 Kathryn Berry: Kathy Berry.
16
17 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
18
19 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
20
21 Doug Rademacher: Thank you very much. Again, we have with us Frank Dryer. [0:30] Frank,
22 please give me your full name.
23
24 Frank Dryer: Frank [J. 0:33] Dryer.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: [0:36] And can I have your address sir?
27
28 Frank Dryer: 211 South Waverly, apartment B8.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: [0:44] Which gender are you?
31
32 Frank Dryer: It's undecided. Male.
33
34 Doug Rademacher: We talked about that earlier didn't we?
35
36 Frank Dryer: [laughter]
37
38 Doug Rademacher: [0:51] Uh, and your marital status?
39
40 Frank Dryer: Single.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: [0:55] Do you have any children?
43
44 Frank Dryer: One.
45
46 Doug Rademacher: [1:00] Um, and your national origin?

1
2 Frank Dryer: American.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: Good for you. Um. [1:08] Your years of education?
5
6 Frank Dryer: Nine.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: [1:12] And do you have any military service?
9
10 Frank Dryer: Navy. [tsk] Medical discharge.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [1:23] Well, Frank, uh, I'd like to find out a little bit about your life
13 and times at the Fisher Body plant, so would ya please tell me, uh, what
14 was your hire-in date?
15
16 Frank Dryer: 8/7 of '69.
17
18 Doug Rademacher: [1:40] And what department did you hire into?
19
20 Frank Dryer: The old cushion room.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: [tsk] [1:47] Which shift did you hire on?
23
24 Frank Dryer: Days.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: [1:52] That's, uh, pretty fortunate, wasn't it, to hire in to the day shift?
27
28 Frank Dryer: At that time, I think most everyone come to days and got bumped within
29 about the first 45 days.
30
31 Doug Rademacher: So, tell me about – obviously there's a window of when you're
32 represented by the union. [2:12] Can you tell me about those first, uh, 90
33 days?
34
35 Frank Dryer: Well, the first day I walked in the plant, I was met by union and
36 management [tsk] and the first thing I was given when I walked in, from
37 management, was a badge and from the union was the union contract,
38 local and national, and told to read it because they make mistakes and that
39 come right from my – at that time, my union official.
40
41 Michael Fleming: [2:44] What were they talking about when they said they Frank?
42
43 Frank Dryer: The union. The rep-, your representative. He said – and the books are
44 about as thick as the are now and he says we cannot memorize all this and
45 if you read it, you're gonna remember some of what I don't and they got
46 away from doin' that.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: [3:04] So how thick was those books you're speaking of?
3
4 Frank Dryer: Just about like those right back there.
5
6 Doug Rademacher: Yeah? [3:10] What is that?
7
8 Frank Dryer: About inch and a half.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: About a inch and half thick.
11
12 Frank Dryer: Probably $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch on the local.
13
14 Doug Rademacher: [3:15] So quite a bit of reading you'd say.
15
16 Frank Dryer: Oh yeah!
17
18 Doug Rademacher: [3:19] Were you there to read books or what'd ya come in to do?
19
20 Frank Dryer: No, I took the book home and read it. [laughter]
21
22 Doug Rademacher: Mm-hm.
23
24 Frank Dryer: 'Cause when I first hired in, comin' off a farm, I didn't know that much
25 about production work per se on a line like that.
26
27 Doug Rademacher: Okay, so...
28
29 Frank Dryer: And it was so much, so much different than farmin' that I was only gonna
30 stay there the winter.
31
32 Female: Hm.
33
34 Doug Rademacher: [3:42] What was – why was that? [Inaudible 3:44].
35
36 Frank Dryer: I was goin' back to work! I was goin' back on the farm.
37
38 Doug Rademacher: [3:46] So what brought ya to town? What brought ya to Lansing Fisher
39 Body?
40
41 Frank Dryer: Money. [laughter]
42
43 Doug Rademacher: Okay.
44
45 Frank Dryer: The farms didn't pay that much.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [3:54] So what would lead ya there for a season? Wh-, what'd ya mean
2 you were gonna just [inaudible 3:57]?
3
4 Frank Dryer: I was goin' back to farmin' 'cause most a your farmin' is done from April
5 to October. Most a your winters are – unless you're on a dairy farm, is
6 basically feedin' cattle 'cause ya can't do much else. But on a dairy farm,
7 it's a 7-days-a-week operation.
8
9 Doug Rademacher: So ya thought you'd come in and get some money before...
10
11 Frank Dryer: Get some money and go back to farmin'.
12
13 Doug Rademacher: [4:23] Well, tell me about that.
14
15 Frank Dryer: Thirty years later, I retired! [laughter]
16
17 Female: [laughter]
18
19 Frank Dryer: Still ain't got back to the farm.
20
21 Doug Rademacher: Never got back to the farm, eh? So, again, you talked about your, uh, first
22 day in, now you've met your union rep [coughing] and your, and your
23 boss. [4:38] Do you remember your first union rep or your boss?
24
25 Frank Dryer: Yes!
26
27 Doug Rademacher: [4:41] Who was that? Which one was which?
28
29 Frank Dryer: [Kenny Fletcher 4:43] was the union rep and [Johnny Walker 4:47] was
30 my sup-, first supervisor.
31
32 Doug Rademacher: [4:53] Were these guys young or old? What...?
33
34 Frank Dryer: Old.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: [4:58] Yeah, so you felt like you were walkin' into a, a place of business?
37
38 Frank Dryer: On days and then I went onto nights and – [shew] tryin' to think. Dan that
39 used to work down at the end of the line. Supervisor on C Line.
40
41 Doug Rademacher: [5:15] It'd be Richards, right?
42
43 Frank Dryer: Dan Richards was on nights. When I went to nights, I had Dan Richards
44 for a supervisor and [Dorothy Stevens 5:22] for committee.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Hm. So, uh, again, tell me about, uh – now you’ve met your union rep
2 and your supervisor. [5:30] Tell me about where they took ya that first day
3 on the job. Where’d ya, where’d ya go?
4

5 Frank Dryer: Uh...
6

7 Doug Rademacher: What, what...
8

9 Frank Dryer: ...down to what they called the press. Press the back seats down so you
10 could pull up the cover and how to bring it down all the way around.
11

12 Doug Rademacher: [5:45] So that department was called...?
13

14 Frank Dryer: P-, part a the cushion room.
15

16 Doug Rademacher: Cushion room.
17

18 Frank Dryer: I don’t know if [it had any 5:49] department number or what but I think it
19 was line – I think it was 184.
20

21 Doug Rademacher: [5:56] How long did ya do that job?
22

23 Frank Dryer: Oh, do, do, do. About 45 days. And then I got bumped to nights and I
24 done, uh – I turned the corners on, uh, rear seats. On the seats a the –
25 bottoms of your cushions.
26

27 Doug Rademacher: [6:19] Now ya talk about turning corners and – is this a type of, uh,
28 sewing or what exactly was goin’ on in this cushion room?
29

30 Frank Dryer: They built the cushions.
31

32 Doug Rademacher: Okay.
33

34 Frank Dryer: From the metal right on up and I was about in the middle where you
35 turned the corners of the cover then hog-ringed it down.
36

37 Doug Rademacher: [6:35] Hog ring; now what’s that?
38

39 Frank Dryer: It’s painful if ya get it in your finger.
40

41 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [laughter]
42

43 Frank Dryer: [laughter] It’s, it’s what holds your seats together.
44

45 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [6:44] Was it, uh – nothin’ to do with, uh – what exactly did it do?
46 What...?

1
2 Frank Dryer: It was hangin' up here, it'd come down. It was operated by air and ya
3 pulled it to ya, then it clamped the hog rings down.
4
5 Doug Rademacher: [6:57] So was that kind a like a nail then or a staple? What exactly...
6
7 Frank Dryer: More like a staple.
8
9 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. [7:03] So you didn't ever have to do any hog ringing?
10
11 Frank Dryer: Oh yeah!
12
13 Doug Rademacher: Did ya?
14
15 Frank Dryer: It was part a the job!
16
17 Doug Rademacher: [7:08] Was that a dangerous job?
18
19 Frank Dryer: It could be if ya didn't pay attention to what you were doin'. For a shorter
20 person, it would be quite dangerous because they had to stretch so far out
21 but for someone a my height, uh, you were already up there! You just had
22 to reach over, put about 25 hog rings in.
23
24 Doug Rademacher: [7:27] So how tall are ya?
25
26 Frank Dryer: 6'2".
27
28 Doug Rademacher: [7:30] So, uh, the line was made pretty good for you bein' a tall guy?
29
30 Frank Dryer: Yeah. And, uh – 'cause the line was – I'm gonna have to say 3.5' off the
31 floor. Up about this height. It was about this height where you were.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [7:45] So was that a good job in that department?
34
35 Frank Dryer: Yes. [coughing] Once ya got used to it. Once ya got used to it, it was a
36 very good job.
37
38 Doug Rademacher: [7:53] So ya said 45 days there and then ya went to the other shift and you
39 got the same, uh, same department?
40
41 Frank Dryer: Same department. Just about the same job.
42
43 Doug Rademacher: [8:03] So, okay, tell me about, uh, your 90th day on the job. What did that
44 mean to ya?
45
46 Frank Dryer: I [inaudible 8:09]. [laughter]

1
2Female: [laughter]
3
4Doug Rademacher: [8:13] What's that? [laughter]
5
6Frank Dryer: I went in and I went home. They had extra help.
7
8Doug Rademacher: Okay.
9
10Frank Dryer: Back then, you asked your supervisor to go home and he'd let ya go if he
11 had the help where today, you ask the supervisor and he'd go to general
12 supervisor, and they go up somewhere [inaudible 8:29]. Then if you're
13 needed in some other department, they go there before you get to go home
14 where it didn't used to be.
15
16Doug Rademacher: [8:37] So there was a lot more extra workers [inaudible 8:39]?
17
18Frank Dryer: More extra people, uh, because a the way the jobs had to be done.
19 Sometimes ya had extra help, sometimes ya didn't. Just like you got now.
20
21Doug Rademacher: [8:53] But that 90th day, what did that mean though?
22
23Frank Dryer: Not very much other than just another day.
24
25Doug Rademacher: [9:02] Did ya feel ya had to – on the 90th day, you're – you had, uh, union
26 representation. You didn't feel like, uh, at that point you were, you were
27 protected or anything like that?
28
29Frank Dryer: Not really.
30
31Doug Rademacher: [No 9:13]? [9:14] You felt secure in your job?
32
33Frank Dryer: I felt, I felt basically like I had protection when I first hired in!
34
35Doug Rademacher: [9:21] So they made ya feel that...
36
37Frank Dryer: They made it – they made you feel like you were somebody when you
38 walked in the door where, uh, I've heard from some a the people that have
39 just hired in, they don't get that same feeling.
40
41Doug Rademacher: [9:35] So'd people help ya?
42
43Frank Dryer: Oh, yeah. Down there if, uh, there's 5 of us workin', one guy went out
44 and got drunk, the other 4 of us cover his job.
45
46Doug Rademacher: That was [inaudible 9:46].

1
2 Frank Dryer: And y-, everybody helped everybody and you don't see that no more.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [9:51] Um, how much did ya make when you hired in?
5
6 Frank Dryer: [365 9:53]. [sniffing]
7
8 Doug Rademacher: [9:57] What year was that again? [throat clearing]
9
10 Frank Dryer: 1969.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: [365 10:00] in 1969.
13
14 Michael Fleming: [10:01] Do you know what your ending wage was when you retired?
15
16 Frank Dryer: An hour? [shew] Twenty-three sumpin'. Bein' on sanitation.
17
18 Michael Fleming: [10:14] So, as, as a general observation from the time ya started in '69 to
19 when you retired, do you feel as though General Motors afforded you a, a,
20 a l-, a decent living? Was it a nice place to be? What, what do ya feel
21 about that?
22
23 Frank Dryer: Everything I have today is a direct result of the UAW and General Motors
24 whether it's my pension or my benefits. They're all the direct result of
25 UAW and General Motors.
26
27 Doug Rademacher: [10:53] So the corporation offered a job and the UAW bargained you
28 some...
29
30 Frank Dryer: Good benefits.
31
32 Doug Rademacher: ...some benefits you recognize today?
33
34 Frank Dryer: Some, some of'm I had to stand out on the street for a while but we got
35 what we wanted and I wasn't gonna stay in there any longer than I had to.
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [11:08] Ya say ya stood on the street. Did ya – were those layoffs or were
38 those strikes?
39
40 Frank Dryer: Nineteen-seventy. One a longest strikes in GM history.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: [11:16] Tell us a little bit about that.
43
44 Frank Dryer: There was a long time without a paycheck. I can tell ya that. That \$25 a,
45 a single person got did not buy groceries [inaudible 11:27] strike
46 [inaudible 11:27]. I had my – I had another job that I worked at, so I

1 didn't have it all that bad. [Inaudible 11:38] had to do [four hours 11:39]
2 picket a week but when they do it that late in the year and it goes that long,
3 them last couple a weeks was cold weeks. [laughter]
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [11:49] Do you remember what they were striking for?
6

7Frank Dryer: Thirty and out. [laughter]
8

9Marilyn Coulter: Thirty. [11:54] And is that why you did your 30 and out?
10

11Frank Dryer: I spent exactly 30 years, 1 week, and 4 hours in that plant on active
12 payroll.
13

14Doug Rademacher: [12:07] So it was well worth standin' outside in that cold weather
15 [inaudible 12:09].
16

17Frank Dryer: Yes. Yes. And for anyone that's got 30 years and don't take advantage of
18 it, it's nuts.
19

20Doug Rademacher: [12:18] Why do ya say that?
21

22Frank Dryer: You're not makin' no money. If you are not getting overtime, after you
23 get 30 years, you are not makin' no money. You're workin' for less than
24 what they're paying McDonald's people.
25

26Doug Rademacher: [12:33] What about your physical condition after 30 years of buildin'
27 automobiles? [Inaudible 12:38].
28

29Frank Dryer: It's a drastic change when you retire because here you are on a structured
30 life, on 5, 6, 7 days a week dependin' on what job you're doin' and all of a
31 sudden, you go to doin' nothin' but you're still gettin' up if you're on
32 days, which I [wasn't 12:54] at the time. I, uh, I had trouble gettin' used
33 to gettin' up rather than stayin' up to 4:00 in the morning.
34

35Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
36

37Frank Dryer: But it's a drastic change, uh, to your system whether you're switchin'
38 shifts or you're just settin' there doin' nothin'.
39

40Marilyn Coulter: [13:13] What were the people like? The people that you worked with.
41 What were they like when you first hired in back in 1941?
42

43Doug Rademacher: Sixty...
44

45Marilyn Coulter: Sixty-nine. Excuse me.
46

1 Frank Dryer: I was gonna say '41, hell, I [inaudible 13:22] born [in '41 13:23].
2
3 Marilyn Coulter: And [you was 13:22] born then. I'm sorry!
4
5 Frank Dryer: [laughter]
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: It's '69.
8
9 Frank Dryer: [laughter]
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [13:25] What was it like, Frank, when you, when you – what were the
12 people like on day shift when you hired in?
13
14 Frank Dryer: Very helpful and very respectful.
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: Really? [12:32] How did they differ from the second shift?
17
18 Frank Dryer: They're both pretty much the same except I noticed on the second shift
19 when I got bumped to nights, you found more alcohol and drugs on nights.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
22
23 Frank Dryer: Even back then.
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: Um. [13:47] So, um, what would you say, um, was one a your most
26 memorable [laughter] experiences workin' in the plant?
27
28 Frank Dryer: Well, doin' my 30 years.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [14:00] So the whole time?
31
32 Frank Dryer: The whole time.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: Hm. [14:05] Being here for 30 years, what would you say was, uh – we
35 were always known as the capital a quality. What would you say
36 attributed that?
37
38 Frank Dryer: We had an excellent workforce and I'm gonna have to say from day one
39 when I hired in until I retired. [papers rustling] The people – I'm not
40 gonna say all of'm. I will say 95 percent of the people took pride in what
41 they were doin' whether it was on the job, quality control, sanitation, they
42 took pride in it but there's gonna be a few that don't. I don't care what job
43 they're doin'. Including [laughter] management.
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
46

1 Doug Rademacher: You know, before ya get – uh, I want a go back to the strike real quick.
2 [14:44] Do you remember, uh, the day ya walked out a the plant?
3
4 Frank Dryer: Yes.
5
6 Doug Rademacher: [14:49] Can ya tell me about that?
7
8 Frank Dryer: 12:01 September 14th, 1970.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: [14:56] 12:01 in the afternoon or was it night shift?
11
12 Frank Dryer: Morning. In the morning. I was workin' up in building, uh, da, da, da, I
13 think it was 9 and right there on the corner from 9 and, uh, I think it was
14 13. They said it was time to go.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: [15:17] Who was they?
17
18 Frank Dryer: Our union reps. And I wasn't the first one out but I wasn't the last one
19 either 'cause I wanted to go party. Well, I didn't get to party.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
22
23 Doug Rademacher: [15:32] What was the atmosphere exiting the plant and what was the
24 atmosphere outside the plant when you...?
25
26 Frank Dryer: It varied. It varied. Some, some were glad to go and others were
27 complaining well, I don't know how I'm gonna make it and the ones
28 [coughing] that complained about they didn't know how they were gonna
29 make it should've already been retired.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: You said you didn't get to party. [15:51] What did ya do instead a
32 partying?
33
34 Frank Dryer: We had to come over here and sign up for strike.
35
36 Michael Fleming: Over here.
37
38 Frank Dryer: Hm.
39
40 Michael Fleming: O-, over here.
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 16:00].
43
44 Michael Fleming: [16:00] Where's...
45

1 Frank Dryer: Union hall. And I happened to be one a the first ones that, uh, had to do
2 picket duty. By time I got done, the bars were closed. [laughter]
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] [throat clearing]
5
6 Michael Fleming: [16:09] So you actually went to the picket line that night?
7
8 Frank Dryer: That night. Any strike, even if they had one today, somebody would
9 already be picked to strike. Back there, they, they picked'm when they
10 come in the building...
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
13
14 Frank Dryer: ...and, uh, [coughing] I had a lot a fun that [inaudible 16:31] – I think it
15 was 67 days even though it was kind a stressful fig-, tryin' to figure out
16 how you're gonna pay your bills, how you're gonna get your food and
17 your clothes, get gas for your car but, uh, I, I got through it. And the
18 worse part was I was way behind in '69 when I hired in, I had just gotten
19 everything caught up in '70, then they go out on strike for 3 months.
20 [laughter] I'm way behind again and it's, uh, it's a long, long way to go
21 either way ya wanna go but it was somethin' at that time we felt we had to
22 do.
23
24 Doug Rademacher: [tsk] So, um...
25
26 Doreen Howard: [17:15] Was that the only strike that you were ever involved?
27
28 Doug Rademacher: Oh, they had a couple a 3-day strikes but I don't count those because ya
29 never got nothin' out of'm. You was never out long enough to get any pay
30 although ya did lose 3 days' pay. [papers rustling]
31
32 Doug Rademacher: [17:32] Did ya have any of your family members work in the plant?
33
34 Frank Dryer: Nope. No. Other plants but not this one.
35
36 Michael Fleming: [17:42] Can you tell me about the cushion room and the, the type of
37 coworkers ya had? Predominantly the cushion room was made up of what
38 type of individuals?
39
40 Frank Dryer: All types.
41
42 Michael Fleming: All types. It was...
43
44 Frank Dryer: [All 17:56].
45
46 Michael Fleming: [17:57] So there was a, a great mix of men and women in there?

1
2 Frank Dryer: Men, women, white, black, Spanish. Little bit of everything.
3
4 Michael Fleming: Okay. [18:06] So y-, y-, as, as a cushion room person, did, did they seem
5 to stick together more than any other group within the plant?
6
7 Frank Dryer: Yes! Yes.
8
9 Michael Fleming: Talk about that.
10
11 Frank Dryer: They stuck together to where they went out on strike. I think that was just
12 before I hired in. I think that was in '67 over a pair a canvas gloves and
13 when the cushion room goes out, that shuts down Fisher Body and it shuts
14 down the main plant.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: [18:39] Do ya know the story [coughing] about the gloves? W-, what do
17 you mean they went out...
18
19 Frank Dryer: That's about all I know. They didn't talk about it too much because there
20 was some, uh, high-up union official involved and some people that went
21 from the union to management and got some [high authorizations 18:53]
22 in a hurry.
23
24 Female: [throat clearing]
25
26 Michael Fleming: That's, that's the one they talk about as, uh, the wildcat. Is that...?
27
28 Frank Dryer: That's the wildcat. [laughter]
29
30 Michael Fleming: That was an unsanctioned strike...
31
32 Frank Dryer: Unsanctioned.
33
34 Michael Fleming: ...by the union, so, uh. [19:06] You remember who walked the people
35 out?
36
37 Frank Dryer: No, I don't 'cause I wasn't there.
38
39 Michael Fleming: Okay. Well, it was told to be [Rocky Wright 19:14]. Uh, just curious if
40 you had a...
41
42 Frank Dryer: I...
43
44 Michael Fleming: ...story about Rocky Wright.
45

1 Frank Dryer: I had heard about Rocky Wright bein' out there. I had heard he laid down
2 in front of a semi and stopped'm from goin' in gate [4X 19:23] over here
3 and shortly after the strike was over, he went to management.
4

5 Michael Fleming: So you did work with Rocky Wright?
6

7 Frank Dryer: Yes, he was my supervisor at one time.
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: And, um...
10

11 Frank Dryer: Let's see. That was back in, do, do, do, I'm gonna say the early '80s.
12 Well, no. It would'a been after that because – when did we go
13 downstairs? When'd A Line go downstairs? '84? When the Grand Am
14 come in?
15

16 Michael Fleming: [tsk] [Inaudible 19:53] car came in in, I think, '84, yeah.
17

18 Frank Dryer: I would put regulators in right there by, uh, [H1 19:57] transfer and he was
19 my supervisor. General – he was a general supervisor.
20

21 Michael Fleming: [20:03] G-, we're goin' back to the cushion room when ya first started and
22 your times there and what type of protective equipment did ya have in
23 there? Did ya have protective equipment and talk about your breaks and
24 your times of breaks and did ya get'm on time and those type of things.
25

26 Frank Dryer: We had – at that time, we had relief people and 99 percent a the time, they
27 were on time. [Inaudible 20:26] the exact time, which I can't remember
28 what the times were then. Uh. You could not smoke in there. Ya had
29 designated smokin' areas even back in '69. Uh. That takin' me back a
30 long way [inaudible 20:41].
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Doin' great.
33

34 Michael Fleming: You're doin' an excellent job Frank.
35

36 Doreen Howard: [20:48] Explain what relief is.
37

38 Frank Dryer: We had three reliefs. Two in the morning, one in the afternoon, but I'm
39 not sure how long they was.
40

41 Doreen Howard: Hm. [20:57] [They 20:57] didn't take relief or the [inaudible 21:00]...
42

43 Frank Dryer: They had a relief person relieve – I think they had – each had six or seven
44 people and they couldn't double up like they did l-, later on in later years
45 because ya couldn't jump the, uh, the conveyer 'cause it was too high up
46 off the ground.

1
2 Michael Fleming: [21:19] How 'bout your protective equipment that you used [inaudible
3 21:22].
4
5 Frank Dryer: Gloves. That was all the protective equipment I had was gloves.
6
7 Michael Fleming: [21:28] No, no [inaudible 21:29]?
8
9 Frank Dryer: Not at that time.
10
11 Michael Fleming: [21:30] So, so you weren't allowed to have any safety glasses?
12
13 Frank Dryer: Oh, you probably could've if you'd a asked for'm.
14
15 Michael Fleming: Frank, you said all ya had was gloves as your protective equipment.
16 [21:50] How long did it take ya to get any other type of equipment and
17 what was the reasons why ya had to have any more than that?
18
19 Frank Dryer: The only thing I had in all the time I worked in the cushion room for
20 protection equipment was gloves. Those that had glasses had to get safety
21 glasses. I do not recall having to have glasses if you didn't wear'm but
22 I'm not 100 percent sure. Now, whether any a the other jobs had
23 protective equipment, I'm not sure but I know on the two jobs that I had,
24 we didn't.
25
26 Michael Fleming: Well, we're in this cushion room again and you've got – uh, you're doin',
27 uh, you said a multitude of different jobs through that department. [22:38]
28 Tell us about – uh, what'd ya do on your lunch break?
29
30 Frank Dryer: Went to Joe's Bar.
31
32 Michael Fleming: [22:47] Whose bar?
33
34 Frank Dryer: Joe's Bar.
35
36 Michael Fleming: Joe's Bar.
37
38 Frank Dryer: You don't remember the old Quonset hut on [inaudible 22:52] Street?
39
40 Michael Fleming: No, I don't.
41
42 Frank Dryer: I'm sorry! [It's a shop stop 22:55] now. [laughter]
43
44 Michael Fleming: Okay, so it was called Joe's Quonset Hut?
45
46 Frank Dryer: Joe – Joe's Bar. It was Joe's Bar.

1
2Michael Fleming: Uh-huh.
3
4Frank Dryer: I went and had two beers before work, then I went and had two beers at
5 lunch!
6
7Michael Fleming: Okay.
8
9Frank Dryer: And I went and got drunk after work. [laughter] Sounds normal to me!
10 [laughter]
11
12Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
13
14Michael Fleming: [23:15] Sounds like that's what ya chose to do and you could afford to,
15 huh?
16
17Frank Dryer: Well, back then, you're only payin' – I think it was 35 cents a beer.
18 [laughter]
19
20Michael Fleming: [23:28] So, um, tell us about – were there any, uh, times in the cushion
21 room where ya, ya did other things than work? Did ya have any fun up in
22 there?
23
24Frank Dryer: Well, sure! Along the outside wall of Michigan Avenue, we used to have
25 races, foot races, durin' our breaks. Water fights. Glove fights. [laughter]
26 You know, all the normal things ya do in a factory...
27
28Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
29
30Frank Dryer: ...and people could say they ain't normal but I seen it – all the way up into
31 the mid '90's, they were still doin' the same thing.
32
33Doug Rademacher: [24:04] What kind a – you say you had a foot race. What do ya mean?
34
35Frank Dryer: Racin' out there in the main aisle – one a the main aisles.
36
37Doug Rademacher: [24:10] Just a sprint?
38
39Frank Dryer: [Two, three, four sprint 24:11].
40
41Doug Rademacher: Like on a football field?
42
43Frank Dryer: Yeah. Yeah.
44
45Doug Rademacher: Were you any good at it?
46

1 Frank Dryer: Fair. Won some, lost some. Depends on who I was runnin' against.
2

3 Doug Rademacher: [24:19] Did ya ever trip anybody so you could win?
4

5 Frank Dryer: No! [laughter]
6

7 Female: [laughter]
8

9 Frank Dryer: It was too, uh, too dangerous in there because of the, uh, wire baskets,
10 your seat frames, uh, the wires that go on the seats, so it – basically
11 everyone, uh, was as safe as they could be when they's out runnin' in the
12 aisle and ya had to watch out for [trucks 24:40].
13

14 Kathryn Berry: Was there a prize for winning?
15

16 Frank Dryer: Nope! Just braggin' rights. [laughter]
17

18 Doug Rademacher: [24:48] Did ya ever have, um, anyone play a joke on ya while you were
19 workin'?
20

21 Frank Dryer: No. Not in the cushion room. I got locked in the trunk up in trim once!
22

23 Female: [laughter]
24

25 Frank Dryer: And then some, uh – well, I ain't gonna call him [inaudible 25:07] what I
26 called him in person – uh, decided to climb inside the [inaudible 25:13]
27 bucket a water on me!
28

29 Female: [laughter]
30

31 Doug Rademacher: That's a lot a water.
32

33 Frank Dryer: Oh, yeah! Basically when it's hot outdoors, the water's cold.
34

35 Female: [laughter]
36

37 Doug Rademacher: [Sounds like it 25:24] made a big mess!
38

39 Frank Dryer: Yeah. In the trunk a the car it did. They pulled it out [inaudible 25:31] to
40 suck it out! [laughter]
41

42 Doug Rademacher: [25:35] So there wasn't a lot a horseplay in the cushion room. Is that what
43 you're sayin'?
44

45 Frank Dryer: I don't think it was – uh, a fair amount but it was all done in fun. Dumpin'
46 the water on supervisors, which there ain't no way you could do today.

1 Not and keep your job! Some a the supervisors back then raised as much
2 hell as the employees. [papers rustling]
3

4Doug Rademacher: Now thinkin' back again, you – we talked about breaks. [26:05] What did
5 a break include? What was involved in a break, uh, as far as – [inaudible]
6 26:10] your lunch, you got breaks throughout the shift. What...?
7

8Frank Dryer: You'd have two breaks in the morning...
9

10Doug Rademacher: [26:15] And what were those consisted of [inaudible] 26:16].
11

12Frank Dryer: I'm not sure how long they were. That, that's when you went to the
13 smoke – smokin' area and had a smoke, bathroom, telephone. Same as
14 they're supposed to be used for now...
15

16Doug Rademacher: Okay.
17

18Frank Dryer: ...but they're not always.
19

20Doug Rademacher: So...
21

22Frank Dryer: Then at lunch, we usually went outdoors. I just hired in after they went
23 from a 42-minute lunch to a 30.
24

25Doug Rademacher: Um. [26:44] They had – lotta times, uh, we heard that they either gamble
26 or [throat clearing] hold check pools or – did ya get [inaudible] 26:52]?
27

28Frank Dryer: Oh, yes! Yes! Always had check pools, uh, you'd always see people in
29 there shootin' dice, playin' cards.
30

31Doug Rademacher: [27:00] You weren't a gambler though?
32

33Frank Dryer: No. [Not] [inaudible] 27:02].
34

35Marilyn Coulter: [27:02] Can you explain what a check pool is please?
36

37Frank Dryer: Oh, man. It's where you get [throat clearing] a group a people and they
38 use the numbers on their check like a deck a cards. Pairs and, uh, straight,
39 three of a kind, four of a kind, five of a kind if you got'm but I never
40 happened to win once.
41

42Female: [laughter]
43

44Frank Dryer: When I first hired in, though, I do not recall having what they call now
45 football pools or basketball pools. I don't recall having any a that until
46 after, after I got up into trim.

1
2 Michael Fleming: [papers rustling] So [throat clearing] in – you’re on second shift now.
3 [27:52] How long did ya stay on second shift? Where did ya go from
4 there? What did it take for you to get what would be a preferred job?
5
6 Frank Dryer: Every job I had was a preferred job.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
9
10 Frank Dryer: Any person can take any job and make it a preferred job if they use the
11 right mindset. This is a job I have, it’s given to me, they’re gonna pay me
12 to do it. I’m gonna do it to the best a my ability instead of goin’ in there
13 and sayin’ well, I don’t want this job; it looks too hard. Well, how do ya
14 know it’s hard – too hard if ya haven’t tried it? Uh, seat covers. [Inaudible
15 28:37] seat covers woulda been a hard job. Uh, door wires would be a
16 hard job. Uh. [papers rustling] Let’s see. What’d I do up in [3X 28:48]? I
17 done everything up there. Uh, door rubbers; I used a do those. W-, if
18 you’d a went in there well, I can’t do it, well, you ain’t gonna do it! Trunk
19 rubbers is the same way. I went on, went on to sanitation and, uh,
20 breakin’ up cardboard!
21
22 Michael Fleming: [29:10] When did you go on sanitation?
23
24 Frank Dryer: [phew] ’94. I believe it was ’94.
25
26 Michael Fleming: [29:21] So you stayed in production until 1994?
27
28 Frank Dryer: Twenty-five years. Twenty-five years on the line. Because I was one of
29 those – and I know there’s a lot of you right in here – afraid of change.
30 Everybody is. It’s just our mindset. We’re afraid of change. We get
31 comfortable into a position. We don’t want a change. Well, my legs at
32 that time were gettin’ to where I couldn’t chase the line no more because
33 of my knees and I had to get off, uh, off a the line. I took sanitation [on
34 the bales 29:58]. Well, at that time, it was breakin’ cardboard down there
35 in, uh – what is that down by the tracks? Where the balers were the first
36 time. Is that 10?
37
38 Male: It’s 10.
39
40 Frank Dryer: Ten. Down in the area a t-, er, uh, Building 10 down by the track and then
41 they put the two balers in and once they done that, that was an awesome
42 [job 30:17]. Other people come in there and do it and complain and he’s
43 heard it from some of’m that took my job when I wasn’t there. [laughter]
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
46

1 Frank Dryer: But it's, it's all in the mindset you go on [to adapt 30:30]. I went in there
2 with a mindset I'm gonna do this job and do it right because I don't want a
3 go back to the line. I knew if I couldn't cut that, I was goin' back to the
4 line period. They already told me that. And I done that and then they put
5 me up in, uh, in the middle of 15 where I run the balers up der until I
6 retired.
7

8 Michael Fleming: [30:56] Talk about this subculture and the people that you came in contact
9 with running the baler and in the trim area. You know, some a the things
10 that you all did, be it, uh, the holidays when they came by. Did ya have
11 parties? Did you have get-togethers? What did you all do?
12

13 Frank Dryer: We had dinners. Even back when I hired into cushion room, every
14 holiday there was a dinner, uh, [inaudible 31:24] all the way up through.
15 They had dinners at least 3, 4 times a year depending on what the holiday
16 was, what kind a dinner you'd get and, uh, I didn't get into too many a the
17 dinners because of the jobs that I had. I couldn't just take off and walk
18 over and get food and most a the utility people didn't like my job, so they
19 wouldn't cover me so I could go, so I just said the hell with it, I'll go to
20 the bar.
21

22 Doug Rademacher: Tell me about, um, the difference – you said you hired in in '69. [32:06]
23 Tell me about the difference of workin' through the '70s and the '80s and
24 the '90s. You've changed different models of vehicles. Was there always
25 a lot a workers or did you come to a time when there started to be, um, not
26 enough workers or did ya have to do more than your share a work
27 sometimes?
28

29 Frank Dryer: It, it stayed from '69, I'm gonna say, up to about '73. That was when they
30 had that oil embargo and most of us got laid off and, uh, and when we
31 come back, I come back in January – February of '84 – or '74 and then
32 they started, uh, gradually cuttin' work, addin' one job onto 4 or 5, and
33 then as you went up into the late '80s, early '90s, they would cut again and
34 where they're takin' one job for 4 or 5, then they were takin' one for 2 or
35 3. They just – ever since, uh, the oil embargo in '73, they just started
36 cuttin' back help on the floor but never cuttin' back help out of the offices.
37

38 Doug Rademacher: [33:18] Did ya build less cars?
39

40 Frank Dryer: No, built more cars. More cars, less people. The same as it is today.
41 They're buildin' more cars with less people and I don't know if it's good
42 or bad but the quality seems to stay up there pretty much on an even keel
43 of where it was in '69 when I hired in until I retired in, uh, '99. We was
44 always up in the top, I'm gonna have to say, the top 5 through that 30-year
45 period in quality. Sometimes I wonder how with all the people they –

1 some a the jobs they had up there but, uh, we always seemed to stay up
2 there.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [34:06] Where was your favorite department that you worked in?
5
6 Frank Dryer: Trim. [C 34:12] trim.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: [34:14] What made that a great place for ya?
9
10 Frank Dryer: The people! I take [end 34:20] trim on the C Line when I hired in – A
11 Line, whatever ya want a call it, uh, [were 34:25] more respectful of the
12 people they were workin’ with than what they was anywhere else. And
13 the worst one for respect was sanitation.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [34:36] And why was that?
16
17 Frank Dryer: I’m gonna screw you before you screw me.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
20
21 Frank Dryer: And, and I told some a my coworkers that that sounds like management to
22 me.
23
24 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
25
26 Frank Dryer: They didn’t like it but I didn’t care!
27
28 Doug Rademacher: Um. [34:58] In trim, weren’t the jobs closer together? Is that what ya
29 mean as far as the people?
30
31 Frank Dryer: Yeah, the jobs were closer together. Uh, ya had someone to, to where you
32 could talk to and they could actually hear what you were sayin’. The – in
33 the old cushion room, they were – about the only one you had to talk to
34 was the one that worked right across the line from you and if you didn’t
35 like that guy, you wasn’t talkin’ to nobody...
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
38
39 Frank Dryer: ...because they were quite spread out and then we, uh, got up into trim,
40 they were closer together, you could hear people talk, and ya
41 understand’m. I never got to body shop and paint, so I don’t know what
42 them jobs were like.
43
44 Doug Rademacher: [35:38] Have ya got a particular coworker that impacted your life?
45
46 Frank Dryer: No. I don’t think so.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: [throat clearing]
3
4Doug Rademacher: Frank, um, we're goin' back to that strike time briefly and you had said
5 that, uh, during that time, uh, some people had it tougher than others.
6 [36:00] You were single and, uh, did ya say that you had a job on the side?
7
8Frank Dryer: I had a side job.
9
10Doug Rademacher: [36:08] What was that?
11
12Frank Dryer: I was a night cook in a bar.
13
14Doug Rademacher: [36:14] So ya worked two jobs?
15
16Frank Dryer: Two jobs.
17
18Doug Rademacher: [36:17] So ya, ya came from the farm to work in the factory and ya, and
19 ya...
20
21Frank Dryer: I took the second job to help catch up the bills and then when we went on
22 strike, I used my second job to help kind a maintain I guess you'd call it.
23
24Doug Rademacher: Um, you had a lot a discussion about spendin' [laughter] your lunch at the
25 bar.
26
27Frank Dryer: Yep.
28
29Doug Rademacher: Uh, ya had a couple beers before work, a couple beers at...
30
31Frank Dryer: At lunch.
32
33Doug Rademacher: ...at lunch and did the same thing after. [36:54] Did ya do that for every
34 day [laughter] or h-, how did that go?
35
36Frank Dryer: Every day!
37
38Doug Rademacher: Every day.
39
40Frank Dryer: That was a basic thing that I done every day.
41
42Marilyn Coulter: [37:02] Do you still drink now?
43
44Frank Dryer: No.
45
46Marilyn Coulter: [37:05] When did ya stop?

1
2 Frank Dryer: First time or last time?
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] Last time.
5
6 Frank Dryer: Eighty – [inaudible 37:14] '87.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 37:16] so...
9
10 Frank Dryer: October 31st, 1987.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [37:19] So, um, you said that, um, [throat clearing] [tsk] people drink here
13 a lot and stuff like that and now – and y-, are you union-active?
14
15 Frank Dryer: Eh, yes and no! [37:33]
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [37:33] What is it that you do for the union?
18
19 Frank Dryer: Right now, I work as a counselor.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [37:41] A counselor for what?
22
23 Frank Dryer: Substance abuse and drugs.
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: [37:45] And when did you start doing that?
26
27 Frank Dryer: On a full-time basis, in, uh, '99.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: [37:51] When did you first start getting active?
30
31 Frank Dryer: In, uh, AA program was, uh, [shew] I'm gonna have to say, uh, September
32 of, uh, '74, I believe it was.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: [38:05] What happened in '74?
35
36 Frank Dryer: In '74, first time I quit drinkin'.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
39
40 Frank Dryer: I spent two weeks at, uh, Sparrow Ho-, er, Saint Lawrence Hospital in the
41 substance abuse program. I stayed sober that time for about a year.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [throat clearing]
44

1 Frank Dryer: Then, then I thought I could handle it, I went back out. Back in the
2 hospital, back out, back in the hospital, and in June, not exactly sure what
3 day, in 1986, management had had enough and I got discharged.
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: [38:48] [Inaudible] [happen 38:48]?
6

7 Frank Dryer: Uh, [phew] and it was all substance abuse-related. I was not caught
8 drinkin'. I was caught over at Harry's when I shoulda been to work.
9 [laughter]
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
12

13 Frank Dryer: And it, it happened – their words, it happened too many times.
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: Hm. [39:08] So how was UAW GM instrumental in helping you stop?
16

17 Frank Dryer: By firin' me.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: By firin' [inaudible 39:15].
20

21 Frank Dryer: I had gone that far to where I had to be fired to realize what I had lost.
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: [39:21] So did they have programs in place that helped you?
24

25 Frank Dryer: Yes.
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: [39:26] Want a tell us a little bit about those?
28

29 Frank Dryer: The AA.
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: [39:28] The AA?
32

33 Frank Dryer: AA.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: [39:29] You want a tell us how you, um – the programs that UAW GM
36 has helped you s-, [inaudible 39:37]...
37

38 Frank Dryer: They have...
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: ...your sobriety?
41

42 Frank Dryer: They have a lot of programs right now that are in place, in my opinion,
43 aren't worth the paper they're written on. But if you go down to the EAP
44 [throat clearing] office today with a problem, today's problem, they want a
45 set you up an appointment with a psychiatrist 3 weeks down the road.

1 Well, to me, I'm sorry, I had the problem today. I might not even be alive
2 3 weeks from now.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: So we have a place called the [Greenhouse 40:10]...
5
6 Frank Dryer: Yes.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: ...and that's where you're at.
9
10 Frank Dryer: I'm, I'm at the gr-...
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [40:13] You want a tell us about the Greenhouse and what it...
13
14 Frank Dryer: [Inaudible 40:15].
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: ...does?
17
18 Frank Dryer: I am over at the Greenhouse and anyone is welcome to come in, set and
19 have coffee, watch TV, play on one of my computers, talk if they want to,
20 or just set there and relax.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: And...
23
24 Frank Dryer: And it don't take 3 weeks to make [sniffing] an appointment to come in.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: [40:32] Who provides the Greenhouse? What, what is this Greenhouse?
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 40:34].
29
30 Frank Dryer: The Greenhouse is provided by, uh, Local 602 UAW. They pay the bills;
31 I show up and do what I do. I, I play a lot a games on my computer but in,
32 in the process of the 7½ hours that I donate 7 days a week, I get more out
33 of it than probably the ones that come in and I talk to.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [41:02] Now, d-, they hold meetings there, don't they? They used to?
36
37 Frank Dryer: They hold meetings there. Su-, [shew] Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
38 Thursday, Friday. Six days a week there is a meeting of some kind in
39 there. They have two AA, they have three NA, they have one CA durin'
40 the day, then they have, uh, Friday night at 2:00 in the morning!
41
42 Michael Fleming: [41:27] What, what are those letters mean? AA, NA.
43
44 Frank Dryer: AA is Alcoholics Anonymous.
45
46 Michael Fleming: [41:31] NA?

1
2 Frank Dryer: CA – NA is Narcotics Anonymous.
3
4 Michael Fleming: [41:35] CA?
5
6 Frank Dryer: CA is Cocaine Anonymous.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [41:38] [throat clearing] Who started up the **Greenhouse**?
9
10 Frank Dryer: Ralph and Ray.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [**Inaudible** 41:42].
13
14 Frank Dryer: Ralph [**inaudible** 41:43] and Ray Young.
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [41:45] So you were, you were – uh, you’re a person who also
17 benefitted from the **Greenhouse**. Yes?
18
19 Frank Dryer: I benefit dearly from that **Greenhouse**. Not only in ’73 or ’74 when I
20 started but today by continuin’ to do what I’m doin’. I am able to stay
21 sober one day at a time.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [42:05] And able to help your other fellow [**inaudible** 42:06].
24
25 Frank Dryer: A-, and help other, other people that come in there.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: [49:09] Uh, primarily are those all union members that come in there?
28
29 Frank Dryer: No. Ninety percent of’m are union members. We have argued [papers
30 rustling] on that [throat clearing] with different presidents to have a sign
31 out front that says community service.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
34
35 Frank Dryer: It doesn’t say it on that sign UAW members. It says community service,
36 which means anybody in the community. I have had people from, uh,
37 [throat clearing] New York, Tennessee, Arkansas, uh, couple other
38 southern states that are truck drivers that when they could get off a the
39 road, that’s the only meeting they could get to...
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
42
43 Frank Dryer: ...was at 2:00 in the morning and they would stop in.
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: [42:55] So then, actually it’s another way where the UAW has also helped
46 not only its members but members of the c...

1
2 Frank Dryer: Its members but its, its, its, uh...
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: ...members of the community.
5
6 Frank Dryer: ...its community! Yeah.
7
8 Michael Fleming: [43:07] In the year 2000, a-, a-, and I guess we're talking about this
9 **Greenhouse**, what, what happened to the name?
10
11 Frank Dryer: In the year 2000, I – I'm thinking it's 2000. It could've been late '99. The
12 membership of UAW named the **Greenhouse** the Frank Dryer House.
13
14 Michael Fleming: [43:27] So it's named after you.
15
16 Frank Dryer: Yes.
17
18 Michael Fleming: [43:30] And how did that make ya feel?
19
20 Frank Dryer: Awesome. Humbling. Even though I at that time – I look back now, I'm
21 very grateful for'm doin' that. At the time they done that, I thought they
22 were way out of, way out a line. But sometimes it takes time to actually
23 s-, see what you have and what's been given to you. Just like when I got
24 fired in '86, the first 30 days I stayed drunk. I didn't care. But all of a
25 sudden, there was no money comin' in. I did care. Then it took 18
26 months to get back into – well, 22 months after I quit drinkin' to get back
27 into work and I've seen people, I've talked to people that have since then
28 been discharged because **[inaudible 44:28]** happen to me. Huh, I'm sorry.
29 Alcohol has no **[inaudible 44:33]**. Drugs have no boundaries. They will
30 take you down eventually. And today I choose not to go back to where I
31 was. I have a very short saying. Instant asshole: Add alcohol.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter] **[Inaudible 44:57]**.
34
35 Doug Rademacher: [44:57] Did you attend union meetings? [throat clearing]
36
37 Frank Dryer: Some. Nothin' other than when I was the assis-, uh, alternate EAP rep did
38 I attend them on a regular basis.
39
40 Doug Rademacher: [45:10] Can you please tell me what is EAP stand for?
41
42 Frank Dryer: Employees Assistance Program.
43
44 Doug Rademacher: [45:15] And you were a – you were one of the, uh...?
45
46 Frank Dryer: I was an alternate.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: [45:20] An alternate rep?
3
4 Frank Dryer: Alternate rep [papers rustling] because I knew when – when it was offered
5 to me for a full-time job was in January of '99. I'd already made up my
6 mind the first day a May I was done and like I told Gary [Burnet 45:40], I
7 says it's kinda stupid for me and for you to put me in as a permanent full-
8 time EAP rep knowin' 4 months down the road I'm gonna retire! Put me
9 in as an alternate, put someone in there full time. I had the chance to go to
10 Black Lake in April, the 15th of April. I had 14 more days to be there.
11 Uh, no. Send someone that's gonna be workin' throughout the next 5 or
12 10 years!
13
14 Doug Rademacher: [46:14] What is this Black Lake?
15
16 Frank Dryer: I have really no idea of 'cause I have never been there although I have
17 heard it's an awesome place...
18
19 Female: [laughter]
20
21 Frank Dryer: ...and they put out awesome food. But for my personal, I have not been
22 there, so I cannot really tell you what it is or what it ain't other than it's a
23 joint venture.
24
25 Doug Rademacher: [46:38] What's your most appreciated bargain benefit that you've...?
26
27 Frank Dryer: Thirty and out.
28
29 Doug Rademacher: Thirty and out. [46:45] Did you, uh, attend any schooling over the years?
30
31 Frank Dryer: No. [phew] Other – well, I went one week for EAP training.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [46:56] Do you view your coworkers as brothers and sisters?
34
35 Frank Dryer: Yes. [sneezing] Very much so.
36
37 Doug Rademacher: I'm gonna ask you 'cause you and I worked together and, uh...
38
39 Frank Dryer: You love some, you hate some. Just the way you do with brothers and
40 sisters, I guess. [laughter]
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
43
44 Frank Dryer: You cannot like everybody.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Well, you had – you said you cooked. I remember that you were – did
2 some roofing and, uh, I had you to my home one day...
3

4 Frank Dryer: Uh, yep. [A new roof 47:31] I did. I probably still could.
5

6 Doug Rademacher: [47:34] You remember that, that particular day?
7

8 Frank Dryer: Yes! Yes!
9

10 Doug Rademacher: [47:38] What'd we do?
11

12 Frank Dryer: We put a roof on your house!
13

14 Doug Rademacher: [47:42] What'd we do other than that? Did we break bread and have...?
15

16 Frank Dryer: Yes, you cooked. No, your wife cooked. You were up there workin' with
17 me.
18

19 Doug Rademacher: So...
20

21 Frank Dryer: Them are enjoyable times when you go in to do a roofing job or painting
22 or siding and the person you're doin' it for gets right in there and works
23 with you. Not only do you appreciate that, the job, but the person that
24 you're workin' for better because they're doin' the same thing you are.
25

26 Doug Rademacher: [48:18] So did ya do that for a lot a coworkers or – is that how you found
27 your extra work or how...?
28

29 Frank Dryer: That's how I got a lot of'm is [right through the shop 48:23]. Done yours,
30 I done one out in Nashville [inaudible 48:28] took me almost two weeks to
31 do and I was workin' 7 days a week but he had a house and a big, oh, huge
32 barn. I don't want a do it again. Even back – as young as I was back then,
33 I don't want a do it again.
34

35 Michael Fleming: [tsk] You say as young as you are.
36

37 Frank Dryer: Were.
38

39 Michael Fleming: As young as you were. [tsk] [48:54] Frank, how old are you?
40

41 Frank Dryer: Sixty-four. And I'm not sure how I made it this far...
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
44

45 Frank Dryer: ...knowin' some a the things that I have done. I don't know how I made it
46 this far.

1
2 Michael Fleming: [49:18] So you were 58 years old when you retired.
3
4 Frank Dryer: Nine.
5
6 Michael Fleming: Fifty-nine. Yes.
7
8 Female: That's young.
9
10 Frank Dryer: Well, I, I was – yes, you're right, I was 58 'cause I retired in May and I
11 turned, uh, 59 in August.
12
13 Michael Fleming: That's a wonderful thing to retire a-, a-, at such an a-, a young age.
14 [Inaudible 49:38].
15
16 Frank Dryer: Yes! Cause you – you're still young enough to where you can do other
17 things that you maybe have put off for years because you had a job that
18 you had to do. There's still things I want a do. The money just ain't there.
19
20 Michael Fleming: [49:54] Well, what kind a hobbies do ya have?
21
22 Frank Dryer: Games on the computer.
23
24 Michael Fleming: [50:00] How long have you been doin' that?
25
26 Frank Dryer: 'Bout 5 years; 4½, 5 years.
27
28 Doug Rademacher: Frank, I want a take ya back real quick. You told me you were
29 discharged. [50:14] How did ya c-, manage to get rehired and [coughing],
30 and work till retirement? If you were discharged by General Motors, how
31 did ya get back?
32
33 Frank Dryer: I was discharged in '86 because of missin' too much work due to
34 alcoholism. I had to prove to the union that I was worthy a gettin' my job
35 back. I come in for an interview in September of – I believe it was '87 –
36 '88; September of '88 and they told me to wait another 6 months. They
37 called me back, uh, the 14th of February of '89 and I was reinstated at that
38 time.
39
40 Michael Fleming: So...
41
42 Frank Dryer: But it was because of the union, AA, uh, different people in the
43 community where I was at, uh, which was, at one time, Onondaga and
44 then I moved into Eaton Rapids and, uh – but I, I had to go to a lot a
45 meetings and as far as, you know, I can set here and tell you that General
46 Motors fired me, well, they didn't! General Motors done the paperwork. I

1 fired myself by not bein' where I was supposed to be at the time I was
2 supposed to be there! And that was hard for – the supervisor that fired me
3 at that time was the cousin to the woman I was livin' with! [laughter]
4

5Doug Rademacher: Frank, a lot a people feel the union, uh, takes, takes care a people that
6 don't deserve to work. [52:16] What do ya think about that? People that
7 have abused the system or, uh – do you think [coughing] – would you've
8 ever got a job back [coughing] for another company without a union?
9

10Frank Dryer: No. No.
11

12Doug Rademacher: [52:29] So what's your thought on, on that particular statement that people
13 say that?
14

15Frank Dryer: I, I can look at that two different ways. In some ways, I can set back and
16 see where the people [throat clearing] are misusing our benefits but – and
17 in return, we had to fight for the benefits we'd have. They're there to use,
18 not misuse. I misused'm by goin' to the doctor just to get a night off work
19 just to go out and get drunk. That's misusin' a benefit that we have.
20 There comes a point that union and management have both got to say
21 enough is enough! We cannot continue to overlook the problem that you
22 have and it happens on both sides; management and union. They overlook
23 people in there that they know are misusin' alcohol and drugs. They know
24 they're misusin' their doctor statements. And I can't – you know, it's, uh,
25 it's hard to say who's at the biggest fault because they both do it but we as
26 union members pay our union to represent us. Okay, now, how far is the
27 union gonna put their neck out to represent somebody that they know is
28 misusin' the system? And then as far as the union, some a the people in
29 there thinkin' that they are takin' care of people that shouldn't be taken
30 care of, that person that they say shouldn't be taken care of paid the same
31 amount a union dues as this person over here that's not misusin' the
32 system. He's paid – he paid his dues to be represented whether they go
33 too far sometimes, yes on some and maybe not far enough on others.
34

35Doug Rademacher: [54:34] But you see a real need for a union.
36

37Frank Dryer: Most definitely. I would not work without a union. I don't care where it
38 was at.
39

40Doreen Howard: [54:46] So it was the union that was able to help you return to
41 employment?
42

43Frank Dryer: Yes. It was definitely the union that helped me get my job back.
44

45Doreen Howard: [54:57] And you s-, what was it – you said you had to go to classes and
46 prove to the union? Um.

1
2 Frank Dryer: The AA meetings. I went 7 days a week for 18 months. And the first 13½
3 months before they would even look to see if I was ready to come back. I
4 had an interview with two EAP reps, two [laughter] union members, and
5 one management member and they told me to come back in 6 months.
6 [From 55:30] somewhere, I don't know, but I only counted 4. September
7 to February is only 4 months unless I miscounted somewhere and, uh, uh,
8 at that time, when I went in there on, uh, I think it was either the 13th or
9 the 14th a February, I was allowed to go back to work.
10
11 Doreen Howard: [55:51] So they just don't arbitrarily pick people who get fired or
12 discharged for...
13
14 Frank Dryer: No.
15
16 Doreen Howard: ...[inaudible 55:58]. [55:59] You have to prove yourself and do something
17 in return...
18
19 Frank Dryer: I'm gonna say...
20
21 Doreen Howard: ...for [inaudible 56:04]...
22
23 Frank Dryer: ...99 percent a the time.
24
25 Doreen Howard: ...to help get you back.
26
27 Frank Dryer: And when I say 99 percent a the time, you have to prove yourself worthy
28 of getting your job back. Well, some people didn't get as bad as I was
29 with the alcohol, so it wouldn't take them as long to recover. The last 6
30 months before I quit, I was goin' through 24 beers a day and that's a lot a
31 beer when you ain't got a job.
32
33 Female: [laughter]
34
35 Frank Dryer: Well, come to think of it, that's a lot a beer when [laughter] you do got a
36 job.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
39
40 Frank Dryer: But that was 7 days a week. My brother and I went through 2 cases a beer
41 every day. Then he took his money and moved to Arizona.
42
43 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 56:49].
44
45 Michael Fleming: Frank, you, you, you built an awful lot a cars here at Fisher Body. [56:56]
46 What was the first automobile ya owned?

1
2 Frank Dryer: [phew] Nineteen-forty-nine Ford.
3
4 Michael Fleming: [57:08] Did ya ever own any General Motors products?
5
6 Frank Dryer: Yeah.
7
8 Michael Fleming: [57:11] What was the first one?
9
10 Frank Dryer: The first General Motors was a 1953 Chevy. Ninety-five percent a my
11 cars has been General Motors.
12
13 Michael Fleming: [57:23] Did ya ever buy any a the product that you were – had built here at
14 Fisher Body?
15
16 Frank Dryer: Yes! I’m drivin’ one right now! Pontiac Grand Am 2002. I’ve had ’88s
17 what were built here. I’ve had a ’98 that was built here. Uh, what other
18 one? I think that’s it we built here.
19
20 Marilyn Coulter: [57:49] Out of all the vehicles that you built here, which one was your
21 favorite one? Or which one did you like the best that we built?
22
23 Frank Dryer: Uh, my favorite one that we built? The one I got now.
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 57:57].
26
27 Frank Dryer: But my favorite car of all of’m that I owned, and if I can find one, I will
28 have it, and it’s a 1963 Chevy Impala convertible. Baby-blue bottom with
29 a Robin egg blue top. Three-twenty-seven automatic.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: Alright.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [58:15] What’d ya like about that car? Why is it, why is it [inaudible
34 58:17]?
35
36 Frank Dryer: I g-, I, I don’t know. I guess it’s probably the size and it’s the first one I
37 owned that I could actually say I really liked to drive. It drove good, it
38 was comfortable, it had power that when you were on the highway, you
39 step on the gas, you go around somebody. It didn’t hesitate any. It’s the
40 first one I had when I got married the first time. There’s just so many
41 things that worked into it.
42
43 Doug Rademacher: [58:45] So it’s – it would bring back all your youthful...
44
45 Frank Dryer: Yeah.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: ...memories?
2

3 Frank Dryer: Yes. Yes.
4

5 Doug Rademacher: I hope you can find that.
6

7 Frank Dryer: Oh, I can find one. It's just...
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: If you were to...
10

11 Frank Dryer: ...the money to buy it. [laughter]
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: [58:57] If you were to, um, [coughing] talk to a new person, what would
14 be the one thing you'd tell'm? That were comin' into the plant?
15

16 Frank Dryer: Enjoy your job. Do the best job you can with the equipment they give you
17 to work with and if it ain't the right quipment, equipment, bitch until they
18 get it for you. When I see so many people not have the right equipment
19 and not say nothin' to the boss! They'd bitch to the person across the line
20 but they wouldn't say nothin' to the boss.
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
23

24 Frank Dryer: When I got my job back, they put me up on upper air vents. I was workin'
25 for [Jerry Chamberlain 59:34]. They reengineered the windshield, which
26 brought everything together. The tool they give me to work with would
27 not fit in that hole and ya had to put, uh, a stud in there to hold the upper
28 air vent in. Well, I bitched and finally I got engineers from the main plant
29 to come over there [and tired 59:56] a tellin' me what the computer says
30 [it'll do 59:58] and I give him my job – gloves, told him go get that
31 goddamn computer, let the son of a bitch do my job, and then you tell me
32 the computer's right not wrong. And all it was was toolin' down a 3/8
33 drive extension – socket extension down to ¼ inch. It was just a simple
34 change.
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00:21] So it was a simple change and as that leads in, what did that
37 make you think about employee involvement in the building of vehicles?
38 The way they have it now?
39

40 Frank Dryer: You have to have employee involvement not only with your supervisor
41 but the engineers that are engineering the job on site so that you can get
42 everything to where it fits the way they say it's supposed to. 'Cause that
43 engineer does everything on a computer and that computer's only as smart
44 as the person that pushin' them keys.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Well, people, uh, people know you. You put 30 years in. Something
2 about the candy store. You, you happen to share that story with us?
3

4 Frank Dryer: Oh, you mean the coffee shop.
5

6 Doug Rademacher: Okay, the coffee shop. [1:01:10] Tell us about that.
7

8 Frank Dryer: We sold coffee in there. We give coffee away. We give doughnuts away.
9 We give candy away. Everything was basically set up on donation and I –
10 probably once a month management – certain management was gonna
11 close it down. I had a supervisor would call and let me know that his boss
12 was comin’ out, so we would just put a free sign up there. Now, if
13 everything’s free, you can’t make a profit. [laughter]
14

15 Doreen Howard: [1:01:48] Where was this located in the plant?
16

17 Frank Dryer: First one was in Building 10 and then we moved down to Building 15.
18

19 Michael Fleming: [1:01:59] Didn’t ya have a tradition on Fridays that you, that, that you
20 [inaudible 1:02:03]?
21

22 Frank Dryer: Mondays.
23

24 Michael Fleming: It was Mondays.
25

26 Frank Dryer: Every Monday was free cookies. Every holiday was free coffee,
27 lemonade, iced tea. Every Halloween, there – everything was free
28 including anywhere from 12 to 16 dozen doughnuts. Now, a-, and I tried
29 to explain it to management. If I’m givin’ all this stuff away, where’s the
30 profit? There was a small amount of profit but it was nothin’ what it
31 coulda been ‘cause a 12-ounce coffee was a quarter. There’s more – there
32 – more than that in the machine for 35 cents I think it was at that time. I
33 don’t know what it is now. And it was better coffee ‘cause we mostly had
34 fresh coffee. F-, I’m gonna have to say fresh coffee every hour if not
35 more depending on when they got their breaks. It was nothin’ to go
36 through 16 to 100 cups every break when these guys got their breaks.
37

38 Michael Fleming: [1:03:10] Pretty much it was a gathering place, wasn’t it?
39

40 Frank Dryer: Yes. [Inaudible 1:03:13].
41

42 Michael Fleming: [1:03:13] Did ya – did – I, I think – y-, you had a lot a stories and, and
43 things goin’ on in that little area. Talk about that.
44

45 Frank Dryer: Well, there’s always stories. Some of’m I wasn’t involved with because
46 they wouldn’t give me no place to sit down! [laughter] But we always had

1 supervision down there. There was always some supervisors. Uh,
2 [Inaudible 1:03:36] made it out there 3 or 4 times. When, uh, the
3 Oklahoma bombing took place, I was still back in 10 then and I set there
4 and watched as much as that on television settin' right out on my table to
5 where I knew pretty much what was goin' on. A couple a high-up
6 supervisors come out and set down there and watched that. A couple of'm
7 for over 45 minutes at one setting 'cause they wanted the information that
8 I had because I had the television. Some supervisors didn't like [inaudible
9 1:04:21] and they'd tell me I had to take my TV home. I took the big one
10 home, brought in a little one.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
13
14 Frank Dryer: Took the little one home, brought in a big one. Well, I took the one home
15 they told me to! I-, i-, in there, you can have a lot a fun if you choose to.
16 You can make that place as miserable as you want to. You can make that
17 place as enjoyable as you want to. It's you have to make up your own
18 mind on how you feel about it. I've seen [that 1:04:59] to where when I
19 hired in, everything was built on one line, which was the upstairs line.
20 And if the people think they're cramped now, they shoulda been up there
21 when both lines were up there. You were cramped. You had 18 feet to do
22 your job 'cause that's as long as your hose was and it's, uh – I don't know
23 if the jobs are any harder today or not because some d-, departments
24 you've got a little bit more work space, you've got less, less motors that'll
25 have to be used today than what was back then, which gives you a little bit
26 leeway on how far up and down the line you can go but it's all in how you
27 want a make that [inaudible 1:05:51] and I have noticed that when any
28 person, including myself, gets pissed off at the supervisor, it's not gonna
29 be a good day on the line. That job is gonna suck because your mind is
30 over here on what that supervisor did or what you did and he got pissed
31 over it rather than on the line on doin' what you're supposed to do.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [1:06:25] So, uh, union and management are workin' together now rather
34 than fightin' each other? Do you think that's...
35
36 Frank Dryer: I think so. I think more so now than, uh, in the '60s and '70s.
37
38 Doug Rademacher: [1:06:38] Do ya think that's a better way to do [business 1:06:39]?
39
40 Frank Dryer: Oh, definitely. Definitely. Anytime you can work together is always, uh,
41 a better way to do business whether your unionized or if you're not
42 unionized but I know for myself, I could not work where there's not a
43 union 'cause some days, I get irate. Some days I throw things. Some days
44 they don't like it.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Well, it sounds like you've had a good, uh, experience workin' for
2 General Motors and...
3
4 Frank Dryer: Yes.
5
6 Doug Rademacher: ...bein' represented by the union.
7
8 Frank Dryer: It's an experience that, uh, ya can't buy. There is no amount a money can
9 buy the experience I had in that plant for 30 years. Just – there's just not
10 enough money.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: [1:07:36] Are you enjoyin' your retirement?
13
14 Frank Dryer: Hell yes. And like I said earlier, it's all in the direct result of the UAW
15 and General Motors and I can set and do what I do and still draw 520
16 bucks a week. How long that's gonna last, who knows but I know for
17 today, that is what I'm gonna have. I know at 9:30 tomorrow morning, I'll
18 be at the credit union, I'll pay my bills, and some of'm are for next month.
19 I get a check twice a month, I get my pension [deferred 1:08:17], I get my,
20 uh, social security the second Wednesday of the month. I don't have to
21 wonder now where my next meal's comin' from and that's because a the
22 place I chose to work.
23
24 Doug Rademacher: Well, you said your favorite benefit was 30 and out.
25
26 Frank Dryer: Thirty and out.
27
28 Doug Rademacher: [1:08:31] What about that [inaudible 1:08:36] – what about that, uh,
29 defined pension?
30
31 Frank Dryer: That defined pension is part of bein' 30 and out.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: Uh-huh.
34
35 Frank Dryer: Social security is part a just bein' old. [laughter]
36
37 Doug Rademacher: Well, we hope to keep it that way. Frank, it's been a real pleasure.
38
39 Frank Dryer: I'm gonna make it that way all day today.
40
41 Doug Rademacher: It's been a real pleasure interviewing you. Um.
42
43 Michael Fleming: Frank, we, uh, really enjoyed you stopping in and talking with us. You
44 had some wonderful stories to tell. Thank you.
45
46 Frank Dryer: You're welcome.

1
2Marilyn Coulter: Thank you.
3
4
5/ad