

**Andy Palermino discusses his career in General Motors
and specifically the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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Cheryl McQuaid: This is Cheryl McQuaid with Lansing Fisher Body Historical team. We are at the 602 UAW Union Hall and preparing to interview Andy Palermino. It is December 5, 2005, at approximately 11 a.m., uh, 11:20 a.m. Um, first, we'll go around the room and introduce everybody in the room.

Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.

Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.

John Fedewa: John Fedewa.

Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.

Michael Fleming: And Michael Fleming.

Cheryl McQuaid: Andy...

Andy Palermino: Andy.

Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter] [0:33] Andy, would you please state your name and spell your last name for us please?

Andy Palermino: First name Andy, last name Palermino, like a horse – P-A-L-E-R-M-I-N-O.

Cheryl McQuaid: [0:44] And Andy, what...are you married? Do you have children?

Andy Palermino: I'm not married anymore but I, I have my ex in my, living with me with my, ah, 4-year-old adopted daughter.

Cheryl McQuaid: [0:56] And...do you have any military service?

Andy Palermino: Uh, 1 day. In 1967, I got drafted, took my physical and I was still in college, so I had to appeal the draft. It cost me 300 bucks. That was well spent. [laughter]

Cheryl McQuaid: [1:16] And could you give us a little bit about your educational background?

Andy Palermino: Uh, went to, went to high school in Amityville. Went to Penn State in the 60s, ah, got a degree in architecture, then went back to school after I was

1 workin' for the state of Pennsylvania and got a master's in planning and
2 management. That was 100 years ago. That was in early 1971, '72.
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing] [1:42] And what is your address?
5
6Andy Palermino: 5305 River Ridge Drive, Lansing, Michigan, 48917.
7
8Michael Fleming: Uh, Mike Fleming, Andy. [1:51] What is your national origin? Your
9 national origin?
10
11Andy Palermino: Oh...
12
13Michael Fleming: What, what, what, uh, what national origin are you?
14
15Andy Palermino: Oh, my parents – from Italy.
16
17Michael Fleming: And you would...
18
19Andy Palermino: I...
20
21Michael Fleming: ...consider yourself an Italian?
22
23Andy Palermino: Nah, I'm American. No, I'm an Italian American.
24
25Michael Fleming: Italian Amer-?
26
27Andy Palermino: A Wop. [laughter] I grew up in Brooklyn.
28
29Michael Fleming: [Inaudible 2:41].
30
31Andy Palermino: That was another country.
32
33Michael Fleming: Is there...
34
35Andy Palermino: I'm actually an, an illegal alien. [laughter]
36
37Michael Fleming: [2:20] So, um, did you grow up in an Italian neighborhood?
38
39Andy Palermino: No, as a matter of fact, I didn't. I grew up in a, a -- You know, we talk
40 about discrimination. I was a little kid. I grew up in, ah, a neighborhood
41 where there was the Jewish Orthodox? I don't know if you know what
42 those people like, they l..., they got the tuft of hair hangin' and they were,
43 yeah, that was a tough place to live. And you weren't allowed to walk
44 through their neighborhood. If you did, they beat you up.
45
46Michael Fleming: [laughter]

1
2Andy Palermino: That was fun. That was, I moved out of Brooklyn when I was 12 and I
3 moved to Amityville out, out in Long Island.
4
5Cheryl McQuaid: [2:54] Andy, why did you come to GM?
6
7Andy Palermino: Why? I, back in 1976, early '77, I had my own construction business in
8 New Jersey and there was a, a job listed where they wanted a press moved
9 from a rail car into the plant, so I had a friend of mine that had a big crane
10 so we bid on the job. We were the only ones that bid on it and, ah, we
11 took the building siding off, got the press off the rail car and moved it
12 almost into the building, and then I, in checking to make sure we had it in
13 the right position, I took a 25-foot tape off my belt. I went into the plant
14 and looked at the foundation and the foundation and the press didn't
15 match. I guess what happened, the GM people had gotten the wrong
16 drawings and the plant people built the foundation and then I was bringin'
17 the press in and we had to stop the job and then take the press back
18 outside, close the wall, and wait about 2 months to go back and do the job
19 right. Sounds familiar.
20
21Cheryl McQuaid: Mm [laughter]
22
23Andy Palermino: And they said to me at the time, "We need some people like you to know
24 what they're doin'." And I'm thinkin', "What do I know what I'm doin'?" I
25 just took out a 25-foot tape and just was checkin' the distances between
26 the, ah, the foundation bolts...
27
28Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
29
30Andy Palermino: ...to find out exactly how to put it in and it was wrong and, so they end up
31 offering me a job. And I took it 'cause I was in construction and, when you
32 work construction, especially, uh, I was workin' in New Jersey. I was
33 workin' 7 days, 7 and 8 days a week just about. I ate home with my family
34 once or twice a week and it really, uh, was a pain. And then when I got
35 the job with GM, it was like dyin' and goin' to heaven. But that plant was
36 New Departure-Hyatt Bearing. I worked there from late '76 to '81 and
37 then quit 'cause the plant closed. They were sel-, they basically made
38 wheel bearings for all the GM, actually GM, Ford, and Chrysler, and at
39 that time, the Japanese were dumping bearings into this country and Roger
40 Smith had just taken over General Motors and, in his wisdom, he closed
41 our plant. Right after that, when the plant eventually, it was sold to
42 employees for a 2-year period. And then after that, the plant went out of
43 business and now, today, there is a 9-hole golf course on the site. So I left
44 GM and I came to Lansing, working for a different company. And then I
45 came to Oldsmobile back in early, or late '82 lookin' for work for the new,
46 the other company I was working for.

1 And when they found out I had worked at GM, they offered me a job and I
2 came back. So I had a break of about 1½ years between, so I worked in
3 Lansing ever since, uh, late '82 or late '83. I worked at plant 1 until about
4 the early '90s and came to the body plant in early '90, '91, '92 and, uh, of
5 course, up until now they closed.
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: [6:03] Do you remember your first day walkin' in to Fisher Body plant and
8 some of your feelings about that?
9
10Andy Palermino: Well it's funny because I will, I'll never forget the first day I walked into
11 the plant in New Jersey.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
14
15Andy Palermino: During the war, WW II that is, the plant in New Jersey uh, was, uh, had
16 uh, presses or equipment that was makin' shells for the war and, when I
17 drove up to the plant, it had machine gun nests on the 4 corners with wire.
18 I thought it was Rahway State Prison.
19
20Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
21
22Andy Palermino: And it was, it said, "New Departure-Hyatt Division of General Motors."
23 Now, I worked at plant 1 when I came to Lansing for about 10 or 11 years
24 and I, of course, I always drove by here 'cause I live right near Fisher
25 Body, so I used to always see this plant. And then, I thought...
26 [background noise]...it was, I thought the plant was old but the plant in
27 New Jersey actually was even older, but, uh, I could tell from the
28 enthusiasm of the people that it was a, a great place to work. I'll never
29 forget when I first came here, uh, I was treated, I mean, people were very,
30 very nice to me. I originally came as a vacation replacement in
31 maintenance. What a horror show that was. I worked in different
32 departments every week and different shifts and I didn't know anybody
33 and I, I was totally lost. I even, uh, got lost in the plant and th-, I couldn't
34 find my way out. I was up in the grillage but...
35
36Cheryl McQuaid: You were vacation replacement. [7:39] What does that mean?
37
38Andy Palermino: Well, during the summer, they have supervisors go out in maintenance on
39 vacation, so you might 1 week, uh, be in paint and next week be in the
40 body shop, the next week be in trim. It would be on different shifts with
41 different supervisors and, uh, I was a total stranger. I, and, they didn't
42 have any kind of program where they kind of broke you in. You showed
43 up on Monday morning, that's it. You are on your own, pal. But since I've
44 worked for GM, I knew that's how they operated so I suffered through it
45 but, uh – you remember [Carl Gretsinger 8:14]?
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
2
3 Jerri Smith: Mm-hm.
4
5 Andy Palermino: He's the one that I was up in the grillage with and he worked here an-, and
6 we got lost. He had to ask one of the, uh, one of the, uh, guys in the plant
7 how to get out of there and they all laughed and I felt, Jesus, but – oh, I, I,
8 and, w-, w-, workin' in the plant, it was quite old but, of course over the
9 last several years, we redid the body shop and we made a ton of
10 improvements. It's unfortunate that they closed the plant, but, uh, it was
11 probably the best work experience I've had workin' at the body plant.
12 Better than in any place.
13
14 Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming...
15
16 Michael Fleming: Uh, Andy? You know, as you came in your first experience was vacation
17 replacement and which sent you all over the place. [8:52] How long was
18 it before you got your own department and where was that?
19
20 Andy Palermino: I worked just the summer of '92 in, and, no, it's, no, it might have been, it
21 was summer of '93 and, uh, I ended up, they decided to put me into
22 facilities because, with my background, I kn-, I could, I knew a lot about a
23 lot of, doin' a lot of things and, uh, they felt with all these, with
24 changeovers they were doing, we were movin' offices, they were movin'
25 the line, they were doin' a lot of stuff and they didn't have the manpower,
26 so they put me in that area and I stayed there ever since. Then, I became
27 the phone coordinator for the plant and then, I – how I got involved with
28 Cheryl, uh, when plant 1 was bein' demolished, they had millions of
29 dollars' worth of furniture that they were goin' to just demolish, you know,
30 s-, c-, knock the building down. We went there and I think we got – I
31 don't know if you guys remember the paint shop off-, not the paint shop,
32 oh yeah, the paint shop offices at work on the roof? The paint department
33 used to be fa, fragmented all over the plant. They, uh, the left hand didn't
34 know what the right hand was doin', so it made sense to consolidate
35 everybody in one place. and they said, "Well, where are we gonna find an
36 office?" I said, "Well, we'll put it out on the roof," and they all laughed.
37 We were havin' a meeting like we are now. "You can't put the office on
38 the roof." I said, "You dumb shits, you put the office there and you put a
39 roof over it, and now it's out of the way and it'll never have to be moved
40 again like you've been doin' over the years." So that's what we ended up
41 doin'.
42
43 And then Cheryl was workin' with me and we went to plant 1 and we, we,
44 we weren't really stealin' the furniture but they treated us like we were.
45 We'd get, collect the furniture. A lot of the furniture went into the

1 engineering offices, into the shop. There was a lot of the foreman
2 enclosures and a lot of the offices. We put furniture everywhere.
3 We probably picked up a couple of million dollars' worth of furniture...
4

5Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
6

7Andy Palermino: ...that would've been just thrown in the dumpsters. In fact, I think they're
8 doin' that now. They're tryin' to come up with, uh, tryin' to save money for
9 the new plant by just taking what they can out of plant 1, out of here,
10 right? Out of the body plant?
11

12Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing] Could be.
13

14Andy Palermino: I mean, I have no idea. But I remember when they were demolishing
15 plant 1, building 66 and 6-, not 66, 64, which was across the street. They
16 had the shops there. They had millions of dollars' worth of equipment, all
17 kinds of Vidmar benches and, uh, uh, all kinds of tools. They just left it
18 there. They wouldn't even let the people buy it and they just knocked it all
19 over. It was incredible.
20

21Cheryl McQuaid: [11:43] So when you were, when you first came over here and you were
22 doing the vacation replacement, did you work with skilled tradespeople?
23

24Andy Palermino: That's all I worked with, the skilled trades.
25

26Cheryl McQuaid: And you said that everybody was very nice to you. [11:56] Do you
27 remember any pranks or, um, do you remember anything special about the
28 people that you worked with?
29

30Andy Palermino: They were all crazy, actually. [laughter]
31

32Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
33

34Andy Palermino: No, I, no, uh, first of all, uh, when you're workin' in, in a, like in
35 engineering, of course, I always ran into a lot of guys that acted like they
36 knew what they were doing [bang] and they, uh, you know, and they
37 basically never asked anybody for input. I was never like that. I always,
38 'cause I, when I had my own business and I would sit down at a table, like
39 we are now, discussing doin' a job, I didn't tell the guys what to do. I said,
40 "Here's what we gotta do guys. Let's come up with the best way to do it,"
41 and everybody would have input in what we were doin' so that we'd come
42 up with the easiest way to do it. I never felt that you should demand to do
43 somethin' one way. Here's the job. Meanwhile, I didn't know what a lot
44 of, uh, uh, when I first got it, I wasn't sure what to do so I never would
45 ever tell anybody that 'cause I'd look like an idiot, so I would tell'm, "Hey,
46 I'm new. I need your help. What is it we gotta do?"

1
2 And, of course with vacation replacement, a lotta times at the body shop I
3 was carryin' radios and I remember when they would call up the C and M
4 line and I'd say A and B, 'cause that's how they had it on, in dispatch, and
5 was it, who was the guy, Harry Gray? No, Harry, he worked in, he was a
6 maintenance supervisor. I, I would lie and tell him I was somebody else
7 'cause he, "Who's this?" And I would, I, you know, I realized I didn't
8 know what I was doin', so I'd give him another name.
9
10 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
11
12 Andy Palermino: [laughter] And they'd say, they'd come up there, "Who are you?" I said,
13 "Aw, Jesus, I'm the maintenance supervisor." "Jesus Christ, you-, you're
14 not Harry, Harry Gray." Yeah, he worked in – I don't know if you guys,
15 you remember Harry?
16
17 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
18
19 Andy Palermino: Harry c-, came to work one day with his wife's Volkswagen.
20
21 Cheryl McQuaid: Uh-oh. [laughter]
22
23 Andy Palermino: And they turned it over.
24
25 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
26
27 Andy Palermino: He came in to work, he was all pissed off. He said, "Mother, m-, m-, m-."
28 I said, "Harry, you're driving a Volkswagen. I would've gone out there
29 and turned the goddamn thing over, you dork." [laughter] Yeah, he was,
30 he was somethin' else. But he actually worked here and lived in Detroit
31 and he used to, uh, drive every day back and forth. I don't know how he
32 did it. And I worked, you guys remember [Bishop Cadel 14:20]?
33
34 Doug Rademacher: Yeah.
35
36 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
37
38 Andy Palermino: Bishop was a good guy. He was one of the nicest supervisors. He was
39 more helpful than just about anybody. He bent over backwards to help ya
40 and that's how everybody was. So the skilled trades, I became friends
41 with a lot of these guys. In fact, I was actually f-, I had more friends that
42 were in the trades and worked in the sh-, in, you know, the regular hourly
43 people, than th-, the salaried 'cause a lot of the salaried people were dorks.
44 I would trust them as far as I could throw this table. [laughter] And it's
45 unfortunate that a lot of these people were like that.
46

1 But, when they came up with this idea to have uh, a, a subcontracting
2 review, they asked me, uh, the union guys wanted me to work with Dave
3 Karkau. The reason they, they did is 'cause they knew that I w-, was up
4 front and honest (I am bullshit) and when we were gonna, we were doin'
5 that building 28 job, we got a bid of, uh, \$350,000 to take out the stacker.
6 You remember we had that stacker? And, uh, clean up the site and fill in
7 the train well, which would have been, what, track 8?

8
9 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.

10
11 Andy Palermino: We filled that in with concrete and we got rid of the bridge? Well, I went
12 before Management and I said, "You know what? The shop can do that
13 job a lot cheaper than 350 grand." "Aw, they cannot." I said, "What do
14 mean? I-, I'll tell you what, I'll run the job. I'll get with the shop and we'll
15 review it. We ended up running the whole job. We did it. We hired a, a
16 guy to come in with a crane and take the, that stacker out. Well, what do
17 you call it, the, yeah, it was a stacker. This thing, the coal pile th-, that c-,
18 ...

19
20 Cheryl McQuaid: The coal chute.

21
22 Andy Palermino: ...the coal conveyor. Anyway, the shop did the job. We did it for
23 \$80,000. That included all their hours and the materials and so we
24 actually, working together, saved the company money. You know what
25 happened? They got pissed at me! Ed Grant said, "What the hell you
26 doin' this for? Now the shop's gonna think they can do everything cheaper
27 than everybody else." I said, "Wait a minute. These guys are sittin' in the
28 plant. They can, a lot of times, these vendors that come in here are rippin'
29 General Motors off. They laugh all the way to the bank. If we can review
30 a job and see that we can do it cheaper, we should." And we did. But, uh,
31 it was an experience workin' here, that's for sure. But the biggest problem
32 is, uh, I had a friend who worked at Chrysler and they contract out
33 everything but they do have what we have here, subcontracting, and the
34 reason they do that is because the vendors that are doing all the work for'm
35 start getting very greedy and they think, "Aw, w-, we can do what we
36 want." Well, they still review the jobs 'cause a lot of times the shops in
37 Chrysler end up doin' some of their own work because the vendors start
38 getting a little – just like now when you're....

39
40 Yeah, when construction's doin' well in town and you wanted to get
41 someone to do some work on your home, they rip you off 'cause they got
42 all this work and they just will throw a big number and if you want to
43 pay'm, good. And that's the whole thing. That's what GM should be doin'
44 everywhere with everything they do. And I told a few people, I think
45 when I was talkin' to you, we were talkin' about, uh, our people finder,
46 where you look up your name in the directory and there's a picture of me

1 with an arrow and it points to my boss and then it points up to his boss and
2 then it has this incredible amount of managers that are above the people
3 that even work here and I'm thinkin', "What the hell are these people
4 doin'?" I think when I did it, there was, like, 30 or 40 people above me
5 before it even got to the guy runnin' the company. And these are all
6 people who aren't in the plant. What are they doin'?

7
8 We're payin' them, you know, there's a salary gap. The salaries at GM,
9 like in engineering, are in the \$80,000 range and an ace level might be
10 about 100 grand and a little bit over. Then, it goes to over 200 and over
11 that and what are we paying these people for? When I was working New
12 Departure-Hyatt when the plant was closed and all the supe-, all the
13 managers in the plant got new jobs in General Motors, they all took off
14 and you know what happened? The plant had no managers. They were all
15 gone. Just general supervisors and we, the plant was doin' better without
16 the managers there. They weren't there to interfere and screw up
17 everything. But, that's on the plant level. When you get above that, you
18 wonder what in the hell is General Motors doing with all these people?
19 It's just incredible. Then they blame you guys.

20
21 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.

22
23 Andy Palermino: I'm thinkin', "What the hell?" I saw [Gary Caliger 19:05] – 'cause I'm
24 home, I'm on, uh, extended, uh, actually, I'm on disability, um, Social
25 Security approved my disability 'cause I've had health, a lot of health
26 problems in the last 2 years. And, uh, right after GM made the
27 announcement early this year that they were losing money, Gary Caliger
28 was interviewed by a, a, s-, a group like this, uh, from Wall Street. And
29 what they do, they want to see what your plan is so they can rate your, you
30 know, your company and end up in the junk bond status and they asked
31 him, "Well, what's the problem with General Motors?" And the first thing
32 he said, "Well, it's the high gasoline prices." And of course, some of these
33 guys that are sittin' there, these guys know what they're doin. They're
34 businessmen, right? They said, "Wait a minute. Gasoline prices, what the
35 hell are you talkin' about? Gasoline prices are across the board for
36 everybody. Every car manufacturer is being affected by that." "Oh, well,
37 the biggest problem is the, is the union and health care." What do you
38 mean the union and health care?" What, what it turned out, these guys
39 said, "Listen, you're a manager. You're runnin' this company and if you
40 thought or, uh, y-, uh, that that would, had an effect on the company, then
41 you should've made damn well sure to convince the union that, 'Heh, we're
42 workin' together. We gotta all share in the cost to keep this company
43 goin'." It never happened.

44
45 Do you remember when Doug Fraser became the, on the board of
46 directors of Chrysler back in the early '80s? And he, and what happened?

1 They developed a tremendous amount of credibility with Chrysler. When
2 Lee Iacocca spoke, the people knew he, w-, where he was coming from
3 because he didn't bullshit. He told the truth. Well, when's the last time
4 that General Motors, or even Ford, has had a union representative on their
5 board? Hey, they got the president, or the chairman, of Proctor and
6 Gamble and Johnson & Johnson. What the hell kinda nonsense is that?
7 And in fact, today, before I came, they were talkin' about getting' rid of
8 Richard Wagner and they were talkin' about the board of directors, that
9 they gotta get rid of them too because these people, [background noise]
10 have, don't have a clue about runnin' an, [background noise] an oil
11 company. And why, you know, even management, if the union ever
12 talked to General Motors about, "Hey, shouldn't you put one of our people
13 on the board of directors? We all are part of the same company." It
14 doesn't happen. But I think it, I think that's gonna change because it has to
15 because GM, uh, with all their problems – in fact, w-, I was talking to him
16 last [background noises] week 'cause I was just, you know, just on and on
17 – but the big issue is who's goin' to the, what's, uh, stopping people from
18 goin' to the showrooms and buyin' our cars? We don't have the products.

19
20 If we had cars that, and trucks that people wanted, all this stuff would be,
21 you know, mute. I'm driving a Hummer. You know what I did? I found
22 out I wanted to get another vehicle and I looked up the company car list
23 and you know what they had on there? Tons of H3s! So I called Jim
24 Wiseman, who works at product delivery, and I...

25
26Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]

27
28Andy Palermino: ..."Jim, is there a problem with the H3?" he goes, "No, what are you
29 talkin' about? They can't make'm fast enough." "Well then, why in the
30 hell do they have so many on the company used?" He said, "You know
31 why? Because th-, they put'm out in the fleet and when they are ready to
32 be turned in there's someone waitin' to buy it. Do you know how many
33 thousands of vehicles that we've had in the fleet that we can't get rid of
34 because nobody wants'm?" I'm thinkin', "Oh, my God." Well, that should
35 tell'm somethin'. Now, they're makin' a new Pontiac. I just found out
36 from a friend of mine that one of his buddies just got one. It took him 9
37 months to get it. That does not cut it. You go into a showroom, you want
38 to buy that vehicle, you should be able to leave the next day with, with it
39 either in, in your driveway or bein' prepped but that's not gonna happen.
40 Now they're making that HHR. I guess they like that SSR number or
41 whatever, so now they got HHR.

42
43Michael Fleming: [laughter]

44
45Andy Palermino: Where do they get these names? [laughter] They must pull'm out of
46 someone's butt. [coughing] [laughter]

1
2Doug Rademacher: Yup. It's a letters and numbers game.
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: Doug Rademacher. Hm.
5
6Andy Palermino: How, ma-, uh, just out of curiosity, how, what kinda vehicles would you
7 guys want to go out and buy tomorrow that you're all excited about?
8 [background noise]
9
10John Fedewa: DeSotos.
11
12Doug Rademacher: Well, I'd be honest with you, Doug Rademacher. I, we just looked at the
13 Solstice.
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
16
17Doug Rademacher: Good lookin' car, but it lacks, it...
18
19Andy Palermino: It's not practical.
20
21Doug Rademacher: ...it doesn't have power seats. I couldn't believe that! I got in that thing,
22 couldn't adjust the seat.
23
24Andy Palermino: Or you c-, does it even have a mechanical adjustment?
25
26Doug Rademacher: It didn't have electrical seat. Didn't even have, so you couldn't adjust it to
27 your height...
28
29Andy Palermino: Oh, I didn't know that.
30
31Doug Rademacher: ...so it's, it's made for 1 person and then, then the steering, hate to say it
32 but the darn tilt wheel was like what's in my daughter's Saturn. The
33 manual one. You loosen it and you adjust it and you lock it back in ...
34
35Andy Palermino: Uh.
36
37Doug Rademacher: ...place. Doesn't even have a quality, uh, uh, tilt wheel in it and here
38 you're in a, what looks to be like a nice sports car an, and it doesn't adjust
39 to the driver. I, I thought, "We failed again. Gotta good lookin' thing but
40 it's not made for the, it's not made for the, the buyer."
41
42Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming. I, my understanding is there's not very much room to carry
43 stuff in it as well. I don't know if it has a trunk or not, but I was told that it
44 didn't have very much room for that. I want to go back to, uh, when you
45 were talking about, uh, someone being on a board of directors for General
46 Motors. I believe that the UAW has tried to do that. The company resists

1 such thinks and, and 'til, until they decide that they want a, or, or, bl-, until
2 they decide that they have lost enough to get practical and change some
3 things that they don't really want to change or haven't traditionally wanted
4 to change, I think that's when we'll see [snapping]...
5
6Andy Palermino: It's prepos-...
7
8Michael Fleming: ...basically turn around.
9
10Andy Palermino: I'll tell you what is preposterous.
11
12Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
13
14Andy Palermino: My older brother, uh, I have 2 older brothers, and 1, uh, has friends in the,
15 in, uh, very bad places. Anyway, growin' up in New York, you h-, you
16 find this out. Anyway, he said, "Andy, you know what the mob wouldn't
17 even have a, a clue how to infiltrate General Motors. They could probably
18 whack t-, 50 of these executives and the company would still be screwed
19 up. They wouldn't know what to do." I said, "Yeah, it's pretty bad." He
20 said, "Holy Christ!" I was tryin' to get him an Avalanche. I lined up a
21 company used and he's down in Florida and he says, "Hell, I can get one
22 for \$3000 or \$4000 here cheaper."
23
24Michael Fleming: He can?
25
26Andy Palermino: I'm think-, you know what they do with, a lot of these company vehicles,
27 they over-load'm with all these extras you don't need and then what
28 happens when you take off this discount, you end up back to where you
29 would be if you just went into a...
30
31Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
32
33Andy Palermino: ... to a, a dealer and just picked one up. They overdo it and...
34
35Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
36
37Andy Palermino: ...the company is in a, [slurping] is really, ah, d-, t-, the tail is waggin' the
38 dog and it's really terrible 'cause we talked about there is, we don't have
39 products that everyone is runnin' to, to the showrooms to buy.
40
41Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
42
43Andy Palermino: When I heard about GM early this summer, uh, offerin' that compa-, that
44 discount to employees, I said, "Oh, my God, are they nuts?" 'Cause what
45 that only did, it just got all their sales and it pulled'm forward. Like, if you
46 were in the process of buying a vehicle but you wanted to wait a month or

1 two and you found out that you now had an opportunity to get one now a
2 little cheaper you would just do it. So now, what happened, what
3 happened at, near the tail end of that program, the sales dried up. And
4 Chrys-, I don't think, I don't know if Chrysler did it but Ford did it but
5 Toyota and all the Japanese car companies and BMW and the rest of'm,
6 none of them did it and every one of their sales still went up. Ours, GM's
7 spiked that one month, I guess it was July, like 30 or 40 percent? And
8 then the next month, then, af-, then near the tail end it actually was down.
9 And what's gonna, and now that the, uh, general public is constantly talkin'
10 about GM and it's financial problems, especially with what's goin' on with
11 Delphi, it's surely makin' GM look bad.

12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.

14
15 Andy Palermino: And there's nobody like a Lee Iacocca that's out there, uh, bein' a
16 spokesman for this company saying, "Hey, listen, we've made a lot of
17 mistakes but we're General Motors and we got, we support a lot of this
18 company, this country, and we need to get a, back on track and we need
19 your help and you can take your Japanese car and shove it up your
20 posterior for all we care. You wanna take care of our country? Take care
21 of our, uh, workers 'cause they took care of you. It works both ways.

22
23 You know, I can remember every year, or every time they'd have a, a, a
24 new contract. All of a sudden, it, it gets in the newspapers, like, oh my
25 God, these, all these people are overpaid. That's bullshit. The people who
26 are overpaid are the managers. They don't broadcast that. When I heard
27 about Delphi and I heard this guy S-, (was his name Stephen s-, Miller?)
28 say that, "We're gonna, ah, offer these golden parachutes to all the
29 executives here to keep'm so they can help rebuild Delphi," I said, "You
30 stupid sonofabitch. Are you brain dead?" That wh-, that infuriate-, that
31 infuriate-, would infuriate anybody with, uh, common sense. What the hell
32 kinda thing is that to say?" And they eventually go-, uh, got the union to
33 go back to, uh, o-, to agree to pay some health care and that was agreed
34 on. And right, what did they do right after that? They then make the
35 announcement that they're closing plants and laying off 30,000 people and
36 I'm thinkin', "hear they go again, these imbeciles." Did anybody know
37 they were goin' to do that bef-, wh-, when they were votin' on payin' for
38 health care? That's a disgrace. Th-, what, all of a sudden it happened
39 from a S-, from a Friday to a Monday that all of a sudden 30,000 people
40 gonna lose their job and they're gonna shut down all these plants? That's
41 bullshit.

42
43 This SSR, everyone's known for a long time th-, that, that production, uh,
44 was way outweighin' the sales. They couldn't, nobody wanted'm 'cause
45 they were overpriced. What are they doin'? Instead of droppin' the price

1 by 10 grand, they tried to put a bigger engine in it and then they make you
2 pay a few dollars more. I mean, that vehicle is what, \$40,000, \$45,000?
3
4John Fedewa: Hm, yeah.
5
6Andy Palermino: Whooh.
7
8Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming, Andy. You talk about, um, th-, the SSR and the trials and
9 tribulations you've gone through. If I can remember correctly, I don't
10 know if you were familiar at all when they first...
11
12Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
13
14Michael Fleming: ...produced that when it first came out, it was said that they had sales for 2
15 years, uh, uh, 2 years' worth of sales, is what they projected, they had so
16 many orders for them. And then, uh, uh, all of a sudden it just kinda
17 withered away. [30:03] Are you familiar with that at all?
18
19Andy Palermino: Mm-hm.
20
21Michael Fleming: You talk about the SSR and its sales, where you think it really went and
22 what caused it to, to die.
23
24Andy Palermino: I think, uh, there's 2 reasons; #1, it, it was actually, it was kind of, uh, uh, a
25 neat vehicle but it wasn't practical and I think once people got over th-, uh,
26 the fact that it was, you know, you really, like, if the women here, I don't
27 think you woulda gone to [Morey's 30:29] to go shoppin'. Where were
28 you gonna put the groceries? How're you gonna get the groceries in the
29 back?
30
31Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
32
33Andy Palermino: And if you had the top up, maybe...
34
35Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
36
37Andy Palermino: ...you could but, if the top's down, where you gonna put the grocery, in
38 the front seat? No, what are you really doin'? Plus, the price was
39 incredible. Look at this sol's-, \$19,000? HHR, \$17,000? What the hell is
40 this, it's \$45,000! Are they crazy? I'm, I'm leasing a Hummer. The
41 Hummer's price is almost the same as a, as the SSR. I think what
42 happened, once people got over the, the uniqueness of it and then they
43 realized the price, uh, people went in the dealer, looked at it and uh,
44 almost like it was a novelty and then walked out. Nobody was going to
45 buy it. They looked at the price their hair st-, would stand on end and
46 there's no special deals. So I think they made a v-, they make a lot of

1 mistakes. They don't talk to people. What they do, is they just come up
2 with an idea and all, like the HHR – why the hell wasn't the HHR, which
3 looks like a PT Cruiser, made first? A few years ago? How long h-, the
4 PT Cruiser's been around for 6, 5 or 6 years at least. I met a guy when I
5 was in a golf thing up north with a bunch of the mana-, bunch of hourly
6 and salaried people get together f-, Dick Fitton, who used to be body shop
7 superintendent, he has, uh, Fitton Follies, and w went up there and one of
8 the guys who became a friend of mine...
9

10 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
11

12 Andy Palermino: ...works in the plant for Chrysler and makes the PT Cruisers and they are
13 still sellin'm and the reason is, is because of the price. The price has a lot
14 to do with the demand and I think what happened with the HH-, I mean
15 the SSR, the price was so outrageous that it turned people away. You
16 remember the Reatta that was made here, \$30,000, pretty close to that
17 price back 10 years ago? And Mazda came out with the Miata. The Miata
18 was about 13 or 14 grand, and the, those dealers were sellin' those cars for
19 more than the sticker price because they were so hot 'cause of the price
20 and they're still sellin'm. That is common sense, something that's lacking
21 in the managers that are runnin' this company. You know, I, I'm sorry.
22

23 Cheryl McQuaid: No. Jerri Smith.
24

25 Jerri Smith: I just wonder, [32.43] Do you think it, a lot of it, I thought when they
26 dropped the Oldsmobile part of it too, wasn't that a big shock to everyone
27 too that they didn't come out like, like Chrysler had the PT Cruiser,
28 somethin' different, somethin' wild, whereas if, do you think it would have
29 helped GM if they would have done somethin' like that with the
30 Oldsmobile?
31

32 Andy Palermino: What...
33

34 Jerri Smith: Instead of just getting' rid of the Oldsmobile...
35

36 Andy Palermino: See, I...
37

38 Jerri Smith: ...completely?
39

40 Andy Palermino: ...worked for Oldsmobile and, unfortunately, I, I, uh, disliked those
41 people that were runnin' the company immensely. They were a, a bunch
42 of arrogant, over, uh, educated incompetents. They were more concerned
43 about the Oldsmobile Golf Classic than they were about sellin' vehicles.
44 And when I first was workin' here in Lansing in the early '80s, we all were
45 Oldsmobile. You were th-, you were Fisher Body and you were makin'
46 the Eighty-eight, the Ninety-eight, and the Cutlasses and they were all

1 high-volume – in fact, I think the Eighty-eight and Ninety-eight were #1 in
2 their...

3

4 Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]

5

6 Andy Palermino: ...class and the Cutlass was doin' great. So what do they do? They take
7 the vehicles away from Lansing and they bring in...

8

9 Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]

10

11 Andy Palermino: ...Grand Am, the Sumerset, which was the pon-, which was the Buick,
12 and the Calais and they were, they weren't, uh, high quality or high, uh,
13 profit and we s-, all of a sudden weren't doin' very well because the
14 products were not, people weren't runnin' to the showrooms to buy these
15 things. And then the Ninety-eight went elsewhere and the Eighty-eight
16 and then the sales, and then the designs. They had the Eighty-eight and
17 Ninety-eight look the same. I even drove an Eighty-eight company car to
18 a meeting in Detroit. Comin' back, I went in the parking lot with these
19 guys and I'm lookin' for a Ninety-eight. They said, "What the hell are you
20 talkin' about, Andy? You were drivin' an Eight-eight. I said, "Bullshit! I
21 know wh-, I know one car from the other." Well, I didn't. It was the exact
22 same interior that I had in my Ninety-eight and it was an Eighty-eight
23 'cause they made'm almost identical and that was a disaster. Then they
24 came out with the Bravada. That's where I think GM's biggest problem is.
25 The Japanese c-, concentrate on one vehicle and they perfect it. What they
26 should've done, the van, the Chevy van should've been the only
27 manufacturer of General Motors's vans or maybe Chevrolet and GMC.
28 Pontiac shouldn't have made a van or, uh, I f-,...

29

30 John Fedewa: Oldsmobile.

31

32 Andy Palermino: ...Oldsmobile.

33

34 John Fedewa: Ventura.

35

36 Andy Palermino: And they...

37

38 John Fedewa: Like a...

39

40 Andy Palermino: ...and they made the Cimarron, the Cadillac Cimarron. Jesus, Mary, and
41 Joseph! You gotta be brain dead. [laughter] If they concentrated having
42 Buick, you make these vehicles; Cadillac, you deal [bang] with the luxury
43 cars. Okay, Chevrolet, you're makin', you got the Corvette, okay, and now
44 Cadillac's got, Cadillac's doin' really well. They're better off they wer-,
45 they weren't part of General Motors. But then you got Buick and it's-, and
46 they got, Saturn got put into the mix. Holy mackerel! They should have

1 each, uh, uh, brand name should concentrate on a vehicle so they don't
2 compete against each other. When you go out and buy a, a, [snapping] a
3 Bravada, you're takin' sales away from a, another vehicle or when you b-,
4 uh, when you buy a Silhouette – what the hell was, uh, Oldsmobile makin'
5 Bravadas, which is a, a...
6
7John Fedewa: TrailBlazer.
8
9Andy Palermino: ...eh, yeah. Or...
10
11Marilyn Coulter: Jimmy.
12
13Andy Palermino: ...a van, it's a Jimmy. That's stupidity. So what happens? They're not
14 competin' with the rest of the world, they're takin' sales away from each
15 other and the quality wasn't that great because they're just tryin' to
16 complete with each other and they could care less about everybody else.
17 But it's not their fault. It's the managers that come up with these bright
18 ideas.
19
20Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
21
22Andy Palermino: You know, what, that, uh, Toyota's got, I found out Toyota's got 3 vehicles
23 and then of course they have the Lexus line, but they concentrate on
24 makin' those perfect and they don't have 20 different models of that brand.
25 They just have that vehicle and that's it. Maybe, uh, the difference is the
26 options. But we, f-, for some, and like now – the Saturn, they're gonna
27 close one of the lines. That's embarrassing. Saturn, at, at one time, had
28 this, uh, uh, this niche in the public that, "Oh, it's a special company."
29 That, th-, when you went and you owned a Saturn they treated you
30 differently. How'd they treat you? As soon as you drive the car and
31 you're buyin' it to drive out, what... But they had people believing that,
32 you know, this was a special deal to buy a Saturn. Well, I don't think
33 people feel that way anymore. And there's no, there's nothin', uh, uh,
34 under General Motors' ass gettin' them to, uh, start concentratin' on certain
35 products and pushin'm. Ah, is Grand Am made anymore?
36
37John Fedewa: It's called the G6.
38
39Marilyn Coulter: G6 now.
40
41John Fedewa: Moved it to Lake Orion.
42
43Andy Palermino: What the hell were they, yeah, should I tell it? What in the hell were they
44 changing? The Grand Am, [background noise] – do you realize the
45 following that that car has as far as all the people that have bought it? I
46 have a neighbor that's, several of'm. But they, since, uh, 19, was it '84

1 when they first came out? Yeah. So for the last 20 years, Grand Am has
2 always stood out as one of the neatest vehicles and what'd the stupid
3 bastards do? They changed the name to G6? So I'm a Grand Am owner.
4 Now I'm a G6 owner. I think that's what you call it. Or the Calais became
5 what, the Achieva? Then it became...

6
7John Fedewa: The Alero.

8
9Andy Palermino: What was the last thing?

10
11John Fedewa: Alero.

12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Alero.

14
15Andy Palermino: Alero? No, GM has a, a problem in almost every area of the business and
16 the biggest problem is they blame everybody else, which in fact, they
17 blame the union for all their problems and the union didn't have a damn
18 thing to do – it's poor management and stupidity from the top down to the
19 first level in the plant. I was tellin' him, Mike, that when we were, uh, in
20 building 64, we had what they called, uh, the, uh, assessment center. They
21 took the Grand Am, the Calais, and the Somerset and they took a Toyota
22 Corolla and a Honda Civic and they took'm through town and they beat
23 the p-, they drove them over railroad tracks, they tried to beat the car
24 apart. And you know what? I see a Grand Am in the mirrors are hangin'
25 off it and it's fallin' apart and you get into this, I went in, I looked a the
26 Honda and the Honda was all dented 'cause the guys hit curbs and it was,
27 they looked like they had destroyed it. And you know what? You still
28 had to roll the window down a little to slam the door it was so tight. And
29 it didn't, they couldn't get it to, anything to rattle on the vehicle.

30
31 And the guy, one of the guys that worked there used to do the door hinges
32 and the door locks and he said, "It's built, the door lock assembly is built
33 just like a watch. Santa Claus could put it together." He just puts 2 bolts
34 and it's done. The guy in the plant, he puts 2 bolts and it's done and it
35 doesn't line up and it's not right 'cause it's not engineered right. It's, it's
36 junk. And that's where the biggest problem has been. And you would
37 think after all these yeas GM, the people that're runnin' the company,
38 would start sayin', You know what? We're doin' to-, we're screwed up
39 here. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know, you know, like, uh, you
40 know the rub-, uh, bumpers? For your hood? You're hood bumpers? You
41 drop your hood down? Building 66 at one time about 350 of'm for
42 different models. They were all different. And I'm thinkin', "Wow, they
43 should be standard for every vehicle. You don't have to waste engineering
44 dollars and time screwin' around with that and concentrate on advertising
45 the vehicle, makin' it more appealing to the public, pricing it. You know,
46 all this extra, uh, people that design hood bumpers, there's 2 or 3 different

1 companies designing the same product? It's crazy. But General Motors is
2 like a, a, it's like a white elephant.
3
4 Michael Fleming: Mike Fleming.
5
6 Andy Palermino: And I feel sorry for you guys.
7
8 Michael Fleming: Michael Fleming, uh, Andy. You were in the Fisher Body plant, um.
9 [41:05] Did you, uh, have any particular, uh, area that stood out the most
10 for you as far as working in those areas and, um, a particular individual
11 that you worked with that was one of your favorite people?
12
13 Andy Palermino: Oh, gosh. Well, I, I did mention earlier [Bishop Cadel 41:30]. Bishop
14 Cadel was a, a maintenance supervisor that every single guy in the plant
15 that I knew in skilled trades had a ton of respect for him because he was
16 good to the people that worked for him and he, and he treated everybody
17 with respect and he was a good guy and you'd go out of your way to, uh,
18 to do work for him. That's how everybody was and if, that's the kind of
19 managers that GM needs. People that everyone likes. I remember when
20 Lee Iacocca used to go to the plants after, uh, he had taken over Chrysler.
21 He was treated like a celebrity. He'd go over and kiss the women and
22 every guy would want his – people even asked for his autograph. Can you
23 imagine that? Roger Smith came to this plant around the same time and
24 he had to be protected by about 20 or 30 people because they wanted to
25 kill'm and that's, that's really, uh, where GM is suffering really right now.
26
27 Michael Fleming: [42:27] Did you have a, a manager above you that was one that you, or a
28 superintendent or someone that you could speak of that you thought was a
29 pretty good people person that worked at Fisher Body?
30
31 Andy Palermino: Yeah, one guy is Dick Fitton. He's a, he's really good to, uh, I mean, from
32 what I gather from talkin' to guys who worked with him, they all loved
33 him they said, you know, and he, he bent over backwards to help
34 everybody and that's the way everybody needs to be. We have jerks,
35 which you know, we seem to remember the bad and you – one time they
36 interviewed me and asked me, "If you're...", and this is right before I
37 came to this, to the plant, they said, "Andy, if you supervise 33 people,"
38 which is what I was supervising, "and you have 1 bad egg, what would
39 you do? Would you spend time on that guy or what would you do?" I
40 said, "I'm gonna tell you somethin'. First of all, it's human nature. Not
41 everyone's perfect. If I got one guy who's like..." – we had this one guy,
42 [Joe Sumble 43:22], remember Joe? We used to catch him sleepin' all the
43 time. They used to want me to do some... I said, "Listen, there's 33 guys
44 workin' for me and 32 of'm are doin' a good job. I'm gonna spend 99.9
45 percent of my time tellin' those guys what a good job they're doin' and
46 helpin' 'm out like.

1
2 I was an engineer. Because I was an engineer, I could go to, uh, the crib
3 and I would buy, like, I went and the guys needed tools, I could authorize,
4 I could get the guys tools. A lot of the supervisors didn't want to be both-
5 "Aw, they're bringin' 'm home." Who gives a shit they're bringin' 'm
6 home? The guy needs a tape measure. We go get a bunch of tapes for
7 everybody. We just would do that. Well, that's what you do with th-, 32
8 people. You take care of'm. If there's one bad egg, don't spend time
9 bustin', uh, wasting your time tryin' to make him be somethin' he can't be.
10 If he's bad news, he's bad news. He's not gonna change. Why waste all
11 your efforts with him? Spend your time with the good people and
12 concentrate on helpin' them out. And guess what? You'll, h-, his, uh, lack
13 of input into the organization will be totally ignored because you're not
14 gonna find everyone workin' in skilled trades. Now, if you're on the line,
15 you have to have a guy doin' his job. If a guy is screwin' off, you gotta do
16 somethin' about it.
17
18 But in skilled trades, if you find a guy sleepin' or whatever, you kick'm in
19 the ass. One time he was sleepin' and he had his alarm set at 7 a.m. to
20 wake up, so I turned it off. I didn't wake'm up. And about 9:30 he's
21 walkin' out of the plant and he clocked out and then he came to me the
22 next day and wanted to get paid 2 hours of overtime and I just laughed.
23 [snap] I said, "What are you, nuts? You were sleepin', you dork."
24
25Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
26
27Andy Palermino: I turned the power off so he couldn't wake up. Unreal. [laughter] He, it
28 was up in the crib up on the second floor and, uh, what was that? Uh, oh,
29 God. Urethane. He was a pipe fitter. I don't know if you remember Joe.
30
31Michael Fleming: Uh, the...
32
33Andy Palermino: He was a Pakistani.
34
35Michael Fleming: Well, here, here we go. If you, you've got experiences like that, [45:32]
36 can you talk [snapping] about some more experiences that were, you
37 know, just really jovial ones that people played pranks on one another to
38 have a good time, you know, be it, uh, regular working time, changeover,
39 whatever? Can you think of some of those stories?
40
41Andy Palermino: Well I told you the one story, guys, you remember Leonard Jones? He
42 was our fire [pause] uh, workman in security? And of course, Sam
43 McGee. Anyway, back, uh, we had that disgusting, uh, m-, uh, basement
44 with all the equipment and crap down there and we turned it into offices?
45 Well I told him the story that I was able to convince the shop that, "Hey,

1 cleanin' out that basement is anybody's job." The fork truck drivers, we
2 used Charlie Farley...
3
4Michael Fleming: Whooh [laughter]
5
6Andy Palermino: ...and, uh, Vinny.
7
8Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
9
10Andy Palermino: You remember Vinny? Anyhow, Charlie Farley, uh, hit a sprinkler line...
11
12Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
13
14Andy Palermino: ...and, uh, instead of just movin' away, he sat there and all of this black
15 mud stuff squirtin' out of the pipe and he's covered with this and we're all
16 laughin' and we're yellin' at him t-, to move. Well he froze, so one of the
17 guys end-, – then of course after the mud came out then water came out
18 and washed'm off and the whole basement got flooded but it ended up
19 cleanin' the place (it was so disgusting) but Charlie was sittin' on the fork
20 truck and they had a physically pull him off becaue he freaked out. I guess
21 he had never been used to getting water on him or somethin'. [laughter] I
22 don't know.
23
24Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
25
26Andy Palermino: But [snap] yeah, we had some, uh, some, uh – anyhow, getting' back to
27 Leonard, when we were cleanin' that basement out, I went down there
28 with him and, uh, we saw a rat that was that big. [gesture] It was as big as
29 a cat. And he had th-, the spot light and, all of a sudden, he took off and I
30 could see the light going like this [gesture] as he's runnin' [laughter] out
31 of the area...
32
33Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
34
35Andy Palermino: ...and he leaves me there...
36
37Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
38
39Andy Palermino: ...and I said a few choice words to'm and he goes, "Andy, I hate rats!"
40
41Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
42
43Andy Palermino: I said, "What the hell! You think I love'm? Get you're ass back here. I
44 wanna get out'a here." 'Cause you couldn't walk through there. I had to
45 climb over stuff. He, uh, eventually walked back and then I climbed out
46 of there and I thought, "Oh, my God!" Well we ended up cleaning out that

1 place and, uh, almost I'd say 500-, almost \$500,000 worth of credit we got
2 for crap that was down there. There was trasnf-, robotic transformers,
3 about 30 of 'm...
4
5Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
6
7Andy Palermino: ...that little [Jay Levine 47:46] had bought for the body shop and they
8 didn't need'm. And...
9
10Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
11
12Andy Palermino: ...each still on the crates. There was thr-, uh, they were 2 on a crate.
13 They were transformers probably about that big. [gesture]
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: How big?
16
17Andy Palermino: About maybe 3 feet long and about 1 ½ feet square and there was over 30
18 of'm. We, and then there was wire, all kindsa wire that was down there.
19 We ended up g-, uh, the guys in the shop ended up, I guess it was the parts
20 people, ended up getting', uh, a ton of money back on all this stuff. Some
21 of the stuff was worth a fortune and we paid big bucks for it and nobody
22 even knew that stuff was down there 'cause everything was buried. It was
23 bad. But then they built the offices and guess what happened? Those
24 job-, tha-, we were almost ready to open the offices. It was all carpeted
25 and we were getting' ready to move. We built the union center and what
26 happens? Charlie Farley is workin' on a...
27
28Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.
29
30Andy Palermino: ...on a Saturday...
31
32Michael Fleming: [laughter]
33
34Andy Palermino: ...and that dumb s.o.b. is up on, in building 1 and hits the tool...
35
36Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
37
38Andy Palermino: ...sprinkler and the...
39
40Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
41
42Andy Palermino: ...place was flooded!
43
44Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
45
46Andy Palermino: But we go downstairs and [pause] it was destroyed. All that water went

1 through this, the cracks in the floor and all the ceiling tile fell and it was a
2 mess and it took probably 2 weeks to clean the mess and we had a rip up
3 all the carpet and redo it and oh, God, he was dangerous.
4
5Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
6
7Andy Palermino: [laughter]
8
9Jerri Smith: [49:29] Did they ever take him off the truck?
10
11Cheryl McQuaid: Jerri Smith.
12
13Michael Fleming: [laughter]
14
15Andy Palermino: I don't know if you know Charlie. He's really goofy.
16
17Michael Fleming: [laughter] Uh, Mike Fleming. For those of you that don't know Charlie
18 Farley, Charlie Farley was a material driver who ended up becoming, uh,
19 the EPG...
20
21Doug Rademacher: Plant manager.
22
23Michael Fleming: [laughter]
24
25John Fedewa: [laughter]
26
27Michael Fleming: No, he was the employee participa-, employee, uh, participation group
28 leader.
29
30Cheryl McQuaid: Advisor.
31
32Michael Fleming: Yeah, advisor. Uh, and he, he was just a guy that had been there for quite
33 some time. I don't...
34
35Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
36
37Michael Fleming: ...know that Charlie might've had...
38
39Doug Rademacher: Oh, he's gotta be in his 40 years plus.
40
41Michael Fleming: Yeah, 40 years so he's been there for a while.
42
43Doug Rademacher: I know it's been a long time.
44
45Andy Palermino: Charlie was really a smart guy so I used to always say, "You're...
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter] Yeah.
2
3 Andy Palermino: ...being, you're acting, aren't you?" "No." 'Cause he always had his mind
4 on, he was always thinkin' of somethin', never concentratin' on what he
5 was doin'. That's why he had a lot of these, uh, accidents.
6
7 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
8
9 Andy Palermino: Oh, gosh.
10
11 Doug Rademacher: Andy, Doug Rademacher here. Would you please tell me a little bit about,
12 you've said you worked for, uh, the auto industry from your home state,
13 then you came to Lansing and worked at the main plant, Oldsmobile, and
14 what we're talking about today is the Fisher Body plant. I was curious.
15 [50:51] Can you tell me about the difference? What did you see at the
16 Fisher Body plant that stood out compared to the other places you'd been
17 to?
18
19 Andy Palermino: Well I'll tell you the biggest thing is the people. Uh, I probably have more
20 friends, uh, here. They're like a family and that's the, that's the whole
21 thing. You know, I can remember, oh, a, when my late wife was teaching,
22 there are people that are dedicated to their job that, uh, and yet I can
23 remember when she would teach and when the day was over some of
24 these teachers would be runnin' the kids over to get out of the parkin' lot
25 and leave. That's not like that at GM and Fisher Body. The people are
26 workin' together and they help each other and that's a big difference and it
27 doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out now. And I worked in
28 plant 1. They had, uh, 652, uh, a lotta good guys but they, uh, they had a
29 lot of attitude problems. They really did. And I know when EDS first
30 came to th-, the Lansing site, they were pretty brutal to these people. In
31 fact, I don't know if they still are. They treated'm like they were lepers.
32 Meanwhile, they were workin' for the company tryin' to, you know, ha-,
33 make it make money but, uh, the body plant was unique. And that's why
34 you gotta new plant. That's why w-, everything's happening t-, in the
35 positive except for closin' the plant, which I think was a major mistake.
36 But it's the people. You know, you could, ah, the facilities in Oklahoma
37 City were new, newer, and their closing the plant! It's because the, uh,
38 people there. The Lansing site has got people who have, their parents
39 worked here. Some people, I have friends whose grandparents worked
40 here. This is, uh, probably the most unique operation in the company.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: [52:34] Can you explain how the union fits into that? Have you seen, uh,
43 other, uh, uh...
44
45 Andy Palermino: Th-, the, the union 602, I remember the one time when I, before I came
46 here, I went over to plant 2 to take an inventory of, uh, all the fork truck

1 equipment we had in Lansing, including pl-, this plant, and I was there
2 and, uh, I thought I was going to get mugged.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [laughter]
5
6 Andy Palermino: We're there at night doin' the job when no one's around and we were, had
7 flashlights. We were writin' down all the brass tag numbers and these
8 guys came around, about 4 or 5 of 'em. They said, "What are you doin'
9 here?" I said, "What the hell does it look like I'm doin'?" I'm, I'm taking
10 inventory of your equipment." Well what are you do-." In other words, I
11 was interrog-, I was with another guy. We thought it was funny but they
12 were pissed and I'm thinkin', "What the hell is with you? We're here doi-
13 doin' our job for Christ sakes." Well nobody ever acted like that here. If
14 somebody caught me doin' some 'em, do-, like that, takin' inventory of the
15 fork truck equipment and writin' down the brass tag numbers? They'd
16 help me! That's the difference. They'd come over and help ya. Now I
17 think plant 2 guys have, uh, unfortunately, because of their, uh, all the
18 [inhale] – it's almost like it's jinxed. You know, with all the vehicles
19 they've made, uh, after a while they, those people there are [snap]
20 probably uh, uh, got shell shocked from all the bad experiences of havin'
21 products and bein' enthusiastic and then all of ...
22
23 Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
24
25 Andy Palermino: ...a sudden they don't have a job again. Do you remember, uh, was it
26 NUMMI, which used to be a plant in California, Fremont, that made uh,
27 the Aler-, uh, that made, uh, used to make the Camaro and the, and, uh,
28 Grand Am, not the c-, I mean, the Camero and the...
29
30 Michael Fleming: Firebird?
31
32 Andy Palermino: ...the Firebird. It wasn't doin' well. They closed the plant.
33
34 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
35
36 Andy Palermino: Then they reopened it and they attitude of the people was 100 percent
37 different 'cause they were, were gettin' good money, had a good job, and
38 then went to no job. It's pretty awful. But then to go back, you're gonna
39 say I'm not, it happened to 'em, us once. It's not gonna happen a second
40 time. Now here, it's never happened because the p-, the attitude and the
41 product here was, actually it was good except for, uh, the GM 20s. That
42 was a mistake but they did, they still ended up makin' money here. The,
43 it's, it's the people. They've had, uh, this, uh, May 6, when the plant
44 closed, did that every happen here before? No. It's pretty awful. I've
45 already gone through a plant closing and it's awful because all of a sudden
46 you gotta great job and, uh, all kinds of great perks, whether you're hourly

1 or salary, and all of a sudden you don't know where the next, uh, uh, dollar
2 is comin' from. Even though you're collectin', uh. some benefits, that
3 doesn't, uh, h-, help your ego. It really doesn't.
4

5 I have a neighbor, Fred Garcia. He used to be a fork truck driver. I think
6 he now, he's workin' in, as a janitor. Fred was up in the jobs [rank 55:25]
7 here and he hated it. He, he asked the managers to, could [snap] he go
8 back and [snap] just work as a janitor 'cause he couldn't, he was, he was
9 losin' his mind sittin' around. No one here was used to that because, uh,
10 the, the people here have a different work ethic. That's awful! And that
11 was the other issue. General Motors, the managers of this company
12 should've never delayed the constru-, they finally made the decision to
13 build that plant and they started. Uh, you know, knowing construction,
14 you never delay a job if you really plan on finishing 'cause every month
15 that you ho-, stop the construction, you're just adding costs. They c-,
16 made the window of May to the opening of the new plant get further and
17 further apart. It makes General Motors a laughing stock. I heard the
18 people on Wall Street sayin', "You got this Fisher Body, Lansing, quality,
19 you know. They were talking about J.D. Powers survey. Great quality.
20 Why wouldn't they work out a program where they kept the product, uh, in
21 the plant so that while the new plant was being constructed, they could
22 then move the people, like in a weekend, or as close to, uh, the same date
23 as possible instead of leavin' that huge break?
24

25 You know, when the people come back to work, there's gonna be less
26 people from 602. Their attitude toward General Motors I don't think's
27 gonna be the way it was before they closed this place because they're
28 gonna realize that, you know what? This could happen tomorrow again
29 just like Saturn. They might open this new plant but if they don't build the
30 product that we at this table are gonna to run to buy, it'll be an exercise in
31 fu-, futility. Grand Am, they always had great sales and, uh, that's the big
32 issue. They, everything that GM has been involved in, in, over the last
33 couple'a years has been mistakes. One mistake after the other.
34

35 Michael Fleming: Andy, Michael Fleming. Um, [throat clearing] GM has for years relied
36 upon what's called brand loyalty. [57:25] Can you talk about, um, some of
37 the vehicles that you've owned that were General Motors vehicles
38 throughout your life and maybe some people you know that, that did, uh,
39 purchase GM vehicles? What types they were?
40

41 Andy Palermino: Well, bottom line is I've never owned anything except GM except 1 year I
42 had a Volkswagen when I first got out of school but it w-, it was a used
43 vehicle but my first car was a '58 Oldsmobile Holiday with a J2 engine. I
44 wish I still had that vehicle. God, it's worth a fortune but, like I mentioned
45 earlier, my relatives when I was a kid growin' up in Brooklyn they used to
46 always tell me, "If ever, when you grow up and you buy your car, make

1 sure you buy a, an Oldsmobile made in Lansing." And, of course, I'd say,
2 "Lansing, where's Lansing?" They said, "In Michigan." "Well why would
3 you buy a car there?" "Well because that's the home of Oldsmobile."
4 [Them's 58:14] are relatives in Brooklyn. A bunch of Italians and their
5 tellin' me about buyin' an Oldsmobile and here it is 40, 50 years later and
6 it's gone! And, y-, this was my mother, my father's Oldsmobile. It's
7 nobody's Oldsmobile. But General Motors, uh, brand loyalty, that is, they
8 have so many issues that they've screwed up. I have an old Chevy II
9 Nova, '66. Then in the, uh, late '80s, they came up with the Nova, which
10 was, uh, one from NUMMI and they put the word Nova on. I was pissed!
11 I said, "What the hell? That's not a Nova. This is a Nova I'm drivin'. And
12 then g-, the Grand Am, now it's a G6? [smack] Mama Mia! [laughter]
13 They have screwed up every sing-, you mention brand loyalty. They ha-,
14 oh, Cadillac? They haven't changed the name Cadillac. I don't know why
15 but they probably should. But Cadillac is one of the only, uh, divisions
16 that still has that Cadillac emblem. You know that Cadillac? You
17 remember...
18
19 Cheryl McQuaid: [inaudible]
20
21 Andy Palermino: ...Oldsmobile used to have the Oldsmobile emblem?
22
23 Cheryl McQuaid: Then all of a sudden, they came with that thing with the line through it?
24 Now what the hell i-, remember it? They had a, I, I guess they had it on
25 the Alero. It was like a cir-, a, a, like an oblong and it had, like, a, a, it
26 looked...
27
28 Cheryl McQuaid: A Q.
29
30 Andy Palermino: Is that what that was?
31
32 Cheryl McQuaid: [inaudible]
33
34 Andy Palermino: Is that what it was? That was a GM emblem.
35
36 Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
37
38 Andy Palermino: And I can remember the Eighty-eights, the Ninety-eights, the Cutlass, they
39 all had that...
40
41 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
42
43 Cheryl McQuaid: [inaudible]
44
45 Andy Palermino: ... little thing on the-, I still have them at home, like, I saved some of'm.
46 Their brand new. They, they, you know, before they put it on the car. I

1 still saved some of them. I have Oldsmobile dishes at home. Back in 19,
2 uh, it would of been 90, they were demolishin' the, the, uh, they had a, a
3 lunch room up, well they had a cafeteria up in, uh, 64 and they had dinners
4 up there an they had Olds-, they had thousands of Oldsmobile dishes. It
5 has the Rocket Eighty-eight and it says "Oldsmobile" and silverware that
6 says "Oldsmobile" on it. They were gonna, they, I was cleanin' out the
7 place and they wanted to just, wanted me to take the dishes and everything
8 and throw it in the dumpster. Time out. I'm not doin' that. You gotta be
9 nuts! I went to the, the women's club and [Nancy Bissel 1:00:24] I've
10 known for years and they worked up a sale and we brought all the dishes
11 to building 32 and they had a sale and they sold everything and the
12 women's club made like about five grand. I still have a whole set of
13 dishes. I got a set, a set, a set of dishes. I, I paid for'm but, and yet, here
14 now, uh, they'll be worth money because the company's gone and it's
15 terrible. But, no, brand loyalty? They screwed up. The-, there i-, I tell
16 you what, why don't you ask me what GM hasn't screwed up? Because I'll
17 tell you right now, I couldn't tell you!
18
19 Michael Fleming: [laughter]
20
21 Andy Palermino: You know, there, you know, you know there's some people, people, [audio
22 rewind] no...
23
24 Michael Fleming: [coughing]
25
26 Andy Palermino: ...matter what they do, they do somethin' wrong. [audio rewind] Brand
27 loyal-, loyalty, ty-, ty-, [audio rewind] uh – Fiat...
28
29 Cheryl McQuaid: Yeah.
30
31 Andy Palermino: ...yeah, Fiat. They owned a portion, a portion of Fiat. "Here, Fiat, we're
32 given' you our dis-, our, our, our ownership, uh, uh, uh, por-, portion ba-,
33 back to you, you, you, [recording rewind] but here's another, another \$4,
34 000,000,000 to go with it, with it. Take, if you give somethin' to
35 somebody, they usually give you somethin' back. But that's not how GM
36 did it. I mean, they have made major mistakes. Just recently with this, uh,
37 union goin' back and negotiating so th-, you pay some of the, of the
38 benefits for health care. Whoop-e-doo! Then, oh, a couple'a weeks later,
39 they announce the plant closings and all that. There is, it just goes [bang]
40 on and on and on. And even you guys havin' me sittin' here, the company
41 should, uh, be doin' this that manages it but they don't have a clue! They
42 all have their 3-piece suits and their company cars and their secretaries and
43 most of them couldn't find their ass with 2 hands. I'm serious. It's very
44 upsetting. And they, and they, and you know what the worst thing is?
45 They're always blaming somebody else. It's the union. Their fuckin' with
46 the [car 1:02:3], with the union. You stupid bastards! If it wasn't for the

1 union, you wouldn't have a job! And it's sad. It really is. And I don't
2 think anybody has an answer. I think the best thing could happen to
3 General Motors, they have this guy, Cicoria? He oughta get, ah, what's it,
4 Kavorkian, out of prison...
5
6 Michael Fleming: [laughter]
7
8 Andy Palermino: ...and the 2 of them oughta run the company. [snap] Get Ross Perot back.
9 I don't know if you ever heard the story of how Ross Perot got out of
10 General Motors. They were havin' a board meeting with all these upper
11 crust of the, uh, management of the world and the United States and they
12 were havin' a meeting and GM wasn't doin' that well at the time. That was
13 Orin doin' great but, uh, he wanted to have a meeting to discuss the, the
14 figures on bonuses for the executives and, of course, Ross Perot is a
15 wealthy man. He didn't need a dime. He could work for nothing. He, uh,
16 you know, raised his hand and he said he wanted to interrupt and Roger
17 Smith said, you know, you know, "Whada you have to say?"
18
19 And he, he got up and stood up on the, you know, he's a little guy. He
20 stood up on the chair and he said, "Listen, I, you shouldn't be discussing
21 bonuses. Nobody needs a bonus. The people that work in this company,
22 th-, the executives, are makin' good money. What they need to do is take
23 care of the Indians. You take care of the Indians, and guess what, guys,
24 they'll take care of the chiefs. That's how it works. You don't..." And of
25 course, Ro-, Roger Smith told'm, you know, "Sit down and shut up." And
26 they got into an argument 'cause Roger Smith didn't h-, didn't have a clue
27 how to run a business and here he's g-, uh, arguing with this guy. So
28 what's he do? Gives'm 350, 375 million dollars to get rid of'm. God, I
29 wish I had been there.
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
32
33 Andy Palermino: They shoulda shot Roger Smith but that didn't happen. But, no, they need
34 somebody in this company that, uh, wake up the American people.
35 Nobody's loyal to General Motors. They're not even loyal to themselves!
36 They're not loyal to their own employees and why would an American be,
37 uh, conscious of tak-, of worryin' about General Motors? If the goddamn
38 company doesn't care about the employees, why should the people?
39 Especially when they do so many stupid things that insults the average
40 person's intelligence?
41
42 Michael Fleming: Ah, Mike Fleming, Andy. [1:04:43] Talk about GM and, and what it had
43 done for the United States as, as a, uh, through the years and, and through
44 the different wars, and what type of icon it really is?
45

1 Andy Palermino:

2 Well, I tell you what, uh, uh, [bang] back in 19, uh, 64, I was playin'
3 baseball when I was in college and I ended up in the hospital. I got hit
4 with a foul ball and ended up I had, they found out I had cancer. Anyway,
5 I had my cancer surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Sloan, Alfred
6 Sloan? Kettering, Kettering Engine plant? These were guys who, uh, at
7 one time were runnin' General Motors. General Motors had, uh, in years
8 past, their employees and their, uh, managers, the old, from the old
9 school? They had hospitals that they donated money to. In other words,
10 they've done a lot outside of the auto industry but this company's been the
11 backbone of our country and the problem is that the company, the people
12 that are runnin' it, aren't smart enough to take advantage of that and
13 educate the American people and that's who I was talkin' about, these
14 [infirmers 1:05:51]. General Motors has done a lot for a lot of people,
15 during the wars especially. And the war's over and now, uh, we're, uh,
16 "junk bond status." That's an absolute disgrace. Most of those people that
17 are on the ex-, the executive boards wouldn't even have a job if it wasn't
18 for the UAW and General Motors, you know.

19 You heard the stories about durin' the '30s, when the UAW formed, the,
20 uh, managers would hire thugs to beat them up and people were killed. I
21 was, uh, workin' at New Departure-Hyatt Bearing and when I saw what
22 was goin' on, I, they threatened to fire me because I got with the union and
23 tal-, they wanted to organize the, the salaried into the union. So I said, "I
24 think that's a great idea because we all work for the same." And then my
25 boss called me into his office and he started givin' me a bunch of shit and I
26 told him to go to hell! I said, "Hey, what, are you gonna fire me? Fire
27 me, you bastard! I'll have, uh, I'll have your ass!" You know, here I just
28 left my own business where I used to work with the union. I had all union
29 people workin' for me when I had my own business and the shop steward
30 used to come to the jobs and ask me to put more men on, so I would sit
31 down with the guy and go over the pro-, the job with'm and show'm all the
32 hours and how much I was gettin' paid and I'd tell'm the truth. "You
33 know, I could add 2 or 3 more guys, but guess what? When the job is
34 over, we're all gonna be out of a job. Do you want me to do that or do
35 you want, you know, x number of guys. I can only hire a certain number
36 of people." And eventually they believed me 'cause I was tellin' the truth.

37
38 And that's the other thing, wow, General Motors' managers. I think it
39 started with Roger Smith. He de-, developed such a wall between the
40 majority of the workers and "managers" that it's pretty hard to break down.
41 And now with all the foreign competition, GM couldn't be, uh, in worse
42 shape. When they need to have the best managers n the world runnin' the
43 company, they got a bunch of nitwits! We discussed this new plant. Has
44 anybody in this room had any input in whatever, what's happening at the
45 new plant that's being built to house the 602 union? Has anyone had any

1 involvement in it out there, in the actual layout of the plant? Well, whose,
2 whose doin' it?
3
4**Doug Rademacher:** They are. Yeah, there is, [throat clearing] [snap] there is a, uh, effort to
5 have the union and our input is being received and we are looking at a new
6 facility.
7
8**Andy Palermino:** But the, but the, the building's built!
9
10**Michael Fleming:** [throat clearing]
11
12**Doug Rademacher:** Right. We've been, we've been, and we have actually, the plant has
13 actually been expanded. The jobs have been increased. Well, actually,
14 we'll hire, every 602 employee will have a job and we'll be looking to
15 employ another 500 or more and we are, uh, working with the corporation
16 to secure a site to build a new union hall on site out there, so we are doin' a
17 few things.
18
19**Andy Palermino:** Okay, when we did building 28, and we c-, we h-, what happened was we
20 needed more space for the, uh, for the, uh, uh, parts for the Malibu and it
21 did not make sense to ship'm here to Lansing and put'm in a warehouse
22 and ship'm here 'cause it, its just, so when we decided to use that site, it
23 made sense. It was right by, uh, it was, uh, an open area 'cause, you know,
24 our s-, this site is limited to our, the body plant's limited in where it could
25 put anything. Of course, in the parkin' lot, with the head count reduction
26 as such, you had space here for the, for the paint shop but we didn't just
27 design it and build it. We sat with everybody and went over it and got the
28 input and made all kind-, we kept tweaking it while it was in the process
29 of getting' built and we kept makin' changes. Then we came up with the
30 idea, "Hey, we could save money by, uh, fillin' in the train well." It wasn't
31 even, it wasn't my idea. One of the, uh, trades said that, "Why don't we
32 fill in the train well? We could use the extra storage." And Joe Williams
33 and a few other guys from materials were there and instead of – you know
34 how much they wanted for that, you know, that bridge that was, you
35 know, that bridge that's over there? We moved it! I think it cost us about
36 \$25,000 to move it but you know how much they wanted for a new one?
37 D-, well, nobody would know – ½ million! We got a price from the
38 vendor. We said, "What the f-, are you out of your mind? We could build
39 that for less. It's just a-, a bunch of structural steel with some...
40
41**Michael Fleming:** [throat clearing]
42
43**Andy Palermino:** ...a couple of big, hydraulic units!
44
45**Cheryl McQuaid:** [laughter]
46

1Andy Palermino: What the... "Oh, it's custo-" [bang] That's what I said to these guys and
2 we said, "We'll move it." So we spent money, enclosed. It gave more
3 square footage and we moved the bridge. That was a combination of, all
4 the people worked. [mic noise]
5

6Doug Rademacher: He was under, he [snap] was, end of story. You've had many benefits over
7 the years. [1:10:38] Could you please share what's your most valuable
8 [straw in ice] benefit that you received by being part of General Motors
9 Corporation?
10

11Andy Palermino: Well o-, of course the biggest benefit is having a job and having security
12 and, uh, right now I guess, because of what's happening, uh, that's going to
13 affect a lot of people. And that is always, that, fortunately, has always
14 been the issue with the union. They b-, ...
15

16Cheryl McQuaid: [sniffle]
17

18Andy Palermino: ...they have worked...
19

20Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
21

22Andy Palermino: ...for General Motors. People have always been concerned about their job
23 and I can understand that 'cause I, uh, there's times when people don't have
24 jobs. It's pretty awful. So havin' uh, uh, good pay, good benefits, having
25 friends. I used to come to work more to socialize and hang out with
26 people and, uh, uh, every once in a while I did somethin'. I said, "Jeez, I
27 just did somethin' to save the company a couple hundred thousand dollars.
28 Nobody gives a shit but I know I did it, so at least I feel like I don-, uh, I
29 can go, uh, down to the, uh, guy's office and shoot the crap for a few
30 minutes but least when there's a job to be done, we do it. But when there's
31 nothin' to do, we can-, like, in the last year that I was workin' 204, I had
32 nothin' to do because we weren't, um, no model change, nothing was goin'
33 on. So, and, guys would come over, "Well, what are you doin'?" "What
34 the hell does it look like I'm doin'?" I'm sittin' on my ass doin' nothin'. You
35 g-, give me somethin' to do, I'll do it. I will be glad to." That's frustrating
36 when, because when we were doin' all these model changes, I remember I
37 used to work every Christmas, I used to work all the holidays and, you
38 know what? When I think about it now, I wish I hadn't done that because
39 of my family. Because the few extra dollars didn't change my life.
40

41 But the best part of General Motors is the perks and havin' a, a good job
42 because, unfortunately, the way things are goin', uh, who knows, uh, we,
43 uh, we might be dinosaurs some day! So, here, "You remember the
44 General Motors?" "Yeah, I remember that company. Yeah." It's, but
45 that's probably the biggest thing. Havin' job security; constant work too.
46 When I was in construction, I'd eith-, it was either feast or famine. You'd

1 have a good job. You got it done and just as it, it wound down, you got be
2 out lookin' for other work or you're, uh, you gotta lay people off. You
3 don't wanna do that. But fortunately, the auto industry, we make a product
4 that has to be replaced periodically because of, uh, they wear out and
5 people, uh, get tired of the same vehicle so that's always gonna be, uh,
6 there. The only problem is, over the last several years that, uh, picture's
7 changed. There's more people buyin' a foreign car. When I lived in Ann
8 Arbor, I hated Ann Arbor. Uh, Christ. I lived there when I left New
9 Jersey in 1981. I was the only one that had an American car on the whole
10 block!

11
12Cheryl McQuaid: Hm.

13
14Andy Palermino: I had a '88 [ML 1:13:23] Chevy and everybody else had, uh, Hondas and
15 this'n that. One guy, who was a Jew, had a Porsche. He came over'n
16 started braggin' about his car. I said, "You dumb shit, that thing was made
17 in Nazi Germany right where they, uh, gassed all your relatives, ya'
18 know." "Oh, my God! That's, that's, uh, uh, politically incorrect!" I said,
19 "up yours."

20
21Michael Fleming: [laughter]

22
23Andy Palermino: But, I, I never liked Ann Arbor.

24
25Michael Fleming: [laughter]

26
27Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]

28
29Andy Palermino: I can't stand Michigan. Those people there are just like, uh, – I mean, if
30 you were to take an inventory, there's very few GM dealers or American
31 auto dealers in Ann Arbor. [straw in ice 1:13:56] They're all ju-, all
32 foreign cars and that's a disgrace. Where the hell is the University of
33 Michigan getting' the majority of their money? From the taxes that are
34 paid by the union and all the people that are related to the auto industry in
35 this state. That's why it, it's just incredible. I was in church back in, when
36 I was livin' in Ann Arbor, and I made a, uh, I was a, I was an usher and
37 this guy – we used to have a part of the service where, uh, joys and
38 concerns. Well this nitwit stands up. He's got a Mazda, a Toyota, and a
39 Volvo. Those were his 3 family cars and he's a doctor workin' in Ann
40 Arbor on a grant, uh, given to, uh, uh, un-, University of Michigan by the
41 state. Where did the money come from? Us! And he says, "I'm really
42 concerned about, uh, the unemployment in the auto industry." And he
43 starts bullshittin'. And I took the, I had the hymnal and I took it and I was
44 sittin' in the back and I slammed it down on the floor so hard that he
45 jumped off the floor. And of course, everybody jumped back and I'm very
46 outspoken. Here I am in the middle of church and this, I said, "Time out,

1 Mr. What-ever-his-name-was." I said, "Quite your b.s. will ya? When
2 you leave this, your joys and concerns about the auto industry and you go
3 out in the parkin' lot to your Mazda and your Japanese car, don't, you
4 could act like you care. You don't care." Well you know what happened?
5 A year or so later, that was in the early '80s when the auto industry wasn't
6 doin' too hot 'cause that's when the plant I worked at closed and I left, the
7 grant money got pulled and he lost his job.
8
9 Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
10
11 Andy Palermino: And I said, "Thank you, Lord, there is some justice in this world." But our
12 comp-, uh, uh, our country is, it's got a problem but our biggest problem
13 with General Motors is they gotta make a, products that people are runnin'
14 to buy and then all this other stuff hopefully will take care of itself. See,
15 in the past, that's happened and so they've never corrected their problems.
16 They just ignored'm. "Oh, I'm gonna get a \$275,000 bonus! Yippee!"
17 God! No, the, they need to do a lot of things. In fact, they can start with,
18 uh, with the letter A and go all the way to Z and everything in between
19 GM's executives need to fix. The problem is they don't have the people.
20 They don't kno-, like now, when I mentioned this Delphi guy who's the...
21
22 Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
23
24 Andy Palermino: ...,uh, it used to be Jay T. Battenberg. Oh, God. I met him. He is, he
25 thinks he shits ice cream. That guy's such a creep. Oh, God. [bang] I'm so
26 impressed. I told, I actually thought one time of impressin'm in the grill'a
27 my car. That guy...
28
29 Michael Fleming: [coughing]
30
31 Andy Palermino: ...he used to work here in Lansing. He took over Delphi and he ran it into
32 the crapper [snap]. But then they blamed the union. "Oh, that's terrible!
33 They're makin' \$26 an hour." "Oh, really? What're you makin'?" "Uh, I
34 make 2 million a year." "Oh, okay. You must put in a lotta hours."
35
36 Michael Fleming: [laughter]
37
38 Doug Rademacher: [laughter]
39
40 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
41
42 Andy Palermino: I mean, gimme a break. It's so emb-, it's embarrassing when you hear this
43 stuff and you realize that this is a corporation that has put 100s, uh, a mill-,
44 millions of people to jo, in jobs and it's really, uh, uh, taking care of so
45 many people's lives in the positive way and now it's bein' handled so
46 poorly that God knows if we're gonna be around. They keep talkin' about

1 GM possibly goin' bankrupt, that they gotta take, take care of Delphi.
2 That's in the news every day just about. And it's, it's pathetic. Delphi,
3 Delco, you know Delco, ACDelco, that, that w-, sh-, – when I useda work
4 on the, my old cars, I, everything ACDel-, that's the best you can get! But
5 then they took...
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
8
9Andy Palermino: ...over and they changed it. "Oh,...
10
11Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
12
13Andy Palermino: ...we don't need AC. Let's just make it Delphi."
14
15Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
16
17Andy Palermino: Then they, uh, why did they break it off? I don't know. It doesn't even
18 make sense to me. Uh, Visteon was, uh, Ford but I think they're not in as
19 bad a shape as Delphi. But GM, uh, you know, they have to find, uh,
20 another Christ I guess to take care of this company because they are in s-,
21 they are so poorly managed that, uh, there's so many issues that they need
22 to address and God knows where do you start? But, uh, always, uh, the
23 thing of always tryin' to blame the union? That's worn out. They're so full
24 of shit it makes me sick when I think of it every day. All these people that
25 are, bust their asses and do their job and show up every day and, uh, uh,
26 give up vacations and take care of this and that for the company so they
27 can have a good job and they're loyal and what do they get for it? Nothin'.
28 The first minute somebody screws up you're out on the street. Now the
29 only positive thing in Lansing is that they had a great workforce and by
30 luck you happen, we here in Lansing, happen to be given products, except
31 for, well, you can't use plant 2, that's a very bad example.
32
33Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
34
35Andy Palermino: The Eldorado, the SSR, the electric car, the Reatta... They were searchin'
36 for, what they probably shoulda done is build some old, like a thousand
37 GTOs, '66 GTOs; run a line of'm and then go to another vehicle and use
38 that as a specialty plant. Woulda done great. Do you know there's a plant
39 in Indiana that makes Avanti? Remember the old Studebaker Avanti?
40 They're still maken'm. They make, make about a thousand a year and they
41 make, then all the people that've been working there for the last several
42 years are still there. They don't make, uh, 5000, 20,000. They don't have
43 to put'm on the market. They just have a certain niche of people that
44 buy'm. The little Cobra, the Shelby Cobra? They got plants that are
45 makin' them. They sell'm for about \$50,000. It's a replica of the original.
46 Those companies are still makin' vehicles. And here the biggest

1 corporation and they can't find their ass with 2 hands and, every time they
2 have a problem, they gotta blame somebody else. And it, it is frustrating.
3 I've been workin' with Benefits since January tryin' to get my, uh, length
4 of service corrected since I had a break in New Jersey and it's still not
5 done. That's why I haven't officially...
6
7Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
8
9Andy Palermino: ...completely retired because they don't, th-, [pause] – salary payroll is in
10 Kingston, Jamaica...
11
12Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
13
14Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
15
16Andy Palermino: ...mon.
17
18Cheryl McQuaid: [coughing]
19
20Andy Palermino: They got Benefits in...
21
22Cheryl McQuaid: [inaudible 1:20:21]
23
24Andy Palermino: ... Auckland, New Zealand; Bombay, India; Budapest, Hungary; and of
25 course, Toronto. Then they have a few others in a different pla-, but what
26 they've done, they've taken every, uh, bit of our, uh, operation and sent it
27 everywhere so you're getting'...
28
29Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
30
31Andy Palermino: ...real quality.
32
33Cheryl McQuaid: Here. [slurping]
34
35Andy Palermino: That's a step backwards. They're supposed to be steppin' [ice cubes]
36 forward.
37
38Doug Rademacher: And, uh, Doug Rademacher. That's to save a buck yet we haven't seemed
39 to be able to, uh, save a dime.
40
41Andy Palermino: You get what you pay for. I called, uh, in January I was takin' care of
42 some phones. I talked to a guy, his name was Balki. It wasn't but I
43 called'm Balki. Remember that show with, uh,...
44
45Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
46

1Andy Palermino: ... , uh, Pierce Bronson, uh, no, uh, uh, Bronson Pinchot? He used to have
2 that accent? I call up a 313 phone to have phones in building 9, uh, moved
3 and changed? And I'm talkin' to this guy, and I said, "Where, where am I
4 calling?" He goes, "I'm in Budapest." "You mean Budapest, Hungary?"
5 he goes, "Ya." I said, "Jesus Christ! I called 313 area code. How the hell
6 did I get Budapest?" He goes, "Oh, the phone transfers over. We work
7 for [EDFs 1:21:27]. They gave us the job of doin' all the VMEs for, uh,
8 General Motors." And I say, "Get the f-, I said, "How much are they
9 payin' you, Balki?" Hi-, his name wasn't Balki, I called'm that. He go-,
10 "Oh, I get \$160 American a week. I make good money." I said, "No ya'
11 don't, you stupid shit. That job in this country was \$1600 a week." "Oh!
12 I come to America to get job!" I said, "Forget it. That's why you got it pal
13 becau-,..." So now you had a, a conversation for 10 minutes, laughing
14 and jokin' with this guy. I hang up, I come to work the next day, [bang]
15 my phone's disconnected!
16
17Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
18
19Andy Palermino: Belki disconnected...
20
21Michael Fleming: [laughter]
22
23Andy Palermino: ...my phone! And my name is on the order for the phone coordinator with
24 my phone number and my, uh, all my information and that's, and that
25 authorized them to do it. So I had to call again, and I talked to somebody
26 else ...
27
28Cheryl McQuaid: [throat clearing]
29
30Andy Palermino: ...that was even worse than him and, uh...
31
32Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
33
34Andy Palermino: ..."Oh, I got order in front of me. It has, yeah, we did the, we did it
35 correct. It's, it's Andy Palama, oh, you Italiano!" I said, y-, no, I'm an
36 American, ya' s-, yeah, my parents are Italian. I'm an American." Yeah,
37 well, uh, "Yeah, I got the order, Andy Palermino." And they g-, "That's
38 me, you stupid shit! I'm the pho-, you got..." Then, "Oh! I see. I see.
39 Okay. We fix. We fix." I'm on Dave Karkau's phone Well, I say, "I
40 gotta get out of here." Well that was one of the last times I had any
41 contact with this guy or these people. And you know what? They're still
42 doin' the job.
43
44Cheryl McQuaid: Mm-hm.
45

1Andy Palermino: You've got, well, you get what you pay for. Wow. [ice in cup] Now the
2 company is in deep shit trouble. And the onl-, [ice in cup] and I tell you
3 what's savin' General Motors, believe it or not. I hate to even, well, it's,
4 it's p-,...
5
6Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
7
8Andy Palermino: ...its actually positive. It's the union. They act, they've tried to, over the
9 years, make it seem as though, uh, uh, people that, uh, work for the UAW
10 are overpaid, don't do anything. And I tell you what, that is no longer the
11 case. They are now, uh, Wall Street people, since I watch TV a lot 'cause
12 I'm home, they are burying General Motors's managers. They want, they
13 want Wagner just like, uh, Matt Millen] to get, uh, "You know, you're not
14 doin' your, the job is screwed up." Meanwhile, it's not Matt Millen's fault.
15 It's, it's, the Lion's kinda remind me of General Motors.
16
17Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
18
19Andy Palermino: They blame one...
20
21Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
22
23Andy Palermino: ...guy? At least they have somebody to point a finger at. It's the players!
24 It's the people that are on the fiel-, if I was makin' all that money I would
25 probably be, well, it depends. I mean, Christ, you don't have to do
26 anything, just show up! But it's pathetic. But it's got nothin' to do with 2
27 or 3 people. It's the team. That's what's wrong with General Motors.
28 They got so many...
29
30Cheryl McQuaid: [inaudible 1:23:59]
31
32Andy Palermino: ...things wrong with it, they don't even know where to start. And the
33 biggest issue is they don't have any person who's the leader, that's really
34 grabbin' the whole thing by the [cogliones 1:24:09] and sayin', "You
35 know what? First, we're gonna do is get rid of a lot of this overhead we
36 have. And we're gonna start spendin' money on product and advertising,
37 all the things that we've done that are positive instead of every single day
38 in the newspapers and in the media they talk about General Motors in the
39 negative way. And that is not helpin' the company." And nobody ad-,
40 Wagner stands up on the podium and he bullshits and he never mentions
41 that. Yeah. You know, "You guy-, you oughta get pissed. You know,
42 you guys have spent most of your goddamn time criticizing us. Why
43 doncha cut us some slack and realize that, you know, General Motors is
44 the backbone of this goddamn country whether you like it or not! And
45 we're trying the best we can." I would probably fall on the floor if I

1 heard'm say that but yet they don't! He just, "Well we're hopin' to be
2 profitable in, uh, 2009 if, uh, uh...
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
5
6Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
7
8Andy Palermino: ...but as long as I get my bonus, I don't give 2 shits 'cause I'm gonna, I got
9 a..." – you know, you can look up his name on the Internet or on the GM
10 stock and you see he's got, uh, 25,000 shares of GM and all these shares,
11 oh, my. But now at \$20 a share, he probably is gonna have to get a part-
12 time job at Lowes! [laughter]
13
14Michael Fleming: What did he, uh, Mike Fleming. [throat clearing] What was, uh, with all
15 the names and all that Fisher Body's been through, what, what, what'd you,
16 what did, [1:25:27] are you goin' to miss the Fisher Body plant or do you
17 call it something else? [bang]
18
19Andy Palermino: Yeah, I do. I already-, I have, I've been gone since January. Yeah, I do
20 miss bein' here. I, in fact, what the hell is an engineer comin' over to the
21 602? I came here to see John Anthony 'cause we're friends and I said, you
22 know what? He's cool and he could probably help me 'cause nobody else
23 can. This goddamn crap [chair scraping 1:25:47] with Benefits is makin'
24 me crazy so I came here and that's because I knew I could talk to
25 somebody and I ended up spendin', uh, a couple hours bending your ear
26 because I'm home alone...
27
28Michael Fleming: [laughter]
29
30Andy Palermino: ...a lot of times and I don't talk very much, so when I get an opportunity to
31 talk, I get diarrhea of the mouth and...
32
33Michael Fleming: [laughter]
34
35Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
36
37Andy Palermino: ...yap away but no! Uh, this is like a home. That's, that's the biggest
38 positive thing. Havin' job security or havin' a job but also havin' people
39 you can, like now, being able to come to talk to people. Seein' people and
40 get-, see'm in Meijers and goin' over and givin' somebody a hug. I never
41 had that before. It's, it's cool. Salary people don't do that. They'd throw
42 somethin' at you in the p-, if you were in Meijers. In fact, I see guys in, in,
43 that I, I've worked with and when, if I see'm, I go in another aisle a lot of
44 ti-, I don't even want to...
45
46Michael Fleming: [laughter]

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
3
4Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
5
6Andy Palermino: ...look at...
7
8Doug Rademacher: [laughter]
9
10Andy Palermino: ...that's serious...
11
12Michael Fleming: Plant superintendents. You've been through a couple. [1:26:41] Um,
13 name a couple of'm. Gimme your best...
14
15Andy Palermino: Oh, you mean, like, [bang] like, uh, like, uh, Jim Zupkus?
16
17Michael Fleming: And, yeah.
18
19Andy Palermino: Oh, yeah. Okay, I'd say, uh, that's...
20
21Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
22
23Andy Palermino: ...person. J-, I don't know what you guys think of Jim Zupkus but I've had
24 an opportunity to work with him one on one and my, uh, first wife died 10
25 years ago and I had only been in the plant a couple'a months and he called
26 me, he called me to his office, so I show up there and he says, he flipped,
27 he throws me his keys. He says, "I got some stuff in my car. Take the car
28 and take it home." So I was kind of, uh, you know, I, I never really talked
29 to'm before'n I didn't know what he was talkin' about, so I walked out in
30 the parkin' l-, I started walkin' out to the, uh, interior parkin' lot and
31 Barbara Rossi walked over with me. She said, "His wife made some food
32 for you." So I went out in, in his car and it was filled with, uh, all these,
33 uh, uh, entr-, not entrees, but, uh, casseroles and stuff. So I took
34 everything and went home, brought it home, came back, and he, and then
35 when I went home the next day af-, it was after my wife's funeral, I had,
36 uh, a huge plant that the plant, I use-, no pun intended, sent to me. And
37 you know what? That's never happened to me in my life. And that guy
38 has got class.
39
40 But that's the type of person General Motors, more of those type of people
41 they need runnin' this company. That's a car person. I don't know how
42 many of you've had contact with him. I didn't know Frank Schotters. I
43 only met'm a couple times, but uh, there's been nobody like Jim Zupkus. I
44 went over, one day I snuck outa work with a bunch of other guys and we
45 went to Hawk Hollow.
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
2
3 Andy Palermino: And we were supposed to have a meeting with him and Barbara Rossi
4 called us, it was like a group meeting about some issue, and they said,
5 "Mr. Zupkus had to cancel this meeting." So I show up at the golf course
6 and there he is in the golf cart! And I said, "Well, you sonofabitch! We
7 had a meeting and you didn't show, [bang] and you called it off?" He
8 says, "Don't tell on me!" [laughter]
9
10 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter]
11
12 Andy Palermino: "Well who am I gonna tell?" And he laughed and he said, and...
13
14 Michael Fleming: [throat clearing]
15
16 Andy Palermino: ...and he, you know. And then one time I was comin' down the aisle in
17 building 2 and he's with a guy by the name of, uh, oh, God, he was his
18 boss, that little guy. I can't think of his name now. Anyway, they have,
19 have an issue with ventilation. They were havin' problems up in the front
20 office with ventilation, uh, a lot of dust and the dirt. So he says,
21 "Palermino!" oh, Tim was the guy's name. He says, "Palermino!" And I,
22 "Yeah?" "The ventilation, y'gonna fix it?" And I said the truth, I said,
23 "Uh, Mr. Zupkus, that's not my job." "Whaddya mean? Not your job?
24 You sound like a goddam Mexican." I s-, and then he said, "You
25 sonofabitch, you hear what I just said?" Of course he yelled it out, bein'
26 funny, and then he realized what he said. He cal-, and he goes back to his
27 office. Then he called me down and he goes, "You dumb sonofabitch!
28 D'you realize what you made me do?" I said, "Time out! I didn't make
29 you do anything. You spurt that out of your mouth on your own." And
30 we laughed and I left. And he's a plant manager. I'm the, a pissant
31 engineer! I mean, he could do that [snap] in 1 minute and fire me. But
32 that, but he was a good guy. And a lot of people went ov-, bent over
33 backwards to work with'm. He could be a prick if he wanted to.
34
35 They actually almost fired me and my, and my 2 bosses because, several
36 years ago, the executive conference room us-, used to be, I'm tryin' to
37 remember who was in there. Uh, [Wookie Hopkins 1:30:15] it was his
38 office and they needed chairs. I said, "Well I'm not gonna buy anything.
39 You can't buy anything." He said, "I'm the plant manager. I wantcha to
40 buy 20 chairs for the executive conference room." "Okay." And I leave.
41 I'm with some woman vendor who told'm how much they were. Well
42 about 2 months later, the chairs get delivered and he just comes back from
43 vacation and, uh, people, I guess the problems in the plant'n he comes
44 back from vacation. He doesn't wanna listen to all this shit. Well their all
45 dump'n on'm so he got pissed. He's lookin' around and he said, "Goddam
46 it. Where the hell'd these chairs come from?" He'd forgotten. "I wanna

1
2
3
4
5/b

[bang] find out who bought'm." 'Cause you know, they were bitchin'
about money. He says, "I'm gonna, I want you to find out who bought...