

**Mikel Lienhart discusses his career as a skilled trades painter and  
UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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5 Cheryl McQuaid: [recorder clicking] Uh, this is Cheryl McQuaid with the Lansing Fisher  
6 Body Historical Team. Today's Friday, November 4th, 2005. We're in the  
7 Labor Relations Conference Room. It's about 10:00 a.m. and we're  
8 preparing to interview Mike Lienhart. Uh, first we're going to go around  
9 and introduce everybody else that's in the room.  
10  
11 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.  
14  
15 Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.  
16  
17 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [clicking]  
18  
19 Cheryl McQuaid: And Mike Lienhart.  
20  
21 Mikel Lienhart: And like you said, my name's Mikel Lienhart; that's spelled L-I-E-N-H-A-  
22 R-T and...  
23  
24 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:38] Your address?  
25  
26 Mikel Lienhart: ...my address is 540 Frost Road, Williamston, Michigan.  
27  
28 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:45] Mike, when did you hire into this plant?  
29  
30 Mikel Lienhart: I hired into this plant in October, uh, 21st, in 1985.  
31  
32 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:59] And was this plant Fisher Body at that time or?  
33  
34 Mikel Lienhart: Uh, I believe it was called BOC at that time.  
35  
36 Cheryl McQuaid: BOC. [1:09] And I think you said to me earlier that you worked here when it  
37 was Fisher Body?  
38  
39 Mikel Lienhart: Yes, I did. I spent, um, I'd say, oh, it'd be 13 years before I came here,  
40 about 60% of my time, working in GM plants throughout the state as an off-  
41 site contractor.  
42  
43 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:28] And what were some a the things ya did?  
44  
45 Mikel Lienhart: Uh.  
46

1Cheryl McQuaid: Well, here at this plant.  
2

3Mikel Lienhart: At this plant? A lotta times what we did as contractors w-, was naturally the  
4 new construction was our work and, uh, other than that, other times, it was  
5 jobs that they didn't want their people doing, uh, such as climbing, walking  
6 the steel, uh, going into tanks, sandblasting, putting in epoxy coatings, uh,  
7 also [coughing] color-coding the pipes and, and other than that, it was often  
8 jobs that were too large for their own maintenance crews to handle.  
9

10Cheryl McQuaid: And then, you hired in. [2:14] What [clicking] – why did you hire in?  
11

12Mikel Lienhart: Well, that's kind of a long story. Um, back in the '70s, union commercial  
13 and industrial work was a much better pay-, paying job than in here. Uh,  
14 they advanced, generally, about a dollar an hour per year on the contracts for  
15 many years. In fact, when I – in the early '70s when I hired in as an  
16 apprentice, at 55% of a journeyman's wage, it was higher than what they  
17 were paying on the line here; uh, almost a dollar an hour higher. The  
18 downside was we didn't have any paid days off; if you didn't work, you  
19 didn't eat. Uh, we had pretty good benefit plan being union and, uh,  
20 [tapping] a pretty good, uh, seniority base. Um, but ya had to move around a  
21 lot too. Ya had to drive to work a lotta the times, and at that time, outside  
22 contractors worked for a small local and the whole state was broken up into  
23 little locals, and whenever you drove outside your local limits, you were  
24 paid 30 cents an hour to travel past that line, plus by the hour [door  
25 squeaking] or they paid your expenses for where you were at [door  
26 squeaking] and you got that in addition to your own pay.  
27

28 And they had another clause in there called the "highest prevailing wage,"  
29 which was whichever contract was higher, yours or the local you went to,  
30 you got the highest a the two, and they had some pretty neat packages in  
31 there, like Saturdays and Sundays in industrial work were double pay  
32 straight through. Uh, night shift premium was time and a fifth, from 6:00  
33 until 6:00. Um, you got paid extra for climbing, working up in the steel; you  
34 got paid extra for spraying; got paid extra for doing the epoxy or  
35 sandblasting. By the time you totaled it all up, uh, sometimes as much as a  
36 third of your pay would be travel pays, bonus pays, overtime, things a that  
37 nature in the GM plants. So it was pretty lucrative when you were working.  
38 Um, very often the, uh, jobs we did were when plants were shut down or on  
39 the weekends, so a lot of our pay was a lot higher than what you could get  
40 anywhere else.  
41

42Cheryl McQuaid: So you went ahead and got hired into Fisher Body – well, at that time, BOC.  
43

44Mikel Lienhart: Yeah.  
45

46Cheryl McQuaid: Um...

1  
2 Mikel Lienhart: Well, there's a reason I did too. Uh, back in the early '80s, General Motors  
3 made an arrangement with the UAW and AFLCIO, which I was then, and  
4 they came up with an international maintenance agreement, which threw out  
5 a lotta those extra pays and, uh, you didn't get any travel pay anymore and  
6 the nightshift premiums went away, down to they gave ya a extra half-hour  
7 off or an hour off, depending on what shift you were at, instead of paying  
8 you. Uh, the overtime went back to time and a half on Saturdays and double  
9 time on Sundays. So a lotta those extras were thrown out, and even though  
10 in 1985 when I came here I took a 55-cent-an-hour pay cut to work here, I  
11 made \$20,000 more that year because I worked all the overtime here and,  
12 uh, I worked Sundays late...  
13  
14 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.  
15  
16 Mikel Lienhart: ...so.  
17  
18 Doug Rademacher: [6:07] Mike, you said that, um, in the '80s then skilled trades saw a change  
19 in the way they did business on the union side and so you came to Fisher  
20 Body – or, to the BOC plant. Has skilled trades taken a change since then?  
21  
22 Mikel Lienhart: Tremendously.  
23  
24 Doug Rademacher: [6:27] Could you tell us a little bit about that?  
25  
26 Mikel Lienhart: Uh-huh. Well, we've all gotten older in the plant here, for one thing. A lotta  
27 the jobs we do now, uh, are not near as large in scope as we did back then.  
28 We don't climb in here anymore; everything is out of a machine. Um, the  
29 most climbing you would do would be on a step ladder. Uh, there – we don't  
30 even have the equipment to do large jobs like we used to have; we just do  
31 the small little odds and ends that would be prohibit-, prohibitively  
32 expensive to contract out every little item. Other things we do in here, too,  
33 are little jobs like making stencils and putting names on lockers and painting  
34 a doorsill to keep people from tripping on it and things a that nature. That  
35 and a lotta the materials we use now come prefinished; uh, they're already  
36 painted when they get here, they, and they have better coatings available.  
37 They don't do the maintenance coatings like they used to. They used to  
38 every 7, 8 years they would go through and, and paint an entire area white if  
39 for nothing more than to clean it out and give light refraction, but the plants  
40 have cleaned up so much in the air and the dirt and the cre-, the operations  
41 they do, they just don't need that anymore.  
42  
43 Doug Rademacher: [8:05] Mike, you saw a change in, uh, the, of the amount of trades, they've  
44 combined'm. Did that aff-...  
45  
46 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah.

1  
2Doug Rademacher: ...did that impact you?  
3  
4Mikel Lienhart: That affected me in that they were doing away with the Painters' trade.  
5 There were 12 of us when I hired in; turned out I was the last one that was  
6 ever hired as a painter from the outside in this plant [throat clearing] and,  
7 uh, they weren't going to hire anymore and they needed, from time-to-time,  
8 more people, so what they did is they combined us with the carpenter's  
9 group, made everybody a Painter/Carpenter, uh, but a lot of us crossed trade  
10 lines and, uh, give a little help on the work when ya had a larger job.  
11  
12Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
13  
14Doreen Howard: [8:55] Um, now, you said they, they combined the carpenter...  
15  
16Mikel Lienhart: Carpenters...  
17  
18Doreen Howard: ...and the painters.  
19  
20Mikel Lienhart: ...mm-hm.  
21  
22Doreen Howard: Did you, um, have to go and get any additional training since you were  
23 considered...  
24  
25Mikel Lienhart: It was available.  
26  
27Doreen Howard: ...both or?  
28  
29Mikel Lienhart: It was available, but they combined it as an EIT program, an employee-in-  
30 training...  
31  
32Doreen Howard: Mm.  
33  
34Mikel Lienhart: ...where if you spent 8 years on the job, you can get a UAW journeyman's  
35 card. Um, they did, as far as General Motors goes, give me credit for the  
36 time that I had in the other trade and in the EITS status, which is a seniority  
37 status, which shortened that down. As far as GM's concerned, I am a  
38 journeyman carpenter, but as far as UAW is concerned, not yet.  
39  
40Doreen Howard: Mm. [9:49] Have you ever used any of the skills that you've learned through  
41 General Motors, um, outside of the Plant?  
42  
43Mikel Lienhart: Not a lot.  
44  
45Doreen Howard: Not a lot?  
46

1Mikel Lienhart: Not a lot. Most of'm are pretty specific to the Plant. Um, since I don't work  
2 in, an industrial job on the outside at all, most a those aren't used. Um, a  
3 lotta the little things that we used to do on the outside sometimes come in  
4 handy here because we're also the glass glazers, uh, the carpet layers, the  
5 furniture movers; ya know, there's a dozen little jobs that all fall under one  
6 heading that, you know, you could say, say you're a carpenter, but you may  
7 not see a piece a wood for a month.  
8  
9Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming.  
10  
11Michael Fleming: Um, Mike, you said ya took a 53-cent-an-hour cut when you came here  
12 [thumping] through [thumping] the, um, what, the AF-, AFL and the UAW  
13 [inaudible 10:54]...  
14  
15Mikel Lienhart: Mm-hm.  
16  
17Michael Fleming: ...and you made more money that year than you would have if you had a  
18 stayed out of here.  
19  
20Mikel Lienhart: Mm-hm.  
21  
22Michael Fleming: [11:00] Did your wage, your actual wage, ever catch up to what you lost in  
23 the 53 cents?  
24  
25Mikel Lienhart: Oh, that year. That year. The, uh, AFLCIO didn't have the bargaining power  
26 that they had back in the '70s anymore and their work was going way  
27 downhill. Uh, [sighing] and the UAW started negotiating higher wages and  
28 increases every year where [sniffing] on the outside they were forced to put  
29 a lotta their – they negotiated a lot differently in that you negotiated for a  
30 dollar amount and then you went back to the Union Hall and ya sat down  
31 with the rest a the guys and you figured out where you had to put that  
32 money, whether it was into benefits or actually on the check, uh, had – that  
33 part had very little to do with your contractor, and 'cause, ya know, benefits  
34 and expenses started going way up at that time, and a large part a their, uh,  
35 wage increases that they did get, which were never as large again as they  
36 were back in the '70s were eaten at by benefits.  
37  
38Michael Fleming: [12:13] I'm assuming that you are going to transition into the new Delta  
39 plant.  
40  
41Mikel Lienhart: That is unsure at this time. Uh.  
42  
43Michael Fleming: If in fact you did do that, you were already an EIT for, uh, the Carpenters'  
44 group. Uh, what is your next EIT assignment if you decided you were going  
45 to take one?  
46

1Mikel Lienhart: It – they’re negotiating that at this time, but at this time, nothing’s offered;  
2 we don’t have a job. There’s about 40 of us in the Plant in that situation; the  
3 Carpenters, the Tinnners, Small Tools.  
4

5Michael Fleming: It was my understandin’ that you have an EIT opportunity, though.  
6

7Mikel Lienhart: Not as yet.  
8

9Michael Fleming: Not yet. [Inaudible 13:00].  
10

11Mikel Lienhart: They’re working on it.  
12

13Michael Fleming: Okay, there we go.  
14

15Mikel Lienhart: They’re working on it, but, uh, I don’t know that there’s going to be any  
16 other opportunities. They’re talking also about a, uh, Central Facilities group  
17 that will be manned by both Local Union 602 and 652 jointly and there may  
18 be some opportunities there, but we don’t know how many and it has not  
19 been finalized yet either.  
20

21Michael Fleming: Sure.  
22

23Mikel Lienhart: And all...  
24

25Cheryl McQuaid: Doug...  
26

27Michael Lienhart: ...all these things have to [papers rustling] go through the, uh, international  
28 [papers rustling] and management and everybody’s gotta get their two cents’  
29 worth in before they finalize what they’re gonna do with us.  
30

31Cheryl McQuaid: ...Doug Rademacher.  
32

33Doug Rademacher: [13:42] Mike, I’d like to go back and find out a little more about you. Are  
34 you married?  
35

36Mikel Lienhart: Yeah, I am. Uh, that, that was another reason I came here is living on the  
37 road is not very conducive to raising a family...  
38

39Doug Rademacher: I was gonna ask you that.  
40

41Mikel Lienhart: ...and, uh, I started having children in the early ’80s, ended up with three,  
42 and, uh, I ended up being single with three kids. Uh, two were still in  
43 diapers when that happened, so they were all very young and, uh, I’d just  
44 been, be away from my family...  
45

46Marilyn Coulter: Mm.

1  
2Mikel Lienhart: ...for a week at a time without knowing that they were going to be taken care  
3 of, and this was, for the first time in a long time, a job where I could stay in  
4 one place and have a [papers rustling] stable work environment [coughing]  
5 where I was gonna be there every day and at the same place. Uh, one a the  
6 things about working [clicking] in the outside as a contractor is you never  
7 knew from one day to the next where you were gonna be; you might be in  
8 Grand Rapids one day and Detroit the next, and, uh, in the middle a the day  
9 you may move from a job to another and you didn't have a regular schedule,  
10 and that's kinda tough when you're tryin' to raise kids.  
11  
12Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [15:01] What shift did you hire in on?  
13  
14Mikel Lienhart: Well, naturally, I was in here on days for the first day. Uh, I remember the  
15 lady that brought me through the Plant and was gonna take me around and  
16 show me where everything was, I ended up showing her places that she had  
17 never seen [laughter] because I'd spent about 2 and a half years in this plant  
18 over the course a 13 years, off and on, doing a lotta little oddball jobs and in  
19 between floors and crawl spaces and things a that nature, and after about 10  
20 minutes, she just gave up; she said, "Well, drive me around," and so I did.  
21 [coughing] [laughter]  
22  
23Doug Rademacher: [15:41] [clicking] Do you have, uh – you went into trades as your  
24 profession, so what is your education [papers rustling] background?  
25  
26Mikel Lienhart: Well, I...  
27  
28Doug Rademacher: Doug..  
29  
30Mikel Lienhart: ...I...  
31  
32Doug Rademacher: ...Doug Rademacher.  
33  
34Mikel Lienhart: ...I graduated from high school and then, uh, worked on my own starting out  
35 as a car wiper in a car wash at, uh, 17 and I worked my up to the manager  
36 and, uh, he put me on salary, and I was starving to death. Even though I was  
37 the manager a the place and we had about 10 or 12 employees, it just did not  
38 pay, and I had an opportunity to get an apprenticeship, um, through Johnson  
39 Paint Company here in town when they were, uh, at that time the largest  
40 commercial industrial paint contractor in this area a the state. They had a  
41 lotta can-, contracts around the state and they needed an apprentice to travel.  
42 Um, for my first few years I only got back to Lansing a few weeks, and that  
43 was here, [coughing] uh, at this plant. But, uh – I, I'm sorry, where were  
44 we?  
45  
46Doug Rademacher: We were at education still.

1  
2Mikel Lienhart: Education. Uh, along with the apprenticeship, we had to go through a 3-year  
3 apprenticeship program, and ya had to go to – [sniffing] at that time, LCC  
4 was the, uh, contract for our program, which was pain-, paid for jointly by,  
5 uh, AFLCIO money contributed by the hourly workers and the contractors,  
6 and it was a 3-year program, 4 terms a year, and it had a graduated [tapping]  
7 raise program; every six months, you got a raise until you completed I think  
8 the 3 years and ya also had to put in 1,000 hours every 6 months to get that  
9 raise. Um, and I graduated from that and actually ended up teaching the  
10 class where they used to send their UAW members to down at LCC for a  
11 while. Um, a lot happened. Other...  
12  
13Doug Rademacher: Okay.  
14  
15Mikel Lienhart: ...other than the education classes that they've given in here, which are  
16 pretty much standard. [thumping]  
17  
18Doug Rademacher: [18:01] And Mike, do you have any military background?  
19  
20Mikel Lienhart: No.  
21  
22Doug Rademacher: Okay. [18:06] I wanted to ask you about – you worked outside, you came in  
23 and, and you said you already were familiar with the Plant, but could you  
24 share [papers rustling] your first job and...  
25  
26Mikel Lienhart: Well, that's real easy.  
27  
28Doug Rademacher: ...was it a pleasurable day for ya, Mike?  
29  
30Mikel Lienhart: It was a terrible [coughing] week. I set the, I set Building 15 on fire.  
31  
32Doreen Howard: Ah. [laughter]  
33  
34Doug Rademacher: Do tell. [laughter]  
35  
36Mikel Lienhart: They were in a rush. They had pulled me back from a job at, uh, Ann Arbor  
37 School of Architecture and Art to the Lansing area because they needed  
38 more bodies; they had to get Building 15 painted so that they could start  
39 getting the equipment in. And I had parked a large airless compressor with  
40 insta-dry paint on one a the landings out there for the stairways upstairs  
41 where the bathroom were at. At that time, the bathrooms weren't even in  
42 yet; it was just all an open area. And, uh, break times were always very  
43 tightly regulated; at, you didn't stop until 10:00 and you sat down for 10  
44 minutes in your designated area and then you got back up and went at it.  
45

1 So when 10:00 rolled around, everybody just dropped whatever they, they  
2 were doing and rushed to get to their break area so that they could have a  
3 cup a coffee, and one a the guys threw a hot torch across the machine and  
4 left it laying there because it wasn't supposed to be there, and the machine  
5 went up while we were on break. Um, it was so hot it actually melted the,  
6 the aluminum cooling fence on the airless machine. Um, so it wasn't a real  
7 pleasurable experience here. I got shipped out back to Ann Arbor the next  
8 day. [laughter] Uh, I understand that there were a lotta guys that were really  
9 happy about it because they made a lotta overtime that weekend repainting  
10 all a the smoke damage in the area. [laughter] So that was my first  
11 experience in this plant.  
12  
13 Linda Johnson: [20:08] About when was that?  
14  
15 Mikel Lienhart: Oh geez, that woulda been in the early '70s; '73 or four. '72, three, or four,  
16 right around in there.  
17  
18 Cheryl McQuaid: [20:17] Oh so that happened while you were a contract here.  
19  
20 Mikel Lienhart: Mm-hm.  
21  
22 Cheryl McQuaid: And when you hired in – I'm sorry, Cheryl McQuaid. [20:26] When you  
23 hired in – in '85, was it?  
24  
25 Mikel Lienhart: Yes.  
26  
27 Cheryl McQuaid: What job did they give you at that point?  
28  
29 Mikel Lienhart: A Maintenance Painter. Uh, mostly it was just small jobs, small projects;  
30 painting ramps, platforms, the stripes on the floors, occasionally an office.  
31 Um, I'd never been real big on glass glazing and that was something I had to  
32 learn because somebody was always puttin' their foot through a window or  
33 a door [thumping] or things here. Um, even that's changed a lot; there isn't  
34 much in the way a glass left around the Plant. Back then, they were still  
35 changing all of it over and, uh, a lotta the windows were puttied into place.  
36 Um, those have been replaced by unbreakable fiberglass and things like that  
37 wherever they had a problem, so that's pretty much died away too.  
38  
39 Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
40  
41 Doreen Howard: [21:21] Um, when you first hired in, being that you were a contractor at one  
42 point and then hired in here, um, how did the other Painters that were  
43 already GM, how d-, wha-, how did they recept you, wha-, in, eh...  
44  
45 Mikel Lienhart: Half the crew was from the same place I was.  
46

1Doreen Howard: Oh, okay.

2

3Mikel Lienhart: Um, back in '84 and '85, they cleaned out half the executive board for our  
4 local union; I used to be a trustee there. Uh, all of us saw the handwriting on  
5 the wall and figured out real fast that the money was going the other way  
6 and with the international agreements there wasn't a real big incentive to  
7 stay out there. So a lot of us put in our, in our applications. But I came in  
8 here and I wor-, ended up working with a lotta the guys – electricians,  
9 plumbers, iron workers, painters, carpenters – that I had worked with on the  
10 outside. Uh, there was a little bit a resentment from some a the guys that  
11 were in here because they had never been through an apprenticeship, uh, had  
12 always figured that, "If I have enough seniority, I can apply for this job and  
13 I can get it because I was a line worker here long enough." Uh, that caused a  
14 little bit a grief too when you would be doing something that they didn't  
15 know how to do or it was a new way of doing things to them.

16

17 It was the same way we'd always done things, and they were simple things  
18 like when you went into a covering area to spray it. They would spend a day  
19 or two taping the area off and covering it all up very carefully, and we came  
20 in and we were just flabbergasted. It's like, "You don't do that. Ya walk in,  
21 ya grab a staple gun or a stapler out from some-, borrow a stapler from  
22 someone's office, ya throw a sheet a plastic over it, and ya pop a couple  
23 staples on it." Um, they were not accustomed to working like that and doing  
24 things on a large scale [sniffing] 'cause they had always been given small  
25 maintenance jobs, go here and there, these little items and p-, and that was a  
26 big adjustment for me to have a dozen little tiny jobs to do, and very often  
27 ya had to wait until people were, were outta your way.

28

29 Uh, another big adjustment was having to work around production workers.  
30 It wasn't allowed. You weren't allowed to get in their way in any way,  
31 shape, or form, whereas before when I had been in the plants as a GM, as a  
32 GM contractor, everything was cleared outta your way and, and it was 100%  
33 production. You came in and you got it done on the weekend and you didn't  
34 have a choice about it. Uh, it wasn't unusual when you were on the outside  
35 to be hooked up to a 55-gallon barrel and ya had one guy runnin' around just  
36 changin' barrels all day long where as much as two barrels a day were put  
37 on by one man. You had a backup crew to keep things going, but [clicking]  
38 that was not the case when I came in here. It was a little hard to get used to  
39 walkin' around with a little bucket and a little brush sometimes.

40

41Cheryl McQuaid: Mike Fleming.

42

43Michael Fleming: [24:44] Um, Mike, can you talk about some a the health and safety, uh,  
44 precautions that you had to [coughing] [tapping] follow within your  
45 particular job? Any real serious health, health or safety violations that y-  
46 have you seen since you've been here that have occurred? Uh.

1  
2 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah. Yeah, I can. Uh, one in particular that changed the way they do  
3 business, uh, I had my lungs burned.  
4  
5 Doreen Howard: Mm.  
6  
7 Mikel Lienhart: Uh, [thumping] they had me working alone because [background noises]  
8 Painters crew had gotten down so low there were only a couple of us per  
9 shift, and I had to go in and spray a bathroom and somebody had used a  
10 different material, an outside contractor had used a different mir-, material  
11 that reacted with mine and burned the cartridges out of the mask before I  
12 could even smell it, and by the time I could, it, it numbed my nose. Ended  
13 up being shipped out in a, uh, ambulance, seein' rainbows and laughin' and  
14 gigglin', and [laughter] I was pretty goofy for a while, but, uh, they've  
15 changed the way they do things for that, uh, especially with confined spaces.  
16 [sniffing]  
17  
18 Uh, I know that we had a confined space accident in, in here that 3 people  
19 were killed in. Um, that one always hit me real hard because I was the guy  
20 that put the original [hood 26:06] in the tank, and we had safety rules in  
21 place that were put in place by General Motors, even though I was an  
22 outside contractor in here, and they were far less stringent than they are  
23 now, but they were still in place, and it, it kinda shocked me to find out that  
24 a year or so after we turned the place over to them that they threw the rules  
25 out and gave that job to a, to the Production Supervisors, and they ignored  
26 those safety rules and they ended up killing some people in there. Um, I've  
27 seen that evolve in this plant, because I'm also on the ERP team and do  
28 confined space standbys, uh, into a pretty safe program where we watch  
29 over the guys pretty close as to what safety features are in place.  
30  
31 Michael Fleming: [26:57] Could you very briefly describe the area you're talking about? We –  
32 I think I understand what you're speaking, but some [inaudible 27:03].  
33  
34 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah, that was a, uh, paint sludge tank in the bottom of one a the spray  
35 booths on the north end of one a the tanks in the Paint Department. Um,  
36 when they originally built those, they had to be sandblasted down to bare  
37 metal and they had a chemical-resistant primer coat that went on, uh, a half-  
38 a-mil. thick and then it got a epoxy coal tar-type epoxy over that, um, and  
39 that was very caustic and very toxic, and we were required by General  
40 Motors to meter the tanks for good air, and then when we went in, because  
41 we were adding toxic materials to it, we had to wear a chemical [sniffing]  
42 cartridge mask underneath an air hood, uh, that fed us fresh air too [chair  
43 squeaking] to do that tank, and we had to keep tabs on it, uh, as to what was  
44 going on. Uh, at first, they want-, once it was all dry and they took it over  
45 and [sniffing] I don't think they realized the toxicity a the materials that they

1 were putting in there and they put three guys in there to paint it up; they  
2 died.  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: [28:26] [papers rustling] Mike – Marilyn Coulter – you said that you were  
5 part of the ERT. Could you tell us what that is and how long you’ve been  
6 doin’ it and what you do?  
7

8Mikel Lienhart: Uh, Emergency Response Team is what that is, and originally it was started  
9 pretty much as a fire, like, fire brigade where would answer the, uh, any fire  
10 calls or emergencies. Uh, I was on it since they first started it in this plant  
11 and I’ve been on it, with the exception of one year, uh, when I had some  
12 shoulder surgery during the, uh, last training class of the year, I wasn’t able  
13 to go so I was off of it for one year. Um, that’s even kind of evolved in the  
14 Plant too. Uh, originally we started out as firemen. We would even train by  
15 stacking cars up out in the parking lot over at, by the airport. We’d light  
16 fires and we’d go put the fires out, we’d go into, uh, enclosed areas and put  
17 out pans ignited with what they call heptane, and we’d work as teams to try  
18 to get that out, and back then we actually had more fires in the Plant and  
19 more problems with that. We had hydraulic robots, the place was greasy, it  
20 was dirty. It wasn’t unusual to drive by and see a couple a flames shootin’  
21 up out by the robots and you stop by [coughing] and you put it out with a  
22 fire extinguisher and call’m and told’m you put it out and they’d come and  
23 fill the fire extinguisher.  
24

25 Uh, they’ve gotten a lot better at [sniffing] regulating those kinda things in  
26 the Plant. It’s cleaner. There isn’t oil and grease left around; if it is, it’s  
27 cleaned up right away. We don’t have the combustion sources anymore s-,  
28 and, uh, [tapping] the training that’s required to maintain that level as a  
29 fireman got to be prohibitive, so General Motors didn’t want the liability, so  
30 they took away our fire coats and fire boots and fire hats and said we are  
31 now incipient-stage firemen, which means [papers rustling] basically if it’s a  
32 trash can and you can put it out with the hand fire extinguisher, we’re  
33 allowed to do that; other than that, we call the fire department. And we have  
34 since switched over to about 90% of our runs are medical, um, and we’re  
35 not doctors, so, uh, [tapping] basically we package and ship; we go get the  
36 guy and get him to Medical. How – [sighing] ya know, with everybody  
37 being older in the Plant too, a lot of the issues are we had people with chest  
38 pains or they, their arm hurts, and we’re not doctors, so we don’t question it;  
39 we just take’m to Medical and they decided if they’re to be shipped out,  
40 which they normally do.  
41

42Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming.  
43

44Michael Fleming: Uh, Mike, you talked about one a your worst days in here, and that would’ve  
45 [papers rustling] been when you realized that they had the fatality in the  
46 Paint Department. [31:30] Can you talk about and tell us about what

1 would've b-, been one a the best days that you have had in this plant, some a  
2 the good things that you [inaudible 31:39]?  
3  
4Mikel Lienhart: [sighing] Yeah. I gotta believe the best day I ever had in this plant was – ya  
5 know, I was goin' through a real low time in my life; I was going through a  
6 divorce, I had three kids I was tryin' to take care of, little ones, and, uh, I'd  
7 been outta the home that I'd grown up in and had no place to, uh, live, with  
8 three kids. I had my pickup truck and myself, and three kids. [clicking] And,  
9 and one diaper bag. Um, some a the other guys found out what's going on  
10 [clicking] and, uh – this is kinda tough, 'cause it, it, it really, uh, was a  
11 happy time. They found out about it and asked me to meet'm out front, and I  
12 didn't have any clothes for my kids, and they had gone out shopping and  
13 purchased seven boxes of new clothes for my kids.  
14  
15Doreen Howard: Oh.  
16  
17Mikel Lienhart: [Inaudible 32:52]. So, it, it kinda, it kinda chokes me up a little bit, ya  
18 know?  
19  
20Doug Rademacher: Oh, it's chokin' us up.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.  
23  
24Michael Fleming: Oh, no question.  
25  
26Marilyn Coulter: It does.  
27  
28Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 33:01] [clicking] [33:03] But you know, that kind of points to the  
29 spirit of Fisher Body, we feel. I, I don't know if you agree with that or not,  
30 but, uh, this, this building has those type of people in it. Wouldn't you  
31 agree?  
32  
33Mikel Lienhart: Yeah. Yeah. Sorry, it was, it was a real tough time in my life. It was just a  
34 ecstatic day.  
35  
36Cheryl McQuaid: Oh, that's okay.  
37  
38Doug Rademacher: We, we appreciate your [inaudible 33:23]...  
39  
40Cheryl McQuaid: Totally understand.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: Thank you for sharing.  
43  
44Doreen Howard: Mm-hm.  
45

1 Doug Rademacher: ...that, uh, memorable moment. So – Doug Rademacher. [33:32] Mike, so do  
2 you, do you consider your coworkers brothers and sisters?  
3

4 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah.  
5

6 Doug Rademacher: Can you talk about the comradery and the, and the fellowship you gained  
7 once you were able to stay in one place like Fisher Bo-, uh, the, the Fisher  
8 Plant and, uh, have you made some close friendships and has it carried over  
9 outside a the, the Plant?  
10

11 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah, I have. Um, before, I always moved around a lot. Um, in the type a  
12 work I was doing, there were only a few hundred of us, really, around the  
13 state that did that regularly, so you, uh – thank you – you, uh, always ran  
14 into the same guys again. You might not see'm again for 5, 6 years, ya  
15 know, ya might only see'm for a week or a day. Uh, here, it, it was a real  
16 adjustment to come here and see the same faces every day, and you got to  
17 know who, who was doing what, what was going on in their life. Uh, ya  
18 know, they actually [coughing] made plans for a weekend to go over to  
19 somebody's house for dinner, where that r-, really wasn't possible before I  
20 came here. So that was a, that was a big change for me, to see that.  
21

22 Doug Rademacher: [34:49] Mike, you shared that the people that you worked with stepped up  
23 and recognized a need for you.  
24

25 Mikel Lienhart: Uh-huh.  
26

27 Doug Rademacher: [34:56] Did, was there a time where you were able to reciprocate and see  
28 someone else in need that you were able to give back?  
29

30 Mikel Lienhart: Yes, but I'm not gonna go there.  
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
33

34 Mikel Lienhart: Um, one a the things that's really neat about this place is, uh, ya know,  
35 they'll have a board up for somebody's that's sick, but they don't care if you  
36 sign it or not; you put your [inaudible 35:20]. Um, it is a belief of my that,  
37 ya know, if you give something to somebody and you step up to the bat,  
38 take, say, "Look what I did," ya didn't it for them; you did it for yourself,  
39 and, uh, they don't make that necessary around here. You can do it for them.  
40 You don't have to, uh, ya know, make a big production about what I did.  
41 And, and that was one a the cool parts about what they did for me is they  
42 kept it quiet; nobody ever told anybody what was goin' on. That was a, I  
43 think, big change.  
44

45 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. Mike, you mentioned that when you would go out on the  
46 production floor and paint...

1  
2Mikel Lienhart: Mm-hm.  
3  
4Cheryl McQuaid: ...that it was hard to work; you were not allowed to be in the way of the  
5 production employees.  
6  
7Mikel Lienhart: Oh, not at all. [laughter]  
8  
9Cheryl McQuaid: [36:20] What kind of relationship did you have with the Line Workers? Did  
10 you have any relationship with them?  
11  
12Mikel Lienhart: Sometimes it was pretty rocky, because you had a job to get done, you had  
13 to, you had to have it done, and, uh, they didn't wanna smell your paint,  
14 they didn't wanna see you in the area, they didn't want you in their area. Uh,  
15 that was – there was a pretty big division there a lotta the times between  
16 Trades and the Production Workers. Uh, I don't think it's as strong [papers  
17 rustling] as it used to be, but I think their used to even be animosity, 'cause  
18 they would see us all the time sittin' down, havin' a cup a coffee while they  
19 were working. Well, most a the time we worked graveyard shift. When they  
20 went home, that's when we started and everything had to be back in place  
21 by the time they were back again, and they would come in the door and they  
22 would see us sittin' down again. Uh, I think that caused a little bit a friction.  
23 I don't think they completely understood what the other person's job was  
24 and what they had to do while they were gone.  
25  
26Cheryl McQuaid: [37:27] Do you – can you share any funny moments in this Plant, like  
27 pranks that you've seen played on people or that you've played...  
28  
29Mikel Lienhart: [Inaudible 37:37].  
30  
31Cheryl McQuaid: ...on people? Yeah? [laughter]  
32  
33Mikel Lienhart: I had one, the one that sticks out the most is we had this one supervisor that  
34 I won't name...  
35  
36Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter] Okay.  
37  
38Mikel Lienhart: ...he used to love to birddog his people by radio, and the first thing he would  
39 always ask is, "Where are ya?" 'Cause everything he wanted done was  
40 always an emergency whether it was or not, but he always made it that way  
41 and he always said, "Well, where are ya?" And, uh, I remember the answer  
42 coming back on the radio, said, "Well, I'm in the bathroom right now but  
43 it's okay because I'm thinking about you." [laughter] The radio went, for the  
44 first time, all night long the radio went silent for 5 minutes. Nobody was on  
45 that radio. [laughter] You know everybody was in the background laughing  
46 and chuckling because [laughter] this guy'd finally [been stung 38:27] and

1 maybe got a lesson not to be askin' where everybody's at all the time.  
2 [laughter]  
3  
4 Doreen Howard: That's good.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: So – Marilyn Coulter – Mike, you said that, um, when you were in your  
7 other, on your outside job, that you were active in your union there and, um,  
8 that you were a trustee. [38:46] Did you become active or – when you came  
9 here?  
10  
11 Mikel Lienhart: Nope. Not all. Um, a difference in the way they do things. Um, on the  
12 outside, hourly construction workers worked very closely with their  
13 contractors.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
16  
17 Mikel Lienhart: Most a your con-, contractors and your small contractors actually worked  
18 hourly at one time out there, which is a big difference here. Um, usually you  
19 end up working for a guy that knows nothing about your job or your history.  
20 Um, and out there, you did things for your trade, like the schooling was half  
21 paid for by an hourly deduction from your check.  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
24  
25 Mikel Lienhart: You paid for the next guy's training. You constantly adjusted your work to  
26 make it faster, more efficient, changed the equipment ya used.  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
29  
30 Mikel Lienhart: In there, that was – stagnated quite a bit.  
31  
32 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
33  
34 Mikel Lienhart: And I didn't exactly agree with the way management and labor got along. It  
35 was always seemed to me to be very adversarial in here. Um, I can  
36 remember working for a contractor on the outside, one in particular was a  
37 millionaire. If there was a problem out on a job, he came out and he stripped  
38 down to his t-shirt right along with the rest a the guys to solve the problem,  
39 on the job. Uh...  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
42  
43 Mikel Lienhart: ...here's another fun one. We were working in, uh, in the plant next door,  
44 and we had, uh, a 60-foot-high bay to paint, and we had to climb up another  
45 20 feet up above the crane to spray, and we walked picks through the steel  
46 to spray it, and it was hot; it was 95 degrees outside, so you can imagine

1 what it was inside that building, up on that ceiling. The boss didn't want us  
2 to come down 'cause he knew if he got us down there it'd take us forever to  
3 get back up there and, and we had to get this place done.  
4

5 One a the apprentices had, uh, tangled up 6 400-foot sections of 3,000 PSI  
6 line into a big ball of spaghetti underneath the crane when it was moving  
7 back and forth, and he was there, this was the owner of the company; like I  
8 say, a millionaire. He came up and he's working right along with us to get  
9 this ball a spaghetti high-pressure lines untangled while we were up there  
10 working so we didn't have to quit, and, uh, one a the guys took a bucket a  
11 ice water while he was bent over and his plumber's butt hanging out, poured  
12 the ice water on him from 40 foot up on the crane [laughter] and handed the  
13 bucket to me [laughter] just as he turned around to look. Uh, yeah, that –  
14 like I s-, those were some a the differences between we, the way we did  
15 businesses now side contractor and the way we did it in here, but those,  
16 those are some a the moments that came about in here.  
17

18Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
19

20Doreen Howard: [42:07] Um, has there been changes since you've been here in the way – and  
21 you talked about it started out you felt that it was very adversarial between,  
22 uh, Management and employee. Um, has that changed over time since the  
23 beginning?  
24

25Mikel Lienhart: I think it has. Uh, you don't see the guys being birddogged by their  
26 supervisor anymore. They're given more responsibility and say, "Hey, look,  
27 here's the job." I've had supervisors in recent years where [sniffing] I didn't  
28 even have to see them. I went in and pulled the paperwork off his desk and  
29 was allowed to combine the work in a fashion that was more efficient. If I  
30 had, uh, 10 yellow things to paint, for instance, on 10 different work orders,  
31 rather than give me a work order for this and the work order for that, I was  
32 allowed to go through the stack, pick out th-, all the ones that were alike so  
33 that I combined'm together and go do the job more efficiently. I think that a  
34 lotta the better supervisors caught onto that within the last few years and  
35 they've started letting us handle it. That coupled with the fact that a lot of  
36 our supervisors now have no experience in the Trades that they're handling,  
37 so they turned us loose and asked us what we want and what we need and,  
38 and they are more like a facilitator...  
39

40Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen...  
41

42Mikel Lienhart: ...rather than a, uh, boss that orders you to do something a specific way.  
43

44Doreen Howard: [43:49] Since you have [papers rustling] spent a lot of time in this facility,  
45 um, both as outside contractor and as a GM employee and working on

1 painting the building and stuff, um, what's your reaction to this building  
2 being demolished? How do you, how do you feel about that?  
3

4Mikel Lienhart: Well, I agree. It needs to come down. It's very inefficient. [coughing] Uh, so  
5 many things in here are a one-off; there's nothing like it around. You can't  
6 go out and buy a replacement part for some things just because nobody's  
7 used'm in 50 years, and every time you go into an area, it's done pretty  
8 much on a custom level because it isn't done anymore, you can't buy that  
9 item anymore, or ya can't go out and say, "I need 50 pieces a glass" and go  
10 out and put'm in any place you want in the building; you have to go out and  
11 measure each and every one. Uh, a doorknob, if we have to change a  
12 doorknob, each and every one is different than the one before. Um, there's  
13 too many things that aren't, aren't standard here.  
14

15Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
16

17Mikel Lienhart: It makes it a real maintenance nightmare to try to keep it up. And I can  
18 understand their wanting to combine trades and get to a smaller number in  
19 the new plant because they just aren't gonna need that many people to  
20 maintain that building like they would this one.  
21

22Cheryl McQuaid: Doug Rademacher.  
23

24Doug Rademacher: [45:37] Mike, you just shared some things about how we do – have done  
25 business in this building. Lansing was known, or is known as the Capital of  
26 Quality, and you just said there's many variations, and you've seen other  
27 facilities. How did Lansing, [laughter] how did Lansing become the Capital  
28 of Quality [inaudible 46:01]?  
29

30Mikel Lienhart: We had a, we had a name for it. This building right here was called Fort  
31 Lansing. They did things differently in this building than they did most of  
32 the other GM plants. Uh, right, uh, down to the, uh, Material Handlers in  
33 this building. Man, those guys go like hotdogs. You go to other plants and  
34 they're real laid back, and they sit on the truck and they'll move it in here  
35 very careful and they'll never scratch anything. You go into some a the  
36 other plants, there would be one yellow post for a guard post in front of an  
37 electrical box and that would be it for the whole building. In here, they've  
38 got iron and steel everywhere because those guys come crashin' through  
39 there and they're gonna get the job done and they're gonna get it done in a  
40 big hurry. It's, uh, it was just a different way of doing business here.  
41

42Doug Rademacher: [46:55] Can ya go any further on that? Is there, uh, a s-, is there a work ethic  
43 here? Is there something different...  
44

1 Mikel Lienhart: I, I think there was a work ethic here that I didn't see at other plants. Uh,  
2 give you like Orion for instance. It seemed like the guys there always  
3 planned ways to pad their job. Uh, featherbedding? Is that a good word?  
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 47:24].  
6

7 Mikel Lienhart: Um, I think we all know what featherbedding is. And sure, they were a little  
8 more adaptable. I think they had to be because the building was so  
9 mismatched everywhere, everything was different. Um, you also had a lotta  
10 people around here that had been here for a long time and they would stay in  
11 one area for a long time [clicking] and if you had something that would only  
12 break down once a year in that area, well the only guy that's gonna know  
13 how to fix that is the guy that's been there for a long time. Everybody else  
14 would stand around scratchin' their head tryin' to figure what to do and how  
15 [throat clearing] to do it and never seen it before. That didn't happen here.  
16 Um, most a the other plants you saw people checking around, moving  
17 around job to job, all over, all the time. Not here. Uh, you'd see a guy that  
18 all he ever did is maybe run an oven, but he ran that oven for 10 years.  
19 [tapping] That, that was quite different.  
20

21 Doug Rademacher: [48:28] Another thing about Lansing is they say they have a working  
22 relationship with the union. Do you see anything – uh, you were a union  
23 man all these years. What's your – what do you see of the connection  
24 between management and union in this facility?  
25

26 Mikel Lienhart: Something I thought was really unusual over here is, if I can go right on  
27 down to the grievance level on things, is rarely was a grievance put in on  
28 small items. Rather than put in a grievance, the Committeeman would go to  
29 the supervisor and see if he couldn't work somethin' out that was equitable  
30 for both people, and that I found quite surprising. Uh, it – somebody'd say,  
31 "Well, yeah, you kinda got screwed over on this deal. Can I pay ya a couple  
32 [months 49:22] just to make for it?" and it never went to the grievance level;  
33 it just was taken care of on a lower level that made everybody happy.  
34

35 I could give ya a for-instance. I was goin' down the escalator and, uh, this  
36 was one a the escalator that they shut down and replaced eventually out in  
37 the shipping area. Was leavin' work. The thing ate my shoe. I mean, it  
38 grabbed that shoe and it sucked it right in, and luckily I had low shoes on, I  
39 was able to pull my foot, and, uh, I went to the boss and I says, "Look,  
40 number one, you're gonna buy me a new pair a shoes. Number two, you're  
41 going to get that thing fixed." Safety Department came over and talked  
42 to'm, and the supervisor actually went in and, and [tapping] started arguing;  
43 "Look, we gotta shut this thing down. Everybody's gonna have to walk until  
44 we get this fixed, and we gotta get it fixed." And a few months later, it was  
45 shut down and repaired.  
46

1 Um, it's just a, a different way of – like I say, you're back working with  
2 management and the hourly people, they, they took care a that. They – I  
3 ended up – I had to get a new pair a shoes, but he paid me lunchbreaks till  
4 they felt that my shoes had been paid for. [laughter] And never made it to a  
5 paperwork-type situation with a grievance, and you'd a seen as a grievance  
6 at some a the other plan-, GM plants that I've been in.  
7

8Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
9

10Doreen Howard: [50:59] Um, earlier on you said you had some children. Um, are your  
11 children old enough that they may possibly work here?  
12

13Mikel Lienhart: Yes.  
14

15Doreen Howard: Do you have [inaudible 51:09]?  
16

17Mikel Lienhart: I have three children myself; I also have two step-children. Uh, I don't see  
18 any of them except for one that really wants to be a tradesman or work at the  
19 plants, and he's got his on the army first; he just turned 18. Uh, myself, I –  
20 my dad retired from General Motors. He was a Toolmaker at the main plant.  
21 Um, I have one brother that's was also a Toolmaker there. Uh, [thumping]  
22 and another brother that was a forklift driver.  
23

24Doreen Howard: So you have a very long...  
25

26Mikel Lienhart: Yeah.  
27

28Doreen Howard: ...heritage with GM.  
29

30Mikel Lienhart: Yeah, GM fed me when I was little guy too.  
31

32Doreen Howard: Mm.  
33

34Mikel Lienhart: Like I say, I was aware a the workings quite well, even back in the early  
35 '70s when I did not want to come here and the issue was pay. Um, the trades  
36 paid better even as an apprentice than they did in here back then.  
37

38Doreen Howard: Mm. Doreen Howard. [52:19] Um, you've been here a while, you've been  
39 other places, um, you're not sure if you're going to go to the new Delta  
40 plant. Um, the Skilled Trades people that, um, eventually be hired into  
41 General Motors, um, what words of wisdom could you offer anyone that  
42 would be interested in a skilled trade such as yours?  
43

44Mikel Lienhart: Mine? It's not going to exist. [laughter] It's not going to exist. I know I  
45 don't wanna go back to, uh, hangin' off buildings with a rope and climbin'  
46 around on steel anymore; I'm too old for that. Uh, like I did on the outside.

1 But uh, I'd be very leary of it, because most of the GM trades – and it isn't  
2 always that way in every plant – but, uh, like your Electricians, Plumbers,  
3 Pipefitters, if you were to go to work on the outside, you would be required  
4 a certain amount of training, a certain amount of time on the job, and  
5 working within GM to accomplish that is not good. Uh, you're not  
6 recognized anywhere else as a journeyman in that group or in that trade.  
7 Um, if you're an electrician here, you could be an electrician for 20 years,  
8 but they know on the outside that you may have spent most a that 20 years  
9 poundin' caps on welding robots and they don't want you. So if you really  
10 wanted to be a tradesman within GM or a tradesman period, ya know, I'd  
11 recommend you training somewhere else. 'Cause GM only trains  
12 specifically for GM jobs.  
13

14Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [54:18] Mike, is there anything you'd like to share with us  
15 that we've not asked?  
16

17Mikel Lienhart: Such as, uh?  
18

19Cheryl McQuaid: Anything at all that you'd like to be put in the history books.  
20

21Mikel Lienhart: [sighing] I, I guess I'd like to see a lotta the, the history, ya know, th-, of the  
22 way this place came to be. Uh, a lot of us within this plant don't even realize  
23 some a the things that went on in this plant, like the, uh, labor issues, like  
24 with [inaudible 55:04] when they had an explosion in the plants and th-, and  
25 we had guys die and it's never been answered as to why or what happened.  
26 Uh, those kinda things. I think those are all history issues that, ya know,  
27 people would be interested in finding out.  
28

29 Um, I – there's a lotta things that happened in GM plants that were very  
30 different in here that I think people should realize and it is their labor pool, I  
31 think GM led the way for all workers be on an equal footing, 'cause even  
32 though I was an outside contractor and I was union, everybody knew if you  
33 were the boss's son, you were gonna work and, uh, even if you weren't as  
34 good, and in here, it, it – you learned a different way of doing things. Ya  
35 know, y-, you learned that you had the same rights as the next guy and, um,  
36 I ended up, uh, I think in my years in the trades on the outside I only worked  
37 with 3 women the entire time I was out there, and, uh, coming in here, that  
38 was a real education. It's like, "Gee, I gotta be careful about the jokes that  
39 the guys tell [papers rustling] because, ya know, we've got other people here  
40 and other women and people would be offended by it."  
41

42 Um, so that – I, I think that General Motors has done a lot in, uh, worker's  
43 rights, in the way of establishing rules and ground rules. I think another  
44 thing that GM has done is, uh – especially since the '80s, late '70s and early  
45 '80s, uh, they've s-, they've set the pay scale [sniffing] for the area. Um, a  
46 lotta guys say, "Oh geez, they make all that money and look what they do,"

1 but they don't stop to realize that if we weren't makin' that much, they  
2 wouldn't be making that much.  
3  
4 Michael Fleming: Absolutely right.  
5  
6 Mikel Lienhart: Uh.  
7  
8 Michael Fleming: Absolutely – Mike Fleming. We do set the prevailing wage...  
9  
10 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah.  
11  
12 Michael Fleming: ...in every area we're in, and there's always someone that has to set that  
13 prevailing wage. I think some folk get it and some folk don't.  
14  
15 Mikel Lienhart: Yeah. But I, I, I think that that's been a big influence and I think [coughing]  
16 historically needs to be documents, because I don't think people understand  
17 how much money is made outside a GM through GM in this town. I know  
18 how much money I made. Sorry to say I bought a brand new Ford in 1979  
19 when I had a good year here, but GM paid for that Ford. Uh, ya know, I  
20 know that the scale would not have been that high for a local union out there  
21 had it not been for the fact that we had worked here in Lansing in the plants.  
22 Uh, a lotta the other locals were 3 and 4 dollars an hour lower than the, the  
23 Lansing local for a construction trade just because they didn't have GM  
24 plants here. Um, a lotta those extra pays I talked about earlier, those  
25 premium pays, those were put in place because we knew we [tapping] could  
26 get it from GM. Um, you went to the other [background movement] areas in  
27 the state and you didn't [papers rustling] get that.  
28  
29 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. [papers rustling] [58:57] Mike, [papers rustling], you  
30 keep saying "we." [papers rustling] Are you speaking of the union  
31 represented, represented bargained benefits?  
32  
33 Mikel Lienhart: Yes.  
34  
35 Doug Rademacher: Because...  
36  
37 Mikel Lienhart: Mm-hm.  
38  
39 Doug Rademacher: ...GM wasn't handing things out...  
40  
41 Mikel Lienhart: No.  
42  
43 Doug Rademacher: ...[inaudible 59:09].  
44  
45 Mikel Lienhart: No. [laughter] I think that that's, that's where a lotta the holdover from the,  
46 uh, old fashioned adversarial relationship came from. I, I do see that is

1 changing. I see that they, they realize [papers rustling] that, "Gee," ya know,  
2 "we can't beat'm so we better join'm and work together," and, uh, I've seen  
3 that, but. See when I first got here, I didn't see that and I [papers rustling]  
4 wanted no part of any union politics at that time because of that.  
5  
6Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
7  
8Doreen Howard: [59:42] Um, you touched base on a Ford that you had purchased early on  
9 before, um, when you were contract. Once you became a GM employee, did  
10 you purchase any of the vehicles that you ever were around that we made  
11 here...  
12  
13Mikel Lienhart: Ah... [sighing]  
14  
15Doreen Howard: ...in our facility or any other...  
16  
17Mikel Lienhart: Well...  
18  
19Doreen Howard: ...[inaudible 60:03]?  
20  
21Mikel Lienhart: ...3 days before I came to work here I purchased a brand new Ford truck,  
22 still had the sticker in the window. Um, that wasn't really well-accepted.  
23 Uh, I remember the orange [inaudible 60:18] [coughing] paint down the side  
24 of it when I went out get it [inaudible 60:21] [coughing]. Somebody in the  
25 M-, the Maintenance Department had caught, picked up on it, didn't like it  
26 either, and it hit it with one a the maintenance vehicles. Um, and they did,  
27 GM did pay to put a new door on it and a new mirror. [laughter] Um, but  
28 after that, I did buy GM cars.  
29  
30 Um, it was kinda sad to say that when I bought that truck, uh, I had always  
31 purchased a full-sized truck, six-cylinder, and the only option I ever got on  
32 my vehicles were an automatic because I drove 30,000, 35,000 hour-, miles  
33 a year on those vehicles because I had to travel around and I wore them out  
34 pretty quick and needed to watch expenses, and, um, even though I knew I  
35 was going to work for GM and would be eligible for a discount, Ford beat  
36 GM by \$1,000 for that same vehicle, so I bought the Ford. Um, since that  
37 time, the money's gone the other way, and I have shopped for Fords a  
38 couple a times 'cause I still buy a six-cylinder full-sized truck 'cause I like  
39 to have a truck around the house, but they've always been GM since then  
40 because they have beaten the price. I'm not that loyal to the company. Um, I  
41 do like to buy UAW products, but, ya know, price is the biggest factor on  
42 that.  
43  
44Cheryl McQuaid: Doreen Howard.  
45

1Doreen Howard: Um, I was wondering if there was any other questions that anybody wanted  
2 to ask of Mike before we wrap things up?  
3  
4Doug Rademacher: I'd just like to say it's a pleasure interviewing you, Mike.  
5  
6Mikel Lienhart: Thank you.  
7  
8Doug Rademacher: Thank you for sharing your, your story with us. [clicking]  
9  
10Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Mike.  
11  
12Marilyn Coulter: Thank you, Mike.  
13  
14Michael Fleming: Thank you, Mike. [recorder clicking]  
15  
16  
17/rt