

**James (Jimmy) Howlett, an African American, discusses his career
as a production worker at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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3
4
5Doreen Howard: Okay, [tsk] uh, it is October 10, 2005. We're at the Lansing Car
6 Assembly. [tsk] Uh, I am Doreen Howard, and we will be interviewing
7 James Howlett. [tsk] Um, James, [00:16] can you, uh, state your name and
8 spell your last name, please, and your address for the record?
9
10 [background conversation]
11
12James Howlett: My name is James [Alan 00:23] Howlett, H-O-W-L-E-T-T.
13
14Doreen Howard: [00:28] And your address?
15
16James Howlett: Address: 1020 Boynton Drive, Lansing Michigan 48917.
17
18 [background conversation]
19
20Doreen Howard: Okay. [00:36] And why don't you guys introduce yourselves?
21
22Cheryl McQuaid: I'm ser-, Cheryl McQuaid.
23
24Jerri Smith: And I'm Jerri Smith.
25
26Doreen Howard: Okay. [background conversation] Um, [tsk] let's see here. [00:48] What's
27 your seniority date?
28
29 [background conversation]
30
31James Howlett: February 24, 1970.
32
33Doreen Howard: [00:53] And what department do you work in?
34
35James Howlett: Environmental Services.
36
37Doreen Howard: Oh. Um, have you always worked in Environmental Services?
38
39James Howlett: Uh, I've worked – no. I've worked 30, 31 years in Environmental
40 Services, and I hired in at – originally hired into the Body Shop.
41
42Doreen Howard: Okay. [00:15] Can you tell me a little bit about that first day when you
43 hired in?
44
45 [background conversation]
46

1 James Howlett: The first day I was hired, I was petrified. I hired into the Body Shop, and
2 the Body Shop was noisy. [background conversation] We had all these
3 many welding guns to work with. It was pretty scary experience. Very
4 loud.
5
6 [background conversation]
7
8 Doreen Howard: [1:35] Do, do you remember your supervisor or anyone...
9
10 James Howlett: Uh, my first supervisor...
11
12 Doreen Howard: ...that, that you worked with?
13
14 James Howlett: ...I worked for was [Walt Beach].
15
16 Doreen Howard: Mm- hm.
17
18 James Howlett: I remember him. He was quite a, quite a supervisor, very loud and
19 flamboyant.
20
21 [laughter]
22
23 Doreen Howard: Okay. Um, [tsk] so body shop.
24
25 James Howlett: Yes.
26
27 Doreen Howard: [1:55] [tsk] And what exact job were you assigned to at that time?
28
29 James Howlett: I did spot welding. I, I weld the back, uh, seat panels, and I did some
30 welding along the front of the, uh, [tsk] windshield wiper brackets and,
31 and I, um, I had ta release clamps off the body trucks...
32
33 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
34
35 James Howlett: ...before the job got lifted off.
36
37 Doreen Howard: [2:24] For someone who doesn't know what spot welding is, can you
38 kinda describe what you – what it is and what you worked with and
39 materials and things...
40
41 James Howlett: Well...
42
43 Doreen Howard: ...that surrounded you?
44

1 James Howlett: Basically you worked with a hammer and 3 or 4 spot welding guns as
2 basically the body is being put together, and you had to weld all these
3 integrated pieces together as the line went, went down the line.
4

5 Doreen Howard: Okay. [2:46] And was that – is that a large department and was there quite
6 a few people that worked in that department?
7

8 James Howlett: Yeah, it was quite a few people. I'd say, it was about, [tsk] at least 'bout
9 30.
10

11 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 2:55]. Okay. That's quite a few. [Inaudible 2:57]
12

13 Cheryl McQuaid: How long did you do that job?
14

15 James Howlett: I did that job for about, oh, 'bout a good year.
16

17 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 3:06]
18

19 James Howlett: Then I left the Body Shop and went on to – I did rework in the Salvage
20 Department where they bought stock in, stock that was wrong or cut
21 wrong. We had to rework it, uh, or wasn't punched in right – certain
22 things that were imperfed from the supplier.
23

24 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
25

26 James Howlett: We did a lotta rework.
27

28 Doreen Howard: [3:22] And, and how long did you work in, in the...
29

30 James Howlett: I did that...
31

32 Doreen Howard: [inaudible 3:25]
33

34 James Howlett: ...for about a year.
35

36 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
37

38 James Howlett: And then I got cut off in '74. During the oil embargo I got laid off...
39

40 Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
41

42 James Howlett: ...for about 5 months and then I leveled off and then I went into
43 Sanitation, Environmental Service in 1974.
44

45 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 3:42] So...
46

1James Howlett: And I've been there ever since.
2

3Doreen Howard: [3:44] How long did you act-, physically get laid off out of the plant for
4 any length of time during that or did you just switch from 1 department to
5 another?
6

7James Howlett: I got laid off for a couple of months and then I ended up eventually
8 leveling off and going to another department.
9

10Doreen Howard: Okay.
11

12James Howlett: Environmental Services.
13

14Doreen Howard: Okay. [4:00] So you came back and at that time started out in
15 Environmental Services?
16

17James Howlett: In 1974.
18

19Doreen Howard: Okay. [4:07] And tell me, what is Environmental Services and what type
20 of jobs did you perform in that arena?
21

22James Howlett: Well, when I, I got in to Environmental Services, it consists of
23 housekeeping or janitorial work which we, you know, cleaned bathrooms
24 and you did a lot of stacking and hauling cardboard and stacking
25 cardboard on, and getting and loading pallets up. We had a lot of pallets at
26 that time and, uh, sweeping, sweeping certain areas. My area then
27 originally was in the Body Shop, so I did a lot of that. And cleaned the
28 [inaudible 4:40] 'cause I was in the soldering area so we had to clean and
29 lift up [inaudible 4:44] solder that was done on jobs that they solder and it
30 fell on the, on the, uh, floor. So I had to take care of that so...
31

32Doreen Howard: So, [4:53] was there a particular department that you did the sanitation for
33 or did you work throughout the plant in different areas?
34

35James Howlett: Eventually I did, then I went into Utility so then that's – I spread it out
36 and did myriad jobs then so I was on Utility for quite a few years, 'bout
37 10, 12 years on utility.
38

39Cheryl McQuaid: [5:14] You started out in Body Shop and then you went into...
40

41James Howlett: Yeah.
42

43Cheryl McQuaid: ...Utility.
44

1Doreen Howard: Um, tell me a little bit about the – how you felt about the transition of
2 going from the production department in – arena to the Sanitation arena,
3 the, the pros and cons and the differences between the, the groups.
4

5James Howlett: Well, the difference is, you don't have to work as steady as you did when
6 you're on production. Sanitation was pretty much, you know, you had a
7 lot of time as opposed to standing on a line all day and doing a job all day.
8 It was mainly task orientated so it was not like a repetitive job like we do
9 working on a line and you performed a certain task, cleaning bathrooms
10 and lifting pallets, consistent sweeping. And, uh, you pretty much had a
11 flexible schedule in terms of free time.
12

13Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 6:05]. So not, not as hard on your, your body...
14

15James Howlett: Right.
16

17Doreen Howard: ...physically then...
18

19James Howard: Strenuously...
20

21Doreen Howard: ...as demanding.
22

23James Howlett: ...not as hard on you. Less demanding.
24

25Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. Uh, [tsk] let's see here. [6:18] Um, we said that, uh, you were
26 laid off before?
27

28James Howlett: Mm-hm. [tsk]
29

30Doreen Howard: And for just a couple of months. [6:27] Do, do you have any idea what the
31 layoff was for? Why you were laid off for?
32

33James Howlett: Um, reduction force. I got laid off back in '74 [stammers] and '75 due to
34 reduction force because of oil embargo.
35

36Doreen Howard: Uh, the oil embargo.
37

38James Howlett: And I did remember I previously got laid off again back in '81, '82. There
39 was a recession.
40

41Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
42

43James Howlett: I was forced out of group for, uh, about 6 months. I ended up going to the
44 Cushion Room.
45

46Doreen Howard: Oh.

1
2James Howlett: I worked there for about 5 or 6 months and eventually back in '84 I came
3 back into Sanitation so I wasn't very much out of Sanitation,
4 Environmental Service for very long.
5
6Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. [7:04] Um, kind of on the same to-, line, um, not necessarily
7 layoffs, but were you ever in-, involved in, in any strikes. Was there any
8 strikes, uh, that happened during...
9
10James Howlett: Yes.
11
12Doreen Howard: ...your time here?
13
14James Howlett: When I hired in, in, uh, February of 1970, that was the year when the
15 contract that was going on in, in September of 1970, and we went off on
16 the strike because of that and the strike was mainly over pensions.
17
18Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 7:32].
19
20James Howlett: At that time, it was a pension issue, and we went out on strike and we
21 were on strike 67 days.
22
23Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 7:39].
24
25James Howlett: I can remember that experience. It was a long ordeal. I had not been here
26 'bout 6 or 7 months and we went on strike and that was for the pension
27 and, of course, we stayed on strike 'til 67, 67 days until the strike was
28 settled.
29
30Doreen Howard: That's a – That was a long, quite a long strike.
31
32James Howlett: Yes, it was quite a experience, humbling experience.
33
34Doreen Howard: Yes. It would be. [8:01] Uh, going back to, um, [tsk] the Sanitation
35 Department, and, uh, could you tell me a little bit about the department as
36 far as was there any initiation into that group or even when you came in
37 your very first day, when you went to Body Shop? Was there an initiation
38 into the production group as far as pranks or any type of things that they
39 did to the new hire people that came into their groups at that time?
40
41James Howlett: Well, I guess the biggest prank is they throw you out there in the area
42 [laughter] and you had to figure out what area that you had to do 'cause
43 the area was split up by boundaries, but a lot of times they didn't tell you
44 those boundaries. So you had to kinda learn from your comrades that were
45 in that particular area, how, how far your area extended.
46

1Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
2
3James Howlett: So they kinda throw you to the wolves...
4
5 [laughter]
6
7James Howlett ...so to speak.
8
9 [laughter]
10
11Doreen Howard: Here's your job. Go find it.
12
13James Howlett: Yeah, here's your job. You take it. Now you figure it out.
14
15 [laughter]
16
17Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 9:01].
18
19James Howlett: So a lot of it was touch and go, but you know, ya, ya learn after you
20 develop a camaraderie with the, uh, your fellow workers 'bout where your
21 particular job end and started.
22
23Doreen Howard: Mm-hm. Uh, you talked a little bit about camaraderie. [9:15] Uh, is there
24 any, uh personnel here that you got to be good friends with, whi-, while
25 you have been here?
26
27James Howlett: I, I got friends with a number of people here, particularly the, ya know,
28 your coworkers that you worked with over the years, and your supervisors.
29 It – there was some supervisors that kinda had a positive affect on me that
30 were really I thought was great supervisors, both professionally and on a
31 human standpoint.
32
33Doreen Howard: Tell me a little bit about'm.
34
35James Howlett: I can think of, uh, 1 particular, when I worked in the Body Shop. His name
36 was [Ray Perez]. I originally worked in his department. I moved from 1
37 department over to his department. He worked in Side Frames, and he was
38 a very fair foreman. He got along with his employees good. If you did his
39 job – did your job, he didn't mess wit' you. He, you know, had a lot of
40 dinners in his department, and he just treated his people well, you know.
41 You did your job. He didn't bother you.
42
43Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 10:13].
44
45James Howlett: And he was one of my favorites and then I had, uh, [tsk] another
46 supervisor, [Al Kelly]. He was one of the first black supervisors in

1 Environmental Services, and he was fair. You know, you did your job, you
2 know. He didn't mess wit' ya, you know. And he had – and if ever you
3 need help in your job, he was there to help ya.
4
5Doreen Howard: [Inaudible].
6
7James Howlett: And just fellow workers along the way, you know. You meet a lot of
8 people, their names I can't even describe. They cross your path over the
9 35 years that I've been here.
10
11 [laughter]
12
13James Howlett: There's a lot of-, there's a lot of good employees.
14
15Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 10:47] Um, [tsk] I would like you to, uh, describe if any, if
16 there were any comparisons from when you first hired in to the present
17 that, um, [tsk] where, any situations where your race may have come into
18 play at any time while you were working here. [11:12] Has that ever been
19 an issue, in, in any of the jobs that you have been in?
20
21James Howlett: No, I really can't say as it ever been an issue for me.
22
23Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 11:18].
24
25James Howlett: I never had any problems where I worked all those years as far as race. I
26 think the only biggest question that came in the race is when, uh, back in,
27 uh, [tsk] I think it, yeah, 1976, was a big issue of race came in. That was
28 the year that before that time, [tsk] male employees would clean male
29 bathrooms.
30
31Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 11:43].
32
33James Howlett: Female employees would clean female bathrooms.
34
35Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 11:46].
36
37James Howlett: Well they changed that then under the E-, Equal Rights Amendment. Now
38 they made jobs that were both men and women could do'm equally and,
39 uh, I can recall when I first started cleaning women's bathroom. Women
40 was very upset, very mad. They didn't like it. [laughter] I – A man coming
41 in cleaning women's toilets, and that caused quite a ruckus for quite a long
42 time. Pe-, women would complain. They went to the Union Hall. They
43 were complaining, "Hey, why we got a man? How come a woman
44 couldn't do that?" But then again women had to clean men's bathrooms so
45 it was kind of a problem as far as, uh, gender, gender discrimination
46 'cause they didn't – they were intimidated, you know. Women – men

1 never had cleaned women's bathroom so the women were frightened, kind
2 of intimidated.
3
4Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 12:33].
5
6James Howlett: So it took a long time for them to adjust.
7
8Doreen Howard: Uh, changes are not...
9
10James Howlett: Yeah.
11
12Doreen Howard ...necessarily the easiest for people to accept.
13
14James Howlett: No, it's not.
15
16Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 12:42]. As far as our facility, uh, [tsk] you've worked here for
17 so many years. [tsk] [12:53] How do you feel about the, the plant closing
18 and, and there's hardly anyone here now, and they're still cleaning and
19 trying to make the [tsk] surroundings nice for the people that are left
20 behind here still. Um...
21
22James Howlett: Well it's a bitter – bittersweet experience. I mean, the, the friendships that
23 you formed here at this plant produced the most cars, you know, in the
24 capital city of the world. We produced more cars than anybody and to see
25 it shut down now, it's kind of a sad experience for me, to see this plant not
26 building any more cars.
27
28Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 13:31].
29
30James Howlett: You know, particularly when it – the fact that it is 1 of the most antiquated
31 plants in the whole GM system, yet we produced the most cars. So it's
32 kind of sad experience and to see it end, shut, and cars never being built
33 again here.
34
35Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 13:46]. [13:47] Um, [tsk] if you were to offer any words of
36 wisdom to a new employee that's going to be, uh, coming in and possibly
37 working at the Delta Plant, what, what would you offer for words of
38 wisdom?
39
40James Howlett: Well I will say that ya, ya have to learn to change with the, the times are
41 different. We're living in a global competitive world now, and you have to
42 have the ability to want to adapt and change. You have to be flexible
43 because our business slowly evolving every day. Every day it's changing
44 so you had, you had to build it. It really changed and have the ability to
45 work in teams. That's the most important...
46

1 [coughing]
2
3 James Howlett: ...thing, to get away from the petty differences and personalities and
4 realize that our major goal is to produce a car and produce it at the best
5 quality and I guess that's the biggest thing, to be able to adapt to change.
6
7 Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 14:43] [14:45] Um, over your time that you have been here, uh,
8 has there been anything that has just st-, stuck with you in your mind that
9 has been so funny that – or just unusual that it stands out, something that
10 you wanna tell us?
11
12 James Howlett: I guess the most funniest, humorous thing is, is when I, uh, worked here,
13 the first week that I worked here, and I received my check. And I hired in
14 at \$3.51 an hour, and I made \$150 check. When I first got that check, I
15 was scared. I thought the boss had made a mistake, that I got \$150 for a
16 paycheck for a whole week. I, [stammers] it was funny because I never
17 believed that I could make that kind of money. I didn't make that kind of
18 money when I first come in, and I asked the boss, "Is something wrong? Is
19 this check right?" He says, "Sure it's right." I says, " God, that seemed
20 like too much money." He says, "Well if you want to give some of it back,
21 I'll take it."
22
23 [laughter]
24
25 James Howlett: He says, "That's your check."
26
27 Cheryl McQuaid: Jimmy you were here when the plant was known as Fisher Body. It was
28 Fisher Body.
29
30 James Howlett: Right.
31
32 Cheryl McQuaid: And you've seen it change to BOC and then to LCA. [16:02] What are
33 your thoughts on that? What did you think when all that was happening?
34
35 James Howlett: Well I thought about, a lot like a lot of people, you know, when they – it,
36 it changed and it – the identity of the Fisher name is synonymous with the
37 whole industry at that time. I mean, Fisher was just every car had emblem,
38 Body by Fisher, on it, and to see it change, it was just unbelievable. I just
39 thought it lost its identity, to lose that Fisher name. But as you know, and
40 then to lose the building of the 98s and the Vista Cruisers and all the big
41 cars that we made, 'cause we lost all that. When they went into the LCA,
42 back in what, '84 I think, it's approximately around there. So it was kind
43 of a shocking experience when we thought that many of us had been here
44 said, "This place is crazy to get rid of your bread and butter cars that we
45 built. We built those 98s and those 88s and Vista Cruisers." We made a lot
46 o' money and we thought the company was headed into wrong direction.

1 Well needless to say the company was right because we made a lot of
2 Grand Ams. We made a lot of Buicks, a lot of Cavaliers, so sometimes
3 change always – sometimes it seems wrong but at that particular time it
4 worked out for the best for us.
5
6Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 17:19]. [17:21] Um,[tsk] was there any, um, [tsk] other
7 members of your family that work here or any relatives that you have that
8 work here?
9
10James Howlett: Uh, I had a, I had a sister retired on the Oldsmobile. She had 30 years. She
11 retired in 1967, no 1997. Excuse me. Then I had a brother-in-law that
12 worked up in Paint. He retired outta here 3 years ago. He had almost 40
13 years.
14
15Doreen Howard: Oh.
16
17James Howlett: Then I got a brother that works in Material here. Hired in 1978 so...
18
19Doreen Howard: Oh.
20
21James Howlett ...those were about the only close relatives I have that worked within
22 General Motors.
23
24Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 17:55] That's quite a few people that, that work [inaudible
25 17:59] so...
26
27Cheryl McQuaid: [18:01] How old were you when you hired in?
28
29James Howlett: I was 20, 20 years old. A little young kid.
30
31Cheryl McQuaid: [18:07] Did you grow up in this neighborhood? Where did you grow up?
32
33James Howlett: I grew up in the Oldsmobile, the [inaudible 18:11] Street area, right where
34 the main plant, the Chassis is.
35
36Doreen Howard: Oh, okay.
37
38James Howlett: I grew up in there until they started buying those houses out in the late 6-
39 70s, that they bought all that property out so I am a lifelong resident.
40
41Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 18:30] a little bit of background on – [18:33] did you ever
42 know what people were doing in those – the [inaudible 18:37] when you
43 were younger? Did you ever wanna – did you think of that [inaudible
44 18:41] I want to work there someday or was there, you know...
45
46James Howlett: No...

1
2Doreen Howard: ...not necessarily?
3
4James Howlett: ...no, I never thought about it. I never thought about really working here.
5 You know, a lot of people retired. Of course I graduated from Lansing
6 Sexton so a lotta kids that got out of school ended up coming over here,
7 but at that particular time, I, I had aspirations of wanting to be a car
8 mechanic so I got into that field for a while, and then I found out that I –
9 this field doesn't really suit me so I decided a lot of my friends were going
10 into General Motors. I said, "Well, I'm, I'm going to go into work in a
11 factory," but I never envisioned myself coming in and working at a
12 factory.
13
14Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 19:18] [background conversation] Um, [19:23] is there, um
15 [inaudible 19:26]
16
17Jerri Smith: [19:27] How much did the plant change in...
18
19Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 19:29]
20
21Jerri Smith: ...all the years you've been here? It's like when you first came in
22 compared to what it is now.
23
24James Howlett: Well when I first came in you hired in and – like when I hired in the Body
25 Shop, everybody was required to go down and get a hammer and get it
26 [inaudible 19:42] and shaped like an anvil, a spiked anvil, and you, you
27 put your coveralls on. They told me, "Well hey you're hired here to work.
28 We don't wanna hear your personal problems or issue. We want – expect
29 you on the job every day," and that was it. And that's it. Ya know, they –
30 your job was to work and that was it. And I see now it's greatly changed. I
31 mean, you know, you had to go find your way to the body shop. You
32 didn't know where you were going. You had to search and ask people
33 where to go or where the hospital was or where the cafeteria was. You
34 kind of had to learn all that on your own. To file for unemployment, sub
35 pay, all that, you know, you pretty much had to learn on your own, or, or
36 through your comrades, and now I see the change as, as the years progress.
37 You know, you – we got the Family Work Life Department that helps
38 people with personal problems and issues.
39
40Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 20:37].
41
42James Howlett: Now they go through orientation, where people come in and get a chance a
43 week to go to their union and be shown around the parts of the plant,
44 where to find the, the hospital and where to find certain places within the
45 plant. They got union awareness. I mean, they got a myriad of different
46 things that, that we didn't have, ya know. You got physical therapy

1 reimbursement where you can go and do physical fitness and get
2 reimbursed. I mean, there's a lotta things now that they're concerned that
3 if the help that worked there now than years ago they didn't have those
4 things.
5

6Doreen Howard: Um, you touched base on, uh, do with the negotiated benefits that are –
7 that we've accumulated over the years. [21:21] Is there any, um, particular
8 benefit that you yourself have been able to use – utilize and, um, [tsk]
9 which one do you feel is one of our better benefits?
10

11James Howlett: I tell you, that's, uh, that can go into a myriad.
12
13 [laughter]
14

15James Howlett: I think the number 1 is the pension. When I first hired in, they fought and
16 struck for \$600 a month pension. That was the issue back then. Thirty
17 years and be able to retire at 30 years regardless of age. That was first
18 instituted in 1970. Before year, it was the age cap and they didn't get paid
19 that much pension so that was something that we, or I've benefited by and
20 a lot of other workers have benefited – increased pensions. You got cost of
21 living. I mean, you got Legal Aid Services. That stands out to me as a very
22 good benefit. You got 401K program started.
23

24Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 22:14].
25

26James Howlett: So there's a lot of good healthy benefit that we got during the years that I
27 certainly am grateful for.
28

29Doreen Howard: Um, [tsk] you, uh, we've talked before and you said you had, uh, children
30 that you have put through college.
31

32James Howlett: Mm-hm.
33

34Doreen Howard: [22:34][tsk] Has that benefit, uh, with the General Motors dependent, uh,
35 scholarships been of use?
36

37James Howlett: Uh, on, 1, 1, 1 year, it, it benefited, but the other years I could not get it
38 because of the fact that I paid most of it. They had a certain limit of – as
39 far as tuition, how much they would pay. There's a cap on that which I
40 didn't know, but they had benefited me. I mean, I, I've [inaudible 23:04]
41 enriched by it and profited by it. And just to have a good wage paying job
42 benefited. To be able to have a job that afforded me the opportunity to
43 send her to college was a big help.
44

1Doreen Howard: Um, you also touched base a little bit on, um, [tsk] the union. [23:22]
2 Have you been to any union meetings or you ever been active in the union
3 at all?
4

5James Howlett: Uh, no, not really. I haven't been to very few union meetings. No, I've not
6 been a active participant within union meetings. No.
7

8Doreen Howard: [23:39] Um, [tsk] um, [tsk] is there any, um, [tsk] thing else that you, you
9 can think of that you, you want to tell us about, something that we haven't
10 touched on, that you wanted to share with us?
11

12James Howlett: Uh, like I said, I've enjoyed my 35 years that I've been here. I have been
13 happy with General Motors. General Motors has been 1 of the best places
14 that I have to work. I have enjoyed the friendships all during the years, in
15 particularly, back in the 70s where we used to have bowling leagues,
16 meaning foremans and supervisors would get together and we had bowling
17 leagues. And we had pool leagues, and we had golf leagues during the 70s,
18 and those were kinda the most enjoyable times that I had during the years
19 and of course when they reorganized, that kinda got lost in the shuffle.
20 Company reorganized and structurally changed the dynamics of the
21 process and how things worked. I mean, there was, years ago, the
22 foremans would set their jobs up but then when they reorganized,
23 industrial engineering did all that. So it kind of lost its cohesiveness
24 between the employees and I kind of felt disappointed by that, that we
25 didn't have that close friendship with management and employees any
26 more. But uh, I am just thankful and grateful for the benefits, for the
27 opportunity to be able to work in 1 plant and not have to go to 4 or 5
28 different plants that built, I think, 1 of the best quality jobs in the world
29 that we built here over the years. We've won so many quality awards and
30 banners and J.D. Powers Award. Those are the things that, in my memory,
31 strike out as very enjoyable experience.
32

33Doreen Howard: [tsk] [25:29] Now, are you going to be continuing on to the Delta Plant?
34
35 [background conversation]
36

37James Howlett: I'm gonna go over there. I don't know how long...
38
39 [laughter]
40

41James Howlett: ...I'm gonna stay, but I want to be able to leave this plant and say that I
42 did physically go to the new plant. So I am looking forward and excited
43 about that. I'll never forget this plant though, even though we're going to
44 something new to me, this has still been 1 of the best plants in the world to
45 work for. But I'm looking for the opportunity to go there.
46

1Doreen Howard: [Inaudible 25:58]. All right. Well, well thank you very much for your
2 interview. We truly appreciate it.
3

4Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you Jimmy.
5

6James Howlett: You welcome.
7

8Jerri Smith: Thank you Jimmy.
9

10James Howlett: You guys are good.
11

12Doreen Howard: Um, Jimmy I have 1 other question that I wanted to ask you. [26:13] Do
13 you remember when women came into the Body Shop?
14

15James Howlett: Yes, I can recall, 1976, women first hired at the Body Shop and to
16 observe'm, it was quite a, as I felt, they felt like I felt. The Body Shop was
17 a very intimidating place. You had a lot of smoke, a lot of noise, lot of
18 spot welding guns. It was very physical and demanding work, and, uh, to
19 see the looks on their face, they were like me. They were very scared.
20 They were very apprehensive, but yet they were energetic to, to rise to the
21 challenge and do the work. Back then, ya had a lotta utility and ya had a
22 lotta other people there that would help you to perform the job, but that
23 was quite an experience to see the women come in to the body shop.
24

25Doreen Howard: [26:56] So what time frame was that, when they [inaudible 27:00] ...
26

27James Howlett: Back in 1976.
28

29Doreen Howard: Okay. [27:02] And prior to that, were women working in other parts of the
30 plant, or, or...
31

32James Howlett: There was no woman working in the, within the Body Shop at that time,
33 and there was very few women – the women that worked, most of'm
34 worked in Paint, in the Paint Department, and there were a couple of
35 women on the Sanitation or Environmental Service as is now called, but,
36 uh, then, uh, the majority of women came in prior and years later, and that
37 was in 1978, '77 and '78, they hired quite a few number of women that
38 came out to the plant to work so...
39

40Doreen Howard: [27:39] So what was, um, [tsk] the majority of the males – what were their
41 feelings do you think when the women started to come in, into the work
42 place?
43

44James Howlett: Well just like it is now. You ha-, had some certain biases and prejudices
45 that men felt women should not be in there doing men's job 'cause they
46 was particularly a male dominated profession at that time. A lot of men

1 didn't like it. They didn't like the idea of women coming in doing men's
2 work or taking the jobs from men so they were pretty – some of'm were
3 pretty angry. There were some that didn't mind it – didn't mind it
4 [inaudible 28:16] hey they doing the same work as we do. They can do it
5 so...
6
7Doreen Howard: [28:20] Has that changed in your time here or do you still see a lot of the
8 same prejudices that there...
9
10James Howlett: [Inaudible 28:26] to, to some degree, you still see some prejudice but
11 basically it's changed because there is some work that women can do
12 better than men because their dex-, dex-, dexterity,...
13
14Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.
15
16James Howlett: ...their ability to handle hands so there were certain jobs women did better
17 than men, like your door wire jobs so, yeah, there's still some prejudice
18 but for the most part, they pretty much accepted it.
19
20Doreen Howard: Okay. All right.
21
22Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you Jimmy.
23
24Female: Thank you.
25
26James Howlett: You're quite welcome.
27
28
29/rm