

**David Wayne Kallweit discusses his career as the UAW Local 602 union hall maintenance and custodial employee and OPEIU Local 42 member**

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5 Doug Rademacher: Good morning. This is the Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team  
6 and today we are interviewing David Wayne Kallweit. It is May  
7 10th. We are at the Frank Dryer Greenhouse. Uh, this is the, uh,  
8 Local 602 Historical Committee. Uh, we'll introduce the team  
9 first.  
10  
11 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.  
12  
13 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. Okay, today is, uh, David's interview.  
14 [00:00:31] David would you please state your name and spell it for  
15 the record?  
16  
17 David Wayne Kallweit: It's, uh, David Wayne Kallweit, K-A-L-L-W-E-I-T.  
18  
19 Doug Rademacher: [00:00:42] And, what is your address?  
20  
21 David Wayne Kallweit: 500 West Geneva Drive, Dewitt, Michigan.  
22  
23 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [00:00:50] Can you tell me, do you have, uh – are you  
24 married?  
25  
26 David Wayne Kallweit: Oh yes.  
27  
28 Doug Rademacher: [00:00:55] And, do you have any children?  
29  
30 David Wayne Kallweit: Two, two boys. Uh, Robby and Trevor.  
31  
32 Doug Rademacher: [00:01:00] And, what are their ages?  
33  
34 David Wayne Kallweit: Uh, Trevor is, uh, 23 and Robby is, uh, 20.  
35  
36 Doug Rademacher: [00:01:06] And, what is your educational background?  
37  
38 David Wayne Kallweit: I have, uh, a high school diploma and I have, uh, uh, almost a full  
39 year of, uh, college on top of that.  
40  
41 Doug Rademacher: [00:01:18] And, your military service? Did you have any?  
42  
43 David Wayne Kallweit: Uh, came close but no.  
44  
45 Doug Rademacher: [00:01:23] And, tell me David, what did your parents do for a  
46 living?

1  
2David Wayne Kallweit: Uh, my father was a, uh, minister for over 25 years and then from  
3 there he went on to work for Art Van until he finally did retire as a  
4 furniture repairman. My mother, uh, she was an unpaid secretary  
5 to the church for all those years, and then she worked for, uh, Estes  
6 Furniture here in Lansing until she retired. Uh, yeah and then she  
7 went from Estes to, uh, Lazy Boy and then retired from there.  
8  
9Doug Rademacher: [00:02:01] Would you please state what your job is today? What  
10 do you do?  
11  
12David Wayne Kallweit: Okay, I work for Local 602 UAW and, um, I've never seen a job  
13 description of my particular job. Um, I, I, I've often – I've asked  
14 for one several times over the years, but I've just never given one.  
15 I kinda put it into the category of, uh, anything that needs to get  
16 done, I'm there to do it. I've done everything from sweep the floors  
17 to answer telephone calls to, um, go get donuts. I mean, anything  
18 that needs to get done that can't quite get finished, I'm asked to do.  
19  
20Doug Rademacher: Okay. David, you did hire into Fisher Body. [00:02:56] Is that  
21 correct?  
22  
23David Wayne Kallweit: That's correct.  
24  
25Doug Rademacher: [00:02:58] Would you please tell me what you did before you  
26 hired into Fisher Body?  
27  
28David Wayne Kallweit: Okay, um, I – my, my family and I moved, uh, from North Dakota  
29 in June of '71 to a little town of Sunfield, Michigan just 30 miles  
30 west of Lansing, and, uh, when I came to the high school for my  
31 senior year, uh, the, the high school required 18 credits to graduate  
32 and I already had 21 going into my senior year. And so, alls I had  
33 to do was pass my – the U.S. Government class and I could  
34 graduate. And coming from, you know – going into a new high  
35 school in my senior year, as far as I was concerned, I needed to get  
36 my 1 credit for my government class, and I wanted to go on with  
37 my life. So, from there I was able to, uh, get a job at the cafeteria  
38 at Fisher Body and I started in the last week of January of '72  
39 there, and then the third week of May I hired in at, at Fisher Body.  
40 So, I was still going to high school when I actually hired in at  
41 Fisher.  
42  
43Doug Rademacher: [00:04:12] And how did you know that Fisher Body was hiring in  
44 the cafeteria? What took you there?  
45

1David Wayne Kallweit: Um, we have a, uh, a good friend – a good acquaintance, um, uh,  
2 named [Bruce Deland 00:04:21] who thought that would be a good  
3 place to start and by there I was able to, you know, you, you learn  
4 some of the staff and I was – I wouldn't say I was on a first name  
5 basis with the, uh, with [Jerry Brooks 00:04:36] but, uh, uh, he  
6 knew me. I knew him and he's who, who I had to get through to  
7 get hired.  
8

9Doug Rademacher: And...

10

11David Wayne Kallweit: So, every day I would be, or every other day anyway, I would be  
12 talking to Jerry.  
13

14Doug Rademacher: [00:04:53] So he was in charge of employment?

15

16David Wayne Kallweit: Yes.  
17

18Doug Rademacher: And so, uh, you [coughing] you worked in the cafeteria for a  
19 while. You saw, you saw the line before you had to go to work on  
20 it. [00:05:05] So, what was...  
21

22David Wayne Kallweit: Oh yes.  
23

24Doug Rademacher: ...so what was that like to walk in from, uh what would sound like  
25 a small town in Minnesota to, uh, Sunfield, Michigan, uh, into a  
26 facility where they build automobiles. [00:05:16] Can you  
27 describe that day when you walked in?  
28

29David Wayne Kallweit: Well, it's, it's incredibly different worlds. Uh, even to go back  
30 there, it's almost like going back in time. And, I'm not meaning to  
31 be negative about this because it's a wonderful way of life, but in  
32 North Dakota, there, there is just no – if you – North Dakota if  
33 you're not directly working for one of the two air force bases, if  
34 you're not in the minerals in the west side of the state or if you're  
35 not a huge farmer, there are no jobs. So, when we came to, to  
36 Michigan it was so that we kids could find jobs. And the auto  
37 industry and with the protection that I knew that the UAW had,  
38 seemed like a great place to have a career. So, I was wanting to do  
39 whatever it took to achieve that goal and starting in the cafeteria  
40 was where I started.  
41

42Doug Rademacher: [00:06:10] Was the cafeteria located on the main level or where  
43 does – or it was when the plant closed in...  
44

45David Wayne Kallweit: Ok there were the, the...  
46

1 Doug Rademacher: ...May of '05?  
2  
3 David Wayne Kallweit: ...the cafeteria is, uh, upstairs but where the coffee was made and  
4 the donuts and the sandwiches were brought to were the, uh – so  
5 when they had the wagons, was down at a different level. And I  
6 don't know exactly what level that was at but we, uh, you know,  
7 we had, uh, a room, big room that we-, where we kept everything.  
8 And, uh, it was, it was funny how, uh, everybody was so particular  
9 with the food and everything but, you know, we had to check all of  
10 our wrappers for our donuts and especially our pies to make sure  
11 the rats hadn't gotten into 'm. And, everybody was so fussy about  
12 the coffee cups, but they didn't know, but the stick that we  
13 measured the coffee with was always falling on the floor.  
14 [laughing] You rinse it off and keep on going.  
15  
16 Doug Rademacher: You said a wagon. [00:07:08] Can you describe what a wagon is  
17 and ...  
18  
19 David Wayne Kallweit: A wagon is, is basically just a big, um, serving cart, really is what  
20 it is. Um, we – it's, it's bigger than – I, I can't remember how big  
21 they were. They had to be at least four or five-foot-long and  
22 maybe 24 inches or 30 inches wide. I don't really remember it's  
23 been so many years ago but you'd had a great big urn at the end of  
24 it for coffee and it was incredible how good you got at math  
25 because these – when you pulled up for their wagon break they had  
26 6 minutes if I remember correctly and you would serve 25, 30  
27 people maybe more in that 6 minute period. And you always had  
28 to be, you had to be counting your money and you had to be  
29 collecting your money and you had to keep track of everybody,  
30 who took what, to make sure somebody wasn't misleading you and  
31 stealing stuff off the cart, because you were responsible for that.  
32 So, it was, it was a big change from going from a little town in  
33 North Dakota to being in the wagon but that was the big city and  
34 that's the way you do it. And, if you were wanting to succeed, you  
35 either got on board or you got kicked to the curb.  
36  
37 Doug Rademacher: Okay, um, this Mr. Deland led you to another, uh, Mr. Brooks and,  
38 and you were, uh – came the day they asked you if you wanted a  
39 job. [00:08:33] Can you tell us about that?  
40  
41 David Wayne Kallweit: Well, I, I was, uh, um, Bruce is a very good friend and I, you  
42 know, I owe Bruce a lot. Um, the way I understand what happened  
43 was is [Weyththorn 00:08:45] who was the plant manager at the  
44 time – Bruce Deland was a, uh, the zone for the skilled trades at  
45 the time and something on his desk got broke and Bruce took it  
46 and got it fixed, and Bruce – and he turned to, uh, uh, Bruce and

1 says, "I, I owe you for this." And he says, "Well I got somebody  
2 that needs a job." And, from that point, I was – between my  
3 bugging Brooks and Weythorn, I was, I was asked to show up for  
4 my physical. I was told directly that, see this was the first week in  
5 May, and I was told that I had to quit my job at the cafeteria and  
6 then in 2 weeks I could show up, but there had to be a space there  
7 between us because they didn't want everybody in the cafeteria  
8 banging on everybody trying to get a job when I was getting a job.  
9 And it, uh, came to be a very crucial two weeks that, that was –  
10 very unfortunate for me anyway, now after all this time, but, uh,  
11 um that's how I got in. [paper rustling] Bruce Deland had a great  
12 deal with influence as far as me getting into the plant.  
13

14 Doug Rademacher: So, you gave your 2 weeks. You disappeared from the regular  
15 cafeteria staff and now you've entered the building. [00:10:08] Uh,  
16 you, you had the physical that day or did it, uh...?  
17

18 David Wayne Kallweit: I, I took the physical that day – uh, I showed up, uh, I forget what  
19 time, I want to say 2:00. In fact, I had to get out of school early to,  
20 to, to make the physical and that night I went to work.  
21

22 Doug Rademacher: So, now you've been there, like I said, uh, the cafeteria. You did  
23 this wagon thing where you brought product out to the workers.  
24 It's your first day in the Fisher Body plant. [00:10:37] Who came  
25 to get ya? Who was your supervisor? And, what did you do?  
26 Where'd they take ya?  
27

28 David Wayne Kallweit: Okay, I was down in the, uh, um, solder booth – uh, silicone  
29 bronze booth, and it was very obvious that I was going to have a  
30 great deal of problems learning how to move that, that lead around  
31 the way it needed to be done. And so, from there they, they moved  
32 me from, uh, to the, to the grinding booth where I spent most of  
33 my time in the early days. Uh, it was – that's, that's almost an art  
34 form, as far as I'm concerned. But uh, I did my best and I did what  
35 I could and, you know, 'cause I knew within time I would learn  
36 how to do that but they, they needed somebody then that could do  
37 it. So, what they did is they took the guy out of the grinding booth  
38 and let him do that and I went to the grinding booth. And, it was,  
39 it was just an absolute difference. 'Cause I can remember the first  
40 night that I worked at Fisher, I worked a 10, 3. That's 10 hours and  
41 18 minutes and I got home, I wanna say 4:30-5:00 in the morning  
42 and I had to be at school by 8:00 and that was a long day.  
43

44 'Course the thing of it is as I got out of school, I had to turn right  
45 back around and do the whole thing the next night. So, I only had

1 3 weeks of school left before I was out but that was a long 3  
2 weeks.  
3  
4 Doug Rademacher: Three weeks. Now, there is, uh, something called a probationary  
5 period. It's generally 90 days and then, uh, you were considered a,  
6 uh, permanent worker. [00:12:10] Can you describe what it was  
7 like to – you said, uh, 3 weeks 'til the end of school, what was it  
8 like to get that 90 days and did ya have any trouble with that, with  
9 management or anybody in the plant?  
10  
11 David Wayne Kallweit: No. Everybody – I, I never had a problem with, with, you know,  
12 you know, dad was, dad was always such a hard worker that they,  
13 they say that it's a reflection of what kind of worker you're going to  
14 be, I guess. But, you know, I knew this was what I wanted, and I  
15 had to do what I had to do to make this work. I had, uh, times, at  
16 that time, of dreams and aspirations even becoming a foreman  
17 someday. So, I would always be there early and, uh, be ready, and,  
18 uh, being in that, that booth, that grinding booth was so hard  
19 because you had all this equipment on, you know, the safety stuff  
20 on and –  
21  
22 Doug Rademacher: [00:13:00] What type of safety equipment?  
23  
24 David Wayne Kallweit: Well, you had a hood on and you had your, you had your safety  
25 glasses on, you had your hood on and you had your – these  
26 coveralls. Well, you would – What you would do is you would  
27 strip down to your shorts and your, your, your boots and then put  
28 these coveralls on because it was so hot. And then, it was just  
29 really, you know, I complained to the, the foremans about – you  
30 know, because we were only given 3 coveralls a week. Well I, I  
31 felt like a porcupine every night because this wire brush you would  
32 use prior to, to grinding would literally be sticking in you, and he  
33 goes, "You know this is silly." And he gave me a whole fistful of,  
34 of um – oh the acquisition forms. I forget what the correct name  
35 for them are.  
36  
37 Doug Rademacher: [00:13:43] Transfer slips?  
38  
39 David Wayne Kallweit: No. No.  
40  
41 Doug Rademacher: Oh acquisition, to go get something from the safety shop or...  
42  
43 David Wayne Kallweit: Right. So, so, I, I, I, uh – so every day I got a new set of coveralls.  
44 But, but the foreman did that over and above and I'm quite sure he  
45 could've gotten in trouble if his higher ups found out about it. But

1 I needed those because I, you, you – I'd be full of pins or full of  
2 those, those needle – from that wire brush every day.  
3  
4 Doug Rademacher: [00:14:08] Was that brush then a hand brush or was that a tool or  
5 [inaudible 00:14:10] ?  
6  
7 David Wayne Kallweit: It was a tool, an air tool.  
8  
9 Doug Rademacher: An air tool.  
10  
11 David Wayne Kallweit: That, that spun around in a circle and when you hit the car, those  
12 would break off, and some of them would impale you right through  
13 your coveralls. And, um, you know, it was – I, I thought – I was  
14 very much appreciative of that. You know, it's something I felt,  
15 you know, the big bad foremans are, were supposed to be so  
16 vicious well he, he was going out of his way to, you know – his  
17 comment to me was, "the, the next contract you're gonna get this  
18 anyway, so why shouldn't you get it now. You need it." And he  
19 made sure I always had'm. So, he says, "Don't tell anybody and  
20 don't advertise this," but, you know, and I obviously did as I was  
21 told  
22  
23 Doug Rademacher: So, fill in a few blanks here. [00:14:52] What was your, uh, hire in  
24 date?  
25  
26 David Wayne Kallweit: My hire in date. I, I really can't tell ya that. It was the, uh, it was  
27 the, uh, third week in May. That's all I can remember.  
28  
29 Doug Rademacher: And you said that you went to the booth, which is in the body  
30 shop.  
31  
32 David Wayne Kallweit: Correct.  
33  
34 Doug Rademacher: [00:15:09] Um, can you tell me how long you worked in the booth  
35 and the body shop?  
36  
37 David Wayne Kallweit: Oh wow. I, I re-, [inaudible 00:15:16]...  
38  
39 Doug Rademacher: [00:15:19] Did you get your 90 days there? How's that?  
40  
41 David Wayne Kallweit: 'Kay, I didn't quite get my 90 days and I was laid off. And then,  
42 from there I was called back. I almost lost my seniority time for  
43 time there, but I was called back and from there I was put into trim.  
44  
45 Doug Rademacher: [00:15:44] Can you describe the difference of going to the trim  
46 department then?

1  
2 David Wayne Kallweit: Incredible difference. It was cooler. Um, so much cleaner. I  
3 mean, you know, down in the body shop you saw the air you  
4 breathed back then, and it was so hot down there. And especially  
5 being in that booth, in the coveralls but in the body shop it was, it  
6 was just I mean – er, in the – I was in body wires, is actually what I  
7 was in then trim but body wires. And, it was just so difficult for  
8 me to, to keep up with the line because we ran all the body wires  
9 on all 4-doors and 2-doors that, that went from the front end of the  
10 vehicle to the back on, on the rider's side of the car. And my  
11 partner, and we would do every other car [coughing] but if we got  
12 a couple Vista Cruisers in a row there, or station wagons in a row,  
13 man we were – I was in trouble because I couldn't keep up. I'd  
14 worked as hard as I could and just, you know, and, and I had a  
15 partner that, that, uh, you know, we worked out that – you know,  
16 when we ran into that he'd help me out with this. And then when  
17 he, uh, times got slow I would build stock for him.  
18  
19 So, we could equal each other out as far as workload. Um, and we  
20 would complain to the, the committee man and there's nothing that  
21 he could really do. But we complained enough that they  
22 "guaranteed us" that they would space these, these station wagons  
23 out farther apart so we – because they, even management  
24 recognized that, that it was tough to do this. And that never really  
25 worked and – but I can remember I would get there real early, you  
26 know, as much as an hour before the line because I'd build up all  
27 my stock. 'Cause if I didn't – because, you see, you had to look at  
28 the manifest...  
29  
30 Doug Rademacher: [00:17:27] What's a manifest?  
31  
32 David Wayne Kallweit: The manifest is, is what wires go, or what product goes into the  
33 car. And every car is, you know, there's probably, I don't know, 10,  
34 12, 14 different styles or wires. You know, like some of them  
35 would have, uh, uh, uh, power windows and some of'm wouldn't.  
36 Some of them would be 2-door, some would be 4-door. Uh, then  
37 the, uh, the wagon it had all these wires in there. Well anyway,  
38 you had to look at the manifest, run to your bench, build up the, the  
39 particular wires for it and then put'm in and install'm. And, you  
40 know, and each door that you had you got a booth that you've got  
41 to fit in place. Well, what I would do is I would come in really  
42 early and I would build up maybe an hour's worth of supply or  
43 different, [keys jingling] you know, 'cause I knew which wires  
44 would be needed and – so that way that would help me up as far as  
45 keeping up with the line. And it used to make me so frustrated  
46 because I'd have 45 minutes to an hour worth of stock left up for



1 the next guy in the next shift. And I'd come in the next day and I'd  
2 have one body wire. [laughter] You know?  
3  
4 Doug Rademacher: Now I don't – I want to separate something. You just mentioned a,  
5 a wire for a wagon. Now, let's separate the two. [00:18:42] What  
6 wagon are you referring to this time? Not the one with the food on  
7 it?  
8  
9 David Wayne Kallweit: No, no this is a st-, like a station wagon.  
10  
11 Doug Rademacher: [00:18:49] Can you tell me what models you built at that time?  
12 And what was the nameplate? Because, I think we don't [inaudible]  
13 [00:18:55]  
14  
15 David Wayne Kallweit: Alright, it was an Oldsmobile, but I can't remember the, the body  
16 style. I, I'm wanting to say it's a Vista Cruiser but I, I can't be for  
17 sure.  
18  
19 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [00:19:04] And what other vehicles were built at the same  
20 time?  
21  
22 David Wayne Kallweit: Oh, we had the, the, that. We had the – 'kay I didn't – on the one  
23 line they built 88's and 98's. And the line that I was on, we built,  
24 um, Cutlass's. I think th-, and, and, and station wagons.  
25  
26 Doug Rademacher: Okay.  
27  
28 David Wayne Kallweit: That's, uh, that's as I remembered anyway.  
29  
30 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. I knew they had separate lines, so there's lots of different  
31 parts. Lots of different, uh – it's called model mix and, uh, to  
32 adjust that so that the work was even would be very difficult  
33 though it was –  
34  
35 David Wayne Kallweit: And this, and this, you know, when they talked about building, you  
36 know, 5 or 6 different, entirely different [coughing] vehicles, I  
37 kinda shake my head and going, "Boy, I hope they can do it and I  
38 hope they have the time." Because I can remember just the few  
39 different changes that, that I dealt with, were so dramatically  
40 different. Um, but, you know, maybe I should back up here just a  
41 second because I kinda missed this, uh – when I got laid off from  
42 Fisher, um, I got hired in as a area hire at, uh, the engine plant at  
43 Oldsmobile. And I was – I had 8 carburetors that I had to install.  
44 The engine would come around and I would look at the manifest  
45 and I had to choose between these 8 carburetors. I had to set u-,  
46 the carburetor on, set 2 bolts in and start 1 and I did 258 of those

1 an hour. I mean, it just, it's just impossible to do that. I know that  
2 it sounds like – it's just, but you know you were flyin'. And, uh, I  
3 remember too that, uh, I had, I had a really good foreman there to.  
4 Um, I was having just this horrible night. My, uh, my future wife  
5 at that time and I had broken up and I was having a horrible time  
6 mentally.  
7  
8 The thing of it is, you set this carburetor on and they would finish  
9 dressing the engine and they wouldn't find out if this was the right  
10 carburetor on or not until it was all the way on the other side of the  
11 factory practically. And, uh, so, so putting on the wrong  
12 carburetor was a big deal because they'd have to take all this stuff  
13 off to – and the foreman comes to me and he says, uh, he says,  
14 "Wayne," he says, uh, "You missed your carburetor." I says, "I  
15 did?" I says, "Okay, I'll try to do better." And, uh about 20  
16 minutes later he comes back over, and says, "You missed a second  
17 one." And he says, uh, he says, "I want you to come over here. I  
18 need to talk to you." So, he took me to his office. He says,  
19 "What's the problem?" And I told him, you know, what was, you  
20 know, I'd broken up with my girlfriend and I just had a-, I had this,  
21 this problem. I was doing my best, I truly was, but it was just a  
22 horrible time for me, you know, 'cause I'd planned on marrying  
23 her. And he says, "Well you've got to do better." He says, "If I  
24 could let you go for the night, I would but I don't have the  
25 manpower." I says, "Alright."  
26  
27 And about 45 minutes later he comes back over, and he pulls me  
28 off the line again. He says, "Wayne," he says, "You know, you  
29 missed another one." He says, "I understand you've got [inaudible  
30 00:22:11] a hard time. I understand this is a terrible time for you  
31 but," he says, "understand this," he says, "you miss another one  
32 and I'm going to cut your nuts off."  
33  
34 Doug Rademacher: That's why your [inaudible 00:22:22] take something personal.  
35  
36 David Wayne Kallweit: You just – he, he was gonna cut my nuts off.  
37  
38 Doug Rademacher: He's gonna take this personal.  
39  
40 David Wayne Killweit: That's what he, you know, and the thing of it is I understood his  
41 position, he understood my position but in the way of scheme of  
42 things, nobody cared. Beca-, he cared, I cared but the job still had  
43 to get done. I never missed another one the rest of the night. And  
44 I, and I –  
45  
46 Doug Rademacher: And that girl wouldn't want ya if you didn't have those.

1  
2David Wayne Killweit: Well, [laughter] and, and the thing of it is I appreciated that  
3 foreman so much because he truly cared. But he had, but he – in  
4 his [coughing], uh, experience or whatever you call it finally found  
5 a way to get me to perform the way I needed to, to get the job  
6 done. It's not that he didn't care, it's just, it had to get done.  
7

8Doug Rademacher: [00:23:01] Well and I need to ask then, David, did you, uh, you  
9 call yourself Wayne? Um, did you get your 90 days in at the  
10 engine plant then?  
11

12David Wayne Killweit: Well before, before I got my 90 days in there, I got called back to  
13 Fisher. [laughter] And, uh ...  
14

15Doug Rademacher: There's a hiring boom going on, eh.  
16

17David Wayne Killweit: Well, it, it, the plants were, you know, back and forth and, you  
18 know, I, I was wanting to stay with Fisher because it was a cleaner  
19 plant and I, I liked that better. So, I went back to Fisher and that's,  
20 that's when I went to the body wires and I, uh, I worked there and  
21 then, uh, then right through the winter and then I worked, uh,  
22 changeover. And that was an experience. Um...  
23

24Doug Rademacher: Well before you go to far here, I wanna ask you then. So you've,  
25 you've hired in Fisher, you've worked the body shop, you've,  
26 you've seen uh, metal and, and, uh, air you can see and breathe.  
27 Uh, you've been to the other side of the town, the sister plant that  
28 finished up the vehicles, built the engines and now you were gonna  
29 go back to Fisher, but you only knew of the body shop. [00:24:21]  
30 So what was it like to walk in and see this trim department that  
31 you'd never seen?  
32

33David Wayne Killweit: Well it was, it, it was so I, I – the first thing that I noticed was that  
34 it was so bright, and it had really good lights. And the body shop  
35 was always so dark. Uh, you know, they – back then that's when  
36 they literally called it the jungle and that's because of all the – you  
37 know, the body shop had all those welders that they had and all the  
38 hoses hanging from all over and, uh, the, uh, they'd change the  
39 points all the time because of the, the points being burned up by  
40 the welders. And, it was, you know, it wasn't the worst place I'd  
41 ever worked, but it was, it was a tough place to work. It was not a  
42 healthy place, you know, I'd, I would assume the paint department  
43 would be worse than that because you, you're breathing all those  
44 fumes all the time. But, um being in the, um – going upstairs it  
45 was just so much cooler and you could see what you were doing.  
46 And, you know, you had more – I, I felt like you had more

1 responsibility because of those body wires and it had to be right.  
2 Um, I, I, and I was glad to be there.  
3

4 Doug Rademacher: [0:25:30] Would you tell about your co-workers? Did they  
5 embrace you as a new worker? Was there any pranks or, uh,  
6 initiations that you had to go through or that you did go through,  
7 and if so did you, uh, [coughing] did you, uh, give'm back?  
8

9 David Wayne Killweit: There was, there was always pranks going on and to this day the  
10 stuff that went on would be – people would be fired over, in a  
11 heartbeat. Um, there was a girl down the end, you know, we had  
12 to put body wires. We're also putting the different putties, the  
13 different cracks and things, was another person's job. And the, the  
14 girl down around the corner, she loved the attention. She couldn't  
15 get enough attention. And so, the guys, they just fed on that. And  
16 one of her – part of her – one of her jobs was, is, is to open the  
17 trunk [semitruck driving by] and she had to do something in the  
18 trunk. I don't remember what it was. But I remember one time  
19 they took this, this, this clay, this putty stuff you know, it was –  
20 they formed it into 2 testicles with a penis and then they got this,  
21 this white stuff [laughter] they poured it over the top. Of course,  
22 she opens this thing up and she was just so embarrassed. She just  
23 ate that up. I mean, we try to do something like that today, we'd –  
24 people'd be fired left and right. But, they – it was a different time  
25 back then.  
26

27 Because, I don't know if you wanna call it more tolerant or less  
28 tolerant but it was, uh, you know, people helped each other and,  
29 you know, I can remember, uh, uh, you know, the co-workers  
30 were, you know there was always the cold one once in a while but  
31 I remember always warm fuzzy feelings about that time.  
32

33 Doug Rademacher: [0:27:11] How old were you when you hired into Fisher Body?  
34

35 David Wayne Killweit: Oh wow, how old was I.  
36

37 Doug Rademacher: [0:27:16] Were you a young man?  
38

39 David Wayne Killweit: I was 19 when I hired in and, um, you know, there was several of  
40 us that hired in that were close to the same seniority dates. But, no  
41 the pe-, the people back then as I look at it, I mean they were –  
42 they looked out for you. The, the foremans I had anyway, they  
43 looked out for you. You know, you could – the, the people that  
44 came to work everyday and did the best they could, even when  
45 they made a mistake, it wasn't a problem because the foreman  
46 recognized that they were doing the best they could. The foremans

1 had a certain – had a, had a lot more authority than they do now.  
2 But, at the same time, um, um, they would, they would, they would  
3 watch out for you. It, it seemed like, it came across anyway, I  
4 never saw a general foreman or was in an interview with a general  
5 foreman or anything, but it seemed like they were a lot harder  
6 crusted individuals that had to – maybe it was because of their  
7 position, I don't know. But, uh, um, I enjoyed the, the foremans I  
8 had, I had and, uh, enjoyed, you know, the, the – I learned real  
9 quickly not to watch the clock. You know, you're doing the same  
10 thing repetitively but as long as you didn't watch the clock and, uh,  
11 uh, came in and you did your job and [coughing] you did the best  
12 you could.

13  
14 And you were always, you know, you were always proud to see  
15 where you were ranked. I took pride in that anyway, seeing where  
16 the plant ranked in quality over the other ones. And we were  
17 always either at the top or the next to the top. And that was always  
18 a good thing for me. I always liked that and I felt I was a part of it.  
19 I was only a tiny part of it, but I was a part of it.  
20

21 Doug Rademacher: Speaking of that ranking of the plant, Lansing's been known as the  
22 Capital of Quality. People have ordered cars from all over the  
23 country, if not all over the world, from Lansing because of its  
24 quality reputation. [0:29:23] What do you, what do you think is  
25 the reason for that?  
26

27 David Wayne Killweit: Well that's a really, that's a really great question and I've often  
28 thought about that over the all these years. I, my, my first – when I  
29 hear that I'm going, "if we're the Capital of Quality and the highest  
30 of quality, what are these other plants?" Because I see so many  
31 different things that need to be improved on and that should be  
32 improved on. So, that's my first impression of that but as far as  
33 why we are, I have been told, is because we have such a rural  
34 based facility. Um, we've got a lot of farmers that were – worked  
35 in the plant. And then the next thing that I think had a lot to do  
36 with it is, is, uh, you have a lot of father, sons, uncles, cousins that  
37 work there. And the thing of it is, it, it's really difficult when, you  
38 know, if the – if your dad's banging you on the head to get up and  
39 get off to work on time because your, the plant depends on it, it's a  
40 lot different than not having anybody else being responsible for  
41 you. Because the, uh, uh, you know, you were – a lot of people  
42 were hired because of what their father's work, uh, work record  
43 was, or their uncle's work record was.  
44

45 I mean, that happened all the time. [coughing] If you had relative  
46 that was [coughing] a poor worker, you had a lot harder time

1 getting in, if you got in. Because they were competitive just like  
2 everybody else. They want the best worker they can for the money  
3 they are paying them.  
4

5 Doug Rademacher: [0:30:59] Can you describe, uh, the age variance of the workers  
6 that you worked with in your trim department? Were they a mixed  
7 group? Did you hire in with a young group? Did you come in  
8 alone? Was there, was there a group of people hired at the same  
9 time? Some of these things, uh...  
10

11 David Wayne Killweit: [inaudible 0:31:18]  
12

13 Doug Rademacher: ...men and women, blacks, Hispanics.  
14

15 David Wayne Killweit: My, my – the first night that I walked in with, uh, there were 6  
16 other people that I hired in with that night. And I don't remember  
17 who they were or their age group. When I was put on the line  
18 down in the body shop, they, the, uh, silicone bronze, um, I was  
19 given to a gentleman his name was – his nickname was Smiley  
20 and, uh, I still [would 00:31:44] see him every once in a great,  
21 great, great while before he retired. He'd come into the hall and,  
22 um, he didn't remember me, but I remembered him. He was, he  
23 was really a good person. I really liked him a lot. He, uh, you  
24 know, I was having a really difficult time learning how to run this,  
25 this [inaudible 00:32:02] but he would, uh, never said a negative  
26 word, never said, you know, and he fixed a lot of my jobs that I  
27 messed up on, you know, because it was just a real – I can  
28 remember the foreman talking about Smiley. He says, "You know,  
29 he's not the brightest person in the world but he's here every day  
30 and he does a great job." And he says, "That's what I, that's what  
31 we pay him for." And I had no idea where he, you know, he knew  
32 him a lot better than I did but that was, uh, I don't know.  
33

34 It, it was, it was always a, a very much of a sore spot to so many of  
35 the fellow – my fellow workers though because you would run into  
36 the very occasional person that didn't come to work, or didn't come  
37 to work often enough. And I don't want to say they were shunned  
38 but they weren't appreciated. And they weren't – they truly were  
39 not accepted into the group because they hurt the group and they  
40 couldn't, uh, you know, that, that happened in, in both body shop  
41 and trim that I was in. Because, uh, you know, you were part of a  
42 group that was – you needed to be there.  
43

44 Doug Rademacher: The line runs pretty fast. [00:33:22] Did, did you find it difficult to  
45 keep up and did people help you keep up?  
46

1David Wayne Killweit: In, in, in the body wires? Absolutely. I had just a terrible time. I  
2 couldn't figure out why my partner could, you know, it was just  
3 like he had magic fingers or something. And he, he was – he could  
4 do the job 75-, uh, at least – he – it took him 75% of the time that it  
5 took me and I was amazed at that. And, uh, he would, he would  
6 help, he would help. And when I'd fall, you know, in, in, uh, uh, I  
7 would do things to make up for that. You know, you couldn't  
8 expect him just to do my job and his, because – so I would do  
9 whatever I could and whatever needed to be done and we became  
10 good friends. And, uh, he was a – he hired in after I had and so, he  
11 had less seniority. And it was a really sad day when he got laid  
12 off, and I never saw him again. Never saw him again. And, you  
13 know, I've often wondered where he's at and what he's doing.  
14

15Doug Rademacher: Well, you've shared about your co-worker, uh, working across  
16 from you. [00:34:28] Can you describe the [throat clearing]  
17 environment? Was there women and was there minorities?  
18

19David Wayne Killweit: There was, there was, um, some women, not very many. There  
20 was some. There was, um, many blacks. There were, uh, very few  
21 Mexicans. Um, but there was – I don't know if you're, I guess  
22 you're asking, I mean was there any racial problems [inaudible  
23 00:34:55]  
24

25Doug Rademacher: I wasn't hinting to problems, you know, I just, I was just curious  
26 was it an all white environment or was there, was there a mix of  
27 people...  
28

29David Wayne Killweit: Oh no, there was, there was definitely a mix.  
30

31Doug Rademacher: ...age groups and ...?  
32

33David Wayne Killweit: Of course, the age group – the older, uh, people were all white and  
34 then there was probably, oh I'm tryin' to think. I, it's been such a  
35 long time ago, I can't tell how – what the ages were for the, for the  
36 blacks and, and the Mexicans but they were – the Mexi-, there was  
37 more blacks than Mexicans but, but, um, well I just can't put it, uh,  
38 put that together, uh, [for you 00:35:37]  
39

40John Fedewa: [inaudible 00:35:37]  
41

42Doug Rademacher: Okay, I just was curious about, um, people getting along of all  
43 different age groups and did [inaudible 00:35:43] ...  
44

45David Wayne Killweit: Oh there, there was no problem with that ...  
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [00:35:45] And did...  
2  
3 David Wayne Killweit: ...that I saw.  
4  
5 Doug Rademacher: ... did th-, you feel come a time when you felt that they were your  
6 brothers and sisters?  
7  
8 David Wayne Killweit: Oh absolutely, absolutely. The, the people especially right around  
9 you. Um, you know, I always felt like the foreman was, was  
10 definitely on our side. He had a role to play [ambulance siren]  
11 and, you know, and I and especially the people around me  
12 absolutely. Um, [engine revving] something would happen and  
13 you wouldn't be able to do a job for whatever reason and I didn't,  
14 you know, I didn't know what to do and they says, "You throw the  
15 wires in it and let it go. Repair will pick it up." And I says, "But  
16 th-, then the job doesn't get done." He says, "That's okay. That's  
17 what the repair people are for." And...  
18  
19 Doug Rademacher: [00:36:31] So, what's a repair person? What is that?  
20  
21 David Wayne Killweit: Well, it's when something doesn't get done or something gets  
22 broke. It's, it goes to the repair bay and they literally take whatever  
23 apart and fix it or put it together the proper way. The thing is with  
24 the body wires, they had to be in because everything goes on top  
25 of'm. There's nothing that doesn't go into'm. Um, it was a difficult  
26 job for me because of the speed factor. And, and when I was down  
27 in the grinding booth, that was not a problem. There was, you  
28 know, grind it and wire brush it and go to the next job. And, uh,  
29 uh, in the – maybe I should say this too. Back in the, uh, the  
30 grinding booth it was so noisy. You, you had all these hand  
31 signals because you couldn't hear. Um, that was kinda cool.  
32  
33 Doug Rademacher: [00:37:26] Did they provide you ear protection?  
34  
35 David Wayne Killweit: Back then, I can't remember that they did and I'm going to say no.  
36  
37 Doug Rademacher: [00:37:32] Maybe cotton even or nothing at that time?  
38  
39 David Wayne Killweit: I can't remember – to me they didn't. They, they must have  
40 because I can still hear but just as – I can't remember them doing  
41 that. But they, you know, he'd come up to you with this, and of  
42 course you've got this hood on, you know, and you can't hear  
43 anything and he'd, you know, make the-, these 2 hands breaking  
44 together. "What?" "You-, you're on break." "Oh, okay." And,  
45 uh...  
46



1 Doug Rademacher: [00:37:57] Just briefly, seeing that you had worked in different  
2 environments in the same building, did it ever amaze you that  
3 some people – they all made the same wage, earned, uh, through  
4 their bargain benefit of the union but they all did different, uh,  
5 degrees of labor, didn't they? Did that ever cross your mind as a  
6 guy that would come in and, and have those pinpricks in the body  
7 shop every day to a guy up in trim where they could dress  
8 differently and hear and see?  
9

10 David Wayne Killweit: Well, it, it didn't bother me at all and the reason being is because  
11 they had the opportunity to move. Um, you had the opportunity, as  
12 far as I was concerned, if you wanted to become a foreman, you  
13 had that opportunity. You might have to go to LCC and take some  
14 classes. You might, uh, you might have to put a, a number of  
15 transfers in to different areas and you might have to wait a year or  
16 2 or 3 or 4, but you had the opportunity to go to other parts of the  
17 plant. So, you were given a wage and, you know, you're not made  
18 to go to that plant. You're not made to work there, yo-, it's a  
19 choice. You can choose to do this job, or you can choose not to  
20 and go some place else for employment. And, and the fact that –  
21 with that plus the fact that you can and had the opportunity to  
22 move. Now I'm sure there's some people that say, "Well, I  
23 shouldn't have to wait all this time." Well, then you have to have a  
24 system and you have to have an orderly way to get there. And,  
25 um, that's just the way it was.  
26

27 Doug Rademacher: You mentioned a, a lot of the work ethic was handed down, father  
28 to son and so forth, uh, family to family. [00:39:41] Did you have  
29 any people or any family members that worked at Fisher Body?  
30

31 David Wayne Killweit: No. None. I was – none.  
32

33 Doug Rademacher: [00:39:49] What about after you? Did any come after you?  
34

35 David Wayne Killweit: I have, um, um, my brother – well, first my sister hired in and then  
36 after hi-, her, my, my brother did. And then my brother's first wife  
37 hired in.  
38

39 Doug Rademacher: [00:40:06] And did you help them adjust to the factory life?  
40

41 David Wayne Killweit: Uh, well it's, at, at that time in my life, uh, I wasn't as close to my  
42 brother and sister 'cause I had my own selfish interests in mind.  
43 And I – there wasn't a lot that I could really do to help them,  
44 except for them to show up to work. Um, I, I, I obviously don't  
45 have a problem doing what I could but there's not a lot of

1 adjustment there that you ca-, you can really help somebody with  
2 except, you know, you just gotta do it. [throat clearing]  
3

4 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Well, I want to know about your breaks and your lunches.  
5 [00:40:50] Did you pack lunch? Did you go to the cafeteria? You  
6 worked in the cafeteria.  
7

8 David Wayne Killweit: Yeah, I worked in the cafeteria and I knew exactly what to eat and  
9 what not to eat, especially on Mondays and Fridays.  
10

11 Doug Rademacher: [00:41:00] And, share with me, [laughter] did any of the people  
12 from the cafeteria recognize you?  
13

14 David Wayne Killweit: Oh.  
15

16 Doug Rademacher: From, uh...  
17

18 David Wayne Killweit: There was, uh, real heated discussions in the cafeteria there 'cause,  
19 uh, you know, all – it, it didn't take any time at all 'cause, you  
20 know, the first night that I showed up everybody went right  
21 through the cafeteria that I had been hired in. And, of course,  
22 everybody knew what was – what had happened. I mean, they're  
23 not dumb. But, at the same time, management would say, "Nope  
24 that didn't happen. There was a 2-week lag here, period of time  
25 and that's all legal now." Um, as far as, um, eating my lunch, I  
26 didn't like to go to the cafeteria because, um, I knew how it was  
27 prepared first off. And I didn't know how, how old it was,  
28 especially on a Monday. And I, I did enjoy the fish and the french  
29 fries. Now on Thursdays, I usually tried to make it – once in a  
30 while, I should say, I tried to m-, 'cause I always enjoyed the fish.  
31 They had excellent perch and all the french fries you could eat. I,  
32 I, I liked that. But outside of that, I didn't. Um, I had a friend that  
33 liked to go to Burger King, uh, for, for lunch and I didn't like that  
34 either 'cause you had to run to the parking lot, fly like a bat out of  
35 Hades to the Burger King, pick up your meal and get back. You  
36 only got 30 minutes.  
37

38 What I always ended – it didn't take long at all. I brought my  
39 meal, 'cause the line'd stop, I'd sit down where I was at, [hand  
40 hitting desk] I'd pull out my lunch. I would eat it probably then in  
41 5, 6, 7 minutes and I'd lay down for 20 minutes. And the line  
42 would start, I'd get up and I'd be right there. I didn't have to rush.  
43 I didn't have to go and, I had to pack my lunch, but that's okay.  
44

45 Doug Rademacher: Well, let's round out that little story though. You, you had the bad  
46 day. You were, uh, you were missing body wire – you were

1 putting the wrong carburetors on. [00:42:48] Did you ever secure  
2 that woman that you were in love with?  
3  
4 David Wayne Killweit: Yes, we did. I ended up marrying her.  
5  
6 Doug Rademacher: [00:42:54] Was she with you when you got back to the Fisher  
7 Body plant?  
8  
9 David Wayne Killweit: Yes.  
10  
11 Doug Rademacher: Well, congratulations. Um, came a time then, uh, you had a wagon  
12 break of your own. [00:43:09] Did you, uh, enjoy that 6 minutes  
13 and did...  
14  
15 David Wayne Killweit: [inaudible 00:43:13] um, um, I almost never frequented the  
16 wagons, almost never. And the reason being is because I knew  
17 about the rats over the pies and, uh, the coffee sticks and how  
18 everything was made and how clean it was and, and I didn't  
19 participate.  
20  
21 Doug Rademacher: [00:43:35] What about departmental dinners and the holidays?  
22 Did you, as a group, do things and did you participate?  
23  
24 David Wayne Killweit: Now the – generally speaking, I was laid off during those different  
25 times. Um, during the, the – I got a year-and-a-half seniority into  
26 the plant before I was laid off permanently. And, you know, it just  
27 seemed like it always skipped over those holidays and I never was  
28 really able to participate in those.  
29  
30 Doug Rademacher: [00:44:02] What was the – was there music? Or, what did people  
31 do with radios and things in the plant? You said it was loud in  
32 body.  
33  
34 David Wayne Killweit: Body there was, you couldn't have had a radio there because it was  
35 just too loud. Um, there were radios in different places I, I, you  
36 know, I know there were but I don't remember where they were up  
37 in, up in trim. I know they were there but it's...  
38  
39 Doug Rademacher: [00:44:29] What shift did you primarily work? Or did you ever  
40 work both shifts?  
41  
42 David Wayne Killweit: I, I worked strictly second shift just about exclusively. Except  
43 when, uh, the only time I didn't work, uh, uh, sec-, second shift  
44 was when I worked in the, uh, the powerhouse.  
45

1 Doug Rademacher:

[00:44:44] Did you meet Skilled Trades and did they – did you have, uh, interaction with them? And describe what Skilled Trades was or did it ever – did you ever encounter...?

5 David Wayne Killweit:

Well, Skilled Trades, the only, the only real skilled tradespeople that I really met is when I was in the powerhouse. And there it was just expected that you would become a skilled tradesman over time, because you were – it was more of a, a, uh, – when one person retired, somebody else moved into that spot and you, at that point, became, started working towards your skilled trades, whichever you're doing. No, you know, I didn't have a lot of, uh – there is one incident that I remember very well and this just didn't really have that much to do with Skilled Trades. But, um, Peabody, I can't remember his first name, but he was a electrical engineer and, uh, he was known as a heavy, heavy drinker. And I remember, back then, the line never stopped. If the line stopped, somebody got fired. I mean it was that critical. And I, at the time, the body shop, I was working on a machine where I put 4-, put 6 pieces in and I hit 2 buttons and the welders would come over and weld it and then would go on into this huge machine. And something happened to this huge machine and I never had seen so many white shirts in all my life. And there were so many white shirts down there that, and, and the skilled tradesman couldn't figure it out, the bosses couldn't figure it out and they're screaming for Peabody. And about 5 minutes later, which is a tremendous amount of time for the line to go, here come Peabody walking along. And it was just so cool to watch him look over things, nonchalantly, look at it. He'd crawl up the ladder and hit a few buttons [chuckle] and you'd take off again. Then he'd come back down the ladder; nobody bothered him because he knew so much and had so much ability that nobody else could do it but him and they knew it. And nobody both-, it was, it was just incredible.

34 Doug Rademacher:

[00:47:05] Um, did a skilled tradesman ever do anything special for you, as far as, uh, help you – make something for you that made your job easier or is that...?

38 David Wayne Killweit:

No, nothing like that. Uh, when I was in the powerhouse, uh, I was a, an ash puller and of course the fireman, who is a skilled tradesperson, we were, you were partnered up with. And, you know, it was, um, you know, that so you were – it was a lot of interaction there because he was your partner. And, you know, you, you were responsible – when he would go to lunch or do whatever he had to do to be away from the boilers. You know, he would leave you in charge and you were expected to know everything to do. Um, of course me being brand new, I knew very

1 little. I, I, you know, basically it was if this gauge goes to here or if  
2 this gauge goes over here, you blow the horn and you find me.  
3 You know, but if I would've been there long enough, I would've  
4 learned how to run those boilers to the point that you're actually a  
5 skilled tradesman before you have the title or even the, you  
6 know...  
7

8 Doug Rademacher: So early on you worked – you became a union member.  
9 [00:48:18] Did you attend the union meetings?  
10

11 David Wayne Killweit: No.  
12

13 Doug Rademacher: [00:48:24] Um, how long did you work at Fisher Body when you,  
14 uh, when rehired into the trim and you say – 'til you, uh...?  
15

16 David Wayne Killweit: Hm, see with my – this is kinda fuzzy here 'cause see I hired in and  
17 I worked in the body shop. I got laid off, went to work at the  
18 engine plant, came back to, came back and worked in the, uh,  
19 powerhouse, got bumped outta that back up into trim and then  
20 from trim I was laid off permanently. And then, of course, I  
21 worked at one change over in sanitation. What's, what's the  
22 question again Doug?  
23

24 Doug Rademacher: Oh, I was just curious how long you worked at the plant itself.  
25

26 David Wayne Killweit: I worked a year – I got-, have a year and a half seniority [inaudible]  
27 00:49:12]  
28

29 Doug Rademacher: [00:49:13] Can you, uh, can you remember – did you ever see  
30 anyone get hurt?  
31

32 David Wayne Killweit: No, no I don't.  
33

34 Doug Rademacher: [00:49:28] What, uh, is one of your best memories of Fisher Body?  
35

36 David Wayne Killweit: My best memories? Uh, I worked out on the coal pile and, uh, um,  
37 'course you drove a bulldozer out there to, to push the coal around  
38 to empty the coal outta the coal cars and then you had to fill, uh,  
39 the hoppers up for, for the boilers. And this was at like 2:00 in the  
40 morning and I was out there in my bulldozer and, and, uh, uh, th-,  
41 there was a, there was a Y to go from first, to go from forward to  
42 reverse, there was a Y and it ha-, it wasn't working properly. So,  
43 you had to hit it just right or you would go into neutral or you'd  
44 stay in the same gear you were in. And this coal pile is probably  
45 30, 35 feet high so you're pushing coal over this edge into this pit.  
46 And, the accelerator on the bulldozer is when you push down on it

1 that stops it. But when you let up on the accelerator, there's a  
2 spring – it's spring loaded, of course, and that accelerated the  
3 bulldozer. Well, I'm on top of this hill pushing over this thing and,  
4 and the thing of it is, after you do this enough times, you get to  
5 where you can go just to the brink of falling over and you throw it  
6 in reverse and you keep going because that's the most efficient way  
7 to do it.

8  
9 Well, I'm on top of this coal pile and I'm pushing [wrong 00:50:56]  
10 and all of a sudden I put it in reverse and it didn't catch. And, I'm  
11 feeling this bulldozer on top of this hill kinda back and forth just  
12 like in the movies, you know? [chuckle] And all of a sudden I start  
13 going down, down and, of course, there's a coal car down at the  
14 bottom of this hill, which would be wedged underneath this –  
15 between the – the bulldozer'd get wedged between the, the ground  
16 [pounding desk] and the [pounding on desk] pull pile and the  
17 railroad car. And I'm going – as I'm starting to go a little bit  
18 farther, a little bit farther, of course I, I'm trying to get it in reverse  
19 and I gotta be careful 'cause if I put it in forward, [laughing] I'm  
20 done. And I can't get it in reverse because it's not catchin' and I'm  
21 gradually going forward and forward. And I says, "Now if I jump  
22 off of this thing, this thing is gonna accelerate," and [laughing] and  
23 finally I'm goin' down the hill and so I'm done. I got – I jumped, I  
24 jumped off th-, that bulldozer and I'm going, "Jeez, I hope this  
25 sucker doesn't roll over on top of me." Course, you know, like I  
26 said, it's 2:00 in the morning [pounding on desk] and it picked that  
27 whole coal car right up and then settled back down. And that  
28 engine just rarin' just, just, and the wheels are, [laughing] the  
29 treads are just diggin' right in and, and, uh, and, uh, it stalled. And  
30 I thought, "I'm fired now." So, I went in to-, inside and, uh, go-,  
31 went to the foreman and, uh, I tol-, I says – his name was  
32 Thompson, not Thompson, [Townsen 00:52:24], Townsen. And  
33 he says, "Well, let's go take a look at it." So we got out there and  
34 he and I an-, and another guy spent the rest of the night getting that  
35 bulldozer out from underneath that, that, that railroad car. And, uh,  
36 not a word was said, didn't go any farther. Because he recognized,  
37 you know, first of all that it wasn't all together my fault because I  
38 couldn't get it in reverse. And, uh, but that was fixed the next day.

39  
40 Doug Rademacher: [00:53:02] And did you have to secure another bulldozer or crane  
41 to pull?

42  
43 David Wayne Killweit: No.

44  
45 Doug Rademacher: [00:53:07] How'd you get that...?  
46

1David Wayne Killweit: No. They – we – what ended up happening is, they have a real  
2 fancy come along that they can pull these railroad cars with. And  
3 between pulling the railroad car, which turned the bulldozer just  
4 enough to free it, so we would back it up the hill. But it took us all  
5 night long to do that.  
6

7John Fedewa: [chuckle]  
8

9Doug Rademacher: Pretty good wage for making a mistake huh?  
10

11David Wayne Killweit: [laughing] Well, [laughing] but that was, you know – I was lucky I  
12 could've gotten hurt real bad there.  
13

14Doug Rademacher: Well, that's a good, uh, story.  
15

16David Wayne Killweit: [inaudible 00:53:42]  
17

18Doug Rademacher: [00:53:42] Do you have a, a funniest or happiest moment in Fisher  
19 Body?  
20

21David Wayne Killweit: Oh, the happiest was when I got hired in. I was just excited. I was  
22 a kid making more money than dad was and, um, you know, I  
23 could afford at that point to do things for the family. Uh, I could  
24 afford to, uh, uh, buy mom things. I remember, uh, on Mother's  
25 Day, I bought her this great big plant. I mean I, uh, it was so big, I  
26 couldn't get it in the car and I had to bend it over, you know, it was  
27 such a big plant and, you know I came home and, of course I got  
28 home at 3, 4:00 in the morning wh-, and I put it in the living room  
29 for Mother's Day and that was fun. And, uh, you know, I felt like  
30 I, I had really, I had the opportunity to do things for – you know  
31 being, being a preacher's kid, you know, we never went without.  
32 We never went without, but we never had a dime left over. It was  
33 never, in my opinion, it was just barely enough money to cover  
34 things and so I was able to do things for the, for the family. And  
35 that was, you know, that was great.  
36

37Doug Rademacher: [00:55:01] Came the day, what was your – what is or what was  
38 your saddest moment at Fisher Body?  
39

40David Wayne Killweit: Getting laid off the last time. Um, it was – I, I remember I got  
41 married, uh, uh, December 15th. My new bride and I moved into  
42 our brand-new house Janu-, or D-, um, December 28th and I got  
43 laid off permanently January 15th. 'Course I didn't know anything  
44 about this being laid off until, and so I was out of a job, you know.  
45

46Doug Rademacher: With a mortgage payment.

1  
2David Wayne Killweit: With a mortgage payment, with a wife.  
3  
4John Fedewa: [coughing]  
5  
6David Wayne Killweit: It was always said, getting your 90 days might be a little bit hard,  
7 you get a year in and you're set. You were set for life. Well, I had  
8 a year and a half and it didn't happen. So that was a real difficult  
9 thing.  
10  
11Doug Rademacher: [00:56:07] Well, can you tell us how did you end up at UAW  
12 Local 602 and, uh ...  
13  
14David Wayne Killweit: Well...  
15  
16Doug Rademacher: ... how did you secure that position?  
17  
18David Wayne Killweit: ... okay, I ...  
19  
20Doug Rademacher: [00:56:16] And, tell us how you got to where you're at today then.  
21  
22David Wayne Killweit: How I got to where I'm at today?  
23  
24Doug Rademacher: Well, here we are. [00:56:21] How many years later?  
25  
26David Wayne Killweit: Well, it's almost 31, almost, not – just a few days, a few weeks  
27 shor-, shy of 31 years. Um, I didn't find a job. At that time, they  
28 had subpay but it is considerably less than what it is today.  
29  
30Doug Rademacher: [00:56:37] What is subpay?  
31  
32David Wayne Killweit: Subpay is a supplementary, uh, benefit. You would, uh, get your  
33 unemployment [inaudible 00:56:47] from, uh...  
34  
35Doug Rademacher: [00:56:49] Did the company just give you that?  
36  
37David Wayne Killweit: Oh no. That was from the UA-, from the, from the Local, from the  
38 union. It was a required or, you know, they, they – every hour you  
39 worked there, x number of cents was put into this kiddie and you  
40 worked with it. But I got laid off on January 15th. I worked for a  
41 farmer. I worked for a contractor. Uh, all under the table. And  
42 then, um, I didn't find work until November in a, uh, foundry.  
43 That was the worst job I've ever had in my life. I would never  
44 wish anyone to work there.  
45  
46Doug Rademacher: [00:57:31] In a foundry or in Charlotte?



1  
2 David Wayne Killweit: In a foundry. Charlotte's a fine little town. Nothing wrong with  
3 Charlotte but that foundry... it was Johnson's Iron. And that was  
4 just, you know, I still got a scar on my leg because of – I had just  
5 had a tear but that molten metal was so hot, I got – it burned my  
6 leg in the same shape of that tear. And, it was so filthy, dirty there  
7 and I worked in there 'til [pause] well I hired in in November, the  
8 following, I wanna say May. Um, Bruce Deland, my – the-, er  
9 family friend was made mention that the custodian at Local 602  
10 was retiring and that I should, that I should apply. And I said,  
11 "Well Bruce I don't know if I have any, any shot there." He says,  
12 "Well they're looking for somebody that's worked in sanitation.  
13 Have you worked there?" I says, "Yeah." "They want somebody  
14 that's worked in maintenance." I says, "Well, I worked in the po-,  
15 powerhouse." And he says, "Well that's good." And he says,  
16 "They want somebody that's got a real jo-, real good job record."  
17 And I said, "Okay." So, I applied and I was told there was 50 other  
18 people that applied for the same job, but they didn't meet all the  
19 exact criteria.  
20  
21 And, uh, Bruce being so active in the union, I'm quite sure that had  
22 a plus to. But, uh, I got hired in and, uh, you know, uh, I've been –  
23 like I said it's been almost 31 years. I figure I've got at least  
24 another 8 years, if not 10 years, to go before I, before I retire.  
25  
26 Doug Rademacher: [00:59:12] And how many different presidents did you work for?  
27  
28 David Wayne Killweit: I, I'm under my 7th president.  
29  
30 Doug Rademacher: [00:59:20] How do you view the union, and did you ever become  
31 active in [coughing] in the union?  
32  
33 David Wayne Killweit: Okay now, as far as being active in the union I, I can't be active in  
34 Local 602's union off-, uh, activities. I am minorly active in my  
35 own personal union, yes.  
36  
37 Doug Rademacher: [00:59:37] And which union would that be?  
38  
39 David Wayne Killweit: It's, uh, Local 42 OPIOU, out of Detroit. Uh...  
40  
41 Doug Rademacher: [00:59:45] And what does that stand for?  
42  
43 David Wayne Killweit: Oh wow, that's a – I should know that.  
44  
45 Doug Rademacher: Oh, it's OPEIU and it's the Office Professional Employees  
46 International Union. Thought I'd help ya.

1  
2David Wayne Killweit: Thank you very much.  
3  
4Doug Rademacher: Uh, but, uh...  
5  
6David Wayne Killweit: I appreciate that.  
7  
8Doug Rademacher: [00:59:56] So you do belong to a union and, and now you have –  
9 you became active in your union?  
10  
11David Wayne Killweit: Uh, to a degree. Um, I've been the union steward for our, our  
12 Local for the last, I wanna say, 6-7 years, maybe a little longer.  
13 Um, going to union meetings is, is difficult because you have to  
14 go-, drive to Detroit which is 90 miles into Detroit. Um, so that's,  
15 that's just – and I, I go to at least 3 or 4 a year, especially lately.  
16  
17Doug Rademacher: Yourself and our office staff are, are union members, uh working  
18 in a UAW facility. [01:00:37] What's that like and, um, just  
19 describe what it's like to, uh, work in a union hall. Are the people,  
20 uh, does a lot of people come through? Is – was the union looking,  
21 uh, always said it was, um, thugs and stuff? What – describe the  
22 union to someone that doesn't know anything about unions.  
23  
24David Wayne Killweit: A, a union is nothing more than, uh, uh, what the general  
25 population is. You have really good people; you've got really bad  
26 people. Uh, the biggest misconception of a union is that people  
27 feel that when they pay those union dues that they're absolutely  
28 guaranteed a fair shake and that's not what a union can do. A lot –  
29 uh, uh, the union gives you the opportunity of possibly getting a  
30 fair shake. And that's what you're actually paying for. Um, just  
31 because you've been done wrong by management doesn't mean the  
32 union can correct that, but with a union you have the possibility of  
33 it being corrected. But that idea is absolutely missed by the vast  
34 majority of the, uh, you know, I – "Why don't I get this  
35 representation?" And soon you get the [inaudible 01:02:00] has  
36 poor abilities. He's elected and so that's what you're going to get.  
37 You're going to get a person with poor abilities. If you elect a  
38 person that has a lot of ability and a lot of drive, that's what you –  
39 that's the type of representation you're gonna get. So, the, the  
40 [ownness 01:02:19] really goes back on the membership to elect  
41 quality people. But, that's...  
42  
43Doug Rademacher: [01:02:25] Which is done through a...?  
44  
45David Wayne Killweit: Through a nominating period and then through an el-, uh, an  
46 election. Um, the va-, you know 80%, 90% of the people that are

1 elected to these offices in the Local are very very good people.  
2 But I 'member one time we had – there was a individual that was  
3 elected to a zone position and he, he made a blank statement the  
4 next day. He says, "Don't bother me for 3 years." And that's what  
5 happened. For 3 years he sat on his butt and didn't do anything.  
6 And, at the end of his term, he wasn't re-elected. He went back to  
7 the line. And, now that's an extreme, extreme situation. By far  
8 and away, there – what happens is you get individuals that really  
9 wanna do well and wanna try hard and, and you know, do well.  
10 And, it's hard to be critic-  
11  
12 Doug Rademacher: Do well. [01:03:27] You mean to – what, what do you mean by do  
13 well? To do what?  
14  
15 David Wayne Killweit: In any type of a, uh, uh, management union position you, you –  
16 there's only so much that a, a, um. First off, there's only so much  
17 that a committee man can do. Now, he can take care of a lot of  
18 things but at the same time [coughing] if management doesn't want  
19 to move on some areas. Or maybe they have a particular grudge  
20 against a particular individual that there's only so much he can do  
21 so he would bump it up to the, the zones who have a little bit more  
22 [pause] I guess I wanna say influence 'cause they don't have  
23 anymore authority but they have influence. And then, of course, it  
24 goes to, to the, uh, international from there. But, um, it bothers me  
25 that so many people don't pay attention enough to the people that  
26 they elect. Um, of course you can, you can say the same thing in  
27 our national, national elections to. You paid more attention to, uh,  
28 what we were doing, and we'd get better people in office.  
29  
30 Doug Rademacher: Okay, you are still a union person, um, they have, uh, benefits  
31 through the, the, um, collective bargaining process. [01:04:49]  
32 What's your most appreciative, appreciated bargain benefit?  
33  
34 David Wayne Killweit: Health coverage. Without a doubt. The health coverage has, has  
35 saved – both of my boys had asthma real bad when they were little.  
36 Uh, they burned up nebulizers, which is a, a, uh, basically what  
37 that is, is a little air compressor that pushes air through a tube  
38 which goes through a medicated, uh, device that air-aerosols it so  
39 that my boys could breathe. We burned one of those up. We used  
40 it so much. Um, being in Wyoming, not Wyoming, being in  
41 Montana and Trevor having an asthma attack. Walking through  
42 the door to the hospital, flashing the card, Pam and Trevor going  
43 one way and I going to the admitting desk another way, never  
44 hearing of anything else of a bill was incredible. Um, you know I  
45 hear all these horror stories about how, you know, people are left  
46 out in the gurneys because they don't [inaudible 01:05:49] pay a

1 health coverage. I do my best not to abuse the system because I  
2 appreciate the system and I'd only want to use it when I need it. In  
3 fact, I've been criticized heavily by my wife, but I don't use it  
4 enough and frequently enough because of different issues. But I'm  
5 going, "I would rather do that and not abuse the system." By far  
6 and away, the health coverage is, is absolutely critical. To me  
7 that's as important as, as the hourly wage.  
8  
9 I mean, uh, you take a person that's got really great health coverage  
10 making \$10 an hour is really making more than the person making  
11 \$15 an hour that doesn't have health coverage. You know, there's  
12 – that's just my opinion.  
13  
14 Doug Rademacher: I'm gonna move into your community quickly. We have a, a little  
15 bit of tape left here. [01:06:41] Um, are you active in anything  
16 outside of your, your job?  
17  
18 David Wayne Killweit: I'm, I'm reasonably active with my church. I have been on a, what  
19 they call, a vision team. Um, since January and this vision team is,  
20 uh, literally planning the, the future of the church or at least we're  
21 giving the ideas of the direction that we feel. And then the church  
22 is put up for a vote and then we go on. We're-, our church is going  
23 through quite a growth spurt. Um, and you know, like, like, we're–  
24 in fact, we're, uh, my Sunday school class that I'm involved with,  
25 uh, um, I try not to talk so I do very-, as little more – so I don't  
26 dominate the conversation. My wife sits on me sometimes.  
27 'Cause, you know, hey they ask me, I'm gonna tell'm. Don't ask me  
28 if you don't wanna know, you know? [laughing] But uh, uh, other  
29 things that I've been really active in, when my boys were in Cub  
30 Scouts, I was a Cub Scouts leader. And then my, I was in the Boy  
31 Scouts and I was on the Boy-, I was on the council of both the Boy  
32 Scouts and the Cub Scouts. And, in fact, I was the, oh shoo-, the  
33 awards chair, which is a horrible job to have. Don't ever be that in  
34 the Cub Scouts, 'cause it's just giving out hundreds of awards every  
35 month and trying to keep them straight. But um, I was really glad  
36 to be involved with the, the, the Boy Scouts.  
37  
38 Doug Rademacher: [01:08:12] What's that giving ya?  
39  
40 John Fedewa: Yeah.  
41  
42 Doug Rademacher: [01:08:14] We got that much time?  
43  
44 John Fedewa: Yeah.  
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Okay, um, that's great you were helping the kids, uh, there.  
2 [01:08:22] Did any of your skills carry over that you use at the –  
3 on our job on a day to day basis, in, uh, your community or do you  
4 do anything with the skills you've got as far as the maintenance  
5 person at Local 602, outside of here?  
6

7 David Wayne Killweit: Well the, the church uses my abilities to a certain degree, uh, as far  
8 as repairing things. What's that old saying? You're knowledgeable  
9 about a lot of things but master of none. I can't remember – kinda  
10 paraphrasing it there but that's basically what I am.  
11

12 Doug Rademacher: So, you've helped out there. [01:08:56] Do you run a business on  
13 the outside of the plant?  
14

15 David Wayne Killweit: I have a very small carpet cleaning company on the side. I've had,  
16 I've run that for 28 years now and it's, uh, I enjoy it a great deal.  
17 Um, the job that I have right now doesn't really push me very far  
18 mentally and I enjoy a great deal of dealing with, especially the  
19 clients that I've had for so many years. And, I was just  
20 commenting earlier today that, that I've watched so many of these,  
21 these parents grow older as their kids grow older and, uh, yeah I've  
22 run my little...  
23

24 Doug Rademacher: Your business.  
25

26 David Wayne Killweit: ... my little business for about 28 years now.  
27

28 Doug Rademacher: David, I'm gonna finish this up with asking you, you've, uh, seen  
29 the good years and the bad and you've seen the Fisher Body plant,  
30 as we know it, come closed a year ago, uh, May 5th of '05.  
31 [01:09:52] What's it feel like to see the place coming down?  
32

33 David Wayne Killweit: It's hard. It's really hard. There's been so many changes that I've  
34 seen. Uh, so many new parts of the plant being built and now it's  
35 not gonna be any more. It's, uh, [coughing] it's very much like a  
36 funeral only a piece at a time. Uh, I just wish they'd get it done  
37 and over with.  
38

39 Doug Rademacher: [01:10:16] Do you have a message for people that are going to  
40 learn about the auto industry from these tapes and this message?  
41 What would you tell young people of the future about [pause]  
42 work ethic or – what do, what do you have to say?  
43

44 David Wayne Killweit: The people that I see that are the most successful are the people  
45 that work the hardest. Uh, we have a president right now, [Art  
46 Luna 01:10:38], um, he works himself literally 'til he's sick. And

1 he's the most effective, the most dynamic, uh, uh, president that  
2 we've ever had in the years that I've been here. Uh, I used to think  
3 that Richard Summer, uh, Richard, uh, [Sandborn 01:10:56] was  
4 the best president that we've ever had. Um, as much as I love  
5 Dick, uh, Art is by – he's by-, the best president we've ever had.  
6 Uh, as far as a message is that, uh, for the future, um, education  
7 doesn't guarantee you anything, but it gets you in the door and  
8 without it you might as well forget it. It used to be a college  
9 degree was really important, now you can't even hardly get in the  
10 door of so many places without a college degree. And if you don't  
11 have a high school education, you might as well forget it. I mean,  
12 uh, I would say just work hard, um, do the best you can at  
13 whatever you're doing, uh, be true to yourself to the best of your  
14 ability and, um, find God.  
15  
16 Doug Rademacher: Well that was an excellent interview David. We thank you today  
17 and, uh, we appreciate your time.  
18  
19 John Fedewa: Thank you very much Dave.  
20  
21  
22/fp