

1 **Mark Groce discusses his career as a production and material handling worker**
2 **and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**
3
4

5 Doug Rademacher: Good morning. I'm Doug Rademacher and this is the Fisher Body
6 Historical Team and we are in the conference room of the 602 Union Hall.
7 Today is November 15th. It's approximately 9:30 a.m. We are here to
8 interview Mark Groce. [0:21] Mark, would you please say your name,
9 spell it for the record? Your last name?
10
11 Mark Groce: Mark Groce, M-A-R-K G-R-O-C-E.
12
13 Doug Rademacher: [0:28] And your address?
14
15 Mark Groce: 522 West Frederick, Lansing, Michigan.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: Excellent. And, uh, you have a nickname. [0:40] Could you share what
18 that is?
19
20 Mark Groce: Uh, my nickname is Blue.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [0:44] Blue, would you share with me – uh, what is your marital
23 status?
24
25 Mark Groce: I'm s-, uh, single.
26
27 Doug Rademacher: [0:51] And do you have any children?
28
29 Mark Groce: No. I'm afraid I don't.
30
31 Doug Rademacher: Okay. And, uh, [0:57] can you share your education level?
32
33 Mark Groce: Uh, I went to high school at Charlotte, went 12 grades, and then I did 2
34 years of LCC welding and a few computer courses on how to and all that.
35 But other than that, that's about it...
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [1:12] And do you...
38
39 Mark Groce: ...so...
40
41 Doug Rademacher: ...do you have any military service?
42
43 Mark Groce: No I do not.
44
45 Doug Rademacher: Okay. At this time, I'm going to go around the room and introduce, uh, all
46 the people that are here in the room today.
47

1 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
2

3 Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.
4

5 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.
6

7 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
8

9 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
10

11 Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming.
12

13 Doug Rademacher: I'd like to start [tapping] today Mark with your hire-in date. [1:37] Could
14 you share your first day, your seniority, and a little bit about that?
15

16 Mark Groce: Well, I hired in, um, in, in September of '76, just a few months after high
17 school. And, uh, my first day, I, I came in for what they called an
18 interview. I wasn't really expecting them to hire me on the spot or
19 anything but they, they brought us in and they, and they – the first thing
20 they did was send us right down to medical. Uh, didn't even talk to us or
21 anything. And then they brought us back and they, and they put us in the
22 employment office and we got to sit around for, oh, 10 or 15 minutes
23 while other bosses came in and selected people from the group. And, uh, I
24 got selected by Bill Bosworth Sr., for the Trim Department. So that was
25 pretty cool.
26

27 Doug Rademacher: [2:26] Was there a point where you stood in line to get, uh, an application?
28 Can you share that?
29

30 Mark Groce: No. My dad brought one home.
31

32 Doug Rademacher: Oh.
33

34 Mark Groce: He used to work here as well. Uh, he was part of the industrial truck repair
35 group. And so he brought an application home and I filled it out and he
36 sent it back, so. And that's how I got the application itself.
37

38 Doug Rademacher: [2:48] And did they call you at home or were you – did you receive a
39 letter?
40

41 Mark Groce: I received a, a, kind of a 5 x 7 postcard in-, uh, informing th-, me of the
42 interview.
43

44 Doug Rademacher: Excellent. [2:59] Do you remember which department you hired into?
45

1Mark Groce: Uh, it was the Trim Department. They put in the in, interiors. First job I
2 got was bolting down seat belts. That was a hard job. Uh, we worked for
3 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. Uh, after the first few days, my hands
4 swelled up so bad that, that I couldn't hardly use'm for anything else. But
5 that only lasted a couple a weeks until I got used to the, holding the guns
6 and stuff, so it was pretty cool.
7

8Doug Rademacher: So Mark, you said your father worked here. [3:34] Would you share with
9 us about the feeling of coming in? You said you didn't realize they were
10 gonna hire you immediately. But did you have an im-, uh, an impression
11 of what factory life was gonna be like? The, the workplace or, or was it
12 new to ya and can you share that...
13

14Mark Groce: It was...
15

16Doug Rademacher: ...initial experience?
17

18Mark Groce: ...it was really new to me. Um, I hadn't pictured – worked in a, in a shop
19 to be more like, uh, a machine shop or, or like it was at school and stuff
20 like that. But this was a lot more intense. They, they, they did, um – how
21 can I put it? They built more cars [laughter] and they, they built more
22 things and so, uh, it was a lotta repetitive work. I was, I wasn't ready for it
23 as a – even as a kid, so. [pause] It was cool.
24

25Doug Rademacher: [4:19] I'd like to know, when you hired in, what was your plan? Did you
26 have something that you decided you were going to do or was it – were
27 you going to use your employment here as a stepping stone?
28

29Mark Groce: No. I was 18 years old, and I needed a job. And when I came to work here,
30 I had no thoughts of the future or, or anything like that. Um, I just came to
31 work. Um, it worked out to be a really good place to work and so I stayed.
32 Uh, however, my education has been for industrial arts. Um, we had
33 machine shop in school and we had wood shop in school and, and we've
34 had, y'know, welding classes and stuff. 'Cause that was my original intent
35 was to be a welder. Um, that's what I trained for when I was in, in high
36 school and thereafter. But, uh, I had no, no vision of the future.
37

38Doug Rademacher: [5:21] Since you did envision yourself as a welder and there was welding
39 available in the plant, did you ever get that opportunity?
40

41Mark Groce: Yes. I welded doors in the Body Shop for a while.
42

43Doug Rademacher: [5:29] So from your original job where you said it was very difficult, the
44 seat belt bolt. Um, let's start there. Would you share, uh, that first day?
45 And the supervisor that selected you – how [clicking] did you guys hit it
46 off? What was that like?

1
2 [crackling]
3
4Mark Groce: Well, Bill Bosworth Sr., was a, um, an experienced foreman and, and
5 knew, uh, a lot about [tapping] people and about the area. And he brought
6 me and 3 other guys up to the, the 3X area where at the time they were
7 running 2 lines side by side. And that was a big ar-, a big building. And,
8 uh, he, we, we found his desk and it was in the middle of just confusion
9 everywhere as far as I could tell. [tapping] And I put my lunch down and
10 he showed us our jobs. He introduced me to the, to a girl called [Annie
11 6:12] and, uh, she was putting in the, the rear seat belt bolts. And she
12 taught me to do that. And we did that half of the day or so and then we
13 went to lunch. Everybody split. And I walked around that place for 20
14 minutes trying to find my lunch.
15
16 [laughter]
17
18Mark Groce: [laughter] I finally found it, had about, oh, just enough time to eat it and
19 get back to my, my position before, before the lunchtime got over. But, uh,
20 it was quite a hectic day.
21
22Doug Rademacher: You said 3X. [6:40] What is 3X?
23
24Mark Groce: 3X is the large Trim building. It's, uh, it's a part of the, the, the whole
25 Fisher Body Plant. Uh, it's just one particular building, part of it. That's all.
26
27Doug Rademacher: Okay. Now, you said, uh, this job was difficult. And you met Annie.
28 [6:58] Now, what was your thought when you were given a job and to be
29 trained by a, a woman? D-, do you have any thought about that? Did that
30 give you...
31
32Mark Groce: No. She was a lot better at it than I was and knew how to hit that hole and
33 get them seat belts in there real darn quick. It took me forever. Every time
34 she'd give me the gun, I'd be down the line so far she'd have to work for 5
35 minutes to get me back up again. I thought I'd never get it.
36
37Doug Rademacher: So you gave the respect for – It didn't matter...
38
39Mark Groce: Oh, she let – we'd get – at the end of the day, she walked outta there just
40 as quick as everybody and everything and I'm like draggin' my butt trying
41 to find a door. I mean I was, I was in bad shape [laughter] for that.
42
43 [throat clearing]
44
45Doug Rademacher: Didja see your father that night?
46

1Mark Groce: No. Uh, he was on the day shift. I got hired on to the second shift, so I was
2 pretty much on my own; however, he did come and see me the next week,
3 y'know. And, uh, that was, that was nice to ha-, – he stopped by the job. I
4 didn't have time to talk but he stopped by the job and watched me work for
5 a while and see what job I had and told me it was a good job and he was
6 glad to see me. And then he left. So...
7

8Doug Rademacher: Well, good. Um, [8:05] so how long did you stay in the Trim Department?
9 And then you said you got to go to welding. Was this – can you give the
10 time frame?
11

12Mark Groce: Oh, that was years later. I didn't actually do – go to the welding, uh, right
13 away. Um, when I, when I originally hired in there, I worked in the Trim
14 area for, oh, I know, 5 or 6 years. I, I went from being the seat belt bolt
15 operator to being a utility person in the area so I could learn all the jobs
16 and have a little variety of something to do for our area. There were 30
17 people in our area, probably 15 operations, and so, so, um, I got to go and
18 be the, the utility person for almost a year. And then I went to, uh, the –
19 what – we had a pickup guy at the end of the area who repaired
20 everything. And I got that job and I was that for 6 months or so. And then
21 Artie Brown found me and decided he liked the way I worked and could
22 repair stuff. And so I went to, um, the on-l-, the end-of-line repair; has –
23 was repairing, uh, the back glass moldings and the seat cushions and
24 things like that that came through that weren't quite right. And, uh, I
25 worked there for a year, year and a half.
26

27 And then they put me off line for the next 4 years. Uh, off line repair. It
28 was a horseshoe at the very end where the more difficult repair jobs were
29 done and we changed glass on the cars. We fixed the vinyl tops. We'd fix
30 the wiring if it wasn't correct. If things were wrong, things got damaged,
31 they brought'm to us and we repaired'm. And I spent my time there in – for
32 4 years or so until they cut out or reduced the, the repair group, okay? Um,
33 at that time, I, I got put back into the, the line gr-, operations. And I, and I
34 went into, uh, the intermittent relief job again where I was repairing on the
35 line – like a pickup person. And then after that, I w-, I decided well, I
36 didn't really, y'know – I was getting' too old to be workin' on a line like
37 that, so I put in for material. And at the time, they were expanding the
38 material department, and so I was hired into material and we went
39 through, uh, 2 weeks of training or something, something like that, uh,
40 where they would let us drive part-time, learn to stack baskets.
41

42 Uh, they would identify the various docks, uh, the tr-, train loading areas
43 and, and places – sto-, stock areas, so we'd know what we were doing. Uh,
44 so we were, we were training for 2 weeks before they brought us out on
45 the floor. And at that time, I got, uh – they sent me to the Body Shop and
46 we un-, um, fed, uh – laid down side frames, which was all the parts for ½

1 of the car. And it was built on a kind of a flat thing. But anyway, I had to
2 bring parts in and put them so the guys could use'm and to, to build these
3 parts. That was part of the material group. There were some big baskets
4 out there. These, uh, these things were 10, 12 feet wide by 15, 20 feet
5 long. And these were huge baskets. And we had to get'm in there pretty
6 quick and stuff. So it was – that was real interesting. And I worked out
7 there for a year until, um, one of the layoffs when they reorganized the
8 material department.
9
10 And I requested to go to the Trim Department because I had worked in
11 Trim previously. And so, uh, I got – they sent me into the Trim
12 Department. Only they sent me to dock 15 as utility. Dock 15 was the
13 major influx of material for Fisher Body in the plant. There was 12, 12, 15
14 guys out there all the time workin' to deliver stock. And I got put into a
15 team of 3 and we unloaded 2 different bays. And we'd unload stock from
16 the trucks and deliver'm to the storage areas and bring back empties and
17 reload the trucks. And it was kinda, kind of, uh, an interesting place to
18 work. There was a lot going on.
19
20 Doug Rademacher: Linda Johnson.
21
22 Linda Johnson: [12:11] How many trucks did they unload a day or for a shift?
23
24 Mark Groce: Uh, for the, for Dock 15?
25
26 Linda Johnson: Just for Dock 15.
27
28 Mark Groce: Um, between 36 and 42 generally speaking. Um, I did not know this at the
29 time, but as time goes – went by, I became more involved with dock
30 operations and have learned quite a bit since then. But at the time, there
31 was quite a few trucks that came in per shift. So, uh, we were, we were
32 moving – as, as individuals, we would move 1 truck every 1½, 2 hours.
33 And, uh, you times that by 15 people or so and, and that works out to quite
34 a work load.
35
36 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
37
38 Mark Groce: So...
39
40 Doug Rademacher: Mark, I wanna take you back. You did say that, uh, you had trained in
41 welding back in high school and, and you said you got an opportunity to
42 do that in the Body Shop. I don't remember you sharing that yet. [13:06]
43 Could ya, could ya talk about, uh, getting that chance and what it was like
44 compared to what ya learned in school?
45

1 Mark Groce: Well, um, when I was – got outta school originally, um, I worked for a
2 little s-, company called [Service Fab 13:23] and they made things like the
3 racks that the c-, the carpets go on and stuff like that. And, uh, at the time,
4 I was a welder there, okay? Uh, [snapping] one thing I did learn at the
5 time was that welding is a very dirty job. Dirty and smelly job. And so
6 working in the Trim Department was better; however, at one point, we had
7 a, a layout for a cutback and, um, I was reduced out of material along with
8 half of the other group. And so at the time, I was sent to the Body Shop to,
9 to take over operations for somebody there. And I, and we – I got sent to
10 the door area. And so I got the job of welding on line as far as welding the,
11 the interiors of the doors and stuff like that. A little MIG welder and we'd,
12 y'know, do the spots on the, on – where the headers came together and
13 stuff like that for the door frames.
14
15 And, uh, um, that wasn't, uh, wasn't nearly as much fun as being out in the
16 Trim area as a truck driver. So when the opportunity came and they re-
17 hired more people, I transferred back out to material. Um, I did weld there
18 for a while, but it's not anything like welding in a s-, in a, in a shop, the,
19 uh, fabrication shop or any – I mean, production welding is, is, is 1 piece
20 after another. It's not real welding. It's part A to part B 7,000 times a day,
21 okay? [laughter] So it's not like welding, okay? It's not, it's not like where
22 you take a, a, a trailer frame or somethin' like that and have to bevel the
23 edges and get the – get it cleaned out, y'know, and, and then do your tack
24 welds and then do your fill welds and then do your finish welds, y'know.
25 It's not like that at all. So it was different.
26
27 Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: [15:09] Um, Mark, what was the difference between working in the Trim
30 Shop and working in the Body Shop just as far as production was?
31
32 Mark Groce: The goals were the same. Um, it was a bit noisier and harder ta, ta
33 communicate with people down in the Body Shop. And, uh, there was
34 certain things like coveralls and gloves that ya had to do every day that
35 you didn't have to do in the Trim Department. And so, um, overall, it was-,
36 wasn't nearly as pleasant because you're always in a hurry getting things
37 done and you never had time to do anything. Even your jobs were set up
38 where you had to do these and then move to the next machine and do these
39 and then move to the next machine and do these. You didn't really have
40 time in between to stop and talk with the people and say, "Hey, how ya
41 doin'," y'know? 'Cause you had to be like within a foot or two of
42 somebody to hear'm. Y'know what I'm sayin'? So it made communication
43 difficult, uh, in the Body Shop.
44
45 Doug Rademacher: Michael Fleming.
46

1 Michael Fleming: So you talked about earlier, when you were around 21, uh, and you were
2 in 3-man teams?
3

4 Mark Groce: Okay.
5

6 Michael Fleming: And, uh, [16:14] can you tell us how those 3-man teams and that type of
7 material coming in then changed when we went to just in time and the
8 [inaudible 16:22] changes on the dock?
9

10 Mark Groce: When we – it was – to start with, it was dock 15 because it was building
11 15 main dock. And it was the trim stuff, not the Body Shop stuff coming
12 in. Uh, when we were doing the 3-man teams, we would have 2 bays per
13 team and we'd be unloading one truck at a time and re-loading the other
14 truck back at the time. So that when one was done, then the other one was
15 full, y'know, and they could switch'm out. Um, the differences between
16 that type of stock...
17

18 Michael Fleming: Just in time and in, y'know, we went to sequencing, so...
19

20 Mark Groce: When we were running bulk stock, we would have large storage areas
21 with 3 to, 3 days to a week's supply of baskets in them. When we switched
22 over to the, the just in time stock, um, the b-, the bank balances were
23 basically reduced to 3 days or less. And, uh, for s-, some a the stuff, it was
24 even within the day that it w-, came in. Uh, later on, we refined that
25 system to be, to be down to like hours. Uh, but to start with, it wasn't – the
26 just in time thing was, was just a few minutes late, generally speaking.
27 Um, we didn't always get the things on time the way we were supposed to.
28 It made a lot of, uh, hurry, hurry at the last minute. But we eventually got
29 that worked out so that things worked. Um, the storage areas were less.
30 We changed packaging on a lotta stuff to make the containers smaller so
31 that we'd have less in'm and, and be able to have more in, y'know, a timely
32 base.
33

34 Michael Fleming: You were a group leader in that area out there.
35

36 Mark Groce: There towards the end, yes.
37

38 Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 18:18].
39

40 Mark Groce: I was your, uh, team coordinator.
41

42 Michael Fleming: [18:20] So talk about the group leader as – and, and the people that
43 worked for you and how they felt about going from a bulk system to a just
44 in time system. Did it make your job easier? Did it make it harder?
45

1 Mark Groce: On the average, it made the individual's job a little more harder 'cause you
2 had ta, uh, monitor your own stock m-, a little more closely. When we
3 were doing the just in time, I got to be a, a tugger upstairs, which delivers
4 all the small parts. At the beginning of each day, I'd have to go through
5 and, and, and I'd have a, a large area and look at each part physically and
6 note if we had enough for the whole day or not. And then I would go to
7 the storage area and I would have to note whether we had enough to finish
8 the day with or, or, or at least start the dayshift with. And then if we didn't,
9 I'd have to go to the controller and have him order more. Because a lotta
10 times, our computers didn't jive with what we actually had on the floor.
11 Sometimes it was scrap involved. Sometimes there were other thing-,
12 reasons why we, we didn't have what the computers say we had. So you
13 had to physically check every piece to make sure that you had enough for
14 the whole day.
15
16 Um, that's pretty much a lot of what this just in time was all about. It was
17 not getting it here any sooner than it needed to be. Not storing bulk stuff
18 on the floor or having the excess in our plant, so that, so that we were
19 paying inventory costs and so on and so forth. So when we had bulk stock,
20 you could look at it and say, "Oh, yeah. We got lots," y'know? Because
21 you could see that there was a lot in the storage area. [coughing] When,
22 when we moved to the just in time stuff, it was a lot more individual
23 monitoring on, on a regular basis. Uh, what we had on the, y'know, in the
24 plant. Um, as I understand it, our controller jobs came about because, um,
25 the supervision needed someone to monitor and order stock on hourly
26 basis as opposed to being once a, once a day and stuff like that. So a lot of
27 our – uh, we created, uh, jobs to, to control the stock and the flow of it for
28 hourly employees by going to this just in time stuff.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.
31
32 Cheryl McQuaid: [20:30] So when you had to go out and physically look at the parts and
33 make sure you had enough, did you – where you ever wrong and shut the
34 production line down? And if that was to happen, what was somethin'
35 typical that would happen because of that?
36
37 Mark Groce: Hm. There have been times when we didn't have enough stock. But there –
38 uh, so much of our car can be put on later that we don't always shut down
39 because of it. And it depends on how many of that car we're goin' – or part
40 we're gonna miss. Because some parts are only used on one car. And we
41 have more than one car flowing down the line, so they would pull it off
42 and do that later. Um, pull it off in the repair areas. But, um, generally
43 speaking, if you messed up on your count, you would be written up of
44 verbally warned, one of the two. Yes, uh, it was a bad thing to, to not have
45 enough stock to finish your day and not tell anybody. Um, your job was to
46 find out if you had enough stock and make sure people knew what you had

1 and, and [tapping] to avoid problems later on down the road. So you – it
2 was the first thing you did when you came in; was you went and did your
3 counts.
4

5Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. So, I want to know – [21:54] do you feel that the, uh,
6 pressure of getting the stock was passed from the supervisor onto the
7 worker?
8

9Mark Groce: Yeah, not – yes and no. It needed more, more, um, what do you call it?
10 Observation, more time. And somebody had to stay on it all the time. You
11 couldn't just order stock once [tapping] a day. Y'know what I'm sayin?
12 Um, when you're in the Body Shop, they order floor pans and, and hood
13 pieces and, and [snapping] roof parts. And they would order'm pretty
14 much by, by what the production schedule said we were gonna run for the
15 next week, okay? Or next day or whatever like that. When the supervisor
16 could do that at the end of each shift. Well, when we moved to the just in
17 time stock and stuff like that, he no longer could wait 'til the end of the
18 shift to be ordering stock. You need to be ordering stock at the beginning
19 of the shift, or maybe if something came up that we were missing, he
20 could, he could, uh, hot stock in, stuff in. Um, order it in from, uh, from –
21 and they would bring it in in vans [tapping] or airplanes or whatever. But
22 he needed to be on it to – so they created a position for the hourly
23 employee to do this constant monitoring of stock. So yeah, in a way, they
24 moved, uh, the, the responsibility for the daily usage onto the employees
25 as opposed to management. [snapping]
26

27Doug Rademacher: Mark, [tapping] many times, uh, in the material world, things would
28 happen where, uh, it would cause a lotta stress for management and the
29 worker. But, uh, there was certain things, special things that had to be
30 done to get parts in. You had talked about a little earlier about having parts
31 flown in. [23:46] What types of things might happen over a course of a
32 full year that would impact, uh, a part? Could you share some stories
33 about that?
34

35Mark Groce: Well, the flow of stock i-, into our shop is maintained by the trucks that,
36 that we have and trucks break down and, and have to be replaced. And
37 sometimes trucks don't get here on time. Sometimes the vendors don't
38 keep up with the stock that they need to be sending to us and so it gets sent
39 late. Um, there were other times when the weather would be a big factor.
40 Snowstorms in Ohio or something like that would slow or almost stop the
41 flow of stock to us. Um, [tapping] at these times like when we had bad
42 weather – if we knew the truck was coming, they would keep a crew after
43 the shift and we would wait until the truck got there and, and then unload
44 it before going home or whatever. Um, if we needed the stock [sniffing]
45 really bad, it would be flown into the airports and we – sometimes we'd
46 get to go out and, and help'm unload, uh, the airplanes and bring the stock

1 in. If it was really, really s-, – you understand though that flying stuff in is
2 expensive. [throat clearing] We would much rather use vans or, or trucks
3 to expedite stock in from other places; however, in a very ba-, uh, worst-
4 case scenario – say like, um, stock coming from Oklahoma, um, they
5 would fly it into the airport and we would, we would go out and unload
6 the trail-, the airplanes and bring it in on the, on trucks from there.
7

8Doug Rademacher: [25:17] Was there an incident in Oklahoma that you could say where that
9 – there was some impact there?
10

11Mark Groce: Well, they had that, um, hurricane or tornado that destroyed one of the
12 [throat clearing] GM plants down there not too awful long ago and that put
13 a damper on quite a bit of the other subsidiary businesses in the area. And,
14 uh, we were short on quite a few parts from Oklahoma. And for almost 2
15 weeks, we flew stuff in before we got the flow back from them, the ground
16 flow, so...
17

18Doug Rademacher: Okay.
19

20Mark Groce: ...yeah, there were several occasions where stock was flown in just
21 because it was too late or something [tapping] had happened and they
22 didn't get stuff. Uh, in the stamping plants, they have a problem with dyes.
23 Sometimes when they stamp a, a piece, the dye would break. And, uh,
24 sometimes it would take up to 2 or 3 days before they would get that dye
25 back together. And we would always e-, expedite sto-, stock in, whatever
26 they had left on hand, a-, and try to make it through until they got their
27 dyes back up and running and started sending us stock again. Um,
28 [tapping] I don't know what ta tell ya.
29

30Doug Rademacher: I've got one. I – tell me, [26:31] as a dock controller or working around
31 them, can you share when stock was loaded into train cars also rather than
32 just trucks, do you remember times when they couldn't find the parts on
33 the right train car or anything like that? [tapping]
34

35Mark Groce: Uh, the only thing we really had any – on trains was the air conditioners in
36 the Trim area, uh, there for a long time. And air conditioner parts. So those
37 were like still stocked days and weeks ahead even after we started the just
38 in time stock delivery. Not all of the vendors became [coughing] just in
39 time stock people and so some of it was still bulk sto-, stored. And the
40 train, uh, [sniffing] air conditions were one of'm, uh; however, I had a
41 friend who worked down on, uh, uh, track 8. And they would unload I
42 think it was – they had 8 spots and they would do 2 sets a day or a shift
43 and, uh, there were plenty a times when, when they would send him 1
44 train and, uh, train car and he was expecting something to be on it but it
45 wasn't there, so we'd have to have a train car pulled out and 2 more put

1 back in. Uh, an extra switch so ta, so ta speak, to try to find the parts that
2 we needed but...
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [27:48] Do you know who they worked with to, uh, do...
5
6 Mark Groce: No.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: ...the train switches?
9
10 Mark Groce: No, I don't.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: [27:51] You don't know which company that was?
13
14 Mark Groce: No. Just a railroad company as far as I know. It was – the railroad
15 company is federal-, federally subsidized, so I don't know. I only thought
16 we had one [throat clearing] and that's about all I know about that. I'm not
17 even sure where they stored the train cars while they were, while they
18 were waitin' ta come here.
19
20 [sniffing]
21
22 Doug Rademacher: All right. [28:12] Do you, uh, remember when you hired in, there was, uh,
23 changeovers and layoffs. Could you share what happens at that time?
24
25 Mark Groce: Well, a changeover was when we switched from one model car to another.
26 Generally, there were – it was a, a time period for the maintenance
27 department to re-machine the Body Shop and, and put in the reg-, the new
28 jigs and stuff like that. Some of'm took up to 6 months. The average
29 though was about 2 or 3 months, uh, long. During that time, the majority
30 of our workforce, me included, was laid off. Uh, we would become a
31 product of the city at that time and have unemployment and SUB pay ta, ta
32 make our way and we would wait until they called us back generally.
33 Sometimes we'd have a call at [inaudible 28:59], y'know, to come back
34 and start up. But they would basically retool all the machines and we'd
35 change from one car model to another. And when we came back, we'd
36 lear-, learn our, our operations all over again and, and start to building a
37 new car.
38
39 Doug Rademacher: Well, you referred to unemployment and SUB pay. [throat clearing]
40 Obviously, unemployment was, uh, paid by the state. [29:20] What is the
41 SUB pay you spoke of?
42
43 Mark Groce: It's, uh, subsidiari-, subsidiary, um, pay from General Motors to make up
44 for the wages, wage difference between unemployment and your regular
45 wages.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [29:37] Do you think they were voluntarily giving that or – how do you
2 think that was...
3

4 Mark Groce: I don't think anybody voluntarily gives any money for anything.
5

6 Doug Rademacher: [29:43] So who might that possibly have been?
7

8 Mark Groce: That, that was a direct contribution of our union.
9

10 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. Okay.
11

12 Mark Groce: Um, I am sure that General Motors would not voluntarily [snapping] pay
13 anything if they didn't have to; [snapping] however, our union helps back
14 us on our wage concessions and so this is one of the concessions that we
15 have.
16

17 Doug Rademacher: [30:03] What was the longest time you were ever laid off?
18
19 [throat clearing]
20

21 Mark Groce: [sighing] I don't remember exactly but I think about 6 months one time we
22 got laid off. Uh, I remember it was a really long layoff. It was like most of
23 the year. So, um, don't know why. It was early in my career and I, and –
24 but I do remember that there was a long period where I didn't have
25 anything to do and I was worried about how to get my – at that time, we
26 had to go to the unemployment office and register for unemployment. And
27 then we had to go back and, and – ta each month for the interview to get
28 our check and stuff like that. So, y'know, the-, there wasn't any of this
29 computer stuff or mail it to ya, y'know or whatever. Ya had to go in there
30 with your form and, and they'd say, "Well, where did you go to look for
31 work each, each week," y'know? And you'd have to find, y'know, 3 places
32 and go and ask'm. Put in applications and everything, y'know? So [throat
33 clearing] at that time, they were really checkin' too. So you actually had to
34 be physically looking for work while you were laid off in order to get the
35 unemployment.
36

37 Doug Rademacher: [31:06] And did you ever go through a strike?
38

39 Mark Groce: Uh, we had one that I was, uh, actually involved with. It was only maybe
40 about 4 weeks long. I think that's what it was. Maybe 3 weeks. It wasn't
41 real long. Um, we h-, – I, I got to walk the picket line on the north parking
42 lot. Um, we would carry a sign for 4 to 6 hours a day and, and everybody
43 else would come and go and carry signs with you and stuff. And we'd
44 maintain 6 or 7 people at each, each station around the plant, y'know, and
45 carrying signs and walkin' around in circles an' yet.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: Michael Fleming.
2
3 Michael Fleming: Um, [coughing] the 4 weeks that you were off on your strike, when you
4 came back to your job on 15 dock, [31:50] were you on 15 dock?
5
6 Mark Groce: Mm-hm. I think so.
7
8 Michael Fleming: [31:54] What – how did that impact you? What was goin' on out there?
9 Was it chaos? Was it nothing out there? No, no stock? What...
10
11 Mark Groce: Um, no. It was, y'know, it was – when you shut the place down and walk
12 away, when you come back almost everything's where it was. There wasn't
13 really much change at all. It was – I don't know, the layoff or the strike
14 was a political thing. It had nothing to do with production at all. [throat
15 clearing] So it was basically everybody just stopped at one time and we
16 left. And then when we came back, everything was right exactly where
17 we'd left it. So starting back up was just as easy as not. I mean, it was –
18 everything was in place. So it wasn't no big change. Changeovers were
19 [tapping] worse. During changeovers in the material department, ya had to
20 remove all of the old stock or outdated stock and, and package it back up
21 in boxes to be sent off to the parts division plant so that they could s-,
22 y'know, [parse 32:49] it out to dealerships as needed. That was for the old
23 car. But then when you have to put back new stuff that was coming in, it
24 had new part numbers and new places to go. And we had to put up new
25 racks in places and take down old racks in other places and relabel
26 everything.
27
28 So when you came to changeovers, there was generally a couple a weeks
29 that everybody else got that material didn't get [throat clearing] because
30 we had a lot of, of stock changeover ta do. We had to remove all the old
31 stock and put in new stock in its place. So, um, that was quite a bit more
32 for – than the, than the strikes. When we came back from changeovers,
33 there was always that learning the new part numbers, where they went,
34 where the new storage areas was. Um, who would be doing what
35 operations and so on. 'Cause some operations ended up the, one model
36 year and we'd start another one at the, at another model year and all that.
37 [bumping] So it was quite different. There was a lot more to a changeover
38 than there was a strike.
39
40 Doug Rademacher: Mark, you said you, uh, were on the strike.
41
42 Mark Groce: Yes.
43
44 Doug Rademacher: [33:52] What was your feeling about a strike and walking out?
45

1Mark Groce: [snapping] Um, it's, it's a political thing. [papers rustling] It's – has nothin'
2 [papers rustling] to do with the individual on the floor. It – all those
3 decisions were made by others [sneezing] and you, you went on strike and
4 you backed your union because your union backed you. Okay. I didn't like
5 being on strike. We didn't get any money for it; however, sometimes it's
6 necessary to do things without pay to get things done. And I viewed
7 strikes as one of those things. That, that it needed doing and it was up to
8 me to do, so there it was. [snapping]
9

10Doug Rademacher: Excellent. Um, [34:43] can you tell us about [throat clearing] things that
11 take place in the workplace for the new guy. When you came in, where
12 there any initiations...
13

14Mark Groce: Hm.
15

16Doug Rademacher: ...or pranks that went along with bein' the new guy?
17

18Mark Groce: Yes. There were several of them.
19

20Doug Rademacher: Can you share some of those?
21

22Mark Groce: Well, y'know how, uh, ya get ta work and ya hang your coat up on the coat
23 rack and ya go ta work and ya do your job all day? And at that end of the
24 day, ya grab your lunchbox and put your coat on. It was quite a common
25 thing ta fill your lunchbox with bolts or your pockets with screws, so that
26 you would have ta either take'm out of your – y'know, you pick up your
27 coat and it'd be like 50 pounds, y'know. This is usually a 10-pound coat, a
28 5-pound coat, y'know, and so that was one of the normal things that went
29 on. Um, there was a whole bunch of pranks that, that went on as – that I
30 would consider horseplay th-, at the time with people. So, yeah, there was
31 some hazing that, that happened when you first hired in. It wasn't nothin'
32 seriously. It was mostly [throat clearing] how, the guys finding out how
33 you're gonna react to stress situations basically. [snapping] So they would
34 pick on ya to find out if you were – had a good sense of humor or not.
35

36Doug Rademacher: Michael Fleming.
37

38Michael Fleming: [35:54] Can you talk about some a those pranks and initiations that went
39 on [throat clearing] when you went into material? What did they do to the
40 new material drivers when – can you remember any of that?
41

42Mark Groce: Yeah, there was – when I was workin' out on the – in the Body Shop, there
43 was this guy named [Jerry 36:06]. [snapping] And I would be busy
44 loading a, a, a rack into a platform. And this guy would sneak up behind
45 ya and park half inch behind your truck. And of course, if you didn't turn
46 around and look, because you're backing out of a rack – you never do,

1 y'know. You're, you're watchin' the rack. You don't wanna bump it on
2 your way out. You'd smack this guy like, I mean, full bore. And he'd just
3 sit there and laugh and laugh. And it was one a his, his [snapping] pet
4 peeves to get people ta look behind there before they'd back up. So he
5 would get right in there and you'd never hear him come and he'd just be
6 there and you'd go [banging] pow. That would be it, so [throat clearing]
7 that was one of'm, um, that, that happened quite frequently. Another one
8 was that they would tell you you were outta stock so that you would have
9 to go run back in and check to see if your stock was there or not. And, and
10 you weren't out of stock and the guys weren't even building. Y'know what
11 I'm sayin'? Um, there were other pranks that people did too, so I can't
12 always remember'm all. There was one where they [snapping], they
13 would, um, put this black sealant stuff in the ear of the phone and then
14 they would call you on your pho-, on the phone next to your operation of
15 course, y'know. And so you'd pick it up and go to answer the phone and
16 you'd get this ear full of sealant. That was one of their pranks.

17
18 [laughter]
19

20 Doug Rademacher: Linda Johnson.
21

22 Linda Johnson: Blue, um, I was familiar with – out [throat clearing] on the dock, when a
23 person retired or a person died, they had a special [snapping] ceremony for
24 that person, just for the material drivers. [37:35] Did you ever participate
25 in any of those?
26

27 Mark Groce: Uh, no. I, I, I have heard of'm where they line the trucks up and raise the,
28 the forks ta half mask and everybody beeps their horn as a [inaudible
29 37:43] drives by as, as a final salute or goodbye to the person going away.
30 I have heard of it. I've seen it once but, um, that was mostly just done on
31 day shift because most of your retirees and people that, that are of that
32 seniority are on days. And so they did that c-, out there. But on nights, we
33 were – we didn't do that. Um, I don't think we had that many people
34 actually retire from nights. So we did have one though, um, Al...
35

36 Doug Rademacher: Schneider.
37

38 Mark Groce: Al Schneider retired this last year and he was on nights and we did all that.
39 We had a cake and w-, it had the Fisher Body and logo on it. An, and he
40 got the plaque and we had a big dinner and everything right there on the
41 dock. We closed off part of the dock to do this. And, uh, which was really
42 had to do. [laughter] And, uh, we, we lined all the trucks up and did the
43 final salute for him and took pictures and things. That was really nice for
44 him, so... But only once have I ever had – been involved with that.
45

46 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.

1
2Mark Groce: Anything else?
3
4Doug Rademacher: Mark, sure. [38:47] I'd like ta ask you about hiring in with women and
5 minorities, what was your feeling about working around a diverse
6 workforce? [tapping] Didja have any impact on you?
7
8Mark Groce: Um...
9
10Doug Rademacher: Did you see any, uh, conflict with people?
11
12Mark Groce: As far as races and things like that are concerned? I am sure there were
13 quite a bit of'm; however, I don't evaluate people like that and each person
14 is an individual. They all deserve a chance. Um, until they prove
15 themselves not worthy of that, y'know, your support or your, your – you
16 have ta treat each person on an individual base. This, this leaves r-, no
17 room for prejudices, okay? I might have a problem with somebody of a
18 different ethnic race or whatever but it's not the whole race. It's that
19 person. Y'see what I'm saying? Um, there have been other incidents
20 where, where people, um, would, would – well, there was one incidence
21 where this small Mexican guy decided he was gonna beat up this big black
22 guy. And just 'cause – I don't know, 'cause they didn't like each other for
23 st-, some reason or another. They had a minor altercation and it – and, uh,
24 both of'm spent the next week in the street. No pay. Um, that was, that was
25 early on – that was my first experience with inter-shop violence or
26 anything like that. There was some of it around but I wasn't involved. Um,
27 I have no qualms working with women. I don't really care about w-, if
28 they're black, white, Mexican [throat clearing] green, purple. Um, we're
29 supposed to evaluate each person as an individual, both their work habits
30 and their personalities, and then you decide whether or not you wanna be
31 involved with them.
32
33Doug Rademacher: Excellent. [40:38] Have the environmental conditions inside the
34 [coughing] the plant changed over the years?
35
36Mark Groce: Yeah. It was great. When we, when we changed over from bulk stock, um,
37 to this just in time stock, we stopped having all the extra cardboard boxes.
38 In years past, when we used stuff outta the boxes, you'd throw the box out
39 in the aisle. And a sanitation guy'd come along about 3 times a day and
40 he'd stand there and he'd bust up boxes and stack'm [snapping] in a, in a
41 gondola. Well, when we went over to the just in time stock area – uh,
42 thing, we stopped having that. We stopped having the extra [snapping]
43 boxes. We stopped throwing'm away because a lot of these things became
44 returnable boxes and returnable items even though they were cardboard.
45 And so the environment improved considerably by not having the, the
46 garbage and the trash in the aisles with the fork trucks. Uh, originally,

1 when you went to go and, and deliver stock down an aisle, you'd have to
2 go down there with your fork truck and clean the boxes outta the way first
3 so you didn't crush'm all on the way through. Push'm back into the line
4 and move everybody's, uh, racks and st-, and stuff around. Y'know what
5 I'm sayin'?

6

7 So, yeah, it, it improved quite considerably. Um, the fresh paint job they
8 put on 8 years ago wasn't too bad. I liked that. And it helped to improve
9 the environment. Um, one a the things they did during changeover was to
10 keep a, a crew of sanitation for nothing but sweeping and, and [squeaking]
11 cleaning up places they'd never get to. Um, so each changeover was their
12 big cleanup. They would move all the benches and sweep out [thumping]
13 underneath them and stuff. So but over the years, I guess the biggest
14 improvement was not throwing the boxes out in the aisle anymore.

15

16 Doug Rademacher: Mike Fleming.

17

18 Michael Fleming: [snapping] Uh, Blue, [42:23] can you talk about – while you're on the
19 environment, this is – goes hand in hand. Can you talk about some of the
20 safety that, uh, the material driver and classes and the types of things that
21 you have to be aware of as a – first of all, t-, tell me what ya did when you
22 first come into plant before you could even start your day and go from
23 there as, as far as safety was [throat clearing] concerned in, uh, in
24 material?

25

26 Mark Groce: Before I started my day...

27

28 Michael Fleming: When you started your day, w-, did you – was there anything you had to
29 do before you got – when you got on your truck? Was there anything in
30 particular?

31

32 Mark Groce: Well, yes, uh, when you first come into the plant and stuff like that, you
33 put your stuff in your locker and you have to get your safety glasses and
34 gloves and stuff like that you get around there. But then when you went
35 out to do your, to d-, to do your job, you had to do a safety check on your
36 truck to start with and make sure everything was up to par. And if it
37 wasn't, you'd have to take it down to the garage and have it repaired. And
38 if it didn't take too long, then you could have your truck back. But if it did,
39 you had to get a new truck or a different truck. Have to do a safety check
40 on it too. But, yes, uh, making sure y-, the equipment was in good working
41 order, uh, you had enough power in the truck to run it and do a – change
42 the battery if you needed to. That was all part of your responsibility as
43 well as the operation of the truck and the safe operation [in a manner
44 43:34] to people around you.

45

1Michael Fleming: [43:35] And, and when you – uh, what's a safety check? You had to
2 document it [tapping] when that was finished.
3

4Mark Groce: That's correct.
5

6Michael Fleming: And if it was not documented?
7

8Mark Groce: Well, uh, management would have a fit ta start with. Um, you learned
9 right away that they were serious about this and that you'd better do it
10 every day. Um, I have heard of other people being [throat clearing]
11 verbally warned or taken to the office and talked to severely or whatever,
12 um, about the saf-, the, the daily safety checks. Um, but I didn't have a
13 problem with it. I liked the idea.
14

15Michael Fleming: And so as a driver, as you're driving through the plant, [44:10] what types
16 of safety, uh, precautions were you – did you have to be aware of or did
17 you know about?
18

19Mark Groce: Well, [snapping] in the, in the beginning when I first went on – and like I
20 said, with all the trash in the aisles, you had to make sure for one, you
21 didn't push those boxes back into the line where the people were at; knock
22 somebody over. So you had to be careful about the trash in the aisle to
23 start with. And when you were, when you were moving stock in, you had
24 to make sure you didn't hit the, the platforms that it was being put on or
25 bump somebody that was trying to run, uh, run by you at the last minute.
26 Uh, when you were transporting stock, you had to watch for people
27 coming out from behind the lines, between the stock. Um, we had to watch
28 for people in the storage areas that didn't belong there because sometimes
29 they would come out to count stock and ta, and ta look at the quality of
30 various pieces and stuff like that. And you never know when you're gonna
31 run ta – into somebody in a storage area, y'know, so...
32

33Michael Fleming: [45:01] Have you ever seen any industrial truck accidents or know of any
34 that have happened when you were working?
35

36Mark Groce: Yes. There have been a few. Um, there was a time when one of our drivers
37 was talking to the supervisor and then he backed up and ran over the
38 supervisor's foot and completely crushed the toes and, uh [throat clearing]
39 the arch, arch support and everything else. Uh, that supervisor was many
40 months not here and then he wasn't in all that great shape when he came
41 back. He limped quite a bit. Um, there was, uh, Eugene [snapping]
42 Bolden, Bovine, Boving, someth-, – anyway, uh, he drove into the
43 elevator with a load and then, when he, when he went to back up, he stuck
44 his f-, fingers through the top of the cage and backed up out of the
45 elevator. Well, there's only ¼-inch clearance between the top a your cage

1 and the, the, the top bar on the elevator opening and it just about cut his
2 fingers off. So he did that one to himself.
3
4Michael Fleming: [46:01] What happened to him about that? Do you have any idea what
5 happened...
6
7Mark Groce: He had to go to safety classes and they restricted his license for a while.
8 And at the time, I was a team leader out there, so I had to restrict his
9 activities as well. [throat clearing] So he wasn't allowed to use the
10 elevators for a while. And, uh, he had this big [thumping] bandage on his
11 hand for weeks and weeks and weeks and so... But he had to go and see a,
12 a fil-, a safety film about, um, um, accidents in the, in the workplace and
13 he had to [tapping] go to several classes. He had to have so many hours – I
14 think it was 16 hours of safety training because he had made a, made a
15 mistake and injured himself.
16
17Michael Fleming: One last question and then we'll move on. You work around a lotta docks
18 and a lot of train wells.
19
20Mark Groce: Mm-hm.
21
22Michael Fleming: [46:46] Any knowledge of anyone coming off [tapping] of a dock or into a
23 train well?
24
25Mark Groce: Um, I – other than, um, what was his name? [tapping] [throat clearing]
26 No, uh, [coughing] Barney [coughing] Something. He worked out on
27 Dock 15. He got off his truck and walked away. He didn't put – set the
28 parking brake and, uh, [inaudible 47:08] his truck and it rolled off the back
29 of the dock. Off the front of the dock, I should say, and landed right on it's
30 back with it's forks straight up in the air. Just sat there. [tapping] Didn't
31 fall over or nothin'. That was pretty c-, funny. But I – we didn't have all
32 that many accidents on nights, not really. [throat clearing] Um, the worst
33 accident I've ever seen is somebody dropped a, the loading plate into the
34 wheel, the train wheel, ho-, well and that [tapping] took 20 minutes to get
35 out. So I mean, other than that [thumping], there really wasn't much, uh,
36 serious accidents. We didn't have anybody packed in boxcars or anything
37 like that. [thumping] So...
38
39Doug Rademacher: Marilyn Coulter.
40
41Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Blue, you said that you were a team leader. [47:50] Can you explain
42 to us what a team leader does and what your function was please?
43
44 [coughing]
45

1 Mark Groce: Um, a while ago, General Motors decided that it was gonna go to the team
2 concept and that all of the plant was going to be – have [coughing] team
3 leaders and, and team organization before the next [snapping] contract
4 year. Well, they did pretty good with the rest of the department setting up
5 team groups and team stuff. So then it came down to the last 6 months or
6 so [tapping] of the contract and then they tr-, tried to apply it to material
7 and it doesn't apply the same way to material as it does to the line. A lot of
8 the values are different, so, uh... But there, there for a while, um, I was
9 honored in being the team coordinator for the material department, uh,
10 Trim, Trim Shop. Um, [Marlene Dietrich 48:37] was the material coord-,
11 or not – yeah, team coordinator for the Body Shop. We actually only had
12 2, [tapping] whereas we shoulda had 5 or 6. [laughter] But, uh, it was, it
13 was a lotta – we would have team meetings every week and we would
14 info-, gather information about the shop, about special events and we
15 would make sure the people knew what was going on in, in their work
16 area. If we had pacific safety concerns, we would, we would discuss them
17 in the group at the, at the team meetings. If there was events going on or
18 things coming up that they needed to know about, that was discussed.
19
20 So in material, it was a lot of communication, um, making sure that
21 everybody knew what they were supposed to be doing in the, in the team
22 coordinator. In the team coordinator, you also had to know what
23 everybody's job was, make sure that they were doing it, find replacements
24 if they were gonna be gone, or help supervision [tapping] find
25 replacements. And make sure the replacements knew how to do the job.
26 And if somebody couldn't keep up, you had ta pitch in and help and get'm
27 caught back up or do the little extra, whatever it needed, ta, ta, [tapping]
28 um, make the things flow better. Uh, [tapping] at the time, we had a lotta
29 AGVs, those are automatic ground vehicles that would transport stock
30 from dock 15 to 3X. And they did not run [tapping] all that well. There
31 was a lot of [tapping] human intervention ta help them get where they
32 were going. [snapping] So that was a lot of my job, was working with the
33 elevators and keep'm running and working with the AGVs to keep them
34 running and keep the stock flowing ta the places. It was supposed to be
35 there before it needed to be there. Anything else?
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: [50:26] Um, through your team leadership [snapping] and things like that
38 and – where there any types of other [pages shuffling] employee
39 involvement programs that helped you make the material world better for
40 the drivers?
41
42 Mark Groce: I'm not understanding the question.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: Well, when there were certain decisions to be made on things that were
45 being made and, um, changes that were made in material, where the

1 drivers allowed to have any kind of impact on those changes that were
2 made in the material world?
3
4 Mark Groce: Yeah. The...
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 50:48].
7
8 Mark Groce: ...driver is always the, the one that helps. I mean management comes up
9 with an idea but it's the guy on the floor who has ta implement it. So a
10 lotta times, y'know, we, we would say, "Okay, we want you guys to do
11 this. But we're not really sure how we want you to do it." So we would just
12 leave it to the, to the drivers to figure it out. [thumping] We would talk ta,
13 ta each of the shifts, y'know, and see how they were doing it. And within a
14 couple a weeks, we'd come up with a consensus of how it should be done.
15 So – but a lot of the times, it was the guy on the floor that, that figured out
16 the best way ta do it. Not, not management.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
19
20 Mark Groce: So I mean they don't always know...
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: No.
23
24 Mark Groce: ...everything.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: Now one last question in terms of trucker safety. I know towards the end,
27 uh, the plant had a safety program where the hourly personnel got to get
28 involved with the truckers. [51:36] Did you find that those programs
29 helped the safety with pedestrians along with trucks?
30
31 Mark Groce: I must a missed that one.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: The ones where the people were getting on the truck so they could see
34 where the blind spots were on the trucks?
35
36 Mark Groce: Oh, yeah. That was, um, um, Joe Jodway's baby. Um, he was our safety
37 coordinator or safety leader and he set up several places in the shop where
38 there – blind corners and, and baskets so the people could –and there was
39 one with a fork truck and some baskets ta show – so people could get on
40 and look and see that, that we couldn't see all the, all the things every,
41 every time, y'know? I mean the, the p-, post on your cage would block
42 your vision in certain places. Your load would block your vision in certain
43 places. [tapping] Uh, as a material person, I don't really notice all that stuff
44 as much as – I mean, I, I take it for granted that everybody knows this and,
45 and because I've been on material 'cause I take it for granted. But there's a
46 lotta things like being more than 2 feet away from the truck, um, so that

1 you don't get your toes run over. Um, I don't even think about it and I do
2 that, so...
3
4 But other people don't [snapping] realize th-, that, that there are dangers
5 that they could be in. And so there was some displays set up ta help them,
6 the average individual, um, understand what the truck driver was dealing
7 with on a daily base. So – but being a truck driver is no different than any
8 other job. It has it's hazards. You learn what they are and you work
9 with'm. Okay? I go to work every day knowing that I have the potential to
10 hurt or, or actually kill somebody with this machine. And the worst part
11 about it isn't the – knowing that you could actually do it. It's knowing that
12 it's gonna be one of your friends. There's no way around it. It's going to be
13 one of your friends that you hurt. So [scratching] that's the worst part. You
14 try really hard not to but things happen from time to time to some people
15 and people do get hurt.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: Mark, this is Doug Rademacher. Mark, the, um, the workplace here in
18 Lansing has been called the capital of quality. [53:44] Is there something
19 that you would attribute the quality and the productivity of this plant with?
20
21 Mark Groce: Well, I haven't been to a lot of other plants but General Motors in Lansing
22 has done a really good job building cars because we want to build cars.
23 This is what we do. This is what our grandparents did, what our fathers
24 did. Um, our, our kids grow up in an industrial area learning industrial
25 things and, and looking forward to working in automated shops and places
26 like that. So we have a lot of experience with industrial plants and how to
27 do this and, and stuff like that. The biggest thing about Lansing, General
28 Motors, is the people work together really good. Um [sighing] they don't
29 have a lot of the prejudisms that you find, a lot of the racial disputes that
30 you might run into in other cities. Um, the people in, in Lansing all want
31 to build cars. That's what we do. That's what we wanna do. So I think that
32 attributes quite a bit to the seccuss – success of the quality of our plants
33 because of, of the overall determination and, and of the historical
34 education that we have with building automobiles. So does that fit your
35 bill?
36
37 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. So they call, um, your coworkers your family. [55:10] Do you
38 consider your co-workers your brothers and sisters? [papers rustling]
39
40 Mark Groce: Friends.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: Friends.
43
44 Mark Groce: Friends. [papers rustling] Not brothers and sisters 'cause I never liked my
45 brothers and sisters.
46

1 [laughter]
2
3 Doug Rademacher: [papers rustling] That would be a good reason.
4
5 Mark Groce: Well, I think you'll find this true in [papers rustling] most families. You
6 grow up with'm and then you can't wait to get away from'm, okay? When
7 you get together for your family holiday, there's always someone lookin'
8 to pick an argument. Y'know what I'm sayin'? I don't get that with my
9 friends and co-workers [yawning] okay?
10
11 [laughter]
12
13 Mark Groce: They're always – they smile and shake your hand and pat ya on the back,
14 tell ya, "Have a nice day," okay? [thumping] Um, I much prefer this ta the
15 punch in the arm and the, the bickering that goes on at the family reunions.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [laughter] I mean you have lots of memories about Fisher Body.
18 [55:54] Could you share your best memory of the Fisher Body plant?
19 Something that you remember that was, uh, whether it was moving or it
20 was a, a warm moment as a friend s-, did something for you?
21
22 Mark Groce: Nah. [tapping] I, I liked the fun things. Um, I worked in a large area. It's,
23 uh, building 15. And there was hundreds of employees here. But after a
24 while of working there, we all have hobbies and, and I like fishing myself.
25 And there was probably about 7 or 8 of us guys that like fishing. I mean
26 really like fishing. So one year, we were all just kinda competing with
27 each other on who could catch the most fish and things like that. And, and
28 we all decided we'd get together one day after work and go fishing. And,
29 uh, there was several times after that we did that. But we, we all
30 [thumping] got together. We stayed up all night and went out and was out
31 there bright and early in the morning and everybody caught fish. It was
32 really a good day, so... But that was one of my brightest memories was
33 getting together with the guys after work and [snapping] just taking off
34 right from here and going to the fishin' hole and, and fishing [tapping] all,
35 all morning until about noon [snapping] or so. So it was a good day.
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [57:07] Do you have a particular worst day that ever happened at Fisher
38 Body?
39
40 Mark Groce: [sighing] That's a hard one. [pausing] No, not really. Um, some of'm were
41 bad. W-, like the days that we got laid off'n, and we knew we weren't
42 gonna be around for a while and – but, um, there's a – it – that's one of the
43 nice things about Fisher Body and, and working for General Motors is you
44 know you'll always be back. Sometime or other, we're gonna come back
45 and do this [again 57:40] with the same people [sniffing] same place.
46 Y'know what I'm saying? [tapping] So...

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Michael Fleming.
3
4 Michael Fleming: Uh, can you talk about – uh, I know you had some pretty good
5 relationships with some of the management people. [57:49] Can you talk
6 about some of the – one of the best management individuals you had to
7 work with as a supervisor and maybe one of the worst that you can think
8 of as [tapping] – when you were in material?
9
10 Mark Groce: Well the best one was, uh, I forgot his name. Used to be the MC for the
11 trim.
12
13 Doug Rademacher: Randy?
14
15 Mark Groce: No. The other one.
16
17 Michael Fleming: Rick?
18
19 Mark Groce: Got hit by the car. In that big, uh, car, um...
20
21 Doug Rademacher: Oh, Tim?
22
23 Mark Groce: Tim Wampler. He was the best [snapping] employee; however, [Randy
24 Gindrich 58:27] was very good. I liked Randy Gindrich. Only he didn't
25 ha-, – he's not a people person. [laughter] Whereas [laughter], whereas, as,
26 as – I forgot his name again. Tim, Tim Wampler was more of a d-, a, a
27 people person. Um, Randy was really good with makin' decisions and,
28 and for workin' out job – what, what, y'know, – how [tapping] the job
29 should be put together and, and what, what should go with what'n who
30 should do what and all that. He was really good with all that but Tim was
31 just more sociable. And you could sit and talk ta him for longer periods of
32 time, and so I got along with him a little bit better. Uh, as far as
33 management goes, they were all nice people or good people ta work with.
34 [throat clearing] Um, some of'm are more people people than, than others
35 and, and that makes a difference. But that's about it. The-, they're all there
36 for the end goal, the products [tapping], and so they were all easy ta work
37 with as far as that goes. [thumping] You stick to business, you don't have a
38 lotta of the social problems.
39
40 Doug Rademacher: Well, you also said you, uh, one of your hobbies was fishing. But you also
41 did something for co-workers.
42
43 Mark Groce: There was, uh...
44
45 Doug Rademacher: Somethin' that you did outta [inaudible 59:41]. You actually did one....
46

1Mark Groce: Right.
2
3Doug Rademacher: ...for me. This is Doug Rademacher.
4
5Mark Groce: [inhaling] There was a time [exhaling] when I was trying, I – after I'd
6 stopped drinking and become more of an adult that I needed a hobby. And
7 so I took up wood crafting as, as a hobby and, and made knickknack
8 shelves in the shapes of hearts and things like that and various, um,
9 knickknacks and bookcases and, and curio cabinets and desks'n just little
10 things like that, that, that I would bring into the shop and I would sell ta
11 [snapping] individuals. I was driving around on this little flatbed anyway,
12 so I just set my stuff up on the back of my flatbed'n drove around. If
13 somebody wanted to take a look, better look at my stuff they would flag
14 me down and I'd go over and let'm buy it or [snapping] whatever. Um, I
15 don't – can't say as [papers rustling] I really made much money on it but it
16 was, it was good to keep my hands entertained'n, and it was something
17 that I, that people appreciated. And so wood crafting became a big part of
18 what I did in there as well. Yes [sniffing] I made one with the [throat
19 clearing] union logo for you.
20
21 And, uh, there was, uh, Jeff. He was gonna retire and management told us
22 they couldn't find one of the plaques for – 'cause you're supposed to have
23 this plaque when you go away, y'know? It's got the gold "Fisher Body" on
24 it. They said he wasn't gonna have one. So I made him the, the colorful
25 one out of wood and [snapping] carved it all up'n, and, uh, it, it had his
26 name and his date of s-, of, of hire [tapping] in and his date of retirement
27 on there. And we presented that to him at his going away party. And he
28 loved it. So there was several things I've done for – in wood crafting. But
29 that goes right along with being able to make things. I mean we make cars,
30 so why not be able to make other things too?
31
32Doug Rademacher: You touched on [papers rustling] growing up and [papers rustling] quitting
33 drinking. [1:01:34] Were there any programs that were available to you...
34
35Mark Groce: Yes.
36
37Doug Rademacher: ...to help you? Can you share about that?
38
39Mark Groce: Well, there for a while I did get kind of carried away with the alcohol
40 abuse. And one day, one of my supervisors came to me and he says,
41 "You've got a problem." And he handed me this card with Dr. Logan,
42 psychological evaluation program that they had for General Motors and I
43 was able to go to that. And after I got done with him, [tapping] there was
44 the Green House over here. It was supported by the, uh, General Motors
45 and u-, and the union to help re-, rehabilitating alcoholics. And, [tapping]

1 um, it was quite useful. I, I, I made big use of these programs to help me
2 quit'n stay quit, and so...
3

4Doug Rademacher: [1:02:19] Did that program help a number of people? Can you...
5

6Mark Groce: Oh, yeah. There was all kinds of us in there. There for a while, we – the –
7 a lot of the workforce was young in this plant'n, and a lot of us drank and
8 partied way too much. And so as it became more of a controlling factor in
9 people's lives, you would find them in there. Um, I would say at least a
10 th-, about ½ of the population has been to your AA meetings at the Green
11 House. It's been quite, quite useful for supporting people. Maybe not the
12 jobs, but the people anyway.
13

14Doug Rademacher: So that was a joint program where...
15

16Mark Groce: I think it was.
17

18Doug Rademacher: ...instead of discharging an employee, there was something set up to...
19

20Mark Groce: Well...
21

22Doug Rademacher: ...help them?
23

24Mark Groce: ...General Motors viewed alcoholism as an illness. [snapping] And so it
25 wasn't [sniffing] it was something that they [sniffing] would provide you
26 help for and not [coughing] not fire you for. They would insist on it. If you
27 didn't take the help and use it, you could be fired. But as a general rule,
28 they viewed it as, as an illness, not as a social disease or whatever. And
29 something that they could treat. Y'know what I'm saying? And so it was, it
30 was a mental health thing for them.
31

32Doug Rademacher: Well, the union has bargained benefits with the corporation. [sniffing]
33 [1:03:35] What was your most appreciated bargain benefit that you have
34 today? [tapping]
35

36Mark Groce: Bargained in my lifetime?
37

38Doug Rademacher: Either that or wh-, what'll you...
39

40Mark Groce: Health care. Um, the health care package that we presently had, uh, have
41 is, is a godsend for most people. Especially our retirees and things like
42 that. And, um, [tapping] [papers rustling] I, I – it's, it's one of those things
43 that, that – y'kn-, if we didn't have it provided, most people wouldn't have
44 it. Um, health care today costs too much for an individual to actually buy
45 and pay for on a regular base. So it's really nice that the, the, uh, [sniffing]
46 health care was provided. Um, I guess that's the biggest benefit over the

1 time that I can think of. Wages have been excellent right along too. And I
2 know that's a direct product of the union involvement. Um, there's a lotta
3 things that union and management together have done, uh, improving
4 work conditions over the years. Safety equipment being provided, the
5 various types of safety equipment that they do provide. Um, there's a lot of
6 things that, that have been negotiated ou-, out. But it's definitely...
7

8 Doug Rademacher: As far as union, [1:05:00] did you attend your union meetings?
9

10 Mark Groce: Several of them. When important issues were involved, um, I came to the
11 meetings.
12

13 [throat clearing]
14

15 Doug Rademacher: [1:05:08] Did you participate in any of the union activities? The, uh, trips
16 that they go on? Uh, games? Um, color tours? Anything like that?
17

18 [throat clearing]
19

20 Mark Groce: Not a lot of'm, no. Um, if I'd a had family, I probably would've went to
21 more of'm because those are a lot – mostly family functions. But being a
22 single male and always being single, uh, hasn't – doesn't lead ta that very
23 well.
24

25 Doug Rademacher: [1:05:32] Do you vote in union and political elections?
26

27 Mark Groce: Yes. Yes, definitely. [tapping]
28

29 Doug Rademacher: What d'ya think about that? Is it...
30

31 Mark Groce: It's the only way I get a say. It's the only way I get a say.
32

33 Doug Rademacher: In your community, [snapping] [01:05:48] have you participated in any
34 activities [papers rustling] outside of the plant? And were – are any of
35 them directly connected from the jobs that you've learned in the plant that
36 you share with the community?
37

38 Mark Groce: No. I can't say as I have. Um, I don't belong to any other organizations
39 other then the church. And, um, we do plays for the kids, um, Christmas,
40 Thanksgiving, Easter, things like that. We do, we do various plays
41 occasionally. And I'll, and I'll be active in that. But, um, as far as
42 community services and things like that, I haven't really been involved
43 in'm now.
44

45 Doug Rademacher: I wanna go quickly back. [1:06:30] How far – how long did your father
46 work here and is he retired?

1
2 Mark Groce: Oh, yes. My dad has worked here. Well he hired in [tapping] when he was
3 18. But they were going through a hard period where a lotta people were
4 gonna be laid off, so he got, he got hired [sneezing] into the Air Force, in
5 the military. I wasn't born until he had been in the military for 3 or 4 years.
6 He worked in the military for 20 years. So when he got out of the military,
7 I was 16. And that was when I h-, went to high school. [tapping] But he
8 went right back to work for – here at General Motors after he got out of
9 the military and had been working here for 6 or 7 years before I hired in.
10 [tapping] And, uh, he completed his time and retired, y'know, and, and
11 everything. Worked, uh, he worked industrial truck repair. Um,
12 [thumping] I don't know. He, he retired several years ago. Lived for 10
13 years afterwards'n, and died of lung problems. Internal fibrosis [tapping]
14 or something like that.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: [1:07:34] Well, is there any question I haven't asked you that you would've
17 liked to talk about?
18
19 [yawning]
20
21 Mark Groce: No. Not really.
22
23 Doug Rademacher: Okay.
24
25 Mark Groce: Uh, I've enjoyed my time at Fisher Body. I've been there 29 years. I would
26 suggest it for anybody if they had, had it to do. Um, I'm sure our new plant
27 will be just as much fun as the old one was. It'll just take some getting
28 used to. [snapping] That's about it.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: Well, excellent. It's been a pleasure interviewing you today. We appreciate
31 your time.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Thank you.
34
35 [throat clearing]
36
37 Linda Johnson: Thank you.
38
39 Michael Fleming: Thank, thanks, Mark. [snapping] [papers rustling]
40
41
42/lb