

**Craig Johnson, an African American, discusses his career as a
production worker and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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5 Marilyn Coulter: Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team interview. Today is April 7, 2006.
6 The time is approximately 10:30 a.m. We are at UAW Local 602's Frank
7 Dryer Greenhouse. First we'll introduce the team.
8
9 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [0:25] And I'm Marilyn Coulter. [background music] Today we're with...
12 Today we're here with Craig Johnson. Craig, will you please state and
13 spell your name for us?
14
15 Craig Johnson: Craig Johnson. C-r-a-i-g J-o-h-n-s-o-n.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [0:34] And your address, please.
18
19 Craig Johnson: 3031 South Washington Avenue, Apartment D7, Lansing, Michigan
20 48910.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: [0:42] Craig, are you married?
23
24 Craig Johnson: I'm currently divorced.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [0:47] Uh, do you have any children?
27
28 Craig Johnson: Yes I do. I have a 15-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [0:51] S-, Craig, where were you born?
31
32 Craig Johnson: Here in Lansing, Michigan.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: [0:56] And raised?
35
36 Craig Johnson: Raised here also in Lansing, Michigan.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00] What is your education level?
39
40 Craig Johnson: I have a 12th grade, graduated from Harry Hill High School and I got a
41 little background in Davenport, uh, Community College as well as
42 Lansing Computer Institute.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00] Okay. Um, were you ever in the military?
45
46 Craig Johnson: No.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: [1:16] What did your parents do for a living?
3
4 Craig Johnson: My mom worked in the hospital as a nurse back in the late 9-, 60s and, uh,
5 early 70s. Then she worked at, uh, Michigan National Bank downtown
6 and she retired from there. My dad worked at General Motors for 32 years.
7 He was a supervisor up in Paint, and he retired back in 1998. He also did
8 some masonry work on the side too as well.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [1:44] So you said your father worked for General Motors. Did he work
11 for Fisher Body?
12
13 Craig Johnson: Yes, he did.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [1:46] What was it like having a father who worked at Fisher Body?
16
17 Craig Johnson: Uh, it was a little different, you know, just, um, we had different areas that
18 we worked in, wh-, which was a good thing. But, um, just knowin' that my
19 dad worked in this big green plant was, um, was enough. I just knew he
20 just went to work every day till I grow older and I understood more about
21 what he was doin' so...
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [2:08] As a child, did you ever get to go inside the plant?
24
25 Craig Johnson: I went inside it [inaudible 2:11] one time we had a tour that went through
26 there one time. I remember just everything just looked strange and big and
27 kinda scary at the time. So I was very young I went through there.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: [2:29] Now I know that, um, supervisors have to work different shifts and
30 swing shifts, and back then they used to rotate a lot. Was that difficult for
31 you as a child?
32
33 Craig Johnson: Yeah because we never [inaudible 2:31] seein' too often, you know,
34 sometimes we'd see'm before we go to bed at night or when we got outta
35 school or in the morning time before we go to school. It just depends
36 whenever he had to go to work. Um, didn't quite understand it then.
37 [Inaudible 2:43] when I got older I kinda understood that's part of his
38 responsibility. So...
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [2:50] Uh, what did you do before you hired in to Fisher Body?
41
42 Craig Johnson: [As far as 2:53] school? [laughter] I just got outta high school when I first
43 got hired in. I actually got hired in twice. I got hired in first in 1979, which
44 was right after the summer of, um, '79, and I didn't get my 90 days in, so I
45 got laid off.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [3:10] Did you plan on workin' in the factory after high school?
2

3 Craig Johnson: Not particularly planned on it, no. I actually thought about goin' into some
4 type of mil-, military service. I was lookin' at the Air Force or maybe the
5 Navy. My brother was in the Navy. He had got outta Navy, so I was kinda,
6 uh, lookin' at that, but, um, um, GM was hirin'. My dad told me to go put a
7 application in, so I did.
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: [3:32] So, um, having your father as a supervisor, was it easy for you to
10 get hired in [inaudible]?
11

12 Craig Johnson: I think it had its perks, yeah.
13

14 [laughter]
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: [3:42] When you hired in, do you remember what your first day was like?
17 What department did you hire in at?
18

19 Craig Johnson: Yeah. Um, I got hired in to the, um, to the, um, I think at the time it was A
20 Line Trim Department. I don't remember exactly [inaudible 3:54] what
21 area like, like Area 20 or 30. I can't remember what area it was, but it was
22 right behind Water Test, and I had a job called Suck-Out Job. It's like a big
23 vacuum sweeper that you had and you suck water out of every car that
24 came by. You just put the hose in the, in the car and it sucks out all the
25 water. So...
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: [4:14] Did you know anybody before you hired in?
28

29 Craig Johnson: Yeah. I knew several people, my, and my sister [inaudible 4:16] workin'
30 the same area. Matter of fact, we worked right next to each other. And,
31 um, that, that made it a little bit easier for me to, to go there and work.
32 You know, she made things a lot easier for me.
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [4:38] Having, um, a sister work there for you, sh-, you had the benefit of
35 having somebody show you the ropes and stuff like that. Did having a
36 sister there prevent you from having, uh, new-hire pranks played on you?
37

38 Craig Johnson: Eh, somewhat. They did play, you know, little pranks on me by turnin' my
39 machine off before, but they didn't do as much to me, you know, as they
40 probly would have, but yeah, I think she probly might have a little
41 somethin' to do with that.
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [5:02] Hm. So you were young and – how long did you do this job?
44

45 Craig Johnson: Uh, I think I did it for like a couple weeks and then I got transferred to
46 another d-, department. I went ta um, um, door panel area, which was like

1 right around the corner from that job. And that job consisted of puttin'
2 door panels on a pacific job. Whatever job was next that we had to do, we
3 had to put that particular panel on. The same color and, you know, so...
4

5Marilyn Coulter: [5:25] Was that – where you first **were**, you said you put on different
6 colors. How did you know what color to put on?
7

8Craig Johnson: We had to read the manifest that was on the front a the car. And by readin'
9 the manifest, they had a certain number on there that tells you which
10 certain – that number matched up with a certain car. So...
11

12Marilyn Coulter: [5:41] So was that a difficult job to learn, having to learn the colors and
13 now you – did you build, did you build the door panels and install them?
14

15Craig Johnson: Yep. We had to build the panels up as well as install them, puttin' clips on,
16 then we install it. Um, it wasn't too difficult to learn how to do the job.
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
19

20Craig Johnson: It just, uh, you know, the colors were **[inaudible 5:57]** pretty right there,
21 it's pretty basic. And they had the colors right there, the numbers right
22 there. So we matched'm up pretty good, so...
23

24Marilyn Coulter: [6:03] And they had'm right there where?
25

26Craig Johnson: Offline when we had to go p-, pick the panel out.
27

28Marilyn Coulter: Oh. Okay.
29

30Craig Johnson: You know, we'd get'm and go to the table and build'm up. Then we put'm
31 up.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: [6:12] So, um, once you're in there and you're actually doing the jobs that
34 you used to sometimes see as a child, what was that like? Were there any
35 surprises to you coming in? What, what shocked you about being inside
36 the plant?
37

38Craig Johnson: How big it was. Like, it was like a different world, different place. Um,
39 how the assembly in kep' movin' and the different people that you see in
40 there from different places and the different age groups that you seen and
41 just – it was like a little world inside of a world, you know?
42

43Marilyn Coulter: [6:44] When you're working night shift, were there more people closer to
44 your age? Were there older people? And how was that bein' a teenager and
45 workin' nights when all your friends are out doin' other things? What was
46 that like?

1
2 Craig Johnson: [laughter] Yeah. We had a lotta more people that were probly closer to our
3 age, my age. Well I, I was actually only 18 when I first started. So, um, we
4 had a lotta people who were in their 20s and 30s but we had some older
5 people too as well. Um, yeah it was difficult givin' up that night life like
6 that because I usually get out s-, you know, late summer, uh, like to get
7 out and do things. I was drivin' at the time too, so, um, it kinda took away
8 from, uh, from my friends a little bit. But they understood I had a job to
9 do.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [7:23] What, um, how did you guys get through the night? You know, was
12 there music? Where there jokes played...
13
14 [coughing]
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 7:29] how did you get through the night?
17
18 [throat clearing]
19
20 Craig Johnson: [Inaudible 7:30] we talked...
21
22 [throat clearing]
23
24 Craig Johnson: ...[inaudible 7:32] to get, when I moved to a new area, I had to, I had to
25 move by one a my friends I went to high school with. Um, and we passed
26 away time pretty good. You know, we joked around quite a bit, you know,
27 listen to music and, uh, just tryin' to keep focused on what we were doin'.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: [7:48] In a factory, is it, is it easy to hear a radio or is it a difficult or...?
30
31 Craig Johnson: It's a little bit louder than normal [laughter], you know, 'cause everything's
32 goin' on, the machinery's goin' on, the line's movin' and plus other people
33 had their music on that's to a different radio station so...
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [8:04] Now how did that work with two different radio stations?
36
37 Craig Johnson: Well, you know, you try to be respectful of other people because they
38 wanna listen to their stuff, but hopefully they don't turn their stuff up too
39 loud and you don't turn yours up too loud, you know, make it so you can
40 hear your, your, your music and, and not be conflicted with each other.
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [8:18] So what types a things did you do for lunch and things like that?
43
44 Craig Johnson: Um, we, we pretty much like – sometimes I stayed in, you know, went to
45 the cafeteria sometimes. Sometime I went out, went across the street to
46 Harry's Bar, which right across the street from where I was, was workin'.

1 And we ordered burgers or something like that. Maybe we got a couple
2 beers or somethin' and, and, uh, [inaudible 8:37] went around to the store.
3 One person would probly drive us around to the store.
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: [8:42] And the store was relatively close to the plant?
6
7 Craig Johnson: Yep, right around the corner from us, yep, Safeway.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [8:47] Safeway store. So, um, how long did you stay in the door panel
10 area?
11
12 Craig Johnson: Stayed there until I got laid off. Right before Christmastime I had got laid
13 off. And I didn't get my 90 days yet.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [8:59] Right before Christmas.
16
17 Craig Johnson: Yep. I had...
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Was...
20
21 Craig Johnson: ...80-somethin' days in.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [9:01] Was that a major shock for you to have a good job, gettin' good
24 money, good benefits, and then right before Christmas – boom!
25
26 [laughter]
27
28 Craig Johnson: Yeah I thought it was gonna make, it, this close...
29
30 [laughter]
31
32 Craig Johnson: ...I was hopin' that I'd make it, you know, but, you know, I understood the
33 nature of the beast, you know, you, you, you know, you're in the 90-day
34 probation period, um, and that '79, I only think they kept a few of us...
35
36 [throat clearing]
37
38 Craig Johnson: ...'cause I stayed in '79, who came in '79, only about maybe 10 of us stayed
39 or somethin' like that.
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
42
43 Craig Johnson: The rest of us got laid off.
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: [9:31] S-, how long were you laid off for?
46

1 Craig Johnson: A year and a half.
2

3 Marilyn Coulter: A year...
4

5 Craig Johnson: Till 19, yeah, 1981 I got re-hired back in.
6

7 Marilyn Coulter: [9:41] So you, when you, '81 when you came in, was it an automatic thing
8 because you already worked there? Did you have to re-apply? How did
9 you get back in?
10

11 Craig Johnson: I had to re-apply. So I had to re-apply. I had to stand in line and go, re-
12 apply again. We was at the [NESE 9:54] building at that time. So...
13

14 Marilyn Coulter: So now...
15

16 Craig Johnson: ...I had to re-apply [and do that. 9:56]
17

18 Marilyn Coulter: [9:57] ...is that where you hired in the first time at NESE?
19

20 Craig Johnson: No. First I had to stand out here in front in, off of Michigan Avenue and
21 Rosemary. We were down here. It was a long line. We stayed in line, I
22 don't know, maybe three or four hours. It was a long time I was in line.
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: You stood in line for...
25

26 Craig Johnson: ...yes.
27

28 Marilyn Coulter: ...three our four hours to get a job.
29

30 Craig Johnson: Yeah.
31

32 [coughing]
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [10:18] Was it hot? Was it cold?
35

36 Craig Johnson: At that time, it was kinda warm 'cause it was summertime. So, yeah.
37

38 Marilyn Coulter: [10:23] And so in '81, was it the same thing? Long line?
39

40 Craig Johnson: It was cold in '81.
41

42 [laughter]
43

44 Marilyn Coulter: [10:30] So did you have to wait a long time again?
45

1Craig Johnson: I had to wait in line. Matter of fact, I believe it was rainin' outside that day.
2 We had to wait outside in a long line. I remember it was a long line just,
3 on Cedar Street. Just lined up, goin' into the building. And, um, but, you
4 know, they, I think it helped out, yeah, 'cause I did work here before. And
5 plus my father was supervisor. So I think it helped.
6

7Marilyn Coulter: [10:50] How long did it take you to get called in?
8

9Craig Johnson: It was like a week later I think she called me up, a week later they called
10 me up and, and asked me what day I wanted to start workin'. So...
11

12Marilyn Coulter: [10:57] And what job did you come back to that time?
13

14Craig Johnson: I came back down, back down to Trim area of the A Line. And I was, uh,
15 put in the glass area. Rear glass.
16

17Marilyn Coulter: Rear glass. That's...
18

19Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [11:12] ...uh, that's back window?
22

23Craig Johnson: That's the back window, what people call their rear window. We had to
24 put the rear window defrost and the, um, windows or exterior window
25 where you had no rear defrost. So I was responsible for buildin' those up.
26

27Marilyn Coulter: [11:24] How did you like learnin' that job?
28

29Craig Johnson: Didn't.
30

31 [laughter]
32

33Marilyn Coulter: [11:26] You didn't?
34

35Craig Johnson: No. That was, uh, it was a pretty nasty and tricky, it was more tricky than
36 anything else.
37

38Marilyn Coulter: [11:35] What did you have to do to build the glass up?
39

40Craig Johnson: Oh we had to, you know, we get a certain job. We look at the manifest,
41 you know, uh, of the job that's comin' down. And either tell you that it's
42 like a heated back glass or a regular back glass. And we'd get that
43 particular glass, we'd put it on the table. And we clean the table off with
44 some saline – the glass off with a saline solution. And then, um, we had
45 pedals where we can push these pedals what makes the table...
46

1 [throat clearing]
2
3 Craig Johnson: ...spin around. And we had this, uh, it's like a hot metal gun and you put
4 black tape in a [inaudible 12:06] and you roll it on the edge of the glass
5 while you press on the pedals, and the table go around, and you put that
6 black tape on there. And that took a while to learn how to do that. And
7 then, um, once you do that, you get another gun, um, which was primer, a
8 black primer, and you press on the p-, pedals again and let that go around.
9 It's like a little brush [inaudible 12:27] the brush right on there and right at
10 the edge a that glass. And then when you get done with that, then you grab
11 another gun and you put the urethane on.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: [12:37] And urethane is a sealant I take it?
14
15 Craig Johnson: It's like a sealer, yeah. It's a sealer that, to stop leaks and stop it from the
16 heat from comin' in and, and, and damagin' the glass.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [12:47] Oh. So once you learned that job, what was it like for you? Was it
19 still difficult?
20
21 Craig Johnson: It was a piece a cake then. It was cool.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [12:55] It was a piece of cake?
24
25 Craig Johnson: Yeah.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: Um, it seems like both time you had what was called off-the-line jobs.
28
29 Craig Johnson: Hm.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: [13:01] Bein' a person who was relatively new, did you get people who
32 were maybe a little bit resentful because you bein' a new guy and low
33 seniority and havin' a, what sounds like maybe might be a preferred job?
34
35 Craig Johnson: Well, it seemed like that but [laughter], yeah, I had some little flack, you
36 know. People didn't like the fact that I got called into Glass area. But, um,
37 you know, I think I was blessed and fortunate to get that. You know, it
38 was a higher-payin' job too as well. So it was like 10 cent more than the
39 other person was gettin'. So...
40
41 Marilyn Coulter: So here's this kid out here havin' this good job, um, doin' glass.
42
43 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
44

1 Marilyn Coulter: [13:38] Um, the people in the glass department, um, did they treat you
2 well and was that a type of a job that maybe you could build up pieces and
3 you'd get a little extra break or somethin' like that?
4

5 Craig Johnson: Yeah. First of all, yeah, the people on the job were, they were pretty good.
6 Um, I think the gentleman I worked with, I don't think he was used to
7 workin' with somebody of my color. But...
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
10

11 Craig Johnson: ...we got along pretty well. I mean we, we worked together. We talked and
12 I think once you get to know somebody, you don't look at the, the, the
13 color of their skin, you know, you look at who they are on the inside. So –
14 but we got along pretty good. We had a good, good partnership. Um, the
15 people who put the glass in, they were kinda like a little different too, but
16 they were makin' extra money, but they didn't have to actually build the
17 glass up. All they did was set the glass in. And, um, but, yeah, we had
18 opportunities to build up extra stock and, um, take a little extra break.
19 Yeah.
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: [14:49] Um, just segueing a little bit, you, you brought forth an interesting
22 point. Uh, many people working there, um, from the outlying areas of
23 Lansing. Some of them, um, had never had an opportunity to work with an
24 African American male. And, um, what was that like? Did you find that
25 you were able to, um, dispel a lotta myths and after a while people treated
26 you well or was that ever a problem? Were there many people of color
27 working in your area?
28

29 Craig Johnson: We had a few of us who were a color. [I know that 15:02] – the gentleman
30 who was settin' the back glass who picked it up off the table, he was a
31 African American. And, uh, my relief person was a Hispanic. But there
32 was some other people who were in the area who, um, I [inaudible 15:18]
33 outside a the city limits and, uh, didn't really deal with too many African
34 Americans or Hispanics [inaudible 15:24] nature and, uh, did you run into
35 anything? Of course we did, you know. And, um, that was somethin' I
36 kinda anticipated because they did-, just didn't know who you were. Plus I
37 ran into things before in the past when I was younger. But the thing is that,
38 you know, uh, I was there to work. I was there to make a livin' just like he
39 was, you know, and, um, I didn't look at him as any different. I treated him
40 just like anybody else, you know, and I think he seen that and then we got
41 along pretty good. So we're still friends today [inaudible 15:54].
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: Friends.
44

45 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [15:57] So working in the plant, did you develop many long-standing
2 friendships?
3

4 Craig Johnson: Oh yeah. You, you, you do that. Yes. That's a given. I mean you can't help
5 but do that so...
6

7 Marilyn Coulter: [16:07] And did some of these friendships extend outside of the plant?
8

9 Craig Johnson: Yeah even in my partner. I, I went and seen his daughter play basketball
10 man. She played pretty good basketball for, I believe Waverly.
11

12 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
13

14 Craig Johnson: I think she was goin' – Michigan State was tryin' to recruit her at one time.
15 But I think she went up to, I believe Ferris State. But yeah, I went and
16 seen his daughter play and, um, build relationships like that, you know.
17 Things you do outside, that's when you know you really got somebody
18 that you, that you care about and, and they're friends, you know, just don't
19 do it inside, in-house. You do it out-house too. So...
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: [16:37] Okay. And then one other question that kind of revolves around
22 that, you know, some people say that – did you see your co-workers as
23 your brothers and sisters?
24

25 Craig Johnson: Yeah. I still do.
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 16:46] family?
28

29 Craig Johnson: Yeah, some of'm I really do. Yeah. Because, you know, we, we build a
30 rapport. When you work together for eight hours...
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
33

34 Craig Johnson: ...a day side by side, you get to know a lot about people and...
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
37

38 Craig Johnson: ...who they are. And you just, you know, come to care for'm.
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: [17:04] That's great. Now and, and talking about family, now you said you
41 had a sister there. Did you have any other siblings that worked there?
42

43 Craig Johnson: Yeah two brothers who worked there as well. I'm the youngest one, so I
44 had two old, older brothers that worked there and my older sister worked
45 there.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [17:12] So actually you really had kind of an advantage than a lotta people
2 because you had a father worked there, your siblings worked there, so you
3 kinda knew the ins and outs before you got there, didn't you?
4

5 Craig Johnson: Kinda, sorta, yeah. Yeah. A little bit. [laughter] They did help out a little
6 bit. Yeah.
7

8 Marilyn Coulter: [17:27] Having a father as a supervisor, did, um, that put any undue
9 pressure on you as a supervisor's child or did it give you preferential
10 treatment being a supervisors child?
11

12 Craig Johnson: As long as I stayed out of his area, um...
13
14 [laughter]
15

16 Craig Johnson: ...he worked up in Paint, and I worked down in Trim. I really didn't want
17 too much to say that he had a lot to do with my success there or anything. I
18 really wanted to do things I my own, you know...
19

20 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
21

22 Craig Johnson: ...that's the way I wanted to be, I mean. I know he did have a hand in
23 helpin' me out and I thank him for that. But there's some, some things that
24 you really wanna do on your own and, you know, stand up, try to be a man
25 on your own. So and I did that but, yeah, some people [inaudible 18:07]
26 especially when I went up to Paint, his area.
27

28 Marilyn Coulter: [18:10] Now how did you have to get up into Paint, in your father's area?
29

30 Craig Johnson: Well I got, um, I wor-, I got hired in '81 and I got laid off. We got and then
31 I had to level back. I mean I got laid off for a couple months. I think like
32 three months.
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [18:21] And leveling in is what, Craig?
35

36 Craig Johnson: It's when you actually wanna come back to work but you don't care what
37 department that you come back in to. You just wanna come back to work
38 as soon as possible according to your seniority. Where they needed you at.
39 And, uh...
40

41 Marilyn Coulter: So you ended up in Paint.
42

43 Craig Johnson: I leveled off and I came back in Paint right next to my dad's department.
44

45 Marilyn Coulter: [18:39] Oh. And what was that like?
46

1 Craig Johnson: I didn't like it.
2
3 [laughter]
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: [18:45] So what job did you do and why didn't you like it?
6
7 Craig Johnson: Oh I didn't like do-, [inaudible 18:48] I didn't like the job 'cause I was in
8 the main cuttin' booth under engine compartments where the job would
9 come in [inaudible 18:56] you're the first job [inaudible] department
10 worked across the line from me. And we had be covered from head to toe
11 with all kinda stuff, with all kinda materials and, and your shoes on. It's
12 just nasty. And, and it had runnin' water beneath the, underneath the
13 booth. And we had to lift up the, the hood and latch it, um, so we could
14 spray the engine compartment. He'd spray one half, and I sprayed the
15 other half. But we end up sprayin' each other more so than we did the car
16 because all that stuff would just come back on us and it was just nasty job.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [19:34] Um, you worked with a lotta chemicals both in urethane and now
19 you're sprayin' paint. In those jobs, were there special protective
20 equipment you had and what was the difference between working in Paint
21 and Trim?
22
23 Craig Johnson: Trim was more open. We had, you know, we had some material we had to
24 wear, we had to wear some gloves [inaudible 19:47], you know, cotton
25 gloves and, and then we had, you know, put safety glasses on. But we had
26 fans that would blow the stuff around and we were in more of a open area.
27 In Paint, we had ta have a suit. I remember I had a gray suit, I had a, a
28 bandana on my head. I had two hats, um, some nasty shoes. I think I wore
29 two pair a socks and wore a respirator 'cause a all the fumes that it was
30 worse – 'cause it was in more enclosed than it was downstairs [inaudible
31 20:22] I worked downstairs in the – on the Trim, on the Trim line.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: [20:27] So if you have a respirator, all this clothing...
34
35 [throat clearing]
36
37 Marilyn Coulter: ...on, how were you able to communicate with the people in your booth?
38
39 Craig Johnson: You didn't do too much communicating. [laughter] You sprayed it where
40 you, you, you ran over and tapped'm on the shoulder or somethin' like that.
41 You had to yell kinda loud because it was pretty loud in there too. So...and
42 you had to kinda speak real loud to just even communicate. So sometimes
43 you really didn't wanna communicate because it was so much work just to
44 communicate with somebody.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [20:57] Really. So because there was paint and stuff like that, you weren't
2 able to read or anything.
3

4 Craig Johnson: No.
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: [21:10] When you worked up in Paint, you said when you were in Trim
7 for lunch sometimes you would go out for lunch. Having to wear all that
8 garment and all that equipment, were you able to go out for lunch and then
9 what were you able to do for lunch?
10

11 Craig Johnson: Mainly either I brought my lunch or went to the cafeteria because it was
12 just restricted as to how much time you had. We got extra relief for it,
13 called heat relief...
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
16

17 Craig Johnson: ...because it was hot in there and they wanted to give you extra relief. But
18 it still wasn't enough time to take off your stuff and go outside and do
19 what you wanted to do, you know, no, I pretty much stayed indoors and,
20 and brought my lunch or went down to the cafeteria.
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: Now, once again, now that you're in your father's department...
23

24 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: [21:48] ...did you find that there were things that were expected of you
27 being his son in his department. Um, how was that working in a
28 department where your dad was? Did people look at you different? Treat
29 you different?
30

31 Craig Johnson: Yeah. Um [laughter], um, I remember he took me off to the side one time
32 tryin' to show me how to paint the job. I actually got moved to another job
33 inside the paint booth which...
34

35 [coughing]
36

37 Craig Johnson: ...[inaudible] car door jambs I would paint just my door on my side,
38 which was, made it a better job but still, it was still nasty. But he took me
39 to the side showed me this how you paint this and that, that's, I didn't
40 wanna be in the booth anymore. I didn't like it. It was restricted. I just
41 didn't like bein' in there. And, um, some people [knew who I was 22:31],
42 you know, who I was and they would come by the window and knock on
43 the window and, and wave, you know, at ya and stuff like that.
44

45 [laughter]
46

1 Craig Johnson: You know, I couldn't stay that. I was, I was gettin' depressed up in there,
2 tell ya the truth. I just didn't like it and, um, but they knew, they knew who
3 I was. And more people up, up in Paint knew who I was that I was, I was
4 his son. And, um, and did they give me any treatment, special treatment?
5 Yes. I [inaudible 22:54] I was comin' in late sometimes and, uh, [laughter]
6 the supervisor that was my supervisor, he said, "You have to stop comin'
7 in late." I said, "Get me outta the booth and I'll stop comin' in late."
8
9 [laughter]
10
11 Craig Johnson: So, um, but eventually I did, I worked my way, I got out. I got a restriction
12 to get out. And, uh, eventually I went back to my old department. They
13 had return rights. So I went back down to the Trim Department.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: [23:17] So you went back down to Trim Department.
16
17 Craig Johnson: Yep.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [23:20] When you went back down to Trim Department, did you go back
20 into the glass area?
21
22 Craig Johnson: Back in glass area. Yes, I did.
23
24 Marilyn Coulter: [23:25] And so you were first [inaudible] did you go back to the same job
25 again?
26
27 Craig Johnson: Back to the same job. Matter of fact, they changed our job because it was
28 a big changeover that happened at that time in '84. And when I came back,
29 instead of us buildin' the glass up by hand, the robot would actually do it.
30 So they had actually got robotics down there. And we, all we had to do
31 was mark the job off, get the glass, put it on, on this table, make sure you
32 [tape 23:46] down the two wires for the, um, for the rear defrost and push
33 two buttons.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [23:54] And that was it?
36
37 Craig Johnson: And the robot did the rest.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [23:57] That's all you had to do?
40
41 Craig Johnson: All. Yes.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [24:00] Okay. So it sounds as though you went into an even better job...
44
45 Craig Johnson: Yes.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: ...than before.
2
3 Craig Johnson: Yes.
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: [24:09] Um, tell me, what was that like? How did you pass your time?
6 How did you have your breaks?
7
8 Craig Johnson: I had more time to do breaks because I could. [laughter]
9
10 [laughter]
11
12 Craig Johnson: I could fill up the robot [inaudible 24:18] I could have either somebody
13 else could run a couple jobs for me if [inaudible 24:22] needed
14 [inaudible]. Plus the bathroom was real close by, so we could do that. We
15 couldn't build up as much stock though. That's the only thing. We didn't
16 have no [racks 24:29] to build up stock because the robot was doin' all the
17 work. But the robot could hold like five jobs in it at one time, so I could
18 load that five jobs up and I could take off and come back in time to have
19 that job run through there. So...
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [24:43] This was a transition period because – now the first time you came
22 in in '79, they were building, what? The...
23
24 Craig Johnson: The Cutlasses...
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: The Cutlasses and the Ninety-Eight.
27
28 Craig Johnson: ...and the Ninety-Eights. Yep.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: And in – so you come back and you work and they're building those for a,
31 for a period of time.
32
33 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: And in '84 is when they had the big model changes and then began
36 building...
37
38 Craig Johnson: The Grand Am.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: ...the Grand Ams.
41
42 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: [25:10] So what was that transition like?
45

1Craig Johnson: It was different. I mean we did – I know a lotta people loved, they had the
2 big Ninety-Eight that was rolling through there, but this was different
3 because now you knew things were changin' and that GM had to make
4 some changes. And they banked a lotta money on this, on the Grand Am.
5 They did so much that they put a whole buncha money down in our glass
6 area...
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
9

10Craig Johnson: ...ta have things runnin' like that. They were even gonna have the robotics
11 with the glass on the job.
12

13Marilyn Coulter: Wow.
14

15Craig Johnson: But it didn't work out 'cause it kept breakin' the glass.
16

17Marilyn Coulter: So the robot was breaking...
18

19Craig Johnson: Yeah. The robot had to go.
20

21Marilyn Coulter: It couldn't do everything that the people could do.
22

23Craig Johnson: No. He couldn't handle that job.
24

25Marilyn Coulter: [25:51] Craig, at that time, were you still workin' nights?
26

27Craig Johnson: I was workin' nights. Yeah.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: You were workin' nights.
30

31Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: [25:57] Now is that a preferred shift for you? Nights? Or is it just because
34 your seniority gave you that time?
35

36Craig Johnson: At the time, I preferred it and [laughter] my seniority, uh, um, allowed me
37 to be on nights.
38

39Marilyn Coulter: [26:08] Why did you prefer nights?
40

41Craig Johnson: Fun. More funner. More people my age. Um, got to knew some more,
42 some more people down there and the area I worked in was, was pretty,
43 pretty live.
44

45Marilyn Coulter: [26:18] So couple questions here. No. 1: Did you ever have the
46 opportunity to work days?

1
2 Craig Johnson: On my seniority in that, in the glass area, no? The day shift? No.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [26:28] So how did you know it was more fun?
5
6 Craig Johnson: Well I figured they were younger people on, on night shift than was the
7 day shift. And, um, I just got to know people and we just started hangin'
8 out with each other, you know, so...
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [26:42] What made it fun?
11
12 Craig Johnson: Just the laughter we had the, you know, go out and party a little bit and,
13 and, um, the girls down there. We had fun with them and, and, you know,
14 just a good area. It was just good. We just had fun.
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [26:56] Can you tell me what one of your best moments was?
17
18 Craig Johnson: [laughter] One of my best moments. [laughter] Okay. One of my best
19 moments. On that job, you mean? That particular job?
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [27:07] During your history.
22
23 Craig Johnson: During my whole history, I'd say one, one moment I'll never forget, a-
24 that, that was special to me is when my dad actually retired.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 27:17].
27
28 Craig Johnson: [Inaudible] maybe a little different but it, to see him actually retire. I went
29 up, had a chance to go up to his job, uh, we brought some family members
30 in and they had a chance to see him actually retire. And how many people
31 respected my dad.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
34
35 Craig Johnson: And that was, that was, I will never forget that day. That was a pretty cool
36 day. And uh, I was real proud of him that what he done and, uh, and, um,
37 that's somethin' that I don't know, that always sticks in my, my mind. You
38 know, I, I was proud of him doin' that. So...
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [27:51] So did that make it all seem like it was worthwhile [inaudible]?
41
42 Craig Johnson: Yeah it gave me more incentive to say, "I wanna get outta here too," so...
43
44 [laughter]
45
46 Marilyn Coulter: [28:00] So the other side of that is what was one of your worst days?

1
2Craig Johnson: Shhhh...One a my worst days. Shhhh...let's see. One a my worst days is
3 when one a my friends was doin' drugs and he was in the bafroom and he
4 was doin' intervenious, uh, drugs and, uh...
5
6Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
7
8Craig Johnson: ...they wanted me to go in and get him out. And I knew him, I was tryin' to
9 work with him tryin' to help him out, so I went in there and, you know,
10 and we talked to him and he was locked hisself in his, in a stall and stuff
11 like that. And, uh, he was, a course he was, you know, he was already high
12 and stuff like that. But just ta, his wife had actually got access. I don't
13 know how she got into the plant, but she got through security and she
14 actually came down there and came in there. And just to see the look on
15 her face, that, that was real bad. That was pretty bad.
16
17Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
18
19Craig Johnson: And, um, and I feel for him and, uh, he was a real good friend a mine. I
20 really had tried to help'm out but, you know, [inaudible 29:07] I haven't
21 heard from him the last several years so I don't know what happened to
22 him. But that was probly one a my low points.
23
24Marilyn Coulter: Hm. Now, um, that also brings us to a different part. Um, between the
25 UAW and GM. They have had [sighing] different programs. Because that,
26 that's a reality.
27
28Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
29
30Marilyn Coulter: [29:29] That's a part a the times. Did you find that, um, the different
31 programs, be it the employee assistance programs or the NA programs that
32 they have, were they able to help many fellow young people?
33
34Craig Johnson: [Inaudible 29:47] experienced from my own self because I was also in that
35 situation too. Um, I had actually overdosed on drugs myself before. And,
36 um, I used the, the program too as well. Came over to the NA meetins and
37 the AA meetins and, and, um, I'm glad that was in place because at least
38 you had something that you can go to and that people really wanted to try
39 to help you out and, uh – [inaudible 30:12] Rob Banks and Frank Dryer
40 were two people that really helped me out. Um, so all the stuff I've been
41 through, you know, they, they stuck by me. They tried to help me out as
42 much as possible whenever I needed it. Um, and I'm still here today. So I,
43 I, I thank them for that that they actually helped me out. So...
44

1Marilyn Coulter: [30:33] That's awesome. Did you find that, um, having gone through those
2 things and working and maybe some parts of the environment was still
3 around you, did that make it difficult for you to work?
4

5Craig Johnson: Yeah it made it difficult but [laughter] once you've OD'd on somethin',
6 you think twice about it [laughter]. So that made it a little bit more...
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
9

10Craig Johnson: ...different than, you know, "I don't wanna go that route no more."
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
13

14Craig Johnson: But, you know, you still, you have, [inaudible 30:54] your friends that you
15 had built rapport with that they were still doin' it. And, uh, they wanted
16 you to come along and stuff like that. But, uh, it was hard at first but, you
17 know, once I just resisted and stayed away, it, it's I'm not stayin' away
18 from you people, per se, but I am, but I'm stayin' away from the drugs and
19 alcohol because that's not what it's about.
20

21Marilyn Coulter: Craig, I know that just so the people know all about what goes on inside
22 there, it's not – there's also different types of parties.
23

24Craig Johnson: Oh yeah.
25

26Marilyn Coulter: [31:43] And I know that, um, personally, since I do know Craig personally
27 from [inaudible 31:34], uh, you hang out with a different kind a crowd and
28 there's different types a things that went on during lunch breaks and stuff.
29 You wanna tell us a little bit about some a those other groups that met
30 during lunch too?
31

32Craig Johnson: Uh, you mean the first group, the party groups or what? [laughter]
33

34Marilyn Coulter: Well I know we had the party groups.
35

36Craig Johnson: Uh-huh.
37

38Marilyn Coulter: And we went to the bars and...
39

40Craig Johnson: Yeah.
41

42Marilyn Coulter: ...we had drinks and obviously some people did drugs.
43

44Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
45

46Marilyn Coulter: But the other side of that was...

1
2Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
3
4Marilyn Coulter: ...that you were – I know that you're born again.
5
6Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
7
8Marilyn Coulter: And I also know that there're religious groups that meet throughout the
9 plant at night too.
10
11Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: [32:08] Wanna tell us a little bit about that? Were you a participant of
14 that?
15
16Craig Johnson: Oh yeah. We had, um, we started, uh, well actually [Randall Jackson
17 32:12] was a gentleman who started, um, uh, Bible study down in Trim.
18 And, um, I remember we had like about 6 people there and then all of a
19 sudden it grew to almost 30. And, uh, that was, that was great. That was
20 somethin' that was good. That was somethin' that was needed. Um,
21 because people need another outlet. Drugs and alcohol are not an outlet.
22 That's a, that's a cover for what they're really feelin' on the insides.
23 Something that's missin'. It's a void. And they wanna fill that void up and
24 that, that doesn't do it 'cause it wears off. Um, but that helped out quite a
25 bit. We even started tryin' to get some AA meetins goin on in there. We
26 would sit down and talk to people, um – actually [inaudible 32:51]
27 strangers would come up to me and, and ask me questions. And I would sit
28 down with'm at lunchtime and, and just talk to'm and – because it, it wasn't
29 like [inaudible] it wasn't just a, a alcohol or drug thing. It's personable.
30 Things that they had goin' on that, that, that they didn't know how do deal
31 with it. They thought their way of dealin' with it was drinkin' or druggin'.
32 So that same thing happened to me. So we thought why not give back to
33 them that something that we've been helped out with. So...
34
35Marilyn Coulter: And that's part of being, as they say, Fisher Body was its own little city.
36
37Craig Johnson: Right.
38
39Marilyn Coulter: And just like all cities, they have good things and bad things happenin' and
40 good things and bad things to access and things to help you recover from
41 that.
42
43Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
44
45Marilyn Coulter: [33:30] Um, as your life changed and – now have you, you p-, did you
46 pretty much, have you always worked in Trim?

1
2 Craig Johnson: No. Um, before the plant closed, I actually went – moved down to the
3 Body Shop. I believe 1997...
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
6
7 Craig Johnson: ...I went down the Body Sho-, I wanted to do on the day shift 'cause my
8 children were getting older and they were startin' to gettin' involved in
9 sports.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
12
13 Craig Johnson: And I was missin' their events because I was workin' nights.
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
16
17 Craig Johnson: And I – so I had to do somethin' about it. So, um, I tried, you know, in my
18 area at the time. Actually I had moved from Rear Glass to s-, uh, Side
19 Glass to Door Glass at this time.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
22
23 Craig Johnson: Um, I had to make a change and so it was somethin' I had to do for my,
24 my family. So I went down to Body Shop and went to day shift.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [34:20] What was – you worked in Body? You worked in Trim. You
27 worked in Paint. You went to Trim. Now you're in Body Shop. Tell me
28 about the Body Shop. What's it like to work in the Body Shop? And that's
29 raw metal and things like that?
30
31 Craig Johnson: Yeah. It's nothin' but gray. Gray, raw metal. It's different. You know,
32 [inaudible 34:37] the cars. The atmosphere was different. It was louder,
33 um, more, uh, robotics [inaudible 34:43] spot welds were flyin' all over the
34 place. So different type of atmosphere than what the Trim Shop was. You
35 had to wear certain protective sleeves and gloves and ear plugs and down
36 in Trim you could wear shorts and stuff like that. So, so it was totally
37 different, yeah.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [35:06] Did you, um, how long did you work in Body Shop?
40
41 Craig Johnson: Uh, I worked there till the plant closed in May of, uh, till May of, uh,
42 2005.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: [35:14] Did you once again have the ability to fall into yet still another
45 great job?
46

1Craig Johnson: Well, uh,
2
3 [laughter]
4
5Craig Johnson: This is a little bit different. Um, I considered it to be a pretty decent job. It
6 wasn't too bad. Um, when I first got down to Body Shop, um, I was
7 workin' and this one guy and I would work on this one like [inaudible
8 35:34] we're doin', it's called I think the IP bracket. But the thing about – I
9 had to work, we had to work together. He worked on one side a the car; I
10 worked on the other side. We had this assist that we both had to pull down
11 the same time.
12
13Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
14
15Craig Johnson: Because he had to put a plate in on his side, I had to put my plate in on my
16 side the same time. It was a very easy job, but the fact is I was tied to him.
17
18Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
19
20Craig Johnson: So whenever I wanted to do a job, I had to wait for him and vice versa. He
21 had to wait for me or, um, so that was all right. Then I did, I put a transfer
22 it to go down to, um, the J Car, 36:09] which was offline build-up.
23
24Marilyn Coulter: [36:16] And that was a good job.
25
26Craig Johnson: Yeah. It was more spot welds and stuff like that. So I had bigger guns and,
27 uh, I had to do a lotta spot welding. I had to work with some other people
28 but it was offline and we got the job done faster and so we had more time
29 for breaks.
30
31Marilyn Coulter: [36:30] Now spot welding is, what's spot welding?
32
33Craig Johnson: It's a gun, um, that actually welds the, the metal together. So you get like
34 two pieces a metal that you wanna weld together to m-, in order to make a
35 frame or side frame. And you, and you put that gun in a certain spot and
36 you press the trigger and, and it, it welds that stuff together. So...
37
38Marilyn Coulter: [36:51] You're in the Body Shop, um, new people, um, once again, what
39 type a things did you guys do for like holidays and weekends and when
40 you were workin' and what, what was it like also workin' six days a week
41 and bein' a father?
42
43Craig Johnson: It was difficult because I, I get my children every other weekend. So, um,
44 some weekends I would have to take'm over my mom's house, pick'm up
45 on Friday and take'm over there and pick'm up after I got off work. So it
46 was kinda difficult. I took a little time away from them...

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
3
4 Craig Johnson: ...but I try to do whatever I could do to spend quality time with'm. Um, we
5 did have parties down there all the time, you know, whenever holidays
6 came up, you know, we had some, uh, people who were in charge of
7 gettin' things together. We would bring the stuff in and, and, um, they
8 would cook stuff [on break down 37:36] the line. It was, it was cool. We
9 had a good time down there.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 37:41] I know some people often had, the skilled trades people
12 do things called government jobs.
13
14 Craig Johnson: Hm.
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [37:52] Where they might get something special. Did you ever have
17 anybody make anything special for you or have a government job done for
18 you?
19
20 Craig Johnson: What do you mean, like, like, what do you mean like what government
21 job?
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [37:59] A government job that you have somebody give you an extra fan
24 quicker, did you get a toolbox made for you or a special chair or – did you
25 ever have any government jobs to help make your job easier?
26
27 Craig Johnson: No not really. No. The job I was on at that time, no, we didn't. We pretty
28 much had everything we needed down there. No. But, um, no. I think
29 maybe I got a fan a little faster than...
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: Than other people.
32
33 Craig Johnson: ...[inaudible 38:25] I asked for one one day, it was there the next day. So...
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [38:30] Now I know that, um, that Fisher Body, they've had a lotta
36 different programs. Um, have you ever been a participant of those
37 programs? Did you ever get involved in any of those [inaudible 38:41]
38 programs and what'dya think about it? Did it help the workers?
39
40 Craig Johnson: Programs as far as...?
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: Well I know they had employee participation groups.
43
44 Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [38:57] They had QWL, Quality of Work Life. Um, they had product
2 development. Did you have any suggestions and did you ever get involved
3 with any of those types of programs?
4

5 Craig Johnson: Somewhat I did. Um, I wasn't too much into it. Um, I remember you what
6 got me started in the union, you know, they had let me go to Black Men in
7 Union at that time. And I really wasn't interested in the union whatsoever.
8 But [laughter], um, the older I got, the more time I spent in there, the more
9 things I said, "Either I gotta shut up or put up or just let things happen."
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: [39:25] So when you got involved with the union, can you tell me, uh,
12 what type of activities have you participated in and what types of
13 committees have you participated in?
14

15 Craig Johnson: Well I started off I was on the Election Committee. Um, I did go to Black
16 Men in Union the late 80s, um, early 90s I believe. Um, I was on
17 community service and then I went to, um, on a workers' comp
18 unemployment rep, which I am currently still that right now. [Carol
19 Bronson chair 39:54]. And I'm currently a Conservation and Recreation
20 chairperson.
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. So you're really active [inaudible 40:01].
23

24 Craig Johnson: Yeah.
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: [40:06] Now a couple things. First of all, you said community service.
27 What does a community service person do?
28

29 Craig Johnson: Pretty much service the community. Whatever, you know, little events that
30 went on maybe help them build a little home or somethin' like that. We did
31 that. Um, any little fund raisers that we had goin' on to help out. Blood
32 drives...
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
35

36 Craig Johnson: ...and things of that nature. So...
37

38 Marilyn Coulter: [40:22] Now you speak of community service. I know oft times people
39 don't really know everything that UAW GM workers do and, um, you
40 wanna speak about that a little bit? Um, were people always really
41 receptive when – I know they did Toys for Tots and blood drives – were
42 people – how were the workers when it came time to helpin' other people?
43

44 Craig Johnson: Workers were great. I think more workers, I think we did so much for, you
45 know, this United Way and Toys for Tots, did, I don't know, I think we
46 helped'm out immensely to tell you the truth. Um, the people were great.

1 the people are big-time givers. You may hear'm complain a little bit here
2 and there, but when push comes to shove and they, they know where it's
3 goin' for, it's goin' for a good cause, then they pretty much will, you know,
4 will give, will donate.
5

6Marilyn Coulter: [41:06] Were people willing to do benefits and stuff to help co-workers?
7 Do you remember any of that?
8

9Craig Johnson: Like any fundraisers, benefits or anything?
10

11Marilyn Coulter: Well I know oft times [inaudible 41:12] times people are sick or maybe
12 somebody's died and they've helped their, their co-workers.
13

14Craig Johnson: Yeah.
15

16Marilyn Coulter: Their internal family [inaudible 41:20].
17

18Craig Johnson: Yep. We [inaudible 41:22] always get, pass cards around and, uh, for
19 people that maybe [inaudible] sick. We would go visit'm, uh, send flowers
20 to'm. Um, I've been to, attended a couple funerals, you know, whatever.
21 Um, whenever people were in need, because they, they become a part of a
22 family and then big-time friends, so...
23

24Marilyn Coulter: [41:41] And you're also currently a alternate...
25

26Craig Johnson: Workers' comp.
27

28Marilyn Coulter: ...workers' compensation. And what do you do with that? How do you
29 affect your fellow employees that way?
30

31Craig Johnson: Hopefully help'm get paid.
32

33 [laughter]
34

35Craig Johnson: Whenever they go, we go for a shutdown or something like that, somethin'
36 that affects us, then we have to go on layoff, then we, uh, Harold Brown
37 and myself we try to get together to try to make it more effective for the
38 workers that they can get paid on a regular basis. We had to call the
39 [Marvin System. 42:13] Uh, we try to give'm all the information that we
40 can. Have information meetings for'm. We try to make sure that they get
41 their sub pay. As long as you get their unemployment they get their sub
42 pay on time.
43

44Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
45

1Craig Johnson: Anytime you're dealin' with workers' comp, we try to give them, point
2 them in the right direction, give them the advice. We can't tell'm exactly
3 what to do, but we give them advice as to, you know, what they can and
4 can't do. Um, if they get – need a lawyer, we give'm, point'm to the right
5 lawyer. Um, if there's gonna be, you know, sick leave or comp, you know,
6 do you have a case and then we'll help, you know, help fight they case
7 for'm. We stand behind'm.
8

9Marilyn Coulter: [42:48] So really busy. It sounds like. That's a lotta responsibility
10 [inaudible 42:50].
11

12Craig Johnson: Big time. Yeah.
13

14Marilyn Coulter: And you also currently, the Recreation Chair.
15

16Craig Johnson: Yeah.
17

18Marilyn Coulter: And, um, that's a big job.
19

20Craig Johnson: Very big. Yeah.
21

22Marilyn Coulter: And it's a busy one.
23

24Craig Johnson: Very busy. Yeah.
25

26Marilyn Coulter: [43:02] So what do you, what do you think about that?
27

28Craig Johnson: Um, [laughter] it's a challenge. It's different. It's kinda exciting though.
29 Uh, setting things up for, um, for our members to enjoy them and their
30 families and friends to go out and enjoy the events that the community has
31 for us. Um, like I have a great committee.
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
34

35Craig Johnson: Uh, John, he's a, he's on the committee, so he's, he's been a great help too.
36 Um, it's been, it's been a learning curve, you know, but, uh, the more you
37 do it, the more you get used to it. I know the contacts to get in contact with
38 now. And, um, starting to get, to see some perks too from that as well.
39 So...
40

41Marilyn Coulter: [43:43] So being the worker, the, uh, the Parks, the Recreation
42 Conservation chair and having the different excursions, do you feel that
43 you're an intricate part of helping form the family and to keep it get, to
44 keep it together, you know what I mean?
45

1Craig Johnson: Yeah. We wanna try to do that, you know, some more, uh, in the near
2 future. Try and get some more family-oriented type a things 'cause I think
3 it's important to try and keep the family together, especially durin' this
4 time, this day and age, um, um, it's good when family can get together and
5 you meet your other people, other friends and their families and you get to
6 know one another. You get to, you know, be more personable, get to, you
7 know, see where they come from.
8

9Marilyn Coulter: [44:24] Do you also feel that maybe it helps in developing the solidarity
10 amongst co-workers.
11

12Craig Johnson: [Inaudible 44:30] yeah. I mean I think...
13

14Marilyn Coulter: Playin' together, workin' together?
15

16Craig Johnson: Yeah. I know we just had this one trip. They went to the Pistons game.
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
19

20Craig Johnson: And I was surprised that we got three bus full of [inaudible 44:42].
21

22Marilyn Coulter: Three buses.
23

24Craig Johnson: Yes. I was real surprised by that that we had three busloads that went
25 down to the Piston game. Uh, I was not anticipating that. I really wasn't.
26 Um, but it's good to see more people come out and enjoy these events that
27 we do have.
28

29Marilyn Coulter: That's pretty awesome. You've done a lot and you've been involved in a
30 lot. You grew up in Lansing.
31

32Craig Johnson: Yep.
33

34Marilyn Coulter: Your father worked in Lansing, um, Fisher Body...
35

36Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.
37

38Marilyn Coulter: ...has obviously meant a lot to your family.
39

40Craig Johnson: Hm. Yep.
41

42Marilyn Coulter: [45:15] Now – it was always known as the Capital of Quality. Um, what
43 do you think that – why do you think that is?
44

45Craig Johnson: Our plant was the Capital of Quality?
46

1Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
2

3Craig Johnson: I believe that come, when you come to know and work with the people
4 that you work with inside there, I think people took pride in what they did.
5 It's one thing, it's a motivator to get a paycheck, yes it is. I think that's for
6 anybody. But to know that you actually put forth the effort to help build a
7 product that people are gonna drive in, that you and your family can even
8 drive in...
9

10Marilyn Coulter: Hm.
11

12Craig Johnson: ...and to do it the best way that you can. I think a lot of us took pride in
13 that. I think we have the best workforce in the, in the country. In the world
14 probly.
15

16Marilyn Coulter: [46:16] With us [throat clearing] once again, Lansing's changing. The
17 facility that we knew as Fisher Body, as we speak right now across the
18 street, is being torn down. How does that make you feel knowing that it's
19 been here all your life and all your family's life. How do you feel about
20 that?
21

22Craig Johnson: It hurts a little bit. It hurts. I mean, it's something that you, you know, you
23 work in it 25 years. You become attached to that. My dad worked in there.
24 People who their fathers and their grandfathers worked in there before
25 they did, you know, and it's big-time history and heritage that you're seein'
26 right here in the heart a Lansing to, to, to, um, go through what it's goin'
27 through right now, you know, bein' demolished. You know, it hurts
28 because you got so many memories because you, you build up that rapport
29 inside there. But I also know that we do have another facility that we
30 [inaudible 46:57] in Delta that we can carry that heritage over to the next
31 plant. Whatever we learned here, we take it over there. And you take pride
32 in where you come from. I don't, I don't forget where I come from.
33

34Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
35

36Craig Johnson: But you always, you know, you wanna take that with ya and, and to build
37 the same thing that we had over here. We take it over there with us. So...
38

39Marilyn Coulter: [47:24] Craig, we've talked about a, a number of different things, um, in
40 this short time we've been together. Is there anything that you'd like, that I
41 haven't touched on, that you'd like to be sure that people know?
42

43Craig Johnson: Um, [inaudible 47:31]. I think a lotta people get misconceptions about GM
44 workers and that, um, we're just [laughter] bowlers and beer drinkers and,
45 you know, I mean [laughter] and a lot of us are not. We're not like that. I
46 think a lot of us we take pride in what we do. We are, we're, we're a proud

1 group of people. We're fun-loving, uh, great people. We're lookin' to make
2 a difference in our communities and our lives and other people's lives and
3 we're lookin' to build quality products. We know we got a big task ahead
4 of us. We got Toyota [inaudible 48:01] that's, um, bein' a monster in front
5 of our face. But I know we keep pushin', we gonna beat'm. And that, um,
6 people gotta know that, uh, they need to learn how to stand behind who we
7 are and not go by per se or whatever people are sayin' about our quality or
8 that, that we're just, you know, we don't do good work, that we're just
9 drinkin' and stuff like that. People don't do that stuff. No. Uh, we take
10 pride in what we do and we're ready to kick some butt. So...

11

12Marilyn Coulter: [48:32] You said something and as I look at your shirt, there's somethin'
13 that makes me know [inaudible 48:35] one of the [inaudible] talk about
14 too. A lot of people – did you find that the, um, once you were working
15 there, that the education level of your co-worker's surprised you at all? As
16 far as...

17

18Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.

19

20Marilyn Coulter: ...people working there with degrees and things like that?

21

22Craig Johnson: You got all different types. You got people who...

23

24 [coughing]

25

26Craig Johnson: ...probably just got GEDs up to people got PhDs and probably even MDs,
27 whatever, you know...

28

29 [laughter]

30

31Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

32

33Craig Johnson: ...you find all types a people in there, you know, but you respect'm for
34 who they are.

35

36Marilyn Coulter: I found that, um, when I was working here, it was amazing the number of
37 people who had their master's degrees...

38

39Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.

40

41Marilyn Coulter: ...and or who were working on their degrees who came there and the level
42 of education...

43

44Craig Johnson: Mm-hm.

45

1 Marilyn Coulter: ...that's on the floor and also, once again, through a UAW GM negotiated
2 benefit...
3
4 Craig Johnson: Right.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: ...they have a tuition assistance program.
7
8 Craig Johnson: Right.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [49:35] Was that a program that you utilized or did your children utilize?
11
12 Craig Johnson: I, I, I used it, yes I have. I definitely used that. Um, it helps me in the near
13 future. My children will utilize that too as well. I mean it's a benefit that's
14 given to us that we've been, that negotiated for us, you know, so why not
15 use it? At first, of course, I [inaudible 49:50] because I wasn't involved but
16 once I started gettin' involved, I said, "You know what? We got so many
17 benefits that we have available that we don't take advantage of those
18 things and we need to start doin' that." And I hope more people would start
19 doing that. Yes we, we have a awesome, some awesome people in there.
20 You got some great smarts, I tell ya that. I meant some awesome people
21 there. Really smart and, uh, I like to hang out with'm because then they,
22 people think I'm smart too. So...
23
24 [laughter]
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [50:19] So, um, so you participated in the building, you participated in the
27 plant and, um, it's nice that you, it seems the best thing about it is it seems
28 like you've been given a lot and you have given back a lot.
29
30 Craig Johnson: Hm.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: And you're helping people along the way, so...all I can say is thank you for
33 the awesome interview and giving your time.
34
35 Craig Johnson: I thank you for the opportunity. I, I enjoyed it.
36
37
38/kj