

Interview of Art Luna

1
2
3
4Interviewer: Hi, I'm Doreen Howard. I'm with Lansing Fisher Body Oral History
5 Team. The date is August 11, 2005. The time is 9:55 a.m. The location is
6 Local 602, the office of Art Luna. Um, the reason that we are here today
7 is to interview Art for the history project. I will go around the room and
8 everyone can introduce themselves at this time.
9
10Mr. Luna: Hi, I'm Art Luna, President, UAW Local 602.
11
12John Fedewa: John Fedewa, part of the Fisher Body historical team.
13
14Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid
15
16Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith
17
18Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson
19
20Mike Fleming: Hi, I'm Mike Fleming. I am the civil rights chairperson for Local 602.
21
22Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter
23
24Doug Rademacher: And Doug Rademacher
25
26Interviewer: Okay. [1:14] Let's start with our biographical sheet on Art. Um, like I
27 said, we are speaking with Art Luna, Local 602 President. Um, just for
28 reference we need you to state your name and address.
29
30Mr. Luna: Art Luna, President Local 602, 2510 W. Michigan Avenue, Lansing,
31 Michigan 48917.
32
33Interviewer: Okay. [1:45] And your gender?
34
35Mr. Luna: I am a male.
36
37Interviewer: [1:48] National origin?
38
39Mr. Luna: I'm of Hispanic descent.
40
41Interviewer: [1:52] Educational background.
42
43Mr. Luna: I graduated high school; took two years of college.
44
45Interviewer: Okay. [1:58] Do you have any military service?
46
47Mr. Luna: I do not.

1Interviewer: [2:10] On your sheet, it shows that you have several organizations and
2 volunteer activities listed: United Way, Hospice, um, clothing bank,
3 Charlotte School Board blue ribbon campaign, Boys/Girls Club and
4 [Highfields 2:27], etc. Um, lets start out with your first day at Fisher
5 Body. [2:38] Could you tell me a little bit about the day that you hired in
6 and including your hire-in date?
7

8Mr. Luna: Okay, well the first day I hired in was May 18, 1981. Um, as anybody
9 would be going into a large facility like that, um, it is a scary day because
10 you want to make sure that you don't mess up. You want to be able to
11 work with whatever co-workers you have...and working with. So, I was
12 nervous. I was quite nervous. But it seems to be in that facility, going in,
13 everybody was cordial, polite and nice to me. You know when you're part
14 of the team is when they start playing practical jokes on you, so... The
15 first day was exciting but a little nerve wracking making sure I didn't mess
16 up so that I wouldn't have someone else doing my job for me.
17

18Interviewer: Yeah. [3:35] At that time, did they have new hire orientation programs for
19 the people coming in?
20

21Mr. Luna: Um, from my recollection... When I hired in, I went to the physical
22 process and then there was no orientation. They brought you in, gave you
23 a couple of days to work...to practice in what you're doing before they
24 released you to the job.
25

26Interviewer: Okay. [4:00] Tell me a bit about that very first day when you had to
27 actually start doing the physical work.
28

29Mr. Luna: Okay. First day, where I was in, I was in the body shop in a booth –
30 solder booth and uh, using a torch. You're heating up the job, taking the
31 primer off and putting the solder on to do the seams. Um, it wasn't a bad
32 job. It was a good job. You just had to know the right temperature for the
33 torch to flow that solder. And, you know, you'd work with three guys on
34 each side of the line. It was quiet enough... The torches were loud, so
35 you'd have to holler back and forth to communicate with them. But uh, it
36 was inside the booth so you could see everybody walking outside in the
37 walkways or the line coming and figure out metal finish. But, you know,
38 we were all a tight-knit group there.
39

40Interviewer: [5:01] How large is this booth? And you said how many people were in
41 there?
42

43Mr. Luna: It's approximately 12-foot wide by 60-foot long. And what would happen
44 is the car would come down the middle and uh, each person would have a
45 station of the car to do, whether it be the front header, the t-post or the
46 back seat. And um, so we all had our jobs, you know, if somebody got

1 behind, we'd help. But uh, you know, we always see each other, we were
2 in the same room, so to speak. So, we got along well.
3
4Interviewer: [5:37] Was there any protective clothing or anything like that that you had
5 to wear to do your job in that specific booth?
6
7Mr. Luna: Well you definitely had to have long-sleeves on; you had to... We wore,
8 uh, shop coats. We also wore, um... We didn't have to wear shields, but
9 safety glasses. And they recommended steel-toed boots because once a
10 solder fell and hit your toe, you wanted to protect yourself from that. And
11 uh, that was pretty much it. We had to scrape and make our own paddles,
12 you know, put the tread in the paddle that would secure the solder. So,
13 that was part of it as well.
14
15Interviewer: Okay. [6:22] And being a new hire and coming into a booth like that with
16 all the equipment and everything, um, was that a scary feeling or... What
17 was your personal feelings about that whole experience in something new
18 in that arena?
19
20Mr. Luna: It wasn't so much scary as I just didn't want to mess up, you know.
21 You've got that time span that you've got to be there everyday on time
22 and that type of thing. But it really wasn't scary as it was just wanting to
23 do it right so that nobody would have to do it for you.
24
25Interviewer: Okay. [7:04] You talked about the different types of protective clothing.
26 You had a term "shop coat". For those that may not know what that is,
27 can you describe what a shop coat is?
28
29Mr. Luna: A shop coat was a very thick, heavy coat you put on. It was quite thick,
30 like maybe three times the thickness of a pair of jeans; and it was pretty
31 much to protect you because you're working with metal. So, if your hand
32 or your arm rolled on the metal of the car it wouldn't cut it or cut you.
33 Um, you know, it's something that you button down so that you wouldn't
34 get solder splatter on your own clothes. So, it was just a protective
35 clothing for safety purposes.
36
37Interviewer: Okay. [7:57] What shift were you on?
38
39Mr. Luna: First, I started out on afternoons. So, you know... Started out in
40 afternoons... Trying to start a family/raise a family was kind of hard at
41 first. But you get used to it, especially when it comes to wanting to
42 provide for your family.
43
44Interviewer: [8:17] And then how long did it take before you were able to go to another
45 shift?
46

1Mr. Luna: Before I had the opportunity to go to day shift, I must have worked there,
2 I'd say 15 years.
3

4Interviewer: Wow, that's quite a long time to...
5

6Mr. Luna: Yeah, it was. And uh, you know, trying to get to the point where I could
7 at least go to my kids' sports activities or school activities, you know. It
8 was... I'd have to take a vacation day. But I could always depend on my
9 wife to secure the home front for that.
10

11Interviewer: So, you had a lot of outside help to make your work life a little easier and
12 your family life also.
13

14Mr. Luna: Yeah.
15

16Interviewer: [9:08] During your employment did you ever have any time where you
17 were laid off and did you have to deal with layoffs at any time?
18

19Mr. Luna: Well when I hired in in 1981, the first major layoff was, I believe, in the
20 '85, '86 timeframe. I signed up to work it. What our jobs when I signed
21 up to work was to go throughout the whole plant and tear the lightbulbs
22 off the lights and take the backing off and wash all them and put'm back
23 on.
24

25 Back then I had the work ethic that work was important in order to provide
26 for your family. So, instead of taking the layoff, I signed up to do that. I
27 was on dayshift at that point and time as well, to do that, during the layoff,
28 because there was no production going on. So, that was, that was okay.
29

30Interviewer: Okay. [10:08] During that changeover, um, what did you actually
31 physically do in the plant at that time; and for those who don't understand
32 what a changeover is, can you go into a little bit more detail about that?
33

34Mr. Luna: Well what a changeover is, is... It's a little bit different than it is now.
35 Back then in the 80's, a changeover was the model run would stop. And
36 between the time it stopped until the time it started, there would be model
37 changes – whether it would be a trim package, whether it would be a new
38 product line, uh, of the same [inaudible 10:47] model.
39

40 It was basically a time where people would be laid off so they could make
41 their necessary changes on – whether it be fixtures, whether it be bringing
42 material into the plant, those types of things, so that when the changeover
43 timeframe has ended, you could go back into building the product. It
44 would be a different style. Normally, it would be during the model
45 changeover, which would be... Like for example, from an '84 to an '85.
46

1Interviewer: Okay. [11:21] Did you ever have any kind of break in your seniority at
2 all? You said you were never laid off.
3

4Mr. Luna: No.
5

6Interviewer: [11:29] No? So, you didn't ever have to deal with anything in that arena?
7 From the time that you started to present, was there changes in wages or
8 any type of benefits that you received that would have significantly
9 impacted your life or your family?
10

11Mr. Luna: Well, you know, any change in benefit or wage system is because it had
12 been negotiated by the UAW. So, anytime anybody gets an increase or a
13 better benefit to their package, that's always a plus. It's always good to do
14 that because that means you're progressing. Well, times change, so do,
15 uh, benefit packages and wages. Um, yeah, I think it's important to do
16 that, but I also think that the reason that was done wasn't because the
17 generosity of the company, but it was because of the hard work of the
18 negotiation process with the UAW.
19

20Interviewer: [12:34] Talking about the UAW, um, when did you start becoming active
21 in your union and, and um, what do you see for the future as the president
22 of your local?
23

24Mr. Luna: I first got started with the local in 1983, when I was asked to be on the
25 reserves committee and work for the United Way campaign, uh, which I
26 was happy to do. I've always wanted to be involved. And then back in
27 '85, my name was put out for nomination for elections committee, which I
28 was, at that time, surprised that I was voted into the elections committee,
29 but that was good to do that.
30

31 At that same time, I was asked to be on the education committee, as well
32 as the workers comp and appointment committee. So, I got involved with
33 those two committees as well. And as I extended my career with the plant,
34 uh, the more I did in my local union knowing what they provided for me
35 and my family, the more I wanted to do. Through the years I've been
36 successful at becoming the cap chair for this local, the vice-president and
37 now have the honor of being the president.
38

39 Where do I go from here? There's a lot of things that we still need to be
40 successful and move forward with. One is to always striving to better
41 serve, better communicate with our members with what's going on now
42 and the history of the UAW 602, as well as Lansing Car Assembly fading
43 away.
44

45 We look towards Delta, Lansing's other township; and we're trying to
46 secure finalizing some things for a four-acre parcel out there, which the
47 plant is approximately eight miles away from here. I don't believe that we

1 can do our membership a service by not being closer to them. By being
2 eight miles away, we can't service them like we'd like to. So, we're
3 trying to finalize some property as well as look to...from the community –
4 not just the community but the membership and executive board –
5 direction on looking at building a new union hall out there.
6

7 That's something that isn't built too often anymore in this country,
8 unfortunately. But I think that would be a great accomplishment for this
9 local. I think it would be a great accomplishment for the executive board
10 and the administration of this [building 15:32] to move forward with.
11

12Interviewer: Okay. [15:39] You talked about several committees that you had been a
13 participant in over your UAW timespan. Could you elaborate a little more
14 on some of these committees and maybe what some of the functions were
15 of the different committees that you...?
16

17Mr. Luna: Well I started out on the elections committee and I looked at it as just
18 helping working on elections here at the hall, you know, whether it be
19 districts or whether it be the executive board – those types of elections. A
20 lot of that time, you know... When they had an election, you'd come in
21 and help run the election and count the ballots. That's pretty much it with
22 the elections committee.
23

24 The um, the other ones pertaining to community services... That was a big
25 one because during my time in the community service committee, you
26 know, we'd go out and build ramps for seniors and handicapped people.
27 You could see that they would greatly appreciate that. You do coat drives,
28 blood drives, um, Old Newsboys, Toys for Tots, those types of programs –
29 that you know you're doing good things for the community.
30

31 Unfortunately, not everybody works at a company that has a negotiate
32 contract that you have a good wage package and benefit package. So,
33 sometimes we take for granted what we have; and we see people that don't
34 have. And so, I thought that was a very useful committee to be on – to
35 know that we were trying to make a difference in somebody's life.
36

37 Um, education committee, um, that was basically... Back then the
38 chairman was Kevin Beard. I worked with Kevin Beard trying to come up
39 with educational programs. Unfortunately, I love my union, but I think
40 the two things that we don't do well enough that we need to continue to
41 strive for is to educate and communicate. That was a committee that, as a
42 member of that committee, you know, you gave your input, but the
43 direction was given by the chairman and the president of the local at that
44 time. So, is there room for improvement? There's always room for
45 improvement no matter what you do.
46

1 Um, the workers' comp unemployment committee, that was basically a
2 committee where you have workers' compensation issues as well as lay-
3 off issues – people get laid off. Jerry Taylor was the, uh, chair at that
4 time. He asked me to come on board and work with him. I learned a lot
5 from that pertaining to workers' comp issues, pertaining to unemployment
6 issues, to better ways to serve our members with those.
7

8 The other issues or the other committees that I've been on is, um, I was on
9 the civil rights committee for about two years. And um, I was on the –
10 like I said, I chaired the cab committee, which was out of our Local 602.
11 That position was to inform and educate the workforce on issues going on,
12 not just in Washington but here in Lansing; trying to have some type of
13 communicative relationship with those that didn't support our issues on
14 the republican side and keeping a good communication with those that did
15 on the democratic side. If I was to sit here and tell you my first love is
16 politics, that's what it is because I believe that's where all the decisions
17 are made. That's why it's so important that we stay involved with that.
18

19 But um, you know, those are the committees I've been on. It's a good
20 learning curve because you learn a lot – different sides of what's going on.
21 I think that's helped me mold myself to helping make decisions at this
22 level that benefit our membership.
23

24Interviewer: Would you like to take a break?

25
26Cheryl McQuaid: No.
27

28Interviewer: Cheryl says no. [Laughter] Okay. [20:22] I would like to know a little bit
29 more about your role as the president of the local; and if you could
30 describe what you feel is one of the most important contributions that you
31 have made personally to the UAW.
32

33Mr. Luna: The roles and responsibility under the Constitution of International Union
34 is to administer the hall. But I truly believe it goes deeper than that. I
35 think a part of that is the public relations that the president plays for this
36 local, not just within the walls of the plant of the local but out in the
37 communities. That means being accessible to the media; that means
38 attending every function possible; wearing the UAW wheel to let them
39 know the UAW is around; that means speaking engagements; that means
40 doing things with the democratic party and the processes that play into that
41 role. I think that's very important.
42

43 It's not just to promote the position of the president, it's to promote the
44 local and the membership. That's a very important part of this because not
45 one individual can do it alone: it's everybody working together. That's
46 what makes the UAW as successful as it's been all these years.
47

1 I guess the hardest part of this job is the commitment, um, of being away
2 from your family a lot. It's, uh...[Crying] Sorry guys. It's a commitment
3 of, uh, putting your family aside because you've got another family –
4 'cause you really do. And um, I take that very seriously, as a lot of other
5 members do as well. But you're out there a lot; you don't get to go with
6 your family here; or you plan a vacation, and something comes up, you
7 want to make sure that things are taken care of.

8
9 For example, my daughter could have gone... She went to Florida a
10 couple weeks ago to a national softball tournament. And uh, she'd never
11 been before and neither had my wife. I would have liked to have gone to
12 that, but unfortunately, I was directed by the regional director to take some
13 training. And unfortunately, when the regional director calls upon you to
14 do those types of things, uh, you need to be there, especially if somewhere
15 down the road it benefits the local – because, you know, you always want
16 to look out for what we may have a favor from the regional director; we
17 may have a favor from Richard Shumaker's office or something like that
18 because that... Whether that plays into politics or not, I think that's an
19 important part to know that we do, as a local, have something in our back
20 pocket if we need to use it.

21
22 That's probably the hardest part of this job. It isn't being in the limelight
23 all the time; it's taking complaints because, uh, the districts or the shop
24 committee isn't do their job. A lot of our members don't know the proper
25 protocol of where to go. I'm the first one they call when they don't get
26 their unemployment check, when they don't get their, uh, you know...
27 When a retiree wonders when they get their Bible – to simple things like
28 why do we have to pay taxes out to another township if our plant's not in
29 Delta township? You know, uh...

30
31 On a regular basis now, I'm having meetings with Joe Drolett from the
32 Delta Township staff. Until we made our endorsement, I had met various
33 times with the mayor's office on issues pertaining to GM; and I had met
34 with the governor's office four or five times in the last year.

35
36 These are things that a president does. Unfortunately, when there is a time
37 when the president needs to talk to somebody; and I started being better at
38 this – I called Doug – where any other... For example, the chairman has
39 his whole shop committee to go to. I don't have a whole lot of people that
40 I can go to; and I'm still trying to weed that out in my mind how to do that
41 and get the help. You can't do it all yourself because it's impossible.

42
43 But those are some of the roles that the president plays. But the most
44 important one is when the member or the retiree has a concern, if you need
45 to use the authority and the position to get it done, then we do.

1Interviewer: Mm-hm. [25:28] What do you feel is your most memorable moment as a
2 UAW member?
3

4Mr. Luna: Most memorable moment for me as a UAW member would probably be,
5 um... You would think it would be being elected to president; you would
6 think it would be the vice-president position; you would think it would be
7 the cap position. But to me, I think the most memorable moment would
8 be getting the Caesar Chavez Award, because of the fact that, you know...
9 I'm the chairmen of the Caesar Chavez Commission now. I've learned of
10 what he does, with the labor movement of the United Farm Workers when
11 he was alive; and he done that. And knowing his commitment he made
12 and put his own life on the line numerous times...and fast...and those
13 types of things, that to be... I guess just to be recognized that, uh, to get
14 that humanitarian award that made me proud to know that I'm doing
15 something that benefits people – that helps people.
16

17 I think that would probably be something that also gave me that much
18 more drive to continue to do what's right.
19

20Interviewer: [27:12] And the Caesar Chavez Award, is that something that is, um,
21 given out on an annual basis or...? Could you describe how often they
22 give that and the criteria or any of the background on what the award is
23 and what it represents?
24

25Mr. Luna: Um, the Cesar Chavez Humanitarian Award was an award that was
26 developed by the civil rights committee here at Local 602. I believe that,
27 uh, they've had 13 of these programs on a yearly basis...once a year. And
28 the award was pretty much a recognition of the service that was provided,
29 not just, uh, in the way that Cesar Chavez would like to see it done, but the
30 way of the actual recipient of the award to serve the membership.
31

32 The civil rights committee had, uh, decided to do that as a humanitarian
33 award. That is an award that is given by your peers. They must have felt
34 that, uh, I was, I done a good job to offer me that opportunity – to give me
35 that award. I thought that was very special, you know. It's something
36 that, um, um, my family came to; something that allowed the
37 Hispanic/Latino community come too. It was just nice to know that
38 sometimes when you do things out there and you don't know if it's the
39 right thing, or you feel it's the right thing but you don't know, you never
40 know until you're recognized.
41

42Interviewer: That's very nice. I want to go back and talk a little bit more about family.
43 You talked... The big importance of family, not only your own family, but
44 the family of the membership... [29:30] Give me some idea of what that
45 family life is like inside the plant. What's some of the culture of the
46 plant? Why would you consider employees as family?
47

1Mr. Luna:

Okay, well first of all, you're probably in the plant working next to somebody more than you see somebody in your everyday family life... because of kids going to school, the wife/spouse working. I have to do my chores; the spouse have to do their chores...those types of things. The reason that I believe in the plant that you have a family is because you see them just as much or even more than you do your own.

With that in mind, you know, you get to become real close and have a lot of friends and have tight relationships inside that plant. We always hear about when retirees retire, they don't miss the plant, but they miss the people. So, you know, me sitting next to John or working with John and Don every day of the week...five days a week, six days a week, you know, 300-something days a year, you know, you grow that tightness and that bond. If you've got a problem at home, you can share it with your co-worker to... Maybe they've been in the same situation. They share their thoughts with you; you share your thoughts with them and, you know... You know when their birthday is; you know when their anniversary is and visa-versa.

You get to a relationship where you create bonds. Sometimes after work you go out and have a beer with somebody; or you decide to have a cookout and invite their family over. That's what I mean by this is a second family. This is my second family because... We have a lot of great people in our local. They are fantastic. While they have a different cultural way of themselves than myself, that's not the point. The point is that we're here to help each other, to work together and... There's always a learning curve. Anytime we can get in and start communicating better, working better, it builds the foundation with the local, which is what it was made for.

31Interviewer:

Okay. [32:04] Um, as far as the culture of the workplace, was there, um, dinners or other activities within the group? You said you worked in the body shop on the nightshift. What were some of the activities that you did while you on the nightshift that helped some of the comradery and family bonding that you are describing?

37Mr. Luna:

A lot of times we would get together; and basically, we'd order together our lunches, like pizzas through DeLuca's and stuff like that. But the bigger part of that was during the holiday time. The holiday time, when most of the time it was supposed to be with family. Well, you know, everybody would bring in a dish to pass...in their department. Normally, the management or the supervisor team would purchase the meat. And just doing that...

Once in a while we'd have somebody bring in breakfast burritos, that type of thing...and they'd share'm. We knew it was a cost to them so people would throw money in. Normally, most of the time, those individuals

1 wouldn't take the money because, you know, you don't charge your child
2 for renting a room from you because it's your child. I think those
3 festivities that we had of dinners... Sometimes birthdays we'd bring cakes
4 and celebrate somebody's birthday. Those were times that you could tell
5 that, hey this group really means a lot to each other because they wouldn't
6 be doing that otherwise.
7
8 As far as the culture part of that is during the dinners and stuff, you'd
9 have... Somebody would bring in a dish from their ethnic background,
10 whether it be Hispanic, whether it be soul food, whether it be Asian food.
11 There was time to sample those when you don't normally get that
12 opportunity to do that. So, that was a, that was a part of the whole festival
13 thing of gathering for dinners, gathering for celebrations of birthday
14 parties, as well as celebrations of accomplishments that the plant has done.
15
16 Interviewer: [34:33] What's your most memorable moment at Fisher Body – in the
17 plant?
18
19 Mr. Luna: My most memorable moment at Fisher Body as an employee...
20
21 Interviewer: Yep.
22
23 Mr. Luna: It probably would be the first prank that was played on me because
24 normally, in my opinion, you're not part of the team yet until you've been
25 pranked or had a prank played on. Like I said, I started out in the torch –
26 in the solder booth. You had these torches that flames shoot out two feet.
27 It's easy for somebody... With all the torch noise going on, it's easy for
28 somebody to stand next to you with a torch down by your feet, you know;
29 and, you get hot feet that way. You get a good hot foot.
30
31 Another situation would be where you always had to heat the primer and
32 then wipe it down. Well, since I was at the end of the booth, a lot of guys
33 would put the rags in the car and [inaudible 35:46], so, by the time they
34 got down to me they were smoking. Well, you know, that was a good
35 prank that was played; but we didn't have a... Between the solder booth
36 and the grinder booth there was a gap that was outside the booth; and we
37 didn't ever want them rags to go out there and, and show management that
38 they were in there playing around with'm. But... So, it was my job to take
39 that rag out and try to dispose of it. And if you put smoke in it so that, uh,
40 management wouldn't know they was doing that inside the booth.
41
42 Interviewer: Okay, that's great. [36:26] What type of pranks did you pull on other
43 people?
44
45 Mr. Luna: Um, the most memorable one... I don't know if you all remember a
46 gentleman named Spider Man in the body shop. He was an older
47 gentleman that worked sanitation. The reason they called him Spider Man

1 is because he had a hat on and had a rubber spider on it. Well, he would
2 always come by and collect all the empty cans, you know, so that he could
3 have some extra money.
4
5 Well, we decided to put a couple cans out and put some fish line on'm;
6 and get around the corner, so when he'd bend down to pick the can up,
7 we'd pull the wire so he couldn't get the can, you know. Was that mean?
8 It was probably mean, but uh... [Laughter from the crowd] It was a nice
9 prank to play. You know, I'd do the same as the others, cause once we'd
10 learn one job, we'd learn the others in booths. So, I'd pull the same
11 pranks as far as the torturing of the toe or the burning of the rag; and have
12 it go down the line. But, uh...
13
14 Normally, I didn't do that. My philosophy is don't do something you
15 wouldn't want done to you. And although I got a lot of the guys
16 [inaudible 37:41], I was there to do a job.
17
18 Interviewer: [37:45] Tell me a little bit about the comradery amongst your group in the
19 solder booth.
20
21 Mr. Luna: Um, during the, uh, you know, everybody would, uh... We'd have to
22 make our own paddles, so we'd take turns making each other's paddles.
23 We got to the point where we knew what everybody liked and how they
24 liked their paddle. But uh, you know, more of the comradery was outside
25 of the plant during the union picnics. We'd play softball as a team. We'd
26 gotten into some other tournaments outside of just the picnic. We'd play
27 in these tournaments; and that was good to just get away, you know, to
28 play them. Naturally, between games there would be beverages and stuff;
29 but there would also be family members there, so we could meet each
30 other's family and get to know them as well.
31
32 Interviewer: Okay. [38:47] Talking about family, um, do you have any other family
33 members that are working in the plant or are part of General Motors or
34 union activities like you're involved in?
35
36 Mr. Luna: Um, when I was a younger kid, we'd drive by the plant probably every
37 other Sunday. My grandparents lived on [inaudible 39:12] Street, just
38 down on the west side of the neighborhood. So, I'd always see that plant.
39 My grandfather worked in this facility. Um, I'm a third generation GM
40 employee. My grandfather worked here, my father worked in the chassis
41 side and paint repair all his life; and I'm a third generation, like I said.
42
43 I think what, uh, what made it special working here is that my grandfather
44 worked here. Um, as far as any other members of my family involved in
45 the union aspect of it, they come to the picnic. I try bringing my wife to a
46 lot of functions. Unfortunately, she doesn't like it when I come into a
47 room and... I like shaking hands and talking to people. "Politic" they call

1 it. And uh, sometimes when I'm doing that, I forget where she's at. So,
2 she's sometimes left in the corner. So, we have our differences there. But
3 um, more so, she's very supportive. It's not always the part of a spouse or
4 family to be at every function. I think it's more so the support of allowing
5 me to be as flexible as I am of my time, to not be home. And they
6 understand the importance of the union functions and everything I'm
7 involved in. They understand; and uh, my wife has been the foundation of
8 that whole process.
9

10Interviewer: [40:57] I'd like to go back and touch on the generations that have worked
11 at the plant. Do you think that affected...? How do you think that affected
12 you as far as, um, your plans for hiring in here? Did that affect your
13 reasons for wanting to hire in? Were you on a different path before hiring
14 in here? And then because of generational family ties to the plant, that
15 drew you to come here to look for employment; or is it because you were
16 riding your bike up and down and you just loved the plant, the way it
17 looked and wanted to get in there and hear those machines and work with
18 some of the machinery in there? Could you kind of go into a little bit
19 more about that?
20

21Mr. Luna: Um, when I first got out of high school, I hired into the SPO plant – at
22 Local 1753. Sixty-two days later, I got fired because I had an idea... The
23 department I worked in was called Joe's Junkyard; and that's where all the
24 trucks would bring in the parts that weren't being used. We'd have to
25 separate them and put 'em in bins. The reason why I got fired was because I
26 had an idea that I took to the supervisor pertaining to how to do it where it
27 wouldn't be so much work on the employees doing it; but yet, it would
28 help them out as well. And uh, I'd go into the office and approach them
29 on it; and uh, some verbal discussion took place; and before I left the
30 office I was fired. So, but um... That was my first experience with GM.
31

32 But I know that with my father working in the [inaudible 43:09] factory in
33 Grand Ledge and got hired into General Motors at the chassis side, um,
34 that uh, before that, we'd always have to work during school break,
35 summer break in the fields, picking pickles, topping onions, doing apples,
36 those types of things. That's how we raised our monies as kids to buy
37 school clothes. And as he moved into General Motors and got the good
38 wages and got the good benefit package that the UAW provided, um, it
39 was more of an issue of, well, you know, I need to provide for my family
40 once I decide to get married and stuff like that.
41

42 So, I really didn't hire into GM until after I was married, uh, about four
43 years later. Before that, I worked at General Tire in Ionia, which was
44 stamping plastic fiberglass parts for GMC trucks. From there, I moved
45 and was hired into Hastings Manufacturing, where I put together oil filters
46 for product; and then I went into the foundry and poured the air filter steel
47 casings.

1 Um, and as soon as, uh... I applied at GM, knowing the possibility of that
2 not happening because you've always heard once you get fired from GM
3 once, you never come back. Well, I took that chance and applied. When
4 they interviewed me, it pertained to why I got fired. I told them. Next
5 day, they called me and told me to come in. It was never a matter of
6 whether I wanted to work or not; it was a matter of trying to better my
7 quality of living for my family.
8
9Interviewer: Alright. We'll take a break.
10
11/al