

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

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5Interviewer: Good morning! We're the Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team. It is
6 April 28, 2006. The time is 9 a.m., and we are at the Local 602 Frank
7 Dryer Greenhouse. First we're gonna introduce the team.
8
9John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
10
11Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
14
15Doug Rademacher: And I'm Doug Rademacher. Today we are going to interview Jody
16 Don Frasher. [00:26] Jody, would you please state your name and spell it?
17
18Jody Don Frasher: Uh, Jody Don Frasher. J-O-D-Y D-O-N Frasher F-R-A-S-H-E-R.
19
20Doug Rademacher: [00:38] And what is your address?
21
22Jody Don Frasher: My address is 6191 Krouse Road, Ovid, Michigan 48866.
23
24Doug Rademacher: [00:47] Are you married?
25
26Jody Don Frasher: Uh, yes, I am.
27
28Doug Rademacher: [00:49] And do you have any children?
29
30Jody Don Frasher: Uh, yes, I have 2.
31
32Doug Rademacher: [00:53] Jody, where were you born and raised?
33
34Jody Don Frasher: I was born in Escanaba, Michigan.
35
36Doug Rademacher: [1:02] What about Escanaba? Why don't you tell us a little bit about
37 where you were raised?
38
39Jody Don Frasher: Uh, Escanaba is, uh, a small, basically a little retirement town. Uh, it's on
40 Little Bay de Noc. Actually it's 180 miles west past the bridge. Um, it's a
41 beautiful little community.
42Doug Rademacher: You said, "the bridge." [1:20] Which bridge is that and, and uh...
43
44Jody Don Frasher: Uh.
45
46Doug Rademacher: ...[1:22] where is this Escanaba in reference to the Lansing Fisher Body?

1
2Jody Don Frasher: Uh, it would be approximately 490 miles, um, and I was referring to the
3 Mackinaw Bridge. Uh, we call it, uh The U.P. I am a Yooper, eh?
4
5 [laughter]
6
7Jody Don Frasher: Um, but it is, it is a beautiful little community, um I was blessed to be
8 raised in so...
9
10Doug Rademacher: Okay. [1:54] What is your education level?
11
12Jody Don Frasher: Um, I graduated from Escanaba Area High School. Um, upon graduation,
13 um, I came down 2½ months after I graduated and found a job at Fisher
14 Body and then I went to Lansing Community College for approximately 1
15 year.
16
17Doug Rademacher: Okay, let's go back up. [2:22] Do you have any military?
18
19Jody Don Frasher: Uh, never been in the military.
20
21Doug Rademacher: [2:26] What did your parents do for a living?
22
23Jody Don Frasher: Um, my father was, uh, worked for the Escanaba Area Schools. He was a
24 maintenance man, um, and then he eventually came - he was the
25 maintenance supervisor. He was responsible, uh, for all the outlying
26 schools and schools in town, making sure the buses got there, keep'm
27 running, uh, all the grounds and all the mechanical things in the school
28 And my mother worked at the West End Drug Store. Um, actually she
29 worked there for 20 - 22 years, 7 days a week, um, on a split shift.
30
31Doug Rademacher: Uh, would you tell me - Escanaba. You said it was a retirement
32 community.
33
34 [movement in background]
35
36Doug Rademacher: [3:14] What else went on in that town and what did you do up...
37
38 [door closing]
39
40Doug Rademacher: ...there before you hired into Fisher Body?
41
42Jody Don Frasher: Well actually, uh, my grandfather, uh, took me on when I was
43 approximately e-, 11 years old. Uh, he cleaned a, a, a banquet hall. It was
44 al-, also a Teamsters Local 328 of Escanaba, but they rented, uh, they
45 rented out the halls, and, uh, I was a janitor. I was a janitor from 11 years
46 old until I was 18 years old. Um...

1
2 Doug Rademacher: [3:50] Just out of curiosity, can you tell us what was the Teamsters Union
3 for up there?
4
5 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, the Teamsters took care of most of the grocery stores up there. Uh,
6 they did have some, uh, trucking companies. We had, uh, P&H cranes, uh,
7 were built in Escanaba, Michigan, that would be Harnischfeger cranes,
8 mobile cranes, and also over-the-head cranes. It, uh, I was anticipating
9 going to work at Harnischfeger. That was one of the largest employers in
10 Escanaba, but at that time, um, the city fathers had given them the land
11 with tax abatements, and they were doing so well that they believed that
12 they should tax, uh, Harnischfeger, and, uh, they said, "If you tax us, uh,
13 we will move", and the city fathers did not believe them. They imposed
14 the...
15
16 [coughing]
17
18 Jody Don Frasher: ...taxes on the property and it was approximately 3 months later they took
19 450 people out, laid them off, left a, a boom crew of 50, and there were,
20 uh, they were - there were approximately 6 months later, they completely
21 shut, uh, the manufacturing down of the P&H Omega crane.
22
23 Escanaba was also known for... Uh, the largest mobile crane in the world
24 was built in Escanaba, Michigan, um, so, uh, that was 1 employment
25 opportunity that went away. Uh, the only other large employer in
26 Escanaba was Mead Paper. Uh, Mead Paper Company, at that time, uh,
27 was pretty family oriented. If you didn't know somebody in the, in the
28 business, uh, you pretty much didn't get hired so, um, what I meant by
29 retirement community - If you didn't own a business, work for the
30 schools, or work for Mead Paper, basically there was not much to do in
31 Escanaba. They relied on tourism and basically it was an older crowd in,
32 uh, in the city.
33
34 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Um, you started to go there on this question here. [6:12] Why did
35 you hire into Fisher Body?
36
37 Jody Don Frasher: Well, uh, that just goes off what I was talking about. Uh, basically there
38 was no employment, um, and at that time, uh, my parents wanted me to go
39 to college. Um, but basically what I had in my mind I wanted to make my
40 own way.
41
42 [sneezing].
43
44 Jody Don Frasher: I wanted some type of money, uh, coming in. I was making \$2.50 an hour,
45 uh, working as a janitor and that really didn't keep a, a whole lot of things
46 going, uh, at \$60 a week, uh, \$60 to 80 a week so that's, um, when my

1 brother, uh, graduated from Ferris State University as, um... He had an
2 automotive degree and he had job applications in Lansing, Detroit, and all
3 the surrounding areas and he ended up getting hired here, um, in Lansing,
4 Michigan at Plant 4. At that time, it was called the, the Reliability Garage
5 so I came down to help him move, uh, from Ferris to here, and at that
6 time, um, they were hiring at the Chassis Plant, Local 652. Um, we had
7 talked to uh, some people in town, and they said, "I have an application.
8 All you've got to do is stand in line, so I called a taxicab. I filled out the
9 application.
10
11 I went over there. There was approximately 25,000 people in line. I was
12 standing...
13
14 [coughing]
15 Jody Don Frasher: ...in line. The line was well over a half a mile long, 6 to 8 people wide,
16 and I stood out there approximately a day and a half, um, and through the
17 evening. I had been standing on my feet so long, um, I got to the point in
18 line where we kinda had a little ledge on a building, and I sat down, and I
19 ended up falling asleep. And I gotta believe there was 5 - 8,000 people
20 walked by me...
21
22 [laughter]
23
24 Jody Don Frasher: ...because I fell asleep. And by the time I got up to get my application in,
25 um, they had 2 boxes. They had a box on top, and they had a box
26 underneath the table, and my application went to the 1 on the bottom. So I
27 was pretty, uh, disappointed, uh, but there was somebody in line that said,
28 "That other plant across town is hiring" and at that time my brother - I, I
29 was left here.
30
31 My brother had to go back to Big Rapids to retrieve some more things and
32 i-, basically it was a wonderful thing because it was my birthday. That
33 would have been my 19th birthday...
34
35 [laughter]
36
37 Jody Don Frasher: ...was coming up. And they said, "That other plant on the other side of
38 town. It's called Fisher Body, is hiring." Same program. You just gotta go
39 get in line, but I didn't have an application, so I thought, "well I don't
40 know anybody here. I might as well go stand in line, so I called a taxicab,
41 gave them the name, and they took me over to Fisher Body. That was
42 approximately at 8:00 in the morning. I stood there from 8:00 in the
43 morning to the following morning on the 3rd stair. And I stood there and,
44 uh, again, that was another line that went all the way down the front of
45 Verlinden, back around the corner into the north parking lot, all the way

1 down the side of the north parking lot. Then it circled back around on the
2 inside of the parking lot, uh, all the way...

3
4 [coughing]
5

6Jody Don Frasher: ...out of the parking lot, but I was on the 3rd stair so I thought, "I'm in!"
7Okay.

8 At that time, they announced, "Okay, everybody needs to back up" and,
9 uh, we are gonna open the doors for an interview because at that time,
10 uh, you'd go right into the plant to get interviewed. Then as they
11 announced that, again, I was on the 3rd stair, they didn't have, uh, the
12 dugout, a cover over the dugout at that time. And as soon as they
13 announced that they were going to open the doors, people started jumping
14 down in the dugout. I was on the 3rd stair, now. By the time I got in, I was
15 number 36th in line. They jumped over and they pushed and...

16
17 [noise]
18

19Jody Don Frasher: ...shoved and slugged people up the stairs because they wanted to get in...

20
21 [laughter]
22

23Jody Don Frasher: ...first to get hired. Well, I was 18 years old. I was from out of town. I was
24 scared to death. I'd just got literally beaten up the stairs. I got into the
25 building. My father sent me down here with a big pair of work boots, a
26 hard hat, and gloves, and I stood in line with all this. I walked in. Um, a
27 gentleman, name of Jerry Brooks, said, "I'll take him."

28
29 We went back into a little room and he asked me, "Son, what, what are
30 you doing here?" I said, "Well I have come from Escanaba, Michigan, and
31 I'm looking for a job, and he says, "You come from government beef and
32 turnips, don't you?" And I really didn't understand what he meant at the
33 time, but after 29 years seniority, uh, I kinda understand uh what he meant
34 with government beef and turnips. It was the venison. Okay. You go shoot
35 your own meat up in the U.P., and I just said, "Yes sir" and he asked me a
36 question.

37
38 He says, "What are you going to do today if I don't hire you?" I said,
39 "Well sir, to tell you the truth, um, I am going to call a cab and, the - I'm
40 going to have them take me to 27 North and I am going to hitchhike home
41 to Escanaba," which would be approximately 7½ hour drive. "Um, I am
42 going to hitchhike home, and I am going to have a drink in my hometown
43 bar, uh, called The Grenada," and he goes, "Happy birthday son." He says,
44 "There's only 1 issue here today." He says, "I don't believe you U.P. boys
45 have, a, a high school up there, and I need to see a diploma." I said, "Sir, I
46 have one." He says, "You, you produce a diploma, and he says, "I am

1 sending you down to the hospital, um, to get a physical today. You show
2 me that diploma, and you're good to go to work." This was on a, on a
3 Tuesday. I could not get my diploma down here until Thursday. I brought
4 it in, and I went to work, um, building headliners on that Friday.
5
6 I went in on a Friday on the night shift, and they told me, um, they s-, they
7 took me upstairs to a little room. I was the very last person that they chose,
8 and they took me downstairs to build up headliners. And, uh, it was, it was
9 pretty scary, now, coming into a big new facility and, uh, because where I
10 come from, we had basically 1 stoplight. Uh, there was no such thing as an
11 exit [laughter]. Uh, you know, it, uh, it was pretty overwhelming. Um...
12 There wasn't many minorities in the U.P., uh, and we had all these
13 different people, uh, in, in the plant. Uh, it was a wonderful experience. I
14 had great, uh, great people when I first hired in. Um, but I think my, my
15 wage in September 16, 1977 was \$6.68 an hour, and my first day I made
16 \$68.00 in 1 day. And that's what I used to make a week in high school. So
17 life was good, um, I had a new job. I called home. I said, "I got a job, um,
18 I gotta come home and get my stuff." So I came home, and my mother
19 was standing there. She goes, "You don't have to take anything." I said,
20 "Mom, I asked you to get my stuff together" and she goes, "No, no." Says,
21 "You can't go. [laughter] You can't go to [Inaudible 14:55] and have a
22 job," and I said, "Mom." She says, "You're going to college. You cannot
23 leave me here with the dog and your father all by, all by myself."
24
25 [laughter]
26
27 Jody Don Frasher: She says, "You're staying home," and I said, "Mom I got a job," um, and
28 my car was broke at that time. So my father had the car, his car, packed
29 sitting out in front of the house and said, "You got to go to work," and it,
30 it, it was quite a thing, uh, uh, to leave home. Uh, it was what?, 3 days
31 after my 19th birthday. I went home, got my stuff, got my father's car. He
32 said, "You will pay me, um, when you get the money," but he said, "Go."
33 Um, and I, and I got to believe that was 1 of the hardest things, uh, I ever
34 did in my life, when I left home. Um, I definitely had a little tear in my
35 eye, you know, my mom's crying, and here I'm going and I gotta go, you
36 know, and I came down here and that, that started my career here at, uh,
37 Lansing Fisher Body.
38
39 Doug Rademacher: Well you've, you've done real well and have now let some of this out
40 now. [16:04] Uh, so you are, uh, 1 of how many siblings? How many, how
41 many ch - ...
42
43 Jody Don Frasher: I have 2 older brothers, uh, Patrick and Michael. Uh, my oldest brother is
44 what - 9 years older than I am. Uh, my brother Pat is in the middle, um... I
45 think there is 4 years between us, and I'm the baby of the family.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Kind of rounds out mom's story. Mom says you're staying home, and dad
2 says you're off to work. Um, then, uh, you said you, uh, got your diploma.
3 [16:36] Was that obviously mailed because we didn't have...
4

5 Jody Don Frasher: Yes.
6

7 Doug Rademacher: ...that other technology using stuff back then. [16:42] Can you tell me...
8 [coughing] Excuse me - You said you took it in and showed it?
9
10 [coughing]
11

12 Doug Rademacher: Now you couldn't lie for days...
13
14 [coughing]
15

16 Doug Rademacher: ...to, uh, get an application and how - once you got your diploma you
17 were able to, uh, just walk right in and ...
18

19 Jody Don Frasher: I wan - ...
20

21 Doug Rademacher: [16:53] Did you know who to ask for?
22

23 Jody Don Frasher: Uh...
24

25 Doug Rademacher: [16:54] How did you do that?
26

27 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, actually, uh, I had already taken my physical and, um, my only
28 responsibility at that time, uh, for employment was to prove that I had a, a
29 high school...
30
31 [coughing]
32

33 Jody Don Frasher: ...education so I was hired if I produced the, uh, diploma.
34

35 Doug Rademacher: [17:15] So you said you got that on the third day? Did you go in Thursday
36 and show your diploma?
37

38 Jody Don Frasher: Yes and I s - ...
39

40 Doug Rademacher: [17:19] And what he said...
41
42 [coughing]
43

44 Doug Rademacher: ...report tomorrow?
45

46 Jody Don Frasher: Tomorrow.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Now tell us about that. Now you have been in the door.
3
4 [coughing]
5
6 Doug Rademacher [17:25] You hadn't seen the sunshine?
7
8 Jody Don Frasher No.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: And you've seen offices and people that wear ties and so forth, but can
11 you tell us now you come to work that first day. [17:36] Did you have
12 your work boots on and that hard hat or what did... [inaudible 17:40]
13
14 Jody Don Frasher Uh, well, they- I hate to say it but they were kinda laughing at me. They
15 were laughing at me like, uh, you know, uh, a young kid, a hick, coming
16 down from the U.P. looking for a job, but I didn't understand what my
17 responsibility would be. Um, as, as a young man, I thought construction.
18 You're working, you know, safety. You have to have, you know, PPE.
19 You got to have a hard hat, personal protective equipment. You got to
20 have gloves on, uh, big boots, steel-toed boots so you can't hurt your feet
21 and, uh, you know everybody is in there in shorts and they had [laughter]
22 tank tops and here I come loaded for bear, you know. It was, uh, it was,
23 uh... [inaudible 18:26].
24
25 Doug Rademacher: Share your first day. Uh, you've come in. You said you were the last 1
26 out. Tell us about what it was like. You came in. [18:35] You hired in with
27 a group of people?
28
29 Jody Don Frasher: There was approximately... Don't quote me on the number, but I think
30 about 10 or 12 people. Um, we were in the offices by, uh, Labor Relations.
31 Um, a handful of supervisors came down. They, they said, "This group
32 comes with me." We went, in, into the plant, up some stairs, and we went
33 over, and they called it, uh, the trim office, and they put us in this little
34 room. They had chairs all the way around. We sat down. Supervisors
35 would come in and basically, uh, with my knowledge now – they were
36 sizing us up. Now, "He's a big boy. I'll take him. He looks like he's a
37 good worker. I'll take him or her," whatever the case was. Well, I was
38 about 128 pounds right out of high school and, uh, I guess I kinda looked
39 like a runt, you know what I mean and the goofball with the boots and the,
40 the hat [laughter] you know.
41
42 So, uh, 2 gentlemen came up – I think – I don't remember their first –
43 [Maury and Steiner 19:45], and they were, uh, the headliner group. And
44 they said, "I guess you're mine, son. Come with me." So we went in to the
45 automotive setting where, where the line was and all of a sudden, they s-
46 "No, no, no. Come this way," so we went back downstairs. There was

nobody down there except stock, and we had 4 people. I think I was working with, uh, [Wayne Stein, Helen Telling 20:12], um... God, I don't remember the repairman's name – Darrell Mangles. He was a, a repairman on the other side of us.

And I go down there. There was no cars. I thought – I said, “Well whattaya got to do to get up there?” [Now 20:29] I wanted – It was, it was fascinating. As I walked into that building, I just had the wow syndrome. You know what I mean? Look at this place! And, uh, logistics were an issue. I was getting lost and I didn't know where to go and they said go to the cafeteria. The cafeteria? Um, took, took me 45 minutes to get there, and I got lost coming back and no one would really tell me where to go. I'd tell'm headliners. They'd, “Go down there.” So I'd go down there. I'd take another turn. I was lost. I was lost in the building, but I d-, d-, knowing what I know today, that was a premium job. That was a great job. It was an off-the-line job I hired on and, uh, we worked into, I think it was, September, October, November. It was coming into December, and we were getting tight in 1977, um, and they were anticipating a new model.

We had a model change from a large Cutlass going down to the small Cutlass, and they said, “We have a new job out there. It's called T-Tops and sunroofs.” We have never, we've never did this in a production setting, and they went around to all the people and no one wanted the job. So I said, “I'll do it. I'll take it.” And, um, it wound up to be a great job. Um, people were very jealous after they found out [laughter] what this job was, uh, because we did 16 jobs a night when everybody else did 600. We were working 6 days a week, 9 hours a day. The production line never s-, never ever stopped. Um, if you stopped that line, we had the, uh – the general supervisors would come down on their little carts, um, screaming, “Why is the line down? This line should not be down.” Um, but fascinating. It was, it was – I gotta believe probably the best thing that ever coulda happened to me at the time.

I didn't realize how important college was back then. I was a young kid. The money started coming in. I had an opportunity to buy a brand new, a, a 1977 Cutlass Brougham. Um, I had my own apartment at 19 years old. I had a brand new car at 19 years old. I had money in my pockets. Uh, it was a wonderful opportunity. Uh, the people around me... Once I got in there and got my 90 days in, it was, it was great. It was fun to go to work, the camaraderie. I was young. I was fairly handy. Um, it was good for me.

Doug Rademacher: Um, I want to round up some of your story there, Jody. Uh, tell me. You just mentioned this “90 days”. [23:44] What did 90 days mean to anybody?

1 Jody Don Frasher: Well, at that time, 90 days, uh, had to be put in before you could possibly
2 join the union and be a permanent employee. Uh, basically, it's a trial
3 period. If you did not cut the mustard, management had the right to
4 discharge you without any explanation. So if you couldn't do your job or
5 you were a slacker or a troublemaker or something like that, before your
6 90 days, they would probably discharge you. So work hard, um, yes, it
7 was something I wanted. You know – I mean I did not want to have to go
8 back home and tell my father that I failed. Um, I had bad jobs. I, I walked
9 off the line 1 night. Um, I said, [inaudible 24:37] I'm not doing this."
10 Now, they put me in...
11
12 [door closing]
13
14 Jody Don Frasher: What was this? I was climbing – it was a trunk job, a wire job.
15
16 It was... Uh, we were building 88s, 98s, Toronados, um, and Cutlasses at
17 that time and station wagons and I had never ever worked a production-
18 type thing. Uh, at that time, I think we were running about 70 - 68 jobs an
19 hour so approximately what – every 40 – 48 seconds you had a
20 responsibility to, to that automobile. You would pick up your parts. You
21 would go in. You would put'm in, come back out, get another part, and
22 you had to go to the next – the next car. And if you got too far away, your
23 hose would not reach far enough and you were down the line, and my
24 timing wasn't there. You know what I mean. My timing wasn't there. I
25 was down to the end and people – the bosses were coming down wanting
26 to know why I couldn't get that part on that car and get to the next one and
27 I couldn't do it. Now. I couldn't do it right away.
28
29 Well, I got frustrated at lunchtime 1 day and I said you know what, um, to
30 my partner. His name was Jerry [Inaudible 25:57]. He was also from the
31 U.P. He was from, uh, Drummond Island, Sault Sainte Marie and
32 somehow, someway, the 2 Yoopers got put together, and I just said, "You
33 know what? I'm not going to take this." People were hollering at me. I
34 said," I can go home and have my father holler at me," and I walked out to
35 the gate and reality set in. I said, "How am I going to go home and tell my
36 dad that I just quit the job?" Um, so I turned back around. Uh, I made it
37 through the guard shack. I turned back around, and I came back in, and I
38 was late. I was towing the line again. Now. So here they are. They're
39 back. They're all hollering at me and I made it through that day and I, I
40 pretty much decided, you know, I got to do this. I got to know one of the
41 supervisors. His name was Don Andrews, and they switched my job. I just
42 – I cou- I wasn't tall enough to reach in that trunk and get it up in there. I
43 just- I didn't have it. So they, they gave me that new job, that T-Tops and
44 sunroofs job and life was better.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Um, you spoke prior to starting, we – the interview, we – you talked a
2 little bit about, I think it was, that first job you were put on. There wasn't
3 an assembly line, but there was a responsibility to feeding a conveyor.
4 [27:20] Can you tell that story? And what - what was it like, uh...
5

6 Jody Don Frasher: Well, at that time, we – we've commonized now – where, uh, you know,
7 in 2006, we have a, a limited number of colors and basically you have 1
8 style of headliner. Back then, we had three different styles of headliners.
9 There was a leather. There was a cloth. There was another type of fabric,
10 and you'd have to put it into a machine, punch the hole in it to be able to
11 put the headliner light up in it. Then you had to flip it over, run the wire
12 up, tape it up, so you w-, you were preparing the headliner that ran up a,
13 conveyor belt, and they all had to be sequenced to the car that was going
14 by up on the production line. Well, with 12 different colors, 12 different,
15 or 16 different colors, fabric, then you had to put, uh, the sunshades also
16 on to match and sometimes there was different. Well, at that time, uh, the
17 people that were breaking me in, they said, "Well you're doing pretty
18 good." Um, I started, uh, downstairs, uh, building up headliners. At that
19 time, it was off – an offline job fed the production line. Uh, we had to
20 sequence the headliners going up a conveyor belt to the cars up on the
21 line.
22

23 There was 16 different colors, 3 different cloths. You had to put the
24 sunshades up on it. You had to punch a hole in it to identify which light's
25 gonna be on it so you put the light, put the wire through the hole, tape it
26 with, uh, duct tape on the back and then you would send it up the, uh,
27 conveyor with, uh, sunshades on it. At that time, we had uh, uh, 3 people
28 doing it and those, uh, folks decided I was good enough, uh, that we could
29 go 5 minutes on and 5 minutes off, so I'd build 5. I would come – They
30 would come back, then they would build 5 and I'd get 5 jobs off, so I
31 thought this is a good thing. Now, 5 on, 5 off, 5 on, 5 off and they both left
32 and left me there alone. Well, I got a little bit behind and I, I, I pulled the
33 wrong one. I got 1 out of sequence so if one's wrong, from that 1 all the
34 way down is wrong. Well, this gentleman comes up. He was very tall. He
35 was skinny. Um, [clears throat] and as you built that headliner, uh, there
36 was a manifest that had the options of the car that is going to reach the top,
37 you had to initial it.
38

39 This gentleman walks up and he go-, he asked, "Who's J?" and, uh, I
40 kinda raised my hand. I said, "I'm, I'm J. My name's Jody," and he goes,
41 "Come here, son," um, and [stammers] I asked, uh, I said, "Your name,
42 sir?" Um, he says, "My name is John Powers." He said, "I'm the general
43 supervisor here and he said, "I wanna know who did this." I said, "Well I
44 did it. I built these up." Well, it made the line have 5 or 7 wrong
45 headliners and this gentleman – he started screaming at me. He said, "Son,
46 if you wanna be on the outside looking in," he says, "I suggest you get up

1 that conveyor, you get all these headliners back down,” and he was
2 screaming at these other folks that were breaking me in and all of a sudden
3 boy people were moving.
4
5 Come to find out, this gentleman was very, very hard. He was cold. He
6 was a car builder. People were scared of him. You didn’t sit on stock. You
7 didn’t drop a screw. He was very, very, very scary. Now, he was a scary
8 guy. He was. People would see him coming and they would be busy doing
9 nothing, but they were busy. Um, the rumor has it, you know, after so
10 many years, uh, this guy fired his own son. So it didn’t, it didn’t matter to
11 him. You were, you were going to do as you were supposed to do on time
12 and do it right, um, or you were fired. And the supervisors came down and
13 kinda came to my defense – er – I think I probably would’ve been fired at
14 that time, uh, because I put those, those wrong parts up on that conveyor
15 belt. I’d built the wrong headliners.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: [32:35] And this was inside your 90 days?
18
19 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, yes. This was in my first couple of weeks. Yeah, I thought – I thought
20 I was done. I thought I was, uh, going to be fired and, uh, that’s when I
21 asked. I said, “There’s gotta be another place,” and I think we talked about
22 that earlier. Um, when they got me upstairs to the production line, I started
23 doing T-Tops and sunroofs, um, as my job. Much better job.
24
25 Doug Rademacher: [33:03] And you said they, uh, teamed you up with another gentleman
26 from, out of chance, from the Upper Peninsula?
27
28 Jody Don Frasher: Yes, his name was, uh, Jerry [Inaudible 33:10]. Um, he was from, uh, uh,
29 Drummond Island – Sault Sainte Marie. Um, his background, uh, or his
30 heritage, he was, uh, an Indian. Um, in Escanaba, we do have a
31 reservation, uh, in Hermansville and he came from a reservation up in
32 Sault Sainte Marie. So we kinda hit it off, and, uh, we ended up being
33 partners and, and, uh, we – like I said – I think we were working 6 days a
34 week, 9 hours a day, but it was fun. It was fun to come to work. The
35 camaraderie, the people, and we would eat, and, and work overtime, uh,
36 because at that time, that was a new process. So all the cars that we built in
37 the morning – er – you know – in the afternoon - we worked from 5 until 3
38 in the morning. They would tell us, “You gotta go down to the offline
39 water,” and we would water test’m to see if the cars leaked when we put
40 the T-Tops in’m. Well, if they leaked, we’d have to take’m all apart and
41 put’m all back together, and it was our job. We were the only ones that
42 were trained to do it so none of the repairmen knew how to do it, so we
43 worked 10, 12, 14-hour-days, um, 6 days a week. I think I, I got some
44 Sundays in there, uh, 7 days a week. I think we worked, what, I think my
45 best was 38 or 39 days in a row without a day off. Um, it was plentiful.
46 Work was plentiful back then. Um, like I said, it was fun to come to work.

1
2 Uh, I was a young adult. They had changed the drinking law. I had just
3 turned 19, but then the law went to 21 so I was able to drink and then I
4 couldn't drink.
5
6 [laughter]
7
8Jody Don Frasher: And all the boys used to go buy me a beer, uh, um, for after work because
9 I wasn't old enough and th - they were teasing me, uh, that I wasn't old
10 enough, uh, to drink, but I could work. I could vote, but I couldn't drink,
11 working in the factory. Having my own apartment. Having my own
12 vehicle but we couldn't drink, but, uh, strange things happened at 3, 4,
13 5:00 in the morning.
14
15Doug Rademacher: Now you said they picked on you. [35:41] Going back to that, were there
16 any new hire or- initiations or pranks that were played on you and did you
17 ever return those favors?
18
19Jody Don Frasher: Uh, it was – I, I think my first one when they, when they sent me down to
20 repair, uh, to get a bucket of steam...
21
22 [coughing]
23
24Jody Don Frasher: ...and I ran down there...
25
26 [coughing]
27
28Jody Don Frasher: ...and I was look – I was looking...
29
30 [coughing]
31
32Jody Don Frasher: ... and they were laughing at me and then because I, I was so excited. I
33 wanted to do well so, you know, they'd tell you, I was – I was on the run. I
34 was going for it, and I finally got down there, and I thought, "A what?"
35 You know what I mean? A bucket of what? And then they would give me
36 these off-name parts. Uh, there was no such part, but they'd sure send me
37 for it and I'd go down and I'd be asking everybody all the way up and
38 down the line and they were [laughter] laughing at me as I am going by
39 and I'd go back and getting lost, finding my way, and, uh, getting locked
40 into the trunk was 1 of my initiations. Um, they picked me up literally.
41 There was 2 people. They picked me up. They put me in the trunk of a, a -
42 what'd it've been? – It would've been a 1978 88, put me in the trunk...
43
44 [laughter]
45

1 Jody Don Frasher: ...and shut it. [stammers] There is no locks in it at then. You gotta have a
2 screwdriver to stick through the hole to get yourself back out, and it was
3 the joke. Now, he is in the trunk and we came, came down and it was – Oh
4 I gotta believe I was in there 8, 10, 12 car lengths or else they would throw
5 you in there and send you into offline water or water test. Remember when
6 we had water tests? They would take, take, uh, – what'd they call them? –
7 [inaudible 37:45]
8
9 [laughter]
10
11 [phone ringing]
12
13 Jody Don Frasher: and they'd loosen up the [inaudible 37:48], put you in the trunk, so
14 meaning the trunk would leak, okay. They'd lock you in. The water is
15 shooting in there at 80 – 80 PSI – pounds per square inch, and it would
16 shoot in there and you'd be sopping wet by the time you got to the other
17 end. They'd open up the trunk and here comes a body. Now...
18
19 [laughter]
20
21 Jody Don Frasher: ...so it was – it was quite a thing.
22
23 Doug Rademacher: [38:11] And as I said, did you get to return that favor?
24
25 Jody Don Frasher: Oh well, there might have been a few instances where we had put...
26
27 [coughing]
28
29 Jody Don Frasher: ...a [inaudible 38:19] of people in the garbage cans and, and lock them
30 into the trunk. It just - It was good clean fun. It was good clean fun. We
31 had fun. Nobody got hurt. Um, but it was, uh, I guess the camaraderie.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: You say that, um, you said it was so busy you couldn't afford to miss a
34 car, you get a little bit down the line and it was hard to get back so to
35 throw you in a vehicle for 12 minutes – 12 car lengths...
36
37 Jody Don Frasher: Well, the joke was, uh, your repairman would always come down. Uh, you
38 always had a person, at, at the end of your area called the repairman and
39 you know, they were all in cahoots. They kinda gave him a wave once I
40 went in the trunk – he came down, so he was doing my job until they let
41 me out. It was, it was intentional. They knew I was in there. Um, so he
42 would do 10 or 12 jobs for me while I was riding in the trunk down the –
43 down the line and everybody would say, "Hey let me out. Huh?"
44 [laughter]

1Jody Don Frasher: And that was the trick. The one who put you in let you out and you did not
2 open the trunk and get another person out because if you did guess who
3 went in the trunk next?
4
5 [laughter]
6
7Jody Don Frasher: You know what I mean, so if someone was in there you just kinda
8 ignore'm and let'm go by. Um.
9
10Doug Rademacher: So you have been sharing a, a typical day. Cars were running down the
11 line. People were having a good time. Uh, money was good. Hours were
12 good. [39:55] Did you, uh, consider your coworkers as brothers and
13 sisters?
14
15Jody Don Frasher: Um...
16
17Doug Rademacher: [40:04] Or did there come a day when that feeling...
18
19Jody Don Frasher: You kn-, you know the, the brother and sister thing – when, when I hired
20 in, uh, union was very, very strong, at, uh, you did not violate anybody
21 else's job and I didn't understand that at the, at the time, you know. I was
22 young. I was 19 years old, and I didn't understand when I had people
23 coming down screaming at me. "That is not your job. You don't do it,"
24 and today, 29 years later, I understand. If you're doing somebody else's
25 job, you're probably gonna end up taking their job away. So if it was your
26 specific job, that's what you did, and if you didn't complete your job, that
27 was the repairman's job. You didn't just jump right in there and be doing
28 somebody else's job from another area or something like that. Um, that's –
29 was the repairman's job or it would go to the end of the line, and it would
30 be pulled off at the end and they had a - what was called a repair hole.
31
32 They would physically pull the car off and build it – build it offline, but
33 yes, I, I did, I did consider them uh, my brothers and sisters. Um, I think as
34 I said earlier in the interview, I wasn't used to having so many a diverse
35 crowd around me. Okay. Uh, it was, uh, it was different. I had a lot to
36 learn. I was, uh, definitely – most definitely, wet behind the ears, uh,
37 naïve, I guess the word would be. And, uh, so, yeah, it was a, it was a
38 wonderful experience. It was – I w-, I was proud to be a UAW person
39 working on my own, taking care of myself, um, yeah, yeah, I guess I did.
40
41Doug Rademacher: [42:03] Have you developed friendships in the plant that extended outside
42 of the plant?
43
44Jody Don Frasher: Um, actually, 1 of my coworkers, um, and one of the first people I met,
45 [Teresa Gale 42:17], um, is now my wife, and that was, uh, I met her, and,
46 uh, I hired in at September of '77, uh, September, October, I had probably

1 met her at the end of October, and we have been recently married in, in the
2 last 3 years, uh, actually, Doug, you and I have been together for quite
3 some time. Uh, Cheryl and myself, uh, have been together, uh, quite some
4 time, um, most definitely. We've, we've got most of our people from out
5 of that plant. My, my good friends and, and confidantes, yeah, come from
6 the plant.
7

8 Doug Rademacher: Boy, you'd be surprised a lot of the interviews we've done, some people
9 never took a coworker as a friend. [43:08] Um, tell me, uh, has a coworker
10 ever impacted your family life?
11

12 Jody Don Frasher: [43:18] Uh, for instance? I'm not quite sure where you're going with that.
13

14 Doug Rademacher: Um, some people... If you don't have anything, that's fine. We can come
15 back to it.
16

17 Jody Don Frasher: Well, you know, impact – absolutely they have. You know. It, uh, I think
18 that goes along with, you know, have we ever taken anybody in – just
19 about everybody that I have worked with has impacted my life in, in some
20 way. Uh, 1 gentleman, uh, his name was Joel [Inaudible 43:49], uh, he -
21 we called the little Italian. He's just – He's just a little guy, um, but he
22 built cars, classic cars on the outside, and that was always my interest to –
23 to have a nice car, and he invited me to his house, uh, and showed me
24 some of his cars. He had 68 and 69 Camaro Super Sport and a Rally Sport
25 and, and, uh, we became real good friends. Uh, a long story short there is 1
26 of my first cars, he - I asked him to help me. I hired him to help me and,
27 uh, we wound up to be good friends to this day, going on 29 years.
28

29 We, we are still in touch but he helped me build, uh, an automobile, my
30 first show car, and as we completed that car, a year and a half later, we
31 took it to, uh, an auto show in South Bend, Indiana, and, uh, I came home
32 with a first place trophy, so impact my life, yes, it was a huge impact, and
33 he is 1 of a dozen – a dozen people that have impacted my life. I've been
34 very fortunate, uh, of moving around inside the plant and, and meeting
35 many, many, many different, uh, people so yes, I [inaudible 45:15].
36

37 Doug Rademacher: I'm going to take you back in the plant.
38

39 Cheryl McQuaid: [45:22] Jody, when you hired in with somebody southern, did you work
40 around many minorities? Women...
41

42 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, yeah, that's – I, I think that was my [inaudible 45:30] with a lot of
43 diverse different people. There were – where I was born and raised, there
44 wasn't many minorities. We had American Indians up there, okay, but as
45 far as blacks and Hispanics, and, and, uh, women were just starting to
46 really come into the body plant at that time, um, but I was, I was like a

1 little kid because it was me and the next hiring date was like the early 70s
2 so I was 19 years old and it seemed like everybody around me was 30 so
3 there was a 10 or 12-year hiring gap there and oh yeah, there was just a
4 wide variety of people.
5
6Cheryl McQuaid: [46:19] Did you ever see any signs of discrimination?
7
8 [sneezing]
9
10Jody Don Frasher: Actually, uh, yeah, it actually happened on, on a pretty much a routine
11 basis. Uh, there was, there was a lot – it – a lot of it was done in good
12 humor but, you know, to today's standard of 2006 it was inappropriate,
13 um, some of the things that were done, some of the things that were said,
14 uh, yes, yes, there was.
15
16Cheryl McQuaid: [46:53] Can you give me an, a for instance?
17
18Jody Don Frasher: Um, we had a gay individual, uh, working in there and, uh, they picked on
19 him. They picked on him very badly. We had a Mexican gentleman. Uh
20 [Shammin Joe Rodriguez 47:11] , uh, another gentleman that impacted me
21 highly, uh, the reason he was called [Shammin Joe 47:18] is because if he
22 could get out of work, oh my God, he'd do it, but they used to call him the
23 pickle picker. Okay. Um, or the dirty Mexican or – and there was other
24 things that I'd rather not go into, but, um, yeah, there was – it was, it was a
25 way of life. Um, I think I got caught up in it. Because everybody else did
26 it, I just thought it was okay to do that, um, and to today's standards it was
27 inappropriate. You know what I mean, um, but yeah, it was there. It was
28 most definitely there.
29
30Cheryl McQuaid: [48:00] Uh, also, what was a typical break or a typical lunch? What did
31 you do for those times that you didn't have to work on the automobile?
32
33Jody Don Frasher: [48:12] Um, really?
34
35Cheryl McQuaid: Really.
36
37Jody Don Frasher: You really want to know or...
38
39Cheryl McQuaid: Yes.
40
41Doug Rademacher: [48:19] Where would you like to go with that?
42
43 [coughing]
44
45Jody Don Frasher: Um...
46

1 [coughing]
2
3 Jody Don Frasher: ...well there was, there was a lot of card playing going on at that time.
4 Um, people were cooking in there, um, I hate to say it. There was a lot of
5 drinking, uh, going on inside the plant. I didn't understand that at the time,
6 but you can't do that, but if you'd get caught, uh, it was automatic,
7 usually...
8
9 [coughing]
10
11 Jody Don Frasher: ...went out the door in a week if you got caught drinking in the plant, uh,
12 but, it seemed everybody had a pretty good routine going, [laughter] you
13 know what I mean? It, uh...
14
15 Doug Rademacher: [48:57] So we closed that [inaudible 48:58] there was still a lot of that in
16 there, huh?
17
18 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, [stammers] realistically, there - anything that you wanted it was a city
19 inside of the city was in that plant, from gambling to drugs to prostitution
20 to alcohol to whatever you wanted, gambling. They used to have gambling
21 downstairs, uh, there would be \$1000 on the table. They would take five
22 material baskets high and a fork truck would come, and it would back out.
23 And all of a sudden, they're in there gambling, shooting craps or gambling
24 downstairs and, uh, uh, in the parts areas. Uh, we had women that would
25 cut hair, uh, at lunch time. We had barbers. We had, you name it, you
26 name it, it was in there. Um, we had uh, like a general store, uh, from
27 alcohol to cigarettes to playing cards to pop and chips and you name it, it
28 was in there.
29
30 If you knew the right person and 1 thing I learned right off the bat, you
31 never ever, ever told on somebody because they would come and get you
32 literally. They would do physical harm to you if you would tell on
33 somebody. Um, I watched a gentleman as I walked out the - my first
34 months, uh, get beat up out in the parking lot so I started parking on the
35 south parking lot, but then I realized I had to go all the way through paint
36 and make my way down to, uh, the trim shop. Uh, it would take me - I'd
37 have to come to work approximately an hour and half early, parking in the
38 south parking lot because I got lost, um, going from 1 end of the building
39 to the other. So I went back to parking in the north parking lot, you know
40 [laughter]. Then, you know, you working 9 and 10 hours a day and then
41 you get there an hour and a half early, uh, you know, made a, made a long
42 day, but oh there was things...
43
44 [coughing]
45
46 Jody Don Frasher: ...going on anyway.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: Uh, you said that there was a lot of cooking going on. [51:18] What kind
3 of cooking and did you get involved in any of the department dinners?
4
5 Jody Don Frasher: Oh yes. We, we had a wonderful thing – I mean, they had frying pans
6 and, um, friers, and they cooked fish and chicken and tacos and people
7 would bring in tamales and, and breakfast burritos, uh, in the morning,
8 um, uh, we had a guy that, that did like homemade cinnamon rolls,
9 homemade cookies. They would bring'm all in and sell them and share
10 them and, and, uh, all that type of thing, um, so yeah, they did it. They did
11 it. They – tons of food, tons of food, or you could order at Harry's across
12 the street. Um, they would give you a, a to-go pack, uh, and they would
13 run it right across the street and you could – they'd hand it through the
14 gate, and you would pay them. Um, yeah, there was always something on.
15 Um...
16
17 Doug Rademacher: And there was a cafeteria. [52:33] And there was always people that
18 packed their lunch but, uh, there was lots of food vending going on, you
19 say?
20
21 Jody Don Frasher: Oh absolu – another exam – old Darrell Mangles, he had ice cream. He
22 had sandwiches. He had, um, God, he had, he had a cooler in his arms
23 most of the day. He was, he was a relief...
24
25 [laughter]
26
27 Jody Don Frasher: ...man and I think he had 4 or 5 coolers a day, huge, large coolers that he
28 would carry around and, and sell things. Um, he was also the banker.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: [Inaudible 53:13] banker?
31
32 Jody Don Frasher: Yeah, he would bring money in and cash your paycheck for \$5 and he got
33 to keep the change. He was also the banker. Now, and there was other
34 people that did it, too. Loan sharks. Sure.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: So, uh you've gotten – now we have got up through the lunch. Tell us
37 about, uh, the typical day, uh, in these breaks. Uh, there was something
38 called a wagon at 1 time that was unique to Fisher Body. [53:44] Can you
39 talk about what is that and what was it like to be working the line and
40 waiting for that next break?
41
42 Jody Don Frasher: Well, at that, at that time, um, we had what they called were relief
43 people. They, they would go around and, uh, the line would never stop,
44 okay. You could get more cars out the door if someone would come and
45 relieve you to the present day where we shut the whole production line
46 down and everybody takes a break at 1 time. We had relief men. So they

1 would come to your job, and they would do – what was it? 14, 15, 17.
2 You'd get two breaks in the morning, um, 14-minute break, a 15-minute
3 break, and after lunch, you'd get a 17-minute break, and then if you
4 worked over 8 hours, you got another 7-minute break and you talked about
5 wagon. What wagon was, was a little munchie cart. It had the chips and
6 the coffee and the - all this stuff and when the wagon would come by –
7 what was that? I don't remember. 7, 8 minutes?
8
9 Doug Rademacher: 7.
10
11 Jody Don Frasher: Um, the line would shut down and we could go get something off the cart,
12 but they, they have eliminated that, I think, what, 1984? In 1984, they
13 eliminated that, uh, that wagon going around. Um, I think that got – what,
14 rolled it into washup, er- something like that.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: [55:11] What's a washup?
17
18 Jody Don Frasher: Um, 6 minutes prior to the line, um, they would give you a chance to go
19 to the bathroom and wash up and get prepared, um, to start your job or to
20 end your job. Six-minute washup time. Um, and in turn, that has also
21 went away. They bargained that away in the contract, uh, the washup
22 times so...
23
24 Doug Rademacher: Uh, Cheryl had asked you about departmental dinners. [55:41] Was there
25 – what did you do on the holidays?
26
27 Jody Don Frasher: Uh, my first bunch. What a wonderful thing. We talked about diversity.
28 You know, coming from the U.P., we were, we were – my father was a
29 pretty much meat and potatoes guy, okay. I didn't know there was
30 anything other than pepperoni on pizza until I was 19 years old, okay.
31 Cause that's the way my dad liked it so that's what we ate. Well, I come
32 down here. You should see the food. Everybody in the whole department
33 would bring like their specialty. If it was dessert or food or whatever the
34 case may be, and we'd get a bunch, a, a bunch of material boxes and the
35 fork trucks would bring'm in and we'd make a nice big long table and put
36 a tablecloth on it and everybody in that department, if you were involved,
37 usually gave like 5 bucks for the meat and then you would bring
38 something. What a wonderful thing. The, the wide variety of different
39 tastes and, and how people prepare it. Um, it was great. It really was. We
40 looked forward to the holidays cause normally the supervisor would kick
41 in the meat, uh, but if you got 1 of those not real bright supervisors out
42 there, it would be, "Well, why don't you throw \$5 in and then bring
43 something to pass, too?" But normally – normally the supervisor would
44 buy the meat on the holidays and everybody else would bring something.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: [57:18] So you called it bright? Um, [stammers] can you describe what
2 you're saying, your, uh - what made a good boss? What made a bad boss?
3

4 Jody Don Frasher: Oh, you know, looking back on it, a good, a good boss to me was straight-
5 forward, okay. They wouldn't tell you any tales. Um, they all – they, they
6 put it up front. They didn't lie to you. They didn't, uh, um, tell you 1 story
7 and tell somebody else another story, uh, and they always took care of
8 their people. They didn't talk down to them. They didn't, uh, um, back
9 stab you or talk about you. They took care of your pay
10 properly. Um, and the biggest thing, they didn't scream at you. That was a
11 good boss because when I hired in, it was very intimidating. You know,
12 there, there – some of those supervisors out there were very, very
13 intimidating. They would get up close and personal. They'd get right in
14 your face and holler at you. Now. "You want to be on the outside looking
15 in? I'm going to have your job. Get out the line," and it, it was, it was a
16 culture you had to definitely adapt to and know who was teasing and, and
17 who really meant business. Um, that answer your question?
18

19 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. [58:58] Were you ever laid off?
20

21 Jody Don Frasher: Well you know what? Looking back on this with 29 years seniority as
22 we talk today, uh, or it will be 29, July 1, uh, of 2006. Um, what was the
23 question again?
24

25 Doug Rademacher: I asked if you've ever been laid off.
26

27 Jody Don Frasher: Oh yes, I - we looked, we looked at it as the best part-time job I ever had
28 because we had changeovers. Okay. So a changeover meaning that when
29 the style of the car changed, they would have to go in and retool the line
30 so we would get that time off and at that time, we would get in the
31 upwards of 3 months off at a time. I was still employed with Fisher Body,
32 but they would give me unemployment, what they called sup pay. It
33 supplemented my pay, so I got 80% of my pay not working. It was a
34 wonderful thing. Best part-time job I ever had. Um, but it had [coughing]
35 major, major layoff. I was very fortunate. Um, with my background, uh, in
36 training, I have had an opportunity to have a wide variety of people, um,
37 that have been to 4 and 5 and 6 different plants throughout General Motors
38 and basically we call them GM gypsies, but I started in 1977 at Fisher
39 Body on Verlinden, uh, Avenue, and I have been there to the present day. I
40 am a very fortunate person.
41

42 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [1:00] Um, tell me about your first interaction with the union and
43 what'd you think of the union and, uh, what about you getting involved
44 with the union?
45

46 Jody Don Frasher: Well, I can't remember. Well, actually I do. It would be T-Tops and

1 sunroofs. See, T-Tops and sunroofs was a new job and there was no
2 language in the contract what would reflect my job application. So when
3 they wouldn't run cars or not run enough cars, they would say, "I want
4 you to go down there." Used me as a utility person, like a jack of all
5 trades person. You'd – wherever they wanted to send you, that's where
6 they were going to send you. And I think I got involved as far as trying
7 to get language into the contract and I was young and dumb and loud
8 and rude [laughter] and, and we had committee people like that, that were
9 very loud. Uh, they would come out, and that's the way they would
10 express themselves. Um, if they were displeased about something, they
11 would come out there in a rant, uh, slamming their bag on the table and,
12 and, uh, but I had some gentlemen that would come and kind of pull my
13 light. They were smooth talkers, smooth talkers, and the favorite line was,
14 "You know what? After all the issues that we've just went through, all the
15 documentation we've done, my hands are tied," [laughter] and that really,
16 really upset me at that time, not enough for me to get involved.

17
18 I went – I started going to union meetings, and I realized there was a
19 procedure that had to be followed at a union meeting. Well, I would start
20 speaking and I was speaking out of turn and how I refer to it [coughing] -
21 I don't know if you remember, uh, the roller blading thing, power
22 jammers. I'd start talking, and, and they'd tell me, "You're out of order."
23 Well, we'd have another gentleman over here. He would, he would say, "I
24 believe this should be tabled," and before you know it, they're asking me
25 to lead the law, so I didn't know procedure. I was talking out of turn, uh,
26 they were smarter than I was, um, on the policies and procedures of what
27 was going on in my surroundings, so it made me very frustrated. Um, I
28 kept going back. You know what I mean? They kept on asking me to
29 leave, um, then 1 individual impacted me. His name was Ronald Perry,
30 Ron Perry, and he was a screaming ole' little guy. He was a short fat little
31 guy that just loved to talk, and he talked very loud. Well, him and I used to
32 go round and round and round and 1 day he put the challenge to me. He
33 says, "You know what? If you think you can do this better, get off your
34 ass and get out there and get involved," and I said, "Maybe." Know what I
35 mean? Maybe I will.

36
37 Then we had a young lady, uh, that became my committee person, and it
38 came down to a sport with me. I would go and investigate it. I would have
39 the answers. I would call my committee person, and she wouldn't have it.
40 Okay. So I'd have it all written down on a piece of paper. I'd take the
41 piece of paper and I'd slide it across the table. You know what I mean? I
42 said, "Is - Would this and this and this and this be the issue and," and in
43 that practice, um, I got to enjoy it. Okay. I, I guess I called it "the hunt"
44 alright, to go out there, investigate it, get the information, go represent it
45 to... [inaudible 1:05].
46

1 [coughing]
2
3 Jody Don Frasher: ...um, uh, and come back with a, a, a positive result and unfortunately at
4 that time there was too many people with that mean mind mentality. Uh,
5 they were more interested in what was good for them, the selfishness, and
6 I guess my favorite saying, "If, if it's not good for we and us, it's not
7 good. If it's not good for the whole group, you can't just be in there
8 bargaining for 1.
9
10 You gotta, you gotta impact everybody and that's how I got involved. Uh,
11 because we had way too many of those mean mind mentality people in
12 place and I was a hothead. I was a loudmouth. Um, my personal life, uh, I
13 guess they thought I was a little crazy at 1 time, but, um, I ran for an
14 alternate committee position, and my friends and people on the floor
15 elected me because I was a little different, and, uh, I had the opportunity to
16 serve as a alternate committee person for 2 terms as an alternate. Uh, 1 as
17 a district, a manpower coordinator, a placement person.
18
19 Um, throughout the years, I have been here, I am now to the present day,
20 I'm a health and safety tech trainer at Building 66. Uh, we do 43 different
21 classes, 4 different locals, uh, on 3 different shifts, and there is 7 of us, uh,
22 that service the Lansing area. Uh, that would be Local 602, uh, Local 652,
23 1618, and 1753 so I gotta believe I have been blessed to be able to go out
24 there and serve my membership in a wide variety of unions. Uh, the
25 different personalities and the different ways, uh, our union can work for
26 the people and sometimes it works just for a very few amount of people.
27 Um, and that's how I got involved because I didn't like that very few
28 people always getting the benefits of the union, um, and also something
29 that I learned, if you don't get involved, you don't have a right to bitch.
30 Okay. And you know what? I was good at that.
31
32 So I had to get involved. I had to, I had to know what was going on or they
33 would beat you down. Um, [stammers] they'd, they'd crucify you. They
34 would take you out. They would let you run, um, make you look like a
35 fool. You'd make yourself look like a fool and then they would shut you
36 down, um, and it happened to me several, several, several times and that's
37 when I decided this is never going to happen to me again. I am going to
38 find out how this program works. I am going to start coming to these
39 meetings. I am going to follow these people. I am going get – I am gonna
40 pick their brain. I am gonna get their knowledge, and they are not going to
41 do that to me and other people again, and that's, that's how I got involved.
42 Uh, uh, it was a matter of survival. Um, you know they were trying to take
43 my job away, um, feed - feeding me a line. And, and [stammers] I guess
44 that's how I got involved. Um...
45
46 Doug Rademacher: I'm gonna take you back in the plant again, Jody. Um, there is different

1 areas in the plant. We know'm as trim, paint, and body. [1:08] Did you
2 work in all 3 and what was the environment like in those different areas?
3

4Jody Don Frasher: When I started in 1977, I started in the, uh, uh, M trim, and realistically, it
5 was still the old plant. I am so happy that I got to see the old way that we
6 used to build cars. We used to have the A system and the B system that
7 ran side by side, the big car line, and, and the little car line. And
8 everything was on the same floor. All the material was downstairs and
9 both, both lines were upstairs. In 1978, they built a new paint department,
10 uh the building 17-2, and they gutted the whole building. Put the small car
11 line downstairs and they had the big car line was upstairs. So actually we
12 had 2 assembly plants in 1 and people don't realize that our numbers
13 reflected that. If I could jump ahead a little bit. Our last, our last heyday at
14 Fisher Body, we built 485,000 cars in a 100-year-old facility. We trucked
15 7 cars at a time across town. We all built North American Operations in
16 every automotive company in the world out of a 100-year-old facility
17 called Fisher Body.
18

19 And we had the J.D. Powers award in quality on both lines. And now as
20 we all know, we have a new Delta facility coming so I gotta believe what,
21 what we did with 100-year-old facility, almost 500,000 cars in a year,
22 what can we do with a new plant and that's why General Motors came
23 here to Lansing. We build'm on time, in budget, and we do it safely. It is
24 the people. They could've went anywhere in the world and they came here
25 to Lansing, Michigan, because we have the best work force, I've got to
26 believe and one of the best regions our union on this end of the country.
27 I've gotta believe that. Um, and, and that's after 29 years, and I know we
28 were talking back. Uh, you know, I jumped ahead there a little bit, but it,
29 uh, uh, to my knowledge, today, in, in my experiences, nobody does it like
30 Lansing. Nobody. They tell us the Japanese and, and, uh, um, the rest of –
31 do it better than we do but it's so close. It is so close now. We just, we just
32 got a bad rap, uh, uh, from years ago.
33

34 [laughter]
35

36John Fedewa: [Inaudible 1:11].
37

38Doug Rademacher: Jody, I'm gonna again take you back inside the plant. Uh, you're, uh,
39 talking about the quality and the, uh, productivity of us has allowed us this
40 new facility, but going back to the Fisher Body plant, working the
41 assembly line, [1:12] how'd you pass the time away? Did radios or
42 anything make the environment better to work in? Wh - What's the story
43 about body paint, trim, and just the differences?
44

45Jody Don Frasher: The radios, um, when I, when I first hired in, uh, everybody had, you
46 know, a small radio, but then the, the times had changed, uh, all of a

1 sudden, I think they call 'em boom boxes now. These large radios that were
2 as good as your sound system at home were in the plant and yeah, I did
3 make the day. Um, I was working on, on, uh, the second shift 5 to 3 in the
4 morning so that was the lower seniority folks were on, on the second shift
5 normally, normally. But there was, there was some senior employees on,
6 on the second shift and sometimes, uh, there was some issues with radios.
7 Uh, some would be watching, uh, or listening, to a baseball game and then
8 you had a young gentleman down there, uh, with rock and roll or, or
9 something like that. Uh, radio wars [laughter]. It, it was, it was something.
10 Then management thought, well, we'll take care of that. They came
11 through the plant and pulled every plug out.
12

13 They said, "You cannot use the power here, um, in the body plant to play
14 your radio. If you're gonna play a radio, you're going to do it with
15 batteries." And you know those big radios we have these days really
16 sucked up the batteries. So it was expensive. I was 1 of the people that I
17 had a little extra time on my job. I would climb up into the steel and I
18 would run extension cords from 2 blocks away down over so we could
19 have a [laughter] radio and didn't have to pay for the batteries. Um, I
20 would crawl underneath, uh, ramps and run extension cords for our
21 cooking, for our radios, for the, a TV – we had those little baby TVs in
22 there for the ball games and, and things like that. Yeah, radios were, were
23 really our friend. Now, I mean it, it passed the time. Uh, People don't
24 realize there is no windows. You are working next to the same person
25 most of the time. You spent more time with the people in the plant, uh,
26 back then at 6 days a week, 9 hours a day, than you did with your family.
27

28 Um, and the, the wide variety of departments, uh, of the trim shop. I
29 basically did most of my time in trim, uh, but when I was involved with
30 the union as a committee person, I represented, uh, uh, areas 10 through
31 60, and I had, uh, um, quality control plant wide. So I had an opportunity
32 to go to the paint shop, uh, into the body shop and [noise] weld integrity.
33 Um, and the different ways people had to dress. Uh, years ago, uh, in the
34 late '70s and the early '80s, uh, lead was still being used in our vehicles,
35 and we know today lead causes health issues. They would be in full, full
36 gear, like an air suit. They would put a helmet over your head with piped
37 in air. Um, so you want to talk about radios down in the, in the body shop.
38 It was very loud. They called it the jungle. Uh, all these weld guns and big
39 sidewinders to screw bolts in the doors, the hinges, uh, uh, things like that.
40

41 Then you'd go in the paint shop and you'd have to have totally different,
42 um, coveralls. You always had to be very careful, uh, if you were going
43 into the paint department, you had to be tested to make sure you didn't
44 have the wrong deodorant or perfume or cologne or the wrong kind of
45 soap because, uh, uh, shampoo, because it would cause cratering into the
46 paint. You would damage the product. So you just really couldn't be going

1 from department to department if you didn't know. There was a lot of
2 people that always walked in, went down the same aisle, went right to
3 their job for 15 and 20 years. They didn't, they didn't care about if they
4 worked in the body shop. They didn't care about paint and trim. They had
5 no idea what was going on. It was like 3 different societies, um, 3 totally
6 different groups of people, the paint people, the body people, the, uh, the
7 trim people. Uh, that, that was the elite crowd, the repair people, the
8 offline repair people, the, the water test people, um, just such a wide
9 variety of – we had s-, I think we called it classifications back then.

10
11 You had a classification on where you worked. You had to work inside
12 your classifications. To present day, we've eliminated probably a good
13 portion of all of those classifications. Basically, you're a worker now, but
14 back then you were a glass person, you were a paint person, you were, a, a
15 trim person, uh, uh, a body shop person, and then you had, uh, all the
16 different facets of that department, uh, you could transfer around to.

17
18 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Um, Jody, there was a place, uh, the plant has been there since the
19 20s I believe, and there is, a, a little establishment across the street. It's
20 known as Harry's Place. You said that they brought lunch to you
21 occasionally. [1:18] Can you talk more about it? What is that place? What
22 did it mean to the workers and did you ever go there?

23
24 Jody Don Frasher: Um, we talked earlier, uh, about your 90 days. Okay. Uh, I, I would not
25 venture out. Uh, I would bring a lunch in. Uh, sometimes, uh, yeah, we
26 would call across the street, and they would bring the lunch over, but for a,
27 for a good portion of the people, um, they started their day at Harry's.
28 They would have a bite to eat. They would go there at lunchtime, um,
29 have a bite a eat, and possibly spirits, you know, and you know that's
30 against the plant rules. You can't be drinking or anything like that on your
31 job or be intoxicated, but it, it seemed, uh, the rules were bent, uh a little
32 bit, and a good portion of them ended their day at, at Harry's Bar, or, uh,
33 the other establishment right down the block, approximately, uh, a block
34 away, a block and a half away, was the Irish Pub. So the Irish Pub and
35 Harry's were kind of a staple for a, for a lot of folks. They would start
36 their day and end their day there or end their day there or...

37
38 Doug Rademacher: [1:19] And did management go to these facilities?

39
40 Jody Don Frasher: Um, as we started, uh, there wasn't a such a thing as management and
41 union people being together. Uh, a couple of supervisors would sneak
42 down with us, uh, but their upper management did not want the folks, the
43 UAW folks and the salary folks playing together I guess you would say,
44 uh, socializing together. Uh, they tried to keep us as 2 different groups
45 unlike today, we have, um, an open relationship with management. Well

1 back then, we did not. We did not have that open relationship and they,
2 they tried to keep us apart. They really did.
3
4John Fedewa: Okay.
5
6Doug Rademacher: The plant has been there forever. It's changed names a number of times.
7 [1:20] What was the plant when it closed? What was it called and what is
8 it to you?
9
10Jody Don Frasher: Uh, Lansing Car Assembly. Uh, when we closed, uh, I think we were
11 BOC, Buick, Oldsmobile, Cadillac Group. Um, we were Fisher Body, um,
12 but I gotta believe it will always be Body by Fisher, Fisher Body to me.
13 Okay. Uh, Lansing Car Assembly, uh, BOC, uh, Buick, Oldsmobile,
14 Cadillac Group. You know a lot of that to me was – all they would
15 reorganize, uh, just to take money out of my pocket, uh, as far as my profit
16 sharing and things like that. You know, in the past, uh, some of our
17 managers, uh, uh, and this is North American Operations, and, and our
18 Lansing site, made, made some very bad decisions for us that, uh, um,
19 impacted the town, the quality of the vehicles, the, um, but I gotta believe,
20 uh, overall capital of quality. When I hired in, there, there was pride. We
21 had banners up and down the hallways going into the, the cafeteria, every,
22 every stairwell, every aisle. Everything was swept, cleaned. Um, people
23 were proud. People were proud, uh, on what they built. Uh, our society on
24 the outside on the other hand, uh, kinda believed that we were overpaid,
25 lazy people in there building cars, uh, but they were wrong. They are
26 wrong. Uh, if they could walk a mile in my shoes and some of the
27 operations.
28
29 I've had great jobs. I've had some nasty jobs in, in that place. But General
30 Motors and Fisher Body, Lansing, has been good to me. They owe me
31 nothin'. They've given me a paycheck since I've been 19 years old and
32 again, I've, uh, uh, to this present day, it'd be 28½ years. Um, it has been a
33 great place to work. They have given me loads of opportunity, um, as far
34 as training and committee work and people and product. And, um, it's a,
35 it's a wonderful place, and, and my hope is that things are going to pick up
36 and, and possibly our children will get younger people back in there. And
37 we will build cars again like we used to, um, millions and millions and
38 millions of Oldsmobiles that we built and Buicks and, and Chevrolets and
39 you know, people don't realize we built 11 different car lines. We kept
40 other plants across town busy when we did the Cavalier, the Malibu. We
41 did convertibles, 2 doors, 4 doors. Um, that body shop produced over 11
42 different – 13, excuse me, 13 different body styles, completely different
43 automobiles we built out of that facility. It, it's, it's been a good thing for
44 me.
45

1John Fedewa: You're there. Uh, I wanna know, [1:23] what's 1 of your best memories of
2 Fisher Body? Give a moment that stands out in your mind.
3

4Jody Don Frasher: Well, I guess, I guess 1 – a good moment for me as when I did get
5 involved in the – and the light family came on, that, um, when I was
6 elected for the first time because I've had a wide variety of, you know,
7 safety coordinator, EPG coordinator, uh, cost coordinator, and you know,
8 all these different things. And then, then when I finally made the
9 commitment to go out there and I didn't do it alone. I had folks behind me.
10 Um, when I was elected in 1992 for the first time, uh, I got to walk my,
11 my folks out on our first strike. You know, it was my first strike, and as an
12 alternate committee person, I walked my department out, uh, on to the
13 picket line. Um, I think that is probably something that's very memorable
14 to me. Um, I've had some horrible things happen.
15

16 I've watched a conveyor, uh, up in the paint department break. It fell down
17 on a woman's head. It drug her down the line, uh, because safety
18 equipment wasn't there. Uh, they didn't have safety chains on the carriers.
19 Uh, we fired up that paint department way too soon. Uh, it was not ready
20 for production, and we did it anyway. Um, but we learnt. We learnt from
21 that. Uh, did not kill her. She was injured but, uh, that, that was a scary,
22 scary thing for me. Um, but good memories. I – you know, I don't think
23 we have enough tape here to go through some of the wonderful memories,
24 uh, of the body plant. Uh, personal mistakes, made a few. Made some bad
25 choices in my life, uh, you know financially, physically, relationships, um,
26 but all in all, that place does not owe me anything. Uh, they give me a
27 paycheck every week. Um, I've had an opportunity of meeting people, uh,
28 my wife, uh, we are still there, um, I'm blessed. I'm blessed. I work, um, I
29 take care of my family. Uh, I try to be active, uh, with the union. Uh, it is
30 the right thing to do.
31

32 Union people are good people, uh, unlike our society believes we are
33 overpaid and things like that. But, uh, if we look back in history, that
34 would be another interview. Um, if it wasn't for the union people, we
35 wouldn't be where we are at today. So yeah, I've, I've got many, many,
36 many, many wonderful experiences there.
37

38Doug Rademacher: You have, uh, are active. You said you try to stay active. You're on the
39 union label committee. You volunteer, uh, [1:27] under your appointed
40 position to safety, uh, there is some obligations?
41

42Jody Don Frasher: Well, I, we have been directed from, from our leadership that they would
43 like to see us involved in, in the community which, which is right. Um, uh
44 approximately, you know, in a bare minimum, 12, 12, 16, 18 hours a year.
45 You know, we, we should get out and give back, um to our community

1 and our, our brothers and sisters, you know, our membership, because
2 realistically these elected and appointed...
3
4 [coughing]
5
6 Jody Don Frasher: ...jobs, what are we here for? It was our choice, our choice to serve the
7 membership and unfortunately sometimes people forget where they came
8 from, um, and these things go to the wayside. So I think that part is just to
9 kinda keep, keep us on track. Okay. I gotta believe I do well over and
10 above my mandatory, uh, time that's allotted but it's, it's my choice. And
11 it's my choice to do that, um, and I gotta believe it's the right thing to do.
12 Um, does it conflict with my family sometime, um, my down time? Uh,
13 yes, it does but you know, it just, it's the right thing to do.
14
15 John Fedewa: I'm gonna go over benefits, Jody. [1:28] What's your most appreciated
16 bargain benefit?
17
18 Jody Don Frasher: I gotta believe, I gotta believe present day, uh, it would be my benefits as
19 far as healthcare and things like that, um, my glasses, my dentist. Uh, um,
20 you know, way, way back when, you know, I remember when I hired in, I
21 guess it would be vacation time. But my, my total package, my total
22 package, everything that's bargained for me, um, in my contract because
23 would management just give it to me? I can't believe so. I can't believe
24 they would just hand it to me. Um, so, everything, everything that we've
25 got, um, from my vacation to my healthcare benefits. Uh, it's all good.
26
27 John Fedewa: Skilled trades, uh...
28
29 [coughing]
30
31 John Fedewa: ...is important to keep the plant running. [1:29] What was your
32 relationship with them, and did you ever have them do anything special
33 for you?
34
35 Jody Don Frasher: Our skilled trades personnel, um, people don't realize we've had – we
36 were the world headquarters for Oldsmobile for over 100 years. We had
37 more talent in this town as far as, uh, from engineering to design to our
38 skilled trades, uh, toolmakers, [jiggin' fixture 1:30] – the field's labs, the,
39 um, and we have really, really narrowed that down. Um, it's gone away.
40 Do something special? You know, as a committee person, I would go –
41 there is a policy and procedure to adhere to when, when it comes to
42 getting work done in the plant as far as work orders and things like that.
43 But I had friends that were skilled tradespeople, and, and people I was
44 involved with, uh, as a committee person that we would ask for something
45 done. And, you know, I can't say too many people denied me. If it was in

1 their power, uh, I would say 9 out of 10 times they would come out and do
2 that.
3
4 Unfortunately, we have a lot of folks that go out there and do other
5 people's jobs. I think we touched upon this a little bit earlier, but people
6 don't realize our brothers and sisters in the trades are being eliminated on
7 a daily basis. If it is not your job, you should not do it. Unfortunately, I
8 think I've violated my own, you know, my own rule there some time
9 [stammers] to do that but – and that goes for our production, our material,
10 our sanitation folks. Our times are, are changing. They're, they're this lean
11 manufacturing, work hard, or – work smarter, not harder. We've, we've
12 eliminated a lot of folks, um, that would be, uh, the early '80s, we had 62,
13 6200 people at Local 602. Across town at 652, I think we were about
14 12,500 people. Uh, our present day, what's, what's our scale, about 3100
15 roughly?
16
17 John Fedewa: [Inaudible 1:32].
18
19 Jody Don Frasher: 31...
20
21 John Fedewa: We're not that big.
22
23 Jody Don Frasher: Um, I think that's what we left with, didn't we? 2800...?
24
25 John Fedewa: [Inaudible 1:32].
26
27 Jody Don Frasher: 2600? Uh, so from the time when I'd have to line up in front of Harry's
28 we had cars lined up all the way to the parking lot which, you know, 65,
29 6700 people down to half. And we built more cars than we did back then.
30 It, uh - but our trades folks, they kinda fell in the category. They've kinda
31 worked themselves out of a job. Um, but it is not right. That's our, that's
32 our skilled labor, our high-paying jobs, and, and hopefully that would be
33 each and every 1 of us goal is to work ourself into something like that. It's
34 not cut out for everybody but, um, trades, you know, it's, it's a great thing.
35
36 John Fedewa: Well, we're about at the end of this, uh, interview. I wanna ask you what'd
37 it feel like to see the plant being tore down at this time and if you have
38 something that you'd feel we haven't asked, add that at this time.
39
40 [coughing]
41
42 Jody Don Frasher: Well to tell you the truth, um, I'm sitting in the greenhouse in this
43 interview and we were just, just outside looking at, uh, um, the old
44 entrance to paint which is no longer there. Um, honest to God, I never
45 thought I would see the day. I never thought I would see the day that, uh
46 the capital of quality, Fisher Body, uh, would be taken away. It, it's a

1 changing time in our society. Uh, our sister Local 652 has, has been
2 impacted also. Um, it's, it's just sad, uh, to see some of this history go.
3 Fortunate for us, we do have a new facility, Delta, and we, uh, discussed
4 that as far as we do have the best work force around. That's why we do
5 have a, a new facility, but I don't know, it's sad. It's sad to me to see, see
6 the old, the old girl go away because there's, there's so many memories,
7 uh, the beautiful, the beautiful, beautiful cars, um, that we've produced,
8 the millions and millions we've produced. Uh, we – were they all good?
9 No. You know, we had some dogs in there, the old station wagon...
10
11 [coughing]
12
13 Jody Don Frasher: ...you know what I mean. The – we were in that boxy time of our design.
14 You know, we had some dogs in there but...
15
16 John Fedewa: You didn't design them.
17
18 Jody Don Frasher: Yeah, we...
19
20 [laughter]
21
22 Jody Don Frasher: ...didn't design it. The old '87 style Cutlass Salon, the little slanted no-
23 trunk vehicle, our, our poor little Achieva, you know, we – you know,
24 there was some cars out there that, that weren't good but you know what?
25 We put'm together proper. Um, and all in all, I, I would like to, uh, thank
26 Jerri and John, uh, Cheryl and Doug, uh, for giving me this opportunity to,
27 to share my time, um, I gotta believe, uh, I am a car builder. I, I am not
28 building cars at this present time. Uh, my leadership has given me the
29 opportunity to be a health and safety, uh, tech trainer, and to continue to
30 serve my membership, but I gotta believe, I am a car builder. This has
31 been – I don't know what I, I would have done in my life other than build
32 cars. I was young. I've basically done nothing else in my life. Uh, you
33 know, my hobbies of working on automobiles and my home and my yard
34 and things like that, and camping, and... But I don't know. [noise] You
35 know, it – what I would've done. I, I worked next to people that have uh,
36 multiple degrees, um, I'm basically uneducated, uh, and, and this place has
37 been a great place to work.
38
39 Um, it's not over. I've still got, um, a, a, a young man, my son Jacob. He
40 is 13 years old so dad's gonna have to work, uh, just a little bit more. I am
41 anticipating about 35 or 36 years, uh, so that would be another 5 or 6 years
42 for me. Hopefully, we are gonna be successful bringing, bringing our new,
43 uh, uh, car line in with our new plant. And thanks again folks for the
44 opportunity.
45
46 John Fedewa: It's been a pleasure, Jody. Thanks for taking [inaudible 1:37].

1

2Female: Thank you.

3

4Doug Rademacher: Thank you, Jody.

5

6Male: Thank you, Jody.

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9/rm