

**Marilyn Poland discusses her career as the Secretary to the President  
and Bargaining Chair of UAW Local 602**

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5 Marilyn Coulter: [recorder clicking] Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team interview with  
6 Marilyn Poland. The date is Thursday, January 5th, 2006. We're in the UAW  
7 Local 602 Conference Room. Uh, first we'll introduce the team. [door  
8 closing] I'm Marilyn Coulter.  
9  
10 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.  
11  
12 Earl Nicholson: Earl Nicholson.  
13  
14 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [throat clearing]  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: [0:22] Um, Marilyn, can you please, uh, s-, uh, say and spell your last name,  
17 please, for us?  
18  
19 Marilyn Poland: Marilyn Poland, P-O-L-A-N-D.  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: [0:33] And could you please spell "Marilyn," also?  
22  
23 Marilyn Poland: M-A-R-I-L-Y-N.  
24  
25 Marilyn Coulter: Thank you. [0:40] Um, Marilyn, uh, can you, um – and your a-, and your  
26 address, please?  
27  
28 Marilyn Poland: 2711 East Rowley Road in Williamston, Michigan.  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: All right. [0:53] And, um, you're a female?  
31  
32 Marilyn Poland: Yes, I am.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [0:56] You're white. Right?  
35  
36 Marilyn Poland: Yes. [coughing]  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [0:58] Uh, marital status?  
39  
40 Marilyn Poland: I am married.  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00] And you have children?  
43  
44 Marilyn Poland: Yes; I have four children and a step-daughter, I have 17 grandchildren, and  
45 five great-grandchildren.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [1:10] And your education level?  
2  
3 Marilyn Poland: Uh, some college.  
4  
5 Marilyn Coulter: [1:13] Uh, any military service?  
6  
7 Marilyn Poland: No.  
8  
9 Marilyn Coulter: All right. [1:19] Um, you were – y-, what was your title?  
10  
11 Marilyn Poland: Secretary to the President.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: [1:26] And, um, you came to UA-, you were the secretary for the presidents of  
14 UAW Local 602, correct?  
15  
16 Marilyn Poland: Yes.  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: [1:34] Uh, what did you do prior to becoming a secretary at 602?  
19  
20 Marilyn Poland: I worked for the State of Michigan for 10 years; uh, the last department I  
21 worked in was the Department of Agriculture. I had left, um, there and had  
22 had a baby and was at home when there was a secretary at Local 724 who was  
23 in a serious car accident, and my husband at that time was the Financial  
24 Secretary of 652 and was called upon by Local 724 to, uh, see if he knew of  
25 anyone who was completely trained in UAW secretarial duties who could  
26 come in and help out, and he said, “Well, my wife.” So I went and covered  
27 [inaudible 2:19] post until her recovery, and at that time, I had worked long  
28 enough to regain my seniority in OPEIU Local 42, and when a secretary left at  
29 602, I was up for consideration for hiring, and I was hired at that time by  
30 Richard Sanborn, and that was 30 years ago.  
31  
32 Marilyn Coulter: [2:41] And do you remember what date that was?  
33  
34 Marilyn Poland: I don’t have that date with me; I can supply it to you.  
35  
36 Marilyn Coulter: [2:47] Oh. Do you...  
37  
38 Marilyn Poland: Uh, because I don’t remember dates.  
39  
40 Marilyn Coulter: ...around as, as far as the year? Do you remember the year?  
41  
42 Marilyn Poland: ’68.  
43  
44 Marilyn Coulter: You were at Lansing ’68. [2:56] Now, was 602 the first UAW local you  
45 worked for?  
46

1 Marilyn Poland: No, I had worked at Local 652, and then I worked at Local 724, and, um, then  
2 I worked as Vacation Replacement to the International Region 1C Office here  
3 in Lansing.  
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [3:15] So when you came into, uh, the UAW Local 602 and, um, 602  
6 was the union representation for Fisher Body, Lansing, um, did you know  
7 much about Fisher Body before hiring in?  
8

9 Marilyn Poland: Yes.  
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: [3:34] And what did you think about the Plant then?  
12

13 Marilyn Poland: I thought it was, um, a very active plant and a plant that had always had active  
14 politics, active committees. Uh, it was one I was looking forward to working  
15 with.  
16

17 Marilyn Coulter: [3:54] So when you came in [throat clearing] as the Secretary to the President  
18 of 602...  
19

20 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: ...what were the job [throat clearing] responsibilities of the Secretary to the  
23 President?  
24

25 Marilyn Poland: The Secretary to the President worked directly with the President and the  
26 Chairman of the Bargaining Committee; [writing] um, typed letters, wrote  
27 correspondence, did original writings, helped, uh, the date procedural  
28 timelines on the grievance procedure, uh, prepared cases as the [sighing]  
29 Chairman of the Shop Committee would dictate them or correct them from  
30 [second-step 4:33] minutes, um, kept all the records, filed original grievances,  
31 and then worked with each chairman of the standing committees on work they  
32 might need to have accomplished, also worked in the Financial Secretary's  
33 Office, uh, during the absence of their own secretary and, uh, covering lunch  
34 breaks and coffee breaks.  
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: [5:00] So you were an integral part in the bargaining procedures of 602 as far  
37 as making sure the documents were in order.  
38

39 Marilyn Poland: Also if any district committeemen wanted to come over and research for a  
40 particular grievance, I would assist in that, helping them locate a subtle  
41 grievance so that they might continue on in a positive manner and prove that  
42 this has already been settled.  
43

44 Marilyn Coulter: [5:30] So in doing that, um, how many presidents and bargaining chairs would  
45 you say that you went through?  
46

1 Marilyn Poland: 12.  
2  
3 Marilyn Coulter: 12.  
4  
5 Marilyn Poland: That's presidents and bargaining...  
6  
7 Marilyn Coulter: And bargaining...  
8  
9 Marilyn Poland: ...chairs.  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: ...chairs.  
12  
13 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: [5:53] So – and you started with, um...  
16  
17 Marilyn Poland: Richard Sanborn.  
18  
19 Marilyn Coulter: ...Richard Sanborn? So, um, during that time and you had the grievance  
20 procedures and the presidents – oh. [recorder clicking] [6:13] So Marilyn,  
21 you've been through a total of 12 presidents and bargaining chairs and you  
22 came in and you'd been involved in local unions and local union politics, and  
23 you knew about Lansing Fisher Body. Can you tell us your story?  
24  
25 Marilyn Poland: Yes, I will briefly describe some of the things [papers rustling] that happened  
26 after I was hired by Richard Sanborn. Uh, Richard Sanborn became president  
27 of Local 602 following the appointment of Lloyd Cain, the preceding  
28 president, to the International Staff of Region 1C.  
29  
30 During, uh, Mr. Sanborn's [background conversation] term of office, there  
31 was a major strike. The strike committee of Local 602 was well set up and one  
32 of the, I believe the Strike Chairman at that time was Nick Kelley, [writing] a  
33 very dedicated union person, and he and his committee made sure that all the  
34 people had done their strike duty by picketing or by delivering coffee to the  
35 people on the gates, or whatever was needed, and the responsibility of the  
36 secretaries at that time was to type up picket strike rosters as to those people  
37 who had actually done their time, uh, strike time to enable their checks to be  
38 processed, [chair squeaking] their strike fund checks. Um, the end, the Union  
39 was eventually successful in settling the strike, but the strike committee  
40 behaved very admirably and very much, um, carried out the duties.  
41  
42 There was an interesting, uh, division of unionism versus personal power that  
43 comes into play on some committees where people were being harassed or  
44 demanded to know why they were absent when they had a reasonable excuse  
45 to be gone. That was handled by the Chairman, saying that we were brothers

1 and sisters in this Union; together, it was not our responsibility to question  
2 each other.

3  
4 Uh, during the period of Mr. Sanborn's presidency, [papers rustling] one thing  
5 that they held at that time were district meetings, and this gave the opportunity  
6 the-, for the members of a district to come together, discuss the problems they  
7 were having, uh, with each other and with management, and they could talk  
8 about the problems with their district committeemen, their aldermen, their  
9 zone. It was also a social time where they could build bonds of friendship.  
10 This is a Union Hall, and it is not only strife; it is togetherness and happiness.  
11 And by having these district meetings, I think that a lotta things were aired out  
12 and the district committeemen had a clearer picture of some a the problems  
13 that were cropping up in his area, and now that they have done away with that  
14 procedure, I think they have lost because of it. I think this is a good, positive  
15 thing to have people be able to express their opinions.

16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: [9:23] Excuse me, Marilyn, can you explain what a district is for us?

18  
19 Marilyn Poland: A district is divided up according to the national agreement and a local  
20 agreement by a certain number in, of people in a set area. As your plant  
21 populations go up, you have more districts; as they go down, you have fewer  
22 districts, and each district elects their own committeemen to represent them  
23 and their own alternate. There were times during both Mr. Sanborn and Mr.  
24 [Somers 9:52] presidency that the people became very disheartened with a  
25 particular committeeman that they might have, and they would – there is an  
26 avenue for removing them. If you are elected, uh, you can be removed by your  
27 constituents, and they were unhappy enough that they did take this action at  
28 least 1 or 2 times.

29  
30 Uh, one a the highest compliments I can give Mr. Sanborn is he is a union  
31 man. He believed in the union, he was active in the Lansing Labor News, and  
32 I enjoyed serving as a secretary during his administration. At that time, a lotta  
33 the standing committees were not as active as they became in later years, uh,  
34 and Mr. Sanborn, during his tenure, um, there was a change in the Shop  
35 Committee. The Chairman of the Shop Committee at that time was not elected  
36 by the membership; the Chairman of the Shop Committee was selected by the  
37 elected zone committeemen. They picked who they wanted to be their leader.  
38 And there some merits to that, because they are, by agreement, saying, "I will  
39 follow this leader," not "We are all equal and nobody's gonna be our leader."

40  
41 They're selecting who's going to lead, but at this time, the chairman was [Bob  
42 Sanders 11:24], [chair squeaking] and he was a man of great knowledge of the  
43 contract; one of the few people I've ever been able to see quote large  
44 segments of contractual language by memory. He had this within his mind.  
45 But the Zone Committee at that time said, "We will not have you as Chairman  
46 anymore. You're done." They then selected Bob Somers to be the Chairman.

1 **Bob Sanders**, naturally, was very hurt over this. Uh, he subsequently resigned  
2 from the Zone Committee and he became a member of management's team;  
3 he became a foreman.  
4

5 Bob Somers, both during his tenure as Chairman and later at President too,  
6 was a true union man. Bob always, always took the part of the person  
7 wronged and was particularly interested in young people. If young people had  
8 made an error and a grievance was resolved in their favor, he wanted them to  
9 know that they were being given a second chance. It was very important to  
10 him that young people be given the chances they need to succeed, and not  
11 only young people, but all people, but particularly young men and women as  
12 they were starting out in the Labor Movement. He cared about their problems.  
13 He was one of the few presidents that was here all day long. He did not run  
14 around becoming involved in a lot of ac-, outside activities. His activity was  
15 representing the people of Local 602. He was here, he available. If they  
16 wanted to talk to him, his door was open. He was here to hear them. The  
17 wasn't involved in, uh, going on to other committees or other events; he was  
18 here for the membership.  
19

20 After, um, Mr. Sanborn and Mr. Somers had served as Chairman and  
21 President, they then reversed, Somers becoming President, Sanborn becoming  
22 Chair, and [chair squeaking] during that time, there was a lot of strife in the  
23 Plant. The committees started to become a little more active. One of the  
24 committees that's always been active in this local is the Recreation  
25 Committee; it's had some very dedicated people throughout the history of the  
26 local. Um, I can remember as a teenager that Local 652 and Local 602 at that  
27 time had active dance programs, and they would have a dance every other  
28 weekend and rotate halls, and it was a good time. Uh, after, after they reversed  
29 positions, as I say, the Committee started becoming more active. Um, [papers  
30 rustling] Mr. Ward, Terry Ward – well, during – excuse me. During the tenure  
31 of, uh, Mr. Somers as President, there was some, uh, extensive, rep-, uh,  
32 repairs and redecorating done to the Union Hall, and there were some monies  
33 that the membership appropriated for that purpose, and it was upgraded, and  
34 then it was never upgraded again until many years later, under Garry Bernath.  
35

36 Terry Ward, when he came into power, the committees became very active.  
37 Uh, one of the things that he oversaw was the renovation of the GreenHouse  
38 across the street. There was a lot of structural things that had to be corrected,  
39 new stairs built in the back. Uh, this was the house where the Alcoholics  
40 Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous met and, um, it really was in need of a  
41 lot of help. The building was deteriorating, and so he oversaw the upgrade of  
42 this. During h-, uh, the time he was President – can we stop? [recorder  
43 clicking]  
44

45 When I first hired in here, the property immediately to the east of the Union  
46 Hall was a huge farmhouse. They owned property back in toward the, uh,

1 Plant 2, and they had a large parcel, and they had grapevines, and they had  
2 fruit trees, and they had [chair squeaking] chickens, and every day, this little  
3 old gnarled up lady who was the owner's mother, I think at that time her son  
4 owned the property, but she would make the rounds of her property every  
5 morning going all the way around the fence line to make sure that her  
6 chickens and everything was doing well, and the GreenHouse [chair  
7 squeaking] across the street that Local 602 eventually purchased was  
8 originally a private residence, and the people there had, to my understand,  
9 planted one of every type of tree, uh, particularly fir trees, that grew in  
10 Michigan. They had a beautiful stone pond, they had fountains. They were in,  
11 um, House Beautiful or Better Homes & Garden; they were written up as an  
12 outstanding showplace home. That house eventually became a jewelry store,  
13 and then after that, it, uh, was purchased by Local 602 who used it for the  
14 insurance officers and for the [background conversation] Alcoholics  
15 Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, also various committees would meet  
16 there as needed. During the time Terry Ward was president and he s-, oversaw  
17 the renovation of the GreenHouse, the Committees were becoming more  
18 active. [Louis Schultz 17:36] became the Chairman of the Bargaining  
19 Committee.  
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: Mar-, Marilyn, I need to interrupt you for one...

22  
23 Marilyn Poland: Yes. [chair squeaking]  
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: ...second. [17:43] But [background conversation] so you were a member of  
26 the Lansing community? Were you a member of the Lansing...  
27

28 Marilyn Poland: Yes, I...

29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: ...community?  
31

32 Marilyn Poland: ...was born in Lansing.  
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [17:52] So being born in Lansing, can you tell me, what did the community  
35 think of Fisher Body Lansing?  
36

37 Marilyn Poland: Well, I can give you a good example. When I was first married, I lived with a  
38 woman who lived within half a block of Fisher Body, and we rented an  
39 apartment from her. Her son worked at Fisher Body. She said, "What a grand  
40 neighbor they are. They keep their property so beautiful. How could anybody  
41 complain?" And at that time, Fisher Body had a program where they had a  
42 beautiful, uh, hand-tended floral arrangement of the famous Fisher Body  
43 coach, and this was at an angle, so as you were driving down the street, you  
44 could see this beautiful, beautiful natural, uh, growing plant production of this  
45 coach. And they did, they always maintained their grounds. They weren't  
46 trashy, they weren't dirty like a lot of great plants are in inner-city areas. They

1 were acknowledging that they were part of the neighborhood and they kept up  
2 their end to make good neighbors, and the people liked them.  
3  
4 It wasn't until many, many years later that people started complaining, [throat  
5 clearing] after they had bought a home by a factory, that factories have odors,  
6 uh, and they do. This is a paint facility. This is a body shop. This is a thing  
7 that is creating employment and good conditions for many people, but there's  
8 downsides to it too, and they tried to correct the odors by extending the stacks,  
9 they tried to comply with these requirements so that people would never have  
10 to smell anything to do with their industry that was creating so much wealth  
11 for them and the people in the City of Lansing.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: [19:49] What about the employees of Fisher Body? How did the community  
14 look at the people who came in from different communities to work here?  
15  
16 Marilyn Poland: In my personal knowledge, no one was ever, ever took exception to people s-,  
17 uh, seeking a job. They didn't resent their being here. Everybody needed jobs,  
18 and if they came from Flint, if they came from Detroit, if they came from the  
19 deep south, they came from the east, they were not shunned or misused, to my  
20 knowledge.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
23  
24 Marilyn Poland: Um, at that time too it was a family tradition. If a father worked at Fisher, he  
25 could get his son a job at Fisher. If a mother worked at Fisher, which in the  
26 ancient days didn't happen 'cause there weren't any women employed there  
27 until, well, much later years, but they could get their children a job. So this  
28 was an ongoing "I work for this company, I'm proud of'm, and I want my  
29 children to work for them." So this was, this is something I think that Fisher  
30 and General Motors in general has lost is that family tradition as they've  
31 turned over their responsibility to hiring agencies who are not directly  
32 involved with the company culture. I think they've lost ground there because  
33 they had people that said, "My dad worked there, and he struggled and he got  
34 to where we are, and I'm gonna work there and I'm gonna make things  
35 better," and I think this is a loss of continuity to families for not having  
36 changed the f-, hiring structure.  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [21:36] Do you feel that that might have also been one a the things that  
39 might've made it difficult for the unity with the new labor, because people did  
40 not know what it took to get there where they might have known with their  
41 fathers?  
42  
43 Marilyn Poland: Right. Because that was a deliberate severing by management of union  
44 history. The father could not say to his son – y-, ya know, we've already  
45 settled that. This, this has been accomplished, because now you have people  
46 who have no knowledge of what happened before or no knowledge of the, of



1 the dedication and of the sacrifice that was made to gain each union increase  
2 that they obtained, and so management was successful in that by altering their  
3 hiring policy of severing that, uh, continuity, but I think as a manufacturing  
4 facility, they may have done this to weaken the union, but they've also  
5 weakened themselves through this, and I think that that may be one of the  
6 things that's playing out now.  
7

8 Uh, during Terry Ward's, uh, term as President, Louis, Louis Schultz became  
9 [papers rustling] the Chairman of the Bargaining Committee. Louis Schultz  
10 was a ground-up activist. He had held Alternate Committee, Committee, Zone  
11 Committee, Chairman, and he had an absolutely amazing faculty of  
12 remembering names. He could remember everyone's name; he could  
13 remember your daughter's name, he could remember your dog's name. He  
14 could say, "How is your mother Beth doing?" He had this amazing memory.  
15 Very few people are gifted with that, of knowing not only your name but other  
16 things associated with you, and Lou was a very independent politician. He did  
17 not depend on the mainstream political alliances for his election. He always  
18 depended on the grassroots and he always depended on the individual  
19 member. Uh, he was a very active Chairman. He was both liked and disliked.  
20 He was a person that only answered to the members, and his committee was  
21 active.  
22

23 Um, Don Brown gave Lou Schultz much advice on being a Chairman, on how  
24 to do things. Don was a very, um, wonderful Chairman. He was the Chairman  
25 during Dick Sanborn's presidency, and he – regressing here back from Lou  
26 Schultz to Don Brown, Don maintained a completely unified committee. Each  
27 committeeman knew that if there were ever any complaints on their actions or  
28 lack of actions that first and foremost, Don Brown would support them. He  
29 would never go behind a district or alternate's back. He would say to the  
30 member had a problem, "We'll address your problem, we'll get into this, but  
31 you've got a good committeeman." He always kept his committee solid, and  
32 as a result of that, they were able to handle a lot of grievances and a lot of  
33 problems because they were united, they were not divided amongst  
34 themselves, and they knew their chairman was always there for them.  
35

36 Um, with Lou Schultz, he became active in the u-, local union, and the  
37 committees, particularly Recreation Committee was active during, uh, Terry  
38 Ward's time. Lou Schultz has now died, but he left the local union to become  
39 an international representative. Uh, he was put on the, uh, Arena of Health and  
40 Safety and he had truly enjoyed his career after he left the local and became  
41 part of the International Detroit Local. Following Terry Ward's de-, um –  
42 when Alvin Pressley became President, Alvin had had a lot of activity – uh,  
43 just a minute – we have. [recorder clicking]  
44

45 Alvin Pressley had been Vice President under Bob Somers, and during Mr.  
46 Somers' illnesses had served as President. When the election was held, Terry

1 Ward was elected. Following his term of office, Alvin Pressley ran for  
2 President and defeated him. Alvin brought a quality of professionalism to the  
3 Union Hall. He was active on his committees, he was an active President. He  
4 had come to this local from Albion where he had also been active. One of the  
5 main things that Mr. Pressley was interested in establishing in Local 602 and  
6 was successful in doing so was the Chaplaincy Program. This was the first  
7 local in the UAW to have such a program and he was a very keen advocate of  
8 that. He also was an advocate of educational programs. Um, because of his  
9 professional demeanor and his hard work, the International recognized him  
10 and put him on the International Staff, and his Vice President at that time, Ted  
11 Hartman, who had run for office on a different caucus. At that time, there  
12 were unofficial caucuses. They were never slates in this local, but there were  
13 unofficial affiliations and ties.

14  
15 Ted Hartman became president. Ted was a man who was a man of the people.  
16 He was a worker in the Plant. He knew the problems of the people in the  
17 Plant. He had not expected to become President but was given that  
18 opportunity when Pressley was chosen by the International Staff. Uh, Garry  
19 Bernath defeated Ted Hartman and I believe, going back here, Pressley, at that  
20 time, the Chairman was Dick Bennett. Dick Bennett was a very organized  
21 committeeman. Um, he kept an absolute eagle eye on the grievance procedure.  
22 There were a lot of grievances at the time. There were a lot – there was a lot  
23 of turmoil in the Plant. Um, Dick performed his job in such a manner that the  
24 International Union then selected him to go on the staff as a Bargaining  
25 Representative. Ted Hartman's defeat by Garry Bernath caused great change  
26 in the local.

27  
28 Garry Bernath was a – was probably the most businessman-like person that  
29 the local had ever had. Uh, he completely re-, [throat clearing] renovated  
30 the Union Hall. He insisted that all his committees become active; they all did  
31 become active, and so it was a time of great activity under his regime, because  
32 he expected it. He himself was busy and he wanted all of his committees to be  
33 busy, and he incorporated a lot of new people from the Plant into committees  
34 that had not been very active before. Mr. Bernath was then subsequently  
35 chosen by the International Union in Detroit to become part of their team and  
36 he left. Oh, and Matt Strickling became President.

37  
38 Matt was, [chair squeaking] um, a great writer, a great President in the fact of  
39 communication, as was Garry Bernath. Garry was a prolific writer, uh, a good  
40 writer. Matt was into the arena of publishing, making sure that the in-plant  
41 newsletter was the best that it could be. Um, he did original writing for it. He  
42 was then replaced by Art Luna, who is the current president.

43  
44 Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Art...

45

46 Marilyn Poland: Art...

1  
2Marilyn Coulter: ...was the [inaudible].  
3  
4Marilyn Poland: ...uh, during Matt Strickling's President, Art Luna was the Vice President, and  
5 then he subsequently ran for office and was elected in his own right as  
6 President. The end.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: Um...  
9  
10Marilyn Poland: Go.  
11  
12Earl Nicholson: Just a couple a fun questions...  
13  
14Marilyn Poland: Yes.  
15  
16Cheryl McQuaid: Earl Nicholson.  
17  
18Earl Nicholson: ...Earl Nicholson – uh, before we wrap it up. [31:49] Um, I wanna ask you a  
19 series of questions. [papers rustling] The day you hired in...  
20  
21Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
22  
23Earl Nicholson: ...and from when you left. So, the differences [inaudible 31:59].  
24  
25Marilyn Poland: The day I hired in...  
26  
27Earl Nicholson: No, I'm n-, I'm gonna ask you, uh...  
28  
29Marilyn Poland: Okay. All right.  
30  
31Earl Nicholson: ...some questions.  
32  
33Marilyn Poland: Okay.  
34  
35Earl Nicholson: [32:04] Okay, number one, smoking.  
36  
37Marilyn Poland: Smoking was allowed in the Union Hall. I didn't smoke, and Mr. Sanborn  
38 didn't smoke, but it was never off limits.  
39  
40Earl Nicholson: Yeah.  
41  
42Marilyn Poland: Those people who chose to smoke could do so.  
43  
44Earl Nicholson: And when you left, was there any change?  
45

1 Marilyn Poland: Yes, there was a change that people could not smoke in the membership  
2 meetings. But there still was not a change that they couldn't smoke in the  
3 building.  
4

5 Earl Nicholson: Okay.  
6

7 Marilyn Poland: Um, it becomes quite smoky in a, in a room when you have a lotta people, and  
8 it can be bothersome to some people, but just on general meetings and other  
9 functions, social functions, smoking was allowed.  
10

11 Earl Nicholson: Okay. [32:41] Uh, the Bible, religion.  
12

13 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
14

15 Earl Nicholson: The difference, uh, between, uh, when you hired in and when you left.  
16

17 Marilyn Poland: At the time I hired in, religion had no, uh, prevalent basis in the union...  
18

19 Earl Nicholson: Mm-hm.  
20

21 Marilyn Poland: ...with the exception of the Bible program whereby bibles were given out in  
22 loving memory of deceased people; not only members, but their immediate  
23 family, and so that was an ongoing, uh, thing that was broadened greatly  
24 under Garry Bernath to include a lot more people, but, uh, it wasn't until the  
25 time of Alvin Pressley that religion had a basis in the Bargaining Unit. Um,  
26 most unions traditionally – and I'm talking about AFL, CIO, I'm talking about  
27 the [Wobblies 33:34], I'm talking about the UAW, I'm talking about Steel  
28 Workers, talkin' about the Coal Miners – religion was not something that was  
29 conducted within the Union Hall; bargaining issues were.  
30

31 Earl Nicholson: Okay. [33:51] Um, your happiest moment?  
32

33 Marilyn Poland: Yes, my happiest moment? Well, I think the day I retired. It was very nice. It  
34 was very special. People had made that day nice, and I had worked with some  
35 wonderful, wonderful activists and people over the years who had made great  
36 strides for the Labor Movement and who had been especially nice to me. It's  
37 nice to work with people that appreciate you and it's nice to work with an  
38 organization that's trying to better the lives of people.  
39

40 Earl Nicholson: Okay. [34:23] Your saddest moment?  
41

42 Marilyn Poland: Hm. I think when I found out that Alvin Pressley had laid dead unfound for 2  
43 days. I think that was sad.  
44

45 Earl Nicholson: Okay. [34:48] Um, and when you left, uh, when you retired...  
46

1 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
2  
3 Earl Nicholson: ...the, were the, were the skills that you had learned, uh, did you carry those  
4 with you after you left, uh...  
5  
6 Marilyn Poland: Yes, some a those skills I carry with me always...  
7  
8 Earl Nicholson: Uh-huh.  
9  
10 Marilyn Poland: ...but, um, I tried to pass on as many of my skills as I could to the people who  
11 replaced me. Um, they had a difficult time finding the right person to replace  
12 me, that caused a lotta grief, but I tried to share as much of my knowledge of  
13 history of the local as I could to make their work experience and tenure as, as  
14 nice as mine had been.  
15  
16 Earl Nicholson: Okay. One more question.  
17  
18 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
19  
20 Earl Nicholson: And, uh, I don't want you to hold back. [35:44] You know, over the years,  
21 you've been here a long time. What's probably the most outrageous prank that  
22 you've ever been – that you've ever known of or been associate with?  
23  
24 Marilyn Poland: I don't know. I really don't know how to answer that. I can't – right off the  
25 top of my head, I can't – oh, I know. This was a prank of a group of men who  
26 had gone to – uh, it was the Bargaining Committee. They had gone to a  
27 [sighing] meeting in Detroit and afterward had decided to go out for a social  
28 time. And they went to an unfamiliar bar, and a gal got up on the bar and was  
29 – and on their table, and was dancing. And then they got to looking around at  
30 the clientele and they figured they were really in the wrong place, and they  
31 tried to leave, and their way was blocked until they paid this exorbitant  
32 amount of money for the dancer in order for them to be able to leave the bar.  
33 And they paid it and they left. [laughter]  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: [37:07] Y-, um, Marilyn, there were some, uh, things that, um, like as part of  
36 your duties, all the postings that came from the Union Hall, that was your  
37 responsibility...  
38  
39 Marilyn Poland: Yes.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: ...to make sure that all the postings were done...  
42  
43 Marilyn Poland: Um...  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: ...for the people of the Plant, correct?  
46

1 Marilyn Poland: Everything...  
2  
3 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter.  
4  
5 Marilyn Poland: ...that was, everything that was done, um, by the Union Hall as far as, w-,  
6 posting for meetings, for postings for different committee activities, worked  
7 on by me, um, very proudly with a union bug on them. Uh, I am proud of my  
8 union association also. Um, my local has a contract with the Local 602 and  
9 they abided by my union bug being on anything that they produced for  
10 meetings, for members, for boards, uh, or the other secretaries that was here in  
11 the Hall. It was not her primary duty to do posters, but it was mine.  
12  
13 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 38:11]. [38:12] I was gonna say, um, you grew up in Lansing...  
14  
15 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: ...you grew up with Fisher Body being here. What do you – how does it affect  
18 you? What do you think about the factor knowing that, um, Fisher Body  
19 Lansing's gonna leave?  
20  
21 Marilyn Poland: I'm very sad. I grew up in Lansing on the north side, on Vermont Avenue. My  
22 father worked for Fisher Body – or worked for Motor Wheel. He subsequently  
23 worked for [Rio 38:39]. Um, as each of these automotive facilities has gone  
24 down, it makes me very sad. I hate to see this end of an era for Lansing. This  
25 has given so much to the city and so much to the people of the city, and I see  
26 to see this end. It makes me very sad. I'm hoping the Delta Project will be  
27 successful and that some of our people will be able to find employment, but  
28 things are vastly different now in the world of finance than they were during  
29 the time I was here, and they're in a death struggle with surviving.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
32  
33 Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn, I'd like to say thank you very much for allowing us this time.  
34  
35 Marilyn Poland: You're welcome.  
36  
37 Jerri Smith: Marilyn...  
38  
39 Marilyn Poland: Yes?  
40  
41 Jerri Smith: ...Jerri Smith. [39:39] Do you, uh, have anything that you would like to say  
42 that we haven't touched on?  
43  
44 Marilyn Poland: Jerri, um, it isn't just the leaders that make the union; it's the members, and  
45 this is something that's so important. Members are so turned off a lotta the  
46 times by unions, by government, that they forget their own power, and it's so

1 imperative that each member knows that it's their responsibility to elect  
2 people who are going to represent their interests and that they have the power  
3 to make sure they have the right person, and they should not overlook this.  
4 They should vote in everything they can that controls their lives. Whether it be  
5 an alternate, a district, a zone, a president, state offices, federal offices, these  
6 people you have control over by your vote, and if you think your vote isn't  
7 strong enough, that's why there is a union, because in numbers, there is  
8 strength. [papers rustling]  
9  
10 Jerri Smith: Thank you.  
11  
12 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm.  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: All right. Thank you, Marilyn.  
15  
16 Marilyn Poland: You're welcome.  
17  
18 Earl Nicholson: Thank you, Marilyn.  
19  
20 Marilyn Poland: Mm-hm. [recorder clicking]  
21  
22  
23/rt