

**William Klein discusses his career as a production worker,
skilled trades pipefitter and UAW member at the
Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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3
4
5 Doug Rademacher: [recorder clicking] ...date it is, and you're ready to...
6
7 Linda Johnson: I'm talkin'. [clanking] [Inaudible 0:02].
8
9 Doug Rademacher: [laughter] I'm talkin'.
10
11 Linda Johnson: It's, uh, the Fisher Body Historical Team, and we're in the Labor Relations
12 [papers rustling] Conference Room. [background movement] It is
13 Thursday, November 3, and it is 10:10, and we're interviewing Mr. Bill
14 Klein. [clicking] [0:20] Bill, would you give us your name and your
15 address and tell us how to spell your last name?
16
17 William Klein: [tsk] My name is William George Klein. I spell my last name K-L-E-I-N.
18 Address is 14745 West French Road, Pewamo P-E-W-A-M-O, Michigan,
19 48873.
20
21 Linda Johnson: And today, interviewing Mr. William Klein, is myself, Linda Johnson,
22 and...
23
24 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
25
26 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
31
32 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
33
34 Linda Johnson: Well thanks for sittin' down with us on such short notice today. [1:01] Can
35 you remember your first day coming into the plant and how old you were
36 and why you decided to come here?
37
38 William Klein: [tsk] I was 18. The first day I came in here was just after the big strike of
39 '70. I heard that, uh, they were hiring. I was thinking about going to
40 college, and I wanted to get some money for college, and, um, you wanna
41 hear a real interesting incident?
42
43 Linda Johnson: Yes, I would.
44
45 William Klein: I came in, and they hired me as soon as I went through medical. [papers
46 rustling] They said, "When can you be here?" "As soon as you want me."
47 "Next morning." Okay, fine and dandy. I had, uh, probly been to Lansing

1 3 times by myself in my life. I found my way here during the daytime, but
2 the next morning, I didn't have a clue how to get here [background
3 movement] in the dark. And I was wanting to be here plenty early, and I
4 start driving down Grand River and I drove up and down Grand River for
5 a half hour. I couldn't find this place. I thought it was on Grand River. I
6 finally end up going to Motor Wheel. I went into Motor Wheel and
7 asked'm if they knew where Fisher Body was. So they directed me from
8 Motor Wheel to come back over here so I could start [laughter], and I
9 actually started – even though my seniority date says 1/10/71, I actually
10 started the 17th of December in 1970.
11
12Linda Johnson: [2:28] And where were you traveling from to come to work?
13
14William Klein: [tsk] All the way from Fowler, Michigan [laughter], which is about 25
15 miles northwest a here.
16
17Linda Johnson: [2:37] So did you get to work on time that day?
18
19William Klein: Yes, I did because actually I left 2 hours before [laughter] I was 'spose to
20 be here.
21
22Linda Johnson: [2:44]And what department did you start out in?
23
24William Klein: [tsk] Started out in the Trim Department on the A Line installing door
25 regulators.
26
27Linda Johnson: [2:52] Now what was your thought when you walked into the plant and
28 saw where you were gonna work?
29
30William Klein: [tsk] Uh, a bit overwhelmed by the size of it. I don't know if I'd ever seen
31 any kind of a factory operation before...
32
33Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
34
35William Klein: ...so it was a bit overwhelming to say the least.
36
37Linda Johnson: [3:09] And how'd your first day go?
38
39William Klein: [tsk] Very fast. They went through, um, showing me how to do the job,
40 and I couldn't believe how difficult this job turned out to be. And, of
41 course, everybody on the line was, uh, taking advantage of the new kid on
42 the block, which, uh, made the day interesting.
43
44Linda Johnson: [3:36] Did they give you pranks? Did they tease you? What [background
45 movement] did they do to you?
46

1William Klein: [tsk] Uh, I suppose mostly pranks. The stuff that everybody has to go
2 through in your initiation coming into a place like this. I can't specifically
3 remember anything, but, uh, oh, probably if you'd ask where the restroom
4 was, they'd head you in the wrong direction and they – different things
5 like that. I can't remember specifics, but just – nothing, uh, real terrible,
6 just little pranks.
7

8Linda Johnson: [4:09] And, uh, did you have problems getting around the plant or was it
9 pretty easy for you to come in and out of the plant?
10

11William Klein: [tsk] I hitched a ride on the back of a guy I knew going out to the parkin'
12 lot, and, um, [background noises] the next day – I had an uncle who
13 worked here. The next day I asked him – because he worked [throat
14 clearing] close to the area where I was. Asked him if I could meet him in
15 the parkin' lot and follow him in, [background movement] and then I spent
16 the second day working my way back and forth to make sure I could get
17 back to where I parked.
18

19Linda Johnson: [4:40] And what was your uncle's name?
20

21William Klein: [Larry 4:43] Klein.
22

23Linda Johnson: [Larry Klein. 4:45] Have you, uh – are you married?
24

25William Klein: Yes.
26

27Linda Johnson: [4:50] And [papers rustling] you have children?
28

29William Klein: Yes, I am married. I have 5 children, and I have 6 grandchildren. And my
30 7th grandchild is due the 23rd of this month.
31

32Linda Johnson: Well, congratulations.
33

34William Klein: Thank you.
35

36Linda Johnson: [5:06] Did you serve any time in the service?
37

38William Klein: No, I didn't. No.
39

40Linda Johnson: [5:13] And, um, what is your job here at Fisher Body now?
41

42William Klein: [tsk] Right now, I am the, uh, air conditioning and refrigeration repairman.
43

44Linda Johnson: [5:20] Is that a trade you learned here in the plant?
45

46William Klein: Yes, it is.

1
2 Linda Johnson: [5:22] And how did you get into the Skilled Trades?
3
4 William Klein: Um, I was riding in with a gentleman who, uh, said he was going to be
5 going into maintenance, and by asking him about what it was, I then went
6 down and applied for the apprenticeship. But that was just before the oil
7 embargo, and then I was laid off for a couple years during that time.
8
9 Linda Johnson: [5:49] Wh-, what were the dates around that?
10
11 William Klein: '73 and '74 – Or was it '74 and '75? I don't know. I know I was laid off in
12 '74 and '75 pretty much all the time, come back just a little bit different
13 times, but I actually came back in and have, um, basically worked since
14 the beginning of '76. So it must have been '74 and '75 when I was laid off
15 for quite a while.
16
17 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm. Doug Rademacher?
18
19 Doug Rademacher: Yes, Bill, you said you came from about 25 miles out. [6:19] Did you
20 drive yourself in or did you carpool ever?
21
22 William Klein: Um, after the first week, I carpooled, and it's been a pretty much
23 continuous carpool with the exception of, uh, the last 6 or 8 months.
24
25 Doug Rademacher: That's quite a few years. [6:39] Can you share – What was it like, uh,
26 spending your waking up moments with str-, I guess neighbors, um, and
27 what was it like to count on other people to get to and from work every
28 day?
29
30 William Klein: Another good experience I had when I was first hired in here – of course, I
31 was just 18 when I came in here, and so it was the fall – late – oh, it must
32 have been in early spring or something, where I always slept on the way
33 in, and the fellow who was driving hit something in the road. And I
34 remember waking up, and they get out of the car and they look and they
35 go, "Oh, I think he's dead!" And they got back in the car and they took off.
36 And being half awake and half asleep, I thought they had hit a person, and
37 I'm like terrified. "Why would you run into somebody and just take off?"
38 [laughter] Of course, it was a deer, but um, I rode with them for [laughter]
39 3 months and then I was laid off. And then when I was called back, I
40 started working and driving in with guys pretty much my own age, and I
41 had pretty much grown up with all these guys so sometimes it would be
42 interesting going home at night depending upon where we decided to stop
43 before we left Lansing.
44
45 Linda Johnson: [8:10] Oh?
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [8:10] And what were some a those places you might stop?
2

3 William Klein: Uh, the, the – probably the most popular place was the Willow Bar, but
4 they don't call it the Willow Bar anymore. They call it DeLuca's. So even
5 when people now say, "We're going to DeLuca's," my mind registers
6 Willow Bar and not DeLuca's.
7

8 Doug Rademacher: [8:28] Does the plant name have the same thing in your mind? It's been
9 called BOC. It's now Lansing Car Assembly as they close. What is it to
10 you?
11

12 William Klein: It's always going to be Fisher Body. Every time I'm asked where I work, I
13 say, "I work at Fisher Body." It'll never be anything but Fisher Body to
14 me.
15

16 Doug Rademacher: [8:49] Are you traveling on to the new facility that's being built in Delta?
17

18 William Klein: Yes, I am. As a matter of fact, I've been assigned out there since May the
19 9th, but I was loaned back here because I was the only one working in the
20 refrigeration department so I had to do all the decommissioning of our
21 refrigeration and air conditioning equipment here. So, uh, between
22 working out there and working here – yeah, I've been out there quite a bit
23 as a matter of fact.
24

25 Doug Rademacher: [9:15] So will that be Fisher Body too or will it be...
26

27 William Klein: No [laughter]...
28

29 Doug Rademacher: ...the new Delta?
30

31 William Klein: ...that's going to be Delta.
32

33 Doug Rademacher: [9:20] So what is your feelings about the closing and the name?
34

35 William Klein: Uh...
36

37 Doug Rademacher: The loss of the Fisher Body plant?
38

39 William Klein: ...yeah, I was thinking about that today before Cheryl asked if I wanted to
40 be interviewed because, uh, from what I've been told, today will probably
41 be the last day that I'll be actually doing any work in the refrigeration
42 department. And I thought, ya know, I've been doing [background
43 movement] this job, well actually for 12 years, but coming into this plant
44 for 35 now, so there's a lot of, uh, uh, memories. It's gonna be tough
45 leaving it. [papers rustling] It really is. Uh, I've had my own little area now

1 for the last 12 years, [pen clicking] and you sorta get used to, uh, a pattern
2 of doing things, so I think it'll be a little bit of a difficult change for me.
3
4 Linda Johnson: Cheryl McQuaid?
5
6 Cheryl McQuaid: You said you hired in on the regulator job. [10:22] What job did [papers
7 rustling] you do after that? Do you remember?
8
9 William Klein: Uh, from door regulators – oh my gosh, where did I go? [background
10 movement] I think I went to Door W-, uh, Door Windows. From
11 Windows, I went – I was laid off again. Then I ended up out in the old
12 Cushion Room. Boy, I hated that place. Wow. That was bad.
13
14 Linda Johnson: [10:53] What was it like?
15
16 Cheryl McQuaid: [10:53] Why was it bad? [throat clearing]
17
18 William Klein: Wha-, what was it like? [laughter] Uh, it was r-, the worst part was I hog
19 ringed my finger that one time. And of course, the, um, repairman said, "If
20 you ever hog ring your finger, don't go to Medical, they'll tear ya up." [He
21 says 11:10], "I'll take care of it for ya," and he did. He just took his side
22 cutters, cut it, pulled it out. Um, it was, uh, a very busy job. A lot of small,
23 little things you had to do, so I wasn't too crazy about that. And then I got
24 laid off again and went to the Body Shop in Quality Control. Then I was
25 laid off again and went over t-, actually, I worked over at Olds for a while
26 after that layoff. That place was really bad. That was very busy. I only
27 worked there for about 60 days. Then was called back here. Then where
28 did I work? Oh, I worked, uh, installing door wires. No, that wasn't door
29 wires. Body wires. Then I got laid off again [laughter], and then when I
30 was called back after the, uh, oil embargo of '74 and '75, I [background
31 movement] went to Paint. And then I came back to, uh, Trim installing
32 quarter glass, and then I got into the apprenticeship.
33
34 Cheryl McQuaid: So you've been all over the plant.
35
36 William Klein: Yes.
37
38 Doug Rademacher: Bill, you just named a lot of jobs [papers rustling] and time – active
39 [background movement] time and off time. [12:37] Would you go back to
40 something you've said? You called, uh, the Cushion Room very difficult
41 place to work and you mentioned a hog ring gun. Is, is there hogs, or
42 would you explain exactly what that is?
43
44 William Klein: [tsk] Hog ring gun was a, uh, device that they actually use to connect the
45 fabric [background movement] to the metal frame. [papers rustling] And
46 they called it a hog ringer. If any of you are familiar with ringing hogs'

1 noses on the farm to keep them from rutting, uh, it was similar to that, but
2 it was an air gun that actually put these metal clamps onto the, uh –
3 between the, the, the cloth and the metal itself to hold the cloth to the
4 metal.
5

6Marilyn Coulter: Bill, Marilyn Coulter. Um, you said that you went into the apprenticeship.
7 [13:23] Can you tell us what the apprenticeship is and how long you had
8 to do that before...?
9

10William Klein: Okay, I got into the pipefitter apprenticeship. I went in in May of '78 into
11 the pipefitter apprenticeship. It's a 4-year apprenticeship, um, and I can't
12 even remember how many hours. It seems like there was, uh – I, I, I
13 honestly can't remember how many hours of schooling was involved with
14 that. And there was a certain amount of hours too of actual work time you
15 had to do to complete the apprenticeship, but I'm not exactly sure. It took,
16 uh, probably – it's usually a 4-year apprenticeship. I think I was completed
17 with it in about 3½ years.
18

19Doug Rademacher: [14:20] Bill, would you tell me about the working conditions from the
20 time you hired in up until the time [background movement] that we've got
21 to the [papers rustling] closing of the plant? Do you remember when you
22 hired in [papers rustling] and the, the atmosphere and the conditions of the
23 workplace?
24

25William Klein: [tsk] On the production lines, um, [papers rustling] of course, depending
26 upon what job you had, some of the working conditions aren't – well, at
27 that time, weren't real good. The, the first job I hired into, the door
28 regulator job, was not considered a very good job. There was a lot of
29 bending, and it was a job you could easily cut yourself on. Compared to
30 what I see they do now with the Kevlar gloves and different things,
31 [background movement] I don't think safety was as big a concern back
32 then. You got cut, [papers rustling] you just taped yourself up and you kep'
33 on going. It wasn't that much of a big deal. Um, [background noise] and as
34 – for me, it's, uh, not real easy to remember the production days because
35 I've spent so much time now in the trades. Um, comparing [clicking] some
36 of the other departments I've worked in, I would say by far that the Trim
37 Department was the easiest and cleanest and quietest department that I
38 worked in compared to Body Shop. Paint was terrible because of the paint
39 fumes and the noise. Um, and the Cushion Room was just – I have – I, I
40 can't think of anything good about the Cushion Room when I worked
41 there. A lotta people really liked it, but I just couldn't stand the Cushion
42 Room at all.
43

44 And, um, once I got into Maintenance, um – probably the biggest changes
45 that have happened in Maintenance since I came in as an [background
46 movement] apprentice, um, [papers rustling] are the way the departments

1 have been split up. When I first came in to Maintenance, there was a
2 central maintenance crib, and everyone worked outta that crib. And
3 workin' outta that crib, you really got to know everybody you were
4 working with, within your own trade at least. And, um, [background
5 movement] you always had the pipefitters, millwrights, and electricians
6 together in a central area, so you really got to know all a those people. But
7 I believe back in the [coughing] mid 80s, and it coulda been around the
8 time they changed the plant, supposedly to BOC or whatever name change
9 they made for it, they split the maintenance areas up to more of an area
10 maintenance-type thing. And so [papers rustling] the trades guys, who
11 were at that time a lot closer and there was more camaraderie with them,
12 that was sort of lost. And just within the, um – probably in the Facilities is
13 what they call it now – the Facilities Department, that still remains. But,
14 um, where before you knew all the guys who were in the trades, at least on
15 your own shift, it isn't like that anymore. I think a lotta that camaraderie
16 has been, um, lost as to what it was like back in probably the mid 80s.
17

18Marilyn Coulter: [tsk] Uh, Bill, Marilyn Coulter. [17:25] Uh, did you have that type of
19 camaraderie with Production, or what's the difference between working in
20 Production and being a work family there and working in the Skilled
21 Trades and having a work family there?
22

23William Klein: Uh, in Production, within your own small group, especially if you had jobs
24 – the, the last job I had on Production [background movement] [coughing]
25 was installing quarter glass and back glass, and I was working with 2 other
26 guys. And, um [coughing], you better get along with the people you're
27 working with because everything depends upon all of you working
28 together. And I can remember too from, um, the other jobs that, uh, I had
29 during production, within your own small group, [background movement]
30 the group of people closest [coughing] to you, uh, it was better to have a
31 good working relationship with them. Every once in a while, you would
32 find someone who just didn't fit in, but [creaking] I would say by and far,
33 people that were the closest to the jobs to you, you got to know them a
34 little bit and you got – hopefully got along with them 'cause if you dint, it,
35 it didn't make for a real good work environment. And by far, most a the
36 people I worked with were all very pleasant to work with. [tsk]
37

38Marilyn Coulter: Hm. Now you said you had an uncle here. [18:35] Did you have any other
39 [clicking] relatives that worked here?
40

41William Klein: Uh, I had actually 3 uncles that worked here. Uh, **Paul** Klein, who was
42 **Larry** Klein's brother. He worked down in the Body Shop, uh, in Quality
43 Control. And, uh, [**George Koenigsknecht** 18:56] who worked in the
44 Cushion Room I think. But he didn't work here too long, uh, before I, um
45 – yeah, I think he retired shortly after I was here. I also – my younger
46 brother, **Tom**, um, hired in here in '78, just after I went into the trades.

1
2 [background movement]
3
4 Linda Johnson: [19:25] As a member of a team [background noise] on the line or as a
5 Skilled Trades person, did you participate in any of the annual dinners or
6 events that we would celebrate as – [background movement] in our own
7 way, as in the holidays or birthdays or...?
8
9 William Klein: [tsk] Yeah. Um, not so much on Production, [clicking] but, uh, once, um,
10 [background movement] I got into the trades, I think probably because of
11 the time factor. There was less time on Production. You had to fit this into
12 your half-hour lunch [door creaking] schedule or whatever, and [door
13 creaking] if they had any of these parties outside of the working hours, I
14 usually didn't partake. But during the working hours, especially once I got
15 into the trades, we'd have, uh, meals where – uh, especially Thanksgiving
16 and, um, Christmas, any of the retirements for the people, um, I would
17 always partake in any of those. If there was food involved, I wasn't far
18 behind. [laughter]
19
20 Linda Johnson: [20:31] Did, uh, one person schedule the party or, uh, do you remember
21 where they held it at when they would invite [background movement]
22 people in?
23
24 William Klein: Uh, usually the parties were held in the, um, maintenance area down in
25 Building 6, and that would be right in between the pipefitter and electrical
26 cribs. Sometimes it would be down in the Millwright Shop, and you could
27 be talking anywhere from 50 to a couple a hundred people who would be
28 attending a lot of these parties, whether they were – especially the
29 retirement parties where you got the bigger numbers. But for the Christmas
30 and Thanksgiving parties, there would be just basically the people in the
31 area, which could be up to a couple a dozen people.
32
33 Linda Johnson: [21:19] Did people bring their own foods in? Did it – was it a picnic affair
34 or [door creaking] was it a catered affair?
35
36 William Klein: Uh, usually at first [door creaking], um, it was more of a potluck thing
37 [clicking], but I think, um, as time went on, people found it was a whole
38 lot easier just to have someone else do the cooking, whether it was
39 [background noise] going down and getting a bunch of pizzas [background
40 movement] or chicken or whatever it might be. So it was probably both
41 where at first people brought it in then after a while it was sort of a
42 catered.
43
44 Linda Johnson: [21:53] Do you remember the wagons?
45

1William Klein: Definitely. Especially on the line I remember the wagons. That was great
2 to look forward to those. Um, I don't necessarily say I ever went and got
3 anything too much off the wagon, but, uh, we still call our breaks "wagon
4 time," [laughter] and I mean, we haven't had – how long has it been since
5 wagons have been gone? Is that...
6
7Male: 80s.
8
9William Klein: 80s?
10
11Female: Mm-hm.
12
13William Klein: Yeah. And so, I mean, even when we talk about going on break, we
14 wouldn't say so much, "I'm going on break," as "It's wagon time," and we
15 would go...
16
17Female: Hm.
18
19William Klein: ...to, uh, take our break. [papers rustling]
20
21Doug Rademacher: [22:37] [tsk] I wanted to ask you – this is Doug Rademacher. Bill, the
22 population's changed over the years that you've worked here. What was it
23 like, um, in trades working [background movement] around women and
24 minorities as opposed to working on the assembly line? Were there a lot
25 [background movement] of women and minorities?
26
27William Klein: [tsk] Um, the women and, um, minorities, I would say probably it wasn't
28 until the mid 80s that they started to come into the trades, so I think there
29 was actually more of an exposure to – not necessarily minorities as in
30 men, but I'm speaking more specifically about women, whether they –
31 whatever their race may be. It wasn't until probably the mid 80s that you
32 could start to see changes where there were more woman, um, [papers
33 rustling] coming into the trades. I don't think minorities were so much a
34 factor as it was gender related. And, um, on Production though, um – of
35 course there's always been more men in the plant, but on Production, I
36 think that, uh, there wasn't as much of a [background movement]
37 distinction as there is in the trades between the genders as to whatever it
38 may be.
39
40Marilyn Coulter: [24:02] How do you think it – Marilyn Coulter. How do you think it was
41 for them given the fact that it was like women coming into an arena that
42 was predominantly all male? [papers rustling] How did that [inaudible
43 24:11]?
44
45William Klein: [tsk] There was, uh, definitely [papers rustling] resistance at first when
46 women first started coming into the trades. I believe the, um, first

1 pipefitter apprentice we had – it was, it was either [Luann 24:29] or
2 [Beth]. I'm not...
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: Luann.
5
6 William Klein: ...sure which. Was it Luann?
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
9
10 William Klein: Um, there was, uh, resistance – I don't say anybody necessarily treated
11 them different in front of them, but, um, I would say probably remarks
12 behind people's backs. It was more something you'd hear when they first
13 started coming in, but after a few years, uh, that all died down. And there
14 isn't, to my knowledge – you don't hear any of that anymore, but we're
15 talking over the last 20 years the change that has been made.
16
17 Linda Johnson: [25:13] Bill, do you have a best memory about coming into the plant or a
18 best memory [background movement] from your work life or something
19 you did that f-, that was a good memory [background movement] for you?
20
21 William Klein: Actually, I do, and it just – it just came to me as you were asking me.
22 Probably one a the things I am, I am the most proud of that I did – we had
23 a, um, number of refrigeration units for the cafeteria for all the walk-in
24 coolers. And they were [background noise], uh, water-cooled condensers,
25 and I was askin' one of our suppliers if there wasn't some way – because
26 [papers rustling] they were on the energy conversat-, or con-, conservation
27 kick – [clicking] some way that we could get away from using water and
28 going to just an air-cooled system. And he said, "Yeah, we've got this, uh,
29 air-cooled condenser you can put on the roof." I says, "Gosh, we got 8
30 units though. How are you possibly...?" I could just envision this huge
31 thing over the roof. "No," he said, "this'll be quite small."
32
33 So I had to figure out how to connect all of these units to this one unit that
34 was going to be on the roof, and, um, if you could look at the piping for
35 that that I had to do. That is probly one a the things I am most proudest of
36 that I was actually able to make that conversion. And I mean we saved
37 millions of gallons of water, and I got a pretty hefty [laughter] suggestions
38 check outta that one, so that's another reason why it probably sticks in my
39 mind. But probably of everything I've done, that's one a the things that, um
40 – as a matter of fact, when they allowed us to bring cameras in here, I
41 went over and took a picture of it...
42
43 Linda Johnson: Aww.
44
45 William Klein: ...so it guess it does [laughter] stick in my mind as something.
46

1 Linda Johnson: That's great. Now they're going to tear it all down..
2
3 William Klein: That's all right. I got my money. [laughter]
4
5 Female: [Inaudible 27:20].
6
7 William Klein: They've been using it now [throat clearing] for like, uh, 8 or 9 years, so
8 they got more than their money worth...
9
10 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
11
12 William Klein: ...out of it.
13
14 Linda Johnson: Yeah. [27:27] Have there other – been other suggestions you've submitted
15 over your years as a employee here?
16
17 William Klein: Yeah, um, I think [background movement] one other one. An electrician
18 and myself, we got paid a little bit more [papers rustling] on that. With the
19 exception of those two, most of'm have just been small suggestions that
20 I've submitted in. [background noises]
21
22 Linda Johnson: [27:50] You submit it 'cause it's – because you think of something that
23 [background movement] would benefit the plant or is it – how do you
24 come up with your ideas?
25
26 William Klein: [tsk] Ah, a lot of'm, just, uh, being work related [background movement]
27 because you're working on the equipment and you see – maybe it's not
28 even a piece of equipment you're working on, but you see [sneezing]
29 where this could be a benefit to the company. Or it might be a safety
30 suggestion where you see, "Gosh, this would be a better way to do it." It
31 might be a safer way to do it. So it's pretty much a hands-on experience
32 thing of, of, uh, what you might just run across, and it sort of sticks in your
33 mind.
34
35 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [28:35] Doug Rademacher. Bill, it's like a family working in here. Do you
38 consider your co-workers brothers and sisters?
39
40 William Klein: Oh yeah. [background movement] Yeah, because you can develop some
41 pretty close relationships with, uh, the people you see every day if you're
42 willing to, you know, pursue it. I guess if you were just to hide in a corner
43 you wouldn't necessarily have many relationships with people, but, uh, I
44 don't know how a person couldn't help but do it. Number one, it's going to
45 make the job easier for you if you are a little bit, at least, friendly with
46 people. And you get to know things about people too. I mean, you don't

1 just walk up to a person and ask'm a list of questions like this, that's for
2 sure. [laughter] But over the years of working with people, you get to, um,
3 learn quite a bit about people, and, um, you actually, uh, find out in, in
4 working with these people, you have outside interests and you might start
5 doing things with these people outside the plant.
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: [29:33] What are some of the things that you've done outside the plant?
8
9 Male: Marilyn Coulter.
10
11 William Klein: Um...
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn.
14
15 William Klein: ...specifically, uh, I've went on some hunting trips with, uh, people, uh,
16 fishing trips. Uh, we have went and visited, um, some of our co-workers
17 with other co-workers when they've been in the hospital, and, um, [tsk]
18 those are the 3 things that come to mind off the top a my head.
19
20 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
21
22 Linda Johnson: [30:04] Have any of these friendships resulted in families doing things
23 together?
24
25 William Klein: Uh, no. I can't think of anything, no.
26
27 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard. Um, you talked early on about, uh, when you were 18
28 years old that you hired in here and [papers rustling] that you finally
29 hooked up with, um, kids that were your own age that started coming h-,
30 in here at that time. [30:30] Is any of those people still employed here and
31 are you still [background movement] friends with them and do you do
32 anything with them?
33
34 William Klein: Yes, uh, as a matter of fact, [Gary Weber 30:37], who is a millwright, he
35 and I had been driving in together. We started driving in together when we
36 were on the line, and then he went into Maintenance. And once we hooked
37 up again on the same shifts, we started, uh, driving again together. And up
38 until, uh, [clicking] I believe about 9 months ago when he went on special
39 assignment, we had been [background movement] driving in with each
40 other so – and actually with Gary – of course, we had a relationship, a
41 pretty good friendship [papers rustling] before we started working here.
42 But if you ask as families, have we done anything, and we, we did, as
43 families, do things together. So I guess it's, it's hard to separate [papers
44 rustling], you know, when you're working with someone. But so yeah,
45 there's been, uh, things like that. Another guy, as a matter of fact, uh, uh,
46 uh, one a the guys I used to drive in with, [Bob Westner 31:34]– do you

1 know **Bob Westner**? Tall, skinny guy. He used to work up in Paint. He's
2 retired now. But, uh, he dated my sister for a while. [laughter]
3
4 Linda Johnson: Did you introduce them?
5
6 William Klein: I pro-, I don't know if [background movement] we really
7 [clicking] introduced or he just – when he'd come over to pick me up or
8 something – that was before I was married.
9
10 Linda Johnson: Oh.
11
12 William Klein: He probably saw her and became interested, so...
13
14 Linda Johnson: [32:02] You've talked about all this, uh, uh, sharing rides back and forth to
15 work, have you ever considered of how much money you saved by, um,
16 sharing rides over the years?
17
18 William Klein: [tsk] Uh, it has to be considerable. Um, I just notice since **Gary** and I quit
19 riding together, how my gas bill went up, especially considering now I live
20 – actually, I don't live in Fowler anymore. I moved all of 10 miles away
21 from Fowler. So it's, uh, close to 35 miles for me, which isn't terribly far,
22 but when your gas bill doubles at the price of what gas is now, it becomes
23 a considerable amount. So I wouldn't have a clue how much I've saved,
24 but in years past, we had as many as 4 or 5 people who would drive
25 together. So when you only have to drive 1 day a week, you know, your
26 savings of gas over the years is considerable I'm sure. [tapping]
27
28 Doreen Howard: [tsk] Doreen Howard. [32:57] Um, have you ever used your skills outside
29 a the plant?
30
31 William Klein: Oh yeah. [tsk] First as plumber, pipefitter, and then, uh, also in air
32 conditioning. I'm constantly having people ask me, well, could you come
33 over and do this or do that. When it comes to plumbing, I've done a lot of
34 plumbing for my parents, for my brothers, actually for myself too. Um, we
35 built a cabin from the ground up up [papers rustling] in the UP a few years
36 back. And I pulled all my own permits and, um, did all the work myself,
37 even going to the electricians I knew to find out [papers rustling] how to
38 wire everything according to code so it would pass. When it comes to air
39 conditioning, I've installed units for people, but they gotta be family
40 because I don't, I don't do it on the side. I just do it to help somebody out.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: [34:02] Have you – Doug Rademacher. Have you used any a that to help
43 in your community with your skills?
44

1 William Klein: [tsk] Down at church one time I did a small job, but it's pretty
2 insignificant. So I can only think of one time where I actually used that,
3 down at the church.
4

5 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [34:25] Were you active in your union at all and did
6 you appreciate your union? Did they support you? Could you share a little
7 bit about working – your working and your relationship with the union?
8

9 William Klein: [tsk] Um, I didn't actively attend our, um, monthly meetings. I would go to
10 any of the special meetings that we had when it came to the tradespeople. I
11 don't believe [coughing] – there hasn't been a single contract I haven't
12 voted for. I [clicking] know for sure that I wouldn't've enjoyed all these
13 benefits I have had it not been for our union here. I'm sure of that. And,
14 um, there was a couple occasions where I had to [coughing] call them to
15 my rescue when, um, I may have stepped out of line a little bit, but that
16 was on rare occasions. So I wouldn't say that I've had a lot to do with the
17 union, but, um, I know in the last few years our committee people in zones
18 have been more than willing to help us out with any of the problems we
19 may have encountered.
20

21 Linda Johnson: [35:49] Do you have a favorite bargained benefit [papers rustling] that you
22 appreciated the most? [background movement]
23

24 William Klein: Healthcare. [papers rustling]
25

26 Doug Rademacher: [36:06] Bill, you – Doug Rademacher. Bill, you said you have [clicking] a
27 couple years' college. [throat clearing] [background movement] Did you
28 use the tuition assistance to do that? [papers rustling]
29

30 William Klein: Oh, definitely. [laughter] Um, was – when I first came to work [papers
31 rustling] here, the idea was to earn money to help pay for my college, and
32 then once I was here, I found out – I'm not – they changed the name of it.
33 They had a different name for it at first, and you had to show them that
34 you actually passed the class and then they'd reimburse you...
35

36 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
37

38 William Klein: ...and I used that plus the – I'm not sure what they call the program now.
39 So yeah, all the college I have was paid for because of, uh, my working
40 here.
41

42 Marilyn Coulter: So – Marilyn Coulter. [36:57] Bill, so what were you initially gonna go to
43 school for?
44

45 William Klein: I was going to go, and my major was natural resources.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [37:06] So what made you stay here?
2
3 William Klein: What made me stay here? Getting married and having 2 small kids
4 [laughter] and so many expenses that once I got into the apprenticeship, I
5 decided that there was no way, even with a natural sciences major, I would
6 be able to make the money I could working here in the trades. And, uh,
7 finances won out, and I think it was a good choice.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [37:30] So there have been no regrets?
10
11 William Klein: There have been absolutely no regrets in staying here. None whatsoever.
12
13 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. Back to the, uh, [background movement] tuition
14 assistance. Has your children been able to u-, have you had that, uh, where
15 your children have used your tuition assistance for...
16
17 William Klein: [tsk] Yes.
18
19 Doug Rademacher: ...[inaudible 37:47] children?
20
21 William Klein: Uh, my oldest son, who now is a mechanical engineer, was able to get,
22 um, the last year he was in school I believe was the first year they came
23 out with the \$1,000 tuition assistance. My second son, who now is an
24 electrical engineer, was able to [throat clearing] get it for 2 years. My third
25 son who is, uh, now a forester – he was able to get it for – well, gosh, I
26 don't know if he was able to get it when he went and got his master's or
27 not. I don't remember for sure about that. I know he got it for at least 4
28 years. And my other 2 daughters as of yet – well, my youngest is still in
29 high school, so they haven't had, uh – oh, gosh, no, I think my oldest
30 daughter – 1 year too. She also was able to get [throat clearing] with the
31 tuition assistance.
32
33 Doreen Howard: That's a lotta money.
34
35 William Klein: That's a whole lotta money.
36
37 [laughter]
38
39 Doug Rademacher: Another wonderful benefit.
40
41 William Klein: Yes.
42
43 Linda Johnson: [39:01] [tsk] Did you know of any of your co-workers that, um, enjoyed
44 music in the plant and would share it? Any Skilled Trades people or...?
45
46 William Klein: You're saying enjoyed music as...?

1
2 Linda Johnson: [39:14] Music as playing instruments in the plant?
3
4 William Klein: Um, [Lyle 39:18] used to play harmonica [throat clearing], and, um, it was
5 either [Ed 39:24] or [Ernie Worrall]...
6
7 Linda Johnson: Ed.
8
9 William Klein: ...used to pl-, Ed? Played harmonica. [Loren Laymen 39:31] used to, uh,
10 play some sort of a stringed instrument, and I'm not sure what that was.
11 Um, what was the group that, uh, Lyle was in? Um, they were a bluegrass
12 group. I, I, [background noise] I'd go listen to them once in a while. I
13 know there was a couple sanitation guys [throat clearing] in on that too.
14 Um...
15
16 Linda Johnson: [39:53] Where'd they play it?
17
18 William Klein: This was – were they the Bluegl-, grass Revival?
19
20 Doug Rademacher: Yes.
21
22 William Klein: Okay. Um, I think this was down – I, I could be confused. It seems like
23 there was a little park right along a crick someplace where I heard them
24 play one time. Um, also [papers rustling] I heard some a these people play
25 when they used to have – maybe they still do have it. I haven't heard of it
26 recently. They'd have the talent...
27
28 Female: Mm-hm.
29
30 William Klein: ...uh, thing for Lansing site-wide people where I heard various...
31
32 Linda Johnson: [40:26] You went to that?
33
34 William Klein: ...uh...
35
36 Linda Johnson: [40:20] The talent show? [papers rustling]
37
38 William Klein: ...I think for 3 or 4 years, yeah.
39
40 Linda Johnson: [40:34] And where was that held at?
41
42 William Klein: [sigh] I don't know. It was like, uh, some school on the north end one time,
43 and – was it Otto, French, or something?
44
45 Linda Johnson: Otto.
46

1 William Klein: And...Otto? Okay. I remember the – that place. There was a couple other
2 places I went to, but I, I don't know. Someplace here in Lansing.
3
4 Linda Johnson: Mm-hm.
5
6 William Klein: I'm not re-, you know, as many years as I've worked here in Lansing,
7 [background noise] I don't come to Lansing too often than to work and I'm
8 outta here. [laughter]
9
10 Female: [Inaudible 41:07].
11
12 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [41:12] [background movement] Bill, would you tell
13 me about the time when Fisher Body was Fisher Body and then there
14 came a time when the, [papers rustling] the plant across town was joined –
15 would you talk about supervision, what it was like to work here, and did,
16 did management change the way they supervised [papers rustling] when
17 they opened up Lansing-wide from just Fisher Body?
18
19 William Klein: [tsk] There was a big change back when, um, they [background
20 movement] actually merged Chassis and Fisher Body with, um, each
21 other. It seems like our management doubled, and the way they actually
22 managed to, uh – the biggest thing I can remember was the, uh –
23 [background movement] when they actually split up the areas into Trim,
24 Body, whatever, in Maintenance. And um, it seems like our management
25 [throat clearing] went from one supervisor to all kinds of supervisors. And
26 the central structure of what was there and everybody kinda having a
27 handle on what everybody was doing disintegrated into [papers rustling]
28 nobody really knowing for sure what the other person was doing. So I
29 would've said, uh, personally I saw it more as a, uh, disorganization than a
30 reorganization [background movement] from my own point of view.
31
32 Doug Rademacher: [42:45] Did you ever have a favorite boss in your years here...
33
34 William Klein: [tsk]
35
36 Doug Rademacher: ...and what made him that?
37
38 William Klein: [thumping] Uh, I would say [Ken Eichelberger 42:57] was probably the,
39 um, favorite boss that [background movement] I had. He was a, very much
40 a, uh, people person. He could deal with the guys, and, um, he didn't talk
41 down to you. The fact that he actually [papers rustling] came outta the
42 trades too I think made a difference, so he knew what it was like out on
43 the floor. [background movement] And I think [papers rustling] us just
44 knowing that, it was easier to relate to him that way too.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: [43:35] Bill, there has been a push to change the way we do business
2 again, and it's called Team Concept [throat clearing]. What's your opinion
3 of that and is it, uh, something you see working in the future?
4

5 William Klein: Um, we started out with QWL. [background movement] Then we went to
6 QWL renamed as something else.
7

8 Female: [Inaudible 44:03].
9

10 William Klein: Then they renamed it to something else, and I can remember us shooting
11 ping pong balls and building things with Tinkertoys [throat clearing] and
12 shooting golf balls and trying to hit quarters. [background movement]
13 And, uh, I've been through a lotta different programs like this, and so now
14 we have this Team Concept. I don't wanna sound negative, and I've been
15 through a lotta schooling in the last few months as we're getting ready for
16 Delta, so I'm going with an open mind. But if all they're doing is, uh, just
17 putting new paint [throat clearing] over some old wall that's had all this
18 other stuff there, uh, I don't know. I – but I ha-, I will give them this. I'm
19 going over there. I hope it works. If it works like they say it's going to, it's
20 gonna be great. [throat clearing] And we as a union and we as GM have
21 gotta make this go, and this, I think, is the best shot we've got. So I'm
22 going with an open mind, but, um, I do have some reservations.
23

24 Doug Rademacher: [45:18] So you said the word QWL. That's Quality of Work Life. You said
25 you've been through some new education, and that's [GMGMS 45:27]. Is
26 this what you're talking about? Is this possibly the new paint?
27

28 William Klein: [tsk]
29

30 Doug Rademacher: The paint to cover an old situation? Or what...?
31

32 William Klein: That's the way I see it. But like I say, I don't want to, I don't wanna sound
33 too negative either because I do have to admit, uh, from the people on top
34 over there, [Randy 45:43] and the different people that I've had to deal
35 with over there, they say they're gonna make it work. It's gotta come, it's
36 gotta come from management. We down here, us peons, I believe, are
37 more than willing to make a go, but, um, they're the ones that are gonna
38 have to change. I'm willing to change, [scraping] and I'm gonna, I'm gonna
39 go in with an open mind. I hope it works. [background movement]
40

41 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard. Um, you're one a the last few people here in the plant.
42 [46:20] What's your feelings as you begin to, um, see [background
43 movement] the plant closing and all the people are gone and – how, how
44 do you feel about that?
45

1 William Klein: Uh, I think over the last few months as you see less and less people in
2 here, it's been sort of a gradual change, so, um, even though there is a little
3 bit of mixed feelings – it's gonna be kind of sad to leave this. I'm very
4 excited about going to the new plant, um, very grateful that we have a new
5 plant to go to. So I, I think it's going to be a lot easier transition knowing I
6 can go from here and that I have completed my job here, which was very
7 important to me. I wanted to make sure I could get all of my refrigeration
8 equipment taken care of like the EPA says we should, and I was able to do
9 that. So I actually don't f-, I, I feel like I finished my job here. I'm ready to
10 move over there, and, um, actually I'm feeling pretty good about the whole
11 move.
12

13 Female: [Inaudible 47:30].
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: Um, Marilyn Coulter. Bill, you've been here for a number of years and
16 you've seen a lot of changes, you've met a lotta people. We do have some
17 people that hired in in '95, so they have like 10 years under their belt.
18 [47:44] What's the best advice you would give to them?
19

20 William Klein: Ah. Boy, this is a volatile time in the auto industry. Oh boy. [tapping] I'm
21 glad I'm where I am and not where they are. What kind of [coughing]
22 advice could I give'm? Wow. [clicking] I don't know. I don't know how to
23 answer that right now. I really don't. Uh, actually, I have a sister who hired
24 in in '95. I have a brother-in-law who actually I referred [background
25 movement] and was hired in here. I am a little concerned about, um, their
26 future in the auto industry.
27

28 Marilyn Coulter: So now – Marilyn Coulter still. Um, you said that you had a sister and a
29 brother-in-law that you referred in too. [48:46] Would you wanna expound
30 on that a little bit and tell us a little bit about what referring somebody
31 means?
32

33 William Klein: Uh, they came up with a program – I'm not just sure how long ago – when
34 they knew there was going to be openings in the plant. Of course, any job
35 in the auto industry is so highly sought after now because of the pay, the
36 benefits we get. Um, I mean, they'd have people standing outside this plant
37 from here all the way to the capital trying to get jobs. So, uh, they gave
38 any of the people who, um, worked here a chance to submit names of
39 either family members, friends, someone you knew, and they would be
40 considered first. I'm not just sure of the logistics of how they did that, but,
41 uh, somehow these people were pulled out of this pool and they went
42 through the selection process, and if they made it, um, they were given the
43 opportunity to be employed here.
44

45 Linda Johnson: Thank you, Bill. This has been very interesting [throat clearing], and, um,
46 I'm glad you're going to the new plant with us.

1
2William Klein: [tsk] So am I.
3
4Doug Rademacher: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.
5
6Female: [Inaudible 49:55].
7
8
9/ab