

**Fonnie Price, an African American, discusses his career as a  
UAW production worker, skilled trades millwright, then GM maintenance  
manager at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

6 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body historical team interview. It's [papers shuffling] Wednesday,  
7 February 1, 2006. We are in UAW Local 602's, Frank Dryer's Green  
8 House. Um, first we'll introduce the historical team.  
9  
10 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.  
11  
12 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.  
13  
14 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.  
15  
16 Gary Judy: Gary Judy.  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: And I'm Marilyn Coulter. Today, we're here with Mr. Fonnie Price. [0:22]  
19 Mr. Price, could you please say and spell your name for us, please?  
20  
21 Fonnie Price: Fonnie Price, F-O-N-N-I-E P-R-I-C-E.  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: And your address, please?  
24  
25 Fonnie Price: 3528 Lucie Street.  
26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Mr....  
28  
29 Fonnie Price: Lansing, Michigan.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: [0:40] Um, are you married?  
34  
35 Fonnie Price: Yes, I am.  
36  
37 Marilyn Coulter: [0:42] And do you have children?  
38  
39 Fonnie Price: Yes, I do.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: [0:45] Um, boys, girls?  
42  
43 [coughing in background]  
44  
45 Fonnie Price: I have 2 boys and 1 girl.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. And...  
2  
3 Fannie Price: And my baby is 50 years old [laughter].  
4  
5 Marilyn Coulter: Is 50? Awesome. [0:55] So, um, were you born in Lansing?  
6  
7 Fannie Price: No, I was not. I was born in Carroll County Tennessee [clicking sound]  
8 and...  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: And...  
11  
12 Fannie Price: I ca-...  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: [1:03] ...were you raised there?  
15  
16 Fannie Price: Uh, no I left at an early age and went to South Bend, Indiana. There I went  
17 to school in South Bend [at Elkhart 1:12], and I came here in 1955.  
18  
19 Marilyn Coulter: [1:16] In 1955?  
20  
21 Fannie Price: Yeah.  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: [1:17] So, um, now what's your education [scratching sound] [like 1:19]?  
24  
25 Fannie Price: Uh, [blowing sound] I, I finished high school and, uh, had some classes in  
26 college, but I didn't graduate.  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
29  
30 Fannie Price: And I went to Lansing Community College for a number of years.  
31  
32 Marilyn Coulter: Oh, excellent. [coughing in background] [1:32] Um, any military  
33 experience?  
34  
35 Fannie Price: Yes, I had – I was in the Army. I was a sergeant in the Army and that was  
36 19 – the Korean War in 1951 to '53.  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [1:48] Um, now what did your parents do?  
39  
40 Fannie Price: Uh, my father died at [creaking sound], at an early age and my mother was  
41 a housewife [creaking sound].  
42  
43 Female: [Inaudible 1:57].  
44  
45 [throat clearing]  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [1:59] And, um, what did you do before you hired into Fisher Body?  
2

3 Fannie Price: Before I came to Fisher Body, I worked at, uh, [thumping sound]  
4 Studebaker's, and, uh, I, – they closed and they laid me off. And  
5 [thumping sound] I was on my way to, uh, Flint to apply for a job, and I  
6 stopped here on Main Street to get a sandwich on my way to the plant.  
7 And there was a gentleman in there that worked at Fisher Body, and he  
8 had a hundred dollar bill [laughter].  
9  
10 [laughter]  
11

12 Fannie Price: And he said – I said, "[Boy 2:36], where'd you get that money?" He said  
13 that, uh, he got that money from Fisher Body and if [you were – you could  
14 2:43] get a job there and, and make all the money ya wanna make. I said,  
15 "Really?" He said, "Yeah." So I, I put an application in and, uh, he gave  
16 me his, his, uh, phone number that I could use as a reference. And I put  
17 my application in that day. It took all day, so I couldn't go to Flint. I had to  
18 go back to South Bend. And by the time I got back to South Bend, they  
19 were callin' me to come and work. I gave him my phone number in South  
20 Bend. He gave me his phone number here [thumping sound].  
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
23

24 Fannie Price: And, uh, they called him and he called me, so then I had to turn around  
25 and come back [thumping sound] to – down here that, that night to be here  
26 the next day.  
27

28 Marilyn Coulter: S-, wow, that's awesome. [3:30] S-, do you [throat clearing in background]  
29 remember the man's name?  
30

31 Fannie Price: Uh, his name was [Goosby 3:35]. And I, I can't remember his real name,  
32 but his name was [Goosby].  
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: [Goosby], okay.  
35

36 Fannie Price: Yeah.  
37

38 Marilyn Coulter: [3:43] So, and this, and now what year was this again?  
39

40 Fannie Price: That was in 1955.  
41

42 Marilyn Coulter: 1955.  
43

44 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
45

46 Marilyn Coulter: So, um, [thumping sound] you went...

1  
2Fonnie Price: I...  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: ...you went down there. [3:51] So what did you do? Did you get a room  
5 here? Did you stay with somebody? And how did you do that...  
6  
7Fonnie Price: That, that, that...  
8  
9Marilyn Coulter: ...[with your 3:55] job?  
10  
11Fonnie Price: ...I came back that next morning [squeaking sound]. I stayed in the  
12 parking lot [clicking sound] right out here [inaudible 4:00]. [clicking  
13 sound] I slept in the car and, uh, until it was time to go over there and do  
14 the, uh, physical and all that stuff. So I spent the, I spent the night in the  
15 car, and the next morning, I went over there. And by the time I finished,  
16 uh, there was some more people around, so I asked a lotta questions to  
17 find out where I could get a room...  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
20  
21Fonnie Price: ...and stuff. And there was a lady here that, uh, was doin' hair. Yeah, I  
22 can't think a her name either. Anyway, I got a, I got a room from her and,  
23 uh, I was married at the time...  
24  
25Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.  
26  
27Fonnie Price: ...and I had a little baby.  
28  
29Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
30  
31Fonnie Price: So I got the room. That was on Friday. I got the room and I didn't even  
32 stay here 'cause I went back to South Bend and, uh, ya know, cut some ties  
33 and that type of thing...  
34  
35Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
36  
37Fonnie Price: ...to make arrangements to come back down here on Monday, which I did.  
38  
39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
40  
41Fonnie Price: And, uh, [cracking sound] I stayed here [screeching sound] 1 week and  
42 worked [thumping sound] and then I went back [creaking sound] the next  
43 week and got my wife and baby. [thumping sound]  
44  
45Marilyn Coulter: Awesome.  
46

1Female: Cheryl McQuaid.  
2

3Cheryl McQuaid: [5:10] Mr. Price, you said that when you turned in your application at  
4Fisher Body [clicking sound] it took all day and you didn't have time to go  
5to Flint. Why did it take so long to put in the application?  
6

7Fonnie Price: There was so many people out here [thumping sound]. A lotta people had  
8to be interviewed and that type a thing. And besides, [creaking sound] it  
9was already up into the day that day because I had driven from South  
10Bend and it was pretty close to lunchtime. That's where I stopped to get  
11that sandwich, and it just took most of the afternoon to, to get an  
12application [and to 5:38] – and I didn't really expect them to, ya know,  
13call me tha-, that early.  
14

15Cheryl McQuaid: [5:42] Was there a long line?  
16

17Fonnie Price: Yeah, there was a lotta people, a lotta people. And, uh, as I remember,  
18there was a lotta people in the waiting room making out applications and  
19that type a thing. And then we had to be interviewed. But they didn't  
20really tell ya that much. 'Cause I really didn't have an idea that I would be  
21hired, [clicking sound] but that they were takin' applications and they  
22were, uh, ya know, they were all nice to me and everything. But they gave  
23me no indication that [clicking sound] I would be hired.  
24

25Marilyn Coulter: So your first day you slept in your car, you cut your ties, you come in  
26there. [6:16] What was the first department you hired into?  
27

28Fonnie Price: I went into, uh, the body shop [rattling sound] and, uh, we had, we were,  
29we had [tapping sound] the hoods with the air [thumping sound] in the  
30back and we were sanding, doing the sanding to the cars. There was  
31grinders and things like that. And, uh, [sighing sound] the dust was terrible  
32in there, ya know. But it was okay because you had this hood [clicking  
33sound] that covered your face...  
34

35Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
36

37Fonnie Price: ...and th-, and your, and your body and your torso. And, uh, then you had  
38the air that was coming [thumping sound] into the back of your head  
39[thumping sound] thr-, so you could breathe.  
40

41Marilyn Coulter: Oh [inaudible 6:56]. [6:57] So you were kinda lookin' like a spaceman,  
42huh?  
43

44Fonnie Price: Lookin' like a [thumping sound] spaceman [chuckle]. But it was, it was,  
45[clicking sound] maybe, uh, ya know, there was a complete line of us and  
46we, uh, we had our own little world in there so to speak 'cause no one

1 wanted to [clicking sound] come in too much [chuckle] because [clicking  
2 sound]...  
3  
4 [laughter]  
5  
6Fonnie Price: ...a-, all that [dryin' 7:16] dust, ya know. We would, we could [thumping  
7 sound] direct that [dr-, that 7:18], fire it at any direction, ya know. If the  
8 foreman come in, you just pshheeww right at him, ya know. [laughter]  
9  
10Marilyn Coulter: [7:24] Oh, [thumping sound] it'd shoot sparks at him, huh?  
11  
12Fonnie Price: Yeah. You could direct it in any direction.  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: [7:28] So [thumping sound] what did you think about that when you, ya  
15 know, here you are, [throat clearing in background] you, you, you walk in  
16 and you're in this body shop and they put ya in this spacesuit and...?  
17  
18Fonnie Price: [laughter] Uh, it was okay because I was young at that time, [clicking  
19 sound] ya know, and I had worked in a factory. See I worked at  
20 Studebaker's...  
21  
22Female: [Inaudible 7:46]  
23  
24Fonnie Price: ...and, uh, I had, I had been working in the factory for quite a while, so I  
25 was familiar with factory work. And, uh, I was hungry, ya know. It didn't  
26 matter what [laughter]...  
27  
28 [laughter]  
29  
30Fonnie Price: ...I had a baby. I had a wife and a baby and [throat clearing in  
31 background] no money.  
32  
33Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
34  
35Fonnie Price: I had been laid off for quite a while. And, uh, they paid mo-, they paid,  
36 they didn't pay as much as, in here, as they paid, uh, at Studebaker's. But,  
37 uh, I was glad to get a job.  
38  
39Marilyn Coulter: [8:13] So may I ask do you remember what ya started in at as far as  
40 wages?  
41  
42Fonnie Price: It was somethin' like 96 cents an hour. But I had – when I was workin' at  
43 Studebaker's, I had been making like \$1.85 an hour back then. [thumping  
44 sound]  
45  
46Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

1  
2Fonnie Price: They paid more. [thumping sound] I guess that's why they outta business.  
3 [thumping sound] But they paid more than any other plant around  
4 [thumping sound] [clicking sound] and, uh, I worked at Studebaker's  
5 before I went in service.  
6  
7Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
8  
9 [thumping sound]  
10  
11Fonnie Price: So my co-, seniority continued while I was in service.  
12  
13Female: Mm-hm.  
14  
15Fonnie Price: And, uh, [thumping sound] they, they, uh, they, they sent me my vacation  
16 pay, [thumping sound] holiday pay from Studebaker's.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
19  
20Fonnie Price: They sent all that. [thumping sound] [Inaudible 8:52] that's probably one  
21 [thumping sound] of the reasons they outta business. But anyway, that was  
22 a strong union over there. [clicking sound] And, uh, I, I worked there and  
23 that was considered one of the best jobs in the state, in that state. That was  
24 'cause [they 9:07] worked at Studebaker, "hey that's nifty. You got it made  
25 for the rest of your life."  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: [9:10] Now at Studebaker's, [tapping sound] may I ask what union was  
28 that with, were you with over there?  
29  
30 [car sound in background]  
31  
32Fonnie Price: That was, uh, that was, uh, that was a UAW.  
33  
34Marilyn Coulter: [9:18] Oh, it was a UAW?  
35  
36Fonnie Price: Yeah.  
37  
38Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Um, so you found out they were hiring, you worked in the body  
39 shop, [clicking sound] and your first day, so you guys, you, you said you  
40 were in your own world there. [9:31] What was it like if you – how did  
41 you communicate so if after you had your hoods on and were you in  
42 spacesuits?  
43  
44Fonnie Price: We had a shield, a face shield...  
45  
46Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.

1  
2Fonnie Price: ...that was made outta plastic.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
5  
6Fonnie Price: And we could...  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: [9:48] Oh, so you started learnin' to read lips?  
9  
10Fonnie Price: Yeah, so to speak. [laughter]  
11  
12 [laughter]  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: Oh [throat clearing in background]. [9:54] For a minute, I'm like okay he's,  
15 and then I realized you had to learn how to – so you had to develop your  
16 own way of communicating...  
17  
18Fonnie Price: Right.  
19  
20Marilyn Coulter: ...in there?  
21  
22Fonnie Price: Right.  
23  
24Marilyn Coulter: [10:00] So, um, when you hired in there, were there like new hire  
25 initiations, pranks, or something like that? How did that, how'd you  
26 guys...  
27  
28Fonnie Price: No.  
29  
30Marilyn Coulter: ...pass the time, other than shootin' sparks at each other?  
31  
32Fonnie Price: Shootin' sparks and throwing discs [pshheeww sound].  
33  
34Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
35  
36Fonnie Price: And things like that.  
37  
38Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. [Inaudible 10:16]  
39  
40Fonnie Price: And [inaudible 10:17] we were pretty amazing too, ya know. You had to,  
41 you had, it was a job. But most of the time wer-, I could do his job and  
42 mine wh-, he wanted to go [clunking sound] and get a drink of water or...  
43  
44Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
45



1Fonnie Price: ...something like that. But we had a relief man that was supposed to do  
2 that. But we could just [clunking sound] relieve each other because after  
3 [thumping sound] a while you could do the job well enough where you  
4 could do 2 jobs.  
5

6Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [10:39] Now did you work day shift, night shift?  
7

8Fonnie Price: I started, I started workin' on the day shift and after, I, I worked until I  
9 learned the job and then they put me on the, on the, on the night shift. But  
10 at that time we worked [thumping sound] 2 weeks and then we'd be off 2,  
11 I mean we'd do 2 weeks [thumping sound] on days, 2 weeks on nights like  
12 that.  
13

14Marilyn Coulter: Oh. [11:00] How was that workin'...

15

16Fonnie Price: Oh...

17

18Marilyn Coulter: ...every...

19

20Fonnie Price: It was...

21

22Marilyn Coulter: ...every other week?

23

24Fonnie Price: ...it was no good, no good at all. Cou-, your body could never get adjusted  
25 to it, ya know.  
26

27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
28

29Fonnie Price: And, uh, I wasn't there very long before they changed that. And, uh, I  
30 voted against it because [blowing sound] I will say at least I get 2 weeks  
31 on days, ya know [chuckle]. So I voted against changin' to a straight shift.  
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
34

35Fonnie Price: But then they got – it passed anyway and then I was put on days. I voted  
36 against it and still got days.  
37

38Marilyn Coulter: And still got your days.  
39

40Fonnie Price: Yeah.  
41

42Marilyn Coulter: I was gonna say 'cause that's kinda difficult for a wife and new baby and  
43 everything...  
44

45Fonnie Price: Right, right.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: ...that's a lot. So now, you hired in in 1955. [11:36] In 1955, were there  
2 very many African Americans that worked there?  
3

4 Fannie Price: Uh, not an awful lot. Um, we had a, we had the, ya know, we had the  
5 menial job. We had the jobs that were kind of undesirable, ya know.  
6

7 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
8

9 Fannie Price: Um, th-, the gates. Moving the gates was a heavy, hard job. Truckin' them  
10 bodies at the end of the line, that's the hard part of the job, ya know.  
11 Pushin' the, pushin' those bodies on the trucks from one line to another  
12 line. There was nothin', none of that was automatic or anything. Had to  
13 man-...  
14

15 Female: [12:11] They had to do all that manually?  
16

17 Fannie Price: ...had to manually [throat clearing in background] do all that, turn the  
18 bodies around and start it on the other line [tapping sound]. And then you  
19 had the wet deck where that was hard work. Not a lot of black guys  
20 worked up there.  
21

22 Marilyn Coulter: [12:23] And that was in the body shop also on the wet deck?  
23

24 Fannie Price: No, the wet deck was in the paint shop. And then they had the, the, uh,  
25 grinding booth where I worked.  
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [12:33] [thumping sound] That's where they usually put most of  
28 the African Americans?  
29

30 Fannie Price: Yeah [inaudible 12:36]  
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Uh, Jerri [Tindler 12:35], I mean Jerri Smith.  
33  
34 [laughter]  
35

36 Jerri Smith: [12:39] How long, uh, did you work in the body shop [doin' 12:42]?  
37

38 Fannie Price: I worked in that for more than 10 years until I w-, I worked in the bo-, I  
39 left the body shop and went to, uh, the millwrights, skilled trade.  
40

41 Jerri Smith: [12:52] Straight from the body shop...  
42

43 Fannie Price: Straight from the body shop. Mm-hm.  
44

45 Jerri Smith: ...right in?  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [12:56] So while you – Marilyn Coulter – while you were in the body shop  
2 did you always do the grinding?  
3

4 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: [13:00] For 10, you grinded for 10 years?  
7

8 Fannie Price: Mm-hm. I had an opportunity to come out [tapping sound], but I was so  
9 good at it that, uh, uh, I, I just chose to stay in there.  
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
12

13 Fannie Price: Because, uh, th-, the only [thumping sound] danger there was the, uh,  
14 getting lead poison.  
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
17

18 Fannie Price: And there was no danger if you took a bath every day [thumping sound].  
19

20 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
21

22 Fannie Price: You had to take a shower every day to wash all that, th-, you leave all  
23 your clothing, ya know, at work.  
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
26

27 Fannie Price: You'd put on new ones every day.  
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: Gary Judy.  
30

31 Gary Judy: Yeah. I worked in the body shop in the...  
32

33 Fannie Price: Uh-huh.  
34

35 Gary Judy: ...a job similar to that. [13:39] Did they – at that time, did they ever send  
36 you guys down to get tested at medical to check the level...  
37

38 Fannie Price: Oh, yeah. Hm-hm.  
39

40 Gary Judy: ...back then?  
41

42 Fannie Price: We had to go down every 6 weeks and get a blood test.  
43

44 Gary Judy: Yeah, I wasn't sure if they were doing that back then.  
45

1Fonnie Price: Yup. They were doin' that then. But I never had any problem because I, I  
2 never would, uh, uh, eat in there or eat before I wash my hands and I took  
3 a bath every day, took a shower every day. So I didn't have any problems.  
4 I didn't take the lead home with me.  
5

6Gary Judy: [14:08] Did, did they let women work in there at that time or?  
7

8Fonnie Price: No, there was hardly any women working in the plant. No, women  
9 couldn't work in there then. There was very few women working in the  
10 plant at that time.  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: S-, so, [scraping sound] 2 things. Number 1, I'd like to make note that, um,  
13 Mr. Price is 78...  
14

15Male: ...6.  
16

17Marilyn Coulter: ...6...  
18

19Fonnie Price: 70 s-, I'll soon be 77.  
20

21Marilyn Coulter: ...he says and he looks fantastic. So obviously he took very good care  
22 [throat clearing in background] of himself [laughter] in the lead booth and  
23 'cause [laughter in background] he looks perfectly, perfectly young  
24 [chuckle]. And, um, but – now you said there weren't very many  
25 [thumping sound] women in there, they were in the body shop. [14:45] In  
26 the [rattling sound] 10 years that you were down there, did any women  
27 ever start working down there?  
28

29Fonnie Price: Oh, oh yeah. They started to bring women in, ya know, in the, in some of  
30 the, uh, easier jobs and things, ya know. Uh, but they wouldn't put women  
31 in the, in the booth because the, because of the pregnancy...  
32

33Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
34

35Fonnie Price: ...they might, they might get pregnant in the timeframe and they might be,  
36 be exposed to the lead.  
37

38Marilyn Coulter: And now I know you said that there weren't very many African Americans  
39 there and then if they were there they had undesirable jobs. [15:15] So I  
40 take it there were no African American supervisors at the time, right?  
41

42Fonnie Price: Uh, no, there was, uh, there, uh, [O-, OJ 15:23] was ab-, I say he was  
43 about the first Afri-, I mean African American supervisor. And, uh, no he  
44 wasn't supervisor then. They didn't have any then. [Jack Lawrence 15:33]  
45 was the first, [tapping sound] [Jack Lawrence] was [inaudible 15:36].  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [Jack Lawrence]?  
2  
3 Fannie Price: He was abo-, he was in body shop. He was about the first African  
4 American supervisor in the body shop. But that all came later.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
7  
8 Fannie Price: Ya know.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. So and I'm [thumping sound] trying to think. [15:48] [O.J. 15:47]  
11 is that Jack O. Johnson...?  
12  
13 Fannie Price: [O.J. Henderson 15:50].  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: ...[Henderson]? Okay. Okay. [15:56] So you said that, um, you then  
16 became a millwright?  
17  
18 Fannie Price: Uh, yeah. See what happened was, uh, [thumping sound] uh [sigh] – when  
19 I was working at Studebaker's...  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
22  
23 Fannie Price: ...I, uh, I applied for the millwright.  
24  
25 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
26  
27 Fannie Price: And I would – I had been accepted into the sch-, trades, at, at  
28 Studebaker's...  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: [Oh 16:19].  
31  
32 Fannie Price: ...when they started to cut back and lay off again. [thumping sound] But I  
33 never went into the millwrights, but they accepted me and before I could  
34 get in...  
35  
36 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
37  
38 Fannie Price: ...they laid me off. [thumping sound] So I was aware of the skilled trades  
39 [inaudible 16:31], ya know, was a better job [chuckle].  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
42  
43 Fannie Price: So then I came right into Fisher Body and started right away trying to get  
44 into the millwrights. [thumping sound] And, uh, I spent, uh, about 10  
45 years tryin' to get into the millwrights [thumping sound]. Um, [McKistry  
46 16:47] was the engineer, [thumping sound] plant engineer at the time.

1 And, uh, I would go down and, after, after work, ya know, I would go and  
2 stop by his office and stop in and talk to him [thumping sound]. And, uh,  
3 he, ya know, he was quite fr-, he says, "You know, we just don't have any  
4 black guys," ya know. A-, a-, and he said, "The white guys won't work  
5 with ya," ya know. And I said, ya know, I said, "Well, hey, I never had  
6 trouble gettin' along with anyone," ya know.  
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
9

10Fonnie Price: But he said, "I tell ya what ya do." So he said, "You, [tapping sound] uh,  
11 work doing changeover and, and, and [inaudible 17:25] to community  
12 college." S-.  
13

14Marilyn Coulter: [17:30] So you can explain what changeover is please?  
15

16Fonnie Price: Changeover is when the lines were down for [changing 17:37] models  
17 from the 56 to the 57 and the skilled trades make all the changes  
18 [thumping sound] that's necessary so when the [production 17:45] [tapping  
19 sound] comes back to work, everything will be ready to run.  
20

21Marilyn Coulter: So...  
22

23Fonnie Price: So the mill, the, the skilled trades [thumping sound] would work doing  
24 changeover. [laughter] Skilled trades would work doing changeover. And,  
25 uh, uh, I would work with'm, work with'm doing the changeover.  
26 [coughing in background] And they would work 7 days a week at that  
27 time [inaudible 18:10].  
28

29Marilyn Coulter: [18:10] And how long would those changeovers be sometimes?  
30

31Fonnie Price: 3 months sometimes. Sometimes it would be, uh, uh, 10 weeks or 8 weeks  
32 or...  
33  
34 [car sound in background]  
35

36Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
37

38Fonnie Price: ...what jus', they were, they had long changeovers in those days. They  
39 were always trying to get to the place where they could cut down the  
40 number of weeks that, uh, they had, it took to, to, uh, finish the  
41 changeovers.  
42

43Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. Gary Judy.  
44

1 Gary Judy: [18:34] Back at that time when they had those long changeovers, what did  
2 the workers do for money? Did, did they have SUB-Pay back in the 50's  
3 or?  
4

5 Fannie Price: They didn't have SUB-Pay. They had unemployment compensation.  
6

7 Gary Judy: [18:45] So they just drew unemployment and that was it for...  
8

9 Fannie Price: Right, right.  
10

11 Gary Judy: ...for 3 months?  
12

13 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: [18:50] So you're learn-, learning your craft and you started going to  
16 LCC?  
17

18 Fannie Price: I started going to LCC, taking classes. And, uh, I, uh, during the  
19 changeover I would work with different guys and, and I would talk to the,  
20 uh, to the guys and find out what trade, what classes I needed to take, ya  
21 know, to learn the trade. [clicking sound] So I took mechanical  
22 engineering and drawing and, uh, welding, stuff like that.  
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: So now, he said that he didn't think that they would work with you.  
25 [19:28] As an hourly employee, supplementing, [scraping sound] doing  
26 your changeovers working with the millwrights, how did they treat you?  
27

28 Fannie Price: [laughter] I stood a little over 6 feet tall and I weighed about 200 pounds,  
29 so everybody treated me pretty good. I've always stood up straight  
30 [laughter] and I'd be a man everywhere I go, so I had no problem there.  
31 And I treated everybody right and I never had any problem. I never had  
32 any problem whatsoever. A lot of people probably did, but I didn't.  
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [And it was 19:58]...  
35

36 Fannie Price: [Inaudible 19:58] I just didn't, yeah, I just wouldn't, I would not allow  
37 anyone to treat me other than me...  
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: Right.  
40

41 Fannie Price: ...'cause that's what I am.  
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [All right 20:08] So, um, obviously they did help you because they told  
44 you what types of classes you needed to take.  
45

1Fonnie Price: Uh, the, the, [different employees 20:17], different ones. I, I had good  
2 friends, ya know. We were friends, ya know.  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5

6Fonnie Price: When you're workin' 7 days with someone...  
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
9

10Fonnie Price: ...and, uh, it becomes a social life and a, and a workin' life also.  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
13

14Fonnie Price: So you get to know people pretty good. And the guys were just [batters  
15 20:37] with me, ya know. They mostly with, mostly apprentices because  
16 [clicking sound] we were, ya know, young and [inaudible 20:43].  
17  
18 [papers shuffling]  
19

20Marilyn Coulter: So...  
21

22Fonnie Price: But we'd drink together and party together and work together.  
23

24Marilyn Coulter: [20:50] So it, it extended outside of the work place.  
25

26Fonnie Price: It extended outside of the work place because you're workin' 7 days a  
27 week. And at that time I was workin' on third shift, so you had no social  
28 life, except with the guys that you're workin' with.  
29

30Marilyn Coulter: [21:03] And what were the hours for third shift?  
31

32Fonnie Price: Uh, it, from 11 to 7:30.  
33

34Marilyn Coulter: From 11 to 7:30. So...  
35

36Fonnie Price: Mm-hm.  
37

38Marilyn Coulter: ...[21:10] that was your work family and your, then became your friends.  
39

40Fonnie Price: Yes.  
41

42Marilyn Coulter: [21:15] Um, did a lot of these friendships extend throughout your work  
43 history?  
44

45Fonnie Price: Even today.  
46



1 Marilyn Coulter: [21:18] Even today?  
2

3 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: Excellent. [grinding sound] [21:21] So, um, 10 years you finally get into  
6 the trades?  
7

8 Fannie Price: Yes.  
9

10 Marilyn Coulter: [21:27] So how did that go for you when you finally [scratching sound]  
11 [inaudible 21:29]?  
12

13 Fannie Price: Well, I, I was the first black guy to come into the trades. So it [tapping  
14 sound] was, uh, it was pretty good. [And I just gotta 21:38] say everybody  
15 treated me okay. But, uh, naturally, a-, any guy, don't matter what color  
16 you are, you were given the worst job.  
17

18 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
19

20 Fannie Price: But, uh, the fact that I had gone to community college, and I didn't  
21 publicize this, they didn't know that I had gone to, to, uh, school. I had  
22 learned to weld and to cut and I had learned blueprint reading. I could  
23 draw blueprints. I had, took mechanical [drawing 22:05]. I knew all those  
24 things that was necessary to be a millwright.  
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
27

28 Fannie Price: I knew in the befo-, in the beforehand. So when they took me in, I had to  
29 pretend that I didn't know nothin' because they would've [inaudible  
30 22:20], they, they would've been jealous of me.  
31

32 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
33

34 Fannie Price: And – but you come in as a trainee. I went as a trainee. You supposed to  
35 be trained, ya know. So – but I knew all these things and I, [tapping  
36 sound] I just pretended that I didn't.  
37

38 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
39

40 Fannie Price: And as the results of me knowing these things and pretendin' that I didn't  
41 know'm, I learned'm so fast they said, "That's the smartest man I ever  
42 seen."  
43

44 [laughter]  
45

1Fonnie Price: But I wasn't. Ya see, I had [inaudible 22:49]. [throat clearing in  
2 background]  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5

6Fonnie Price: But anyway, I hadn't been in the millwrights over a year when the  
7 superintendent came to me and told me that he wanted me to start  
8 preparing to be a supervisor. It scared the devil outta me, 'cause you go,  
9 you go for 4 years training to be a millwright.  
10

11Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
12

13Fonnie Price: And, uh, I told him, I said, uh, "Don-, don't do this to me." I said, ya  
14 know, "The guys would have no respect for me whatsoever and no one" –  
15 I said, "I don't wanna be a supervisor like that," ya know. But I said, "I  
16 have a family." At that time, I had 3 kids.  
17

18Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
19

20Fonnie Price: I said, "I have a family and I wanna do better just like everybody else, but  
21 I don't want to be supervisor now, ya know, I don't." He said, "But you  
22 kn-, you said you learn so fast and [inaudible 23:33] "yeah, but I don't  
23 want [clicking sound] to be." He said, "Wait till I'm – wait until I have my  
24 journeyman's status...  
25

26Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
27

28Fonnie Price: ...and then you talk to me again." He said, "The minute you become  
29 [chuckle] a journeyman, I'm gonna make you supervisor." That's what he  
30 told me. So I had 3 years to switch, ya know. I said, "Oh, my goodness."  
31 [inaudible 23:50] [laughter] Gee whiz, ya know. All I wanna do is – I, ya  
32 know – hey...  
33

34Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
35

36Fonnie Price: ...I'm happy with havin' a job at Fish-, Fisher Body, you know, then you  
37 tryin' to make me a millwright. Oh man, I got [inaudible 23:59] on my  
38 side now [inaudible 24:01]  
39  
40 [laughter]  
41

42Fonnie Price: And now you're gonna make me a supervisor.  
43  
44 [laughter]  
45

46Fonnie Price: Oh, I'm scared to death. Ya know what I mean. [laughter]

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: So now you had a family, you came in, and you were making like 96 cents  
3 an hour [inaudible 24:13]...  
4  
5 Fannie Price: Oh yeah. Right.  
6  
7 Marilyn Coulter: ...uh, workin' on the line in the body shop.  
8  
9 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: [24:15] How much of an increase did you get when you went to – as far as  
12 hour, pay per hour, as being a millwright?  
13  
14 Fannie Price: By the time, by the time I was in skilled trades, uh, uh, the ch-, the pay  
15 rate had changed considerably because we gotta raise every year...  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
18  
19 Fannie Price: ...ya know. There were no merit raises. The only raise you got was  
20 through the union.  
21  
22 [coughing in background]  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 [papers shuffling]  
27  
28 Fannie Price: But there was almost like a dollar an hour difference...  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
31  
32 Fannie Price: ...between the skilled trades...  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
35  
36 Fannie Price: ...and, uh, and the hourly. But I don't remember when it was, uh, ya  
37 know...  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 24:46]  
40  
41 [laughter]  
42  
43 Fannie Price: ...at that time. I really don't.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: [But it was 24:47] [still 24:48] you just remember [it 24:49] somehow.  
46

1Fonnie Price: Right.  
2

3Marilyn Coulter: [24:50] During that 3 years while you were preparing for what was  
4 coming and you knew that was coming, what were some of the things that  
5 you had to put in line to prepare you to be a supervisor over your  
6 coworkers?  
7

8Fonnie Price: [laughter] Nothin', 'cause I didn't do anything different 'cause I, y-, ya  
9 know, I just had, I had a bed that I would go and sleep in every night and  
10 all that stuff. So I didn't do anything different. I just kept learnin' and, and  
11 everything. And, uh, and along about the last year, uh, they started to, uh,  
12 put me on different jobs so that I could get diversified. [laughter]  
13

14Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
15

16Fonnie Price: And, uh, I, I didn't really like that. But I had, I had – most of the time that  
17 I went through my training, um, I had, I had the crib. I was in, I was in the  
18 paint department.  
19

20Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
21

22Fonnie Price: And I had my own, own area...  
23

24Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
25

26Fonnie Price: ...of responsibility. And, uh, um, I, I just knew the paint department. But  
27 as far as, uh, building things, ya know, and things like that I would do on  
28 the, some weekends...  
29

30Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
31

32Fonnie Price: ...from doing changeovers...  
33

34Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
35

36Fonnie Price: ...something like that. So I had to learn all those things. [clicking sound]  
37 And I started to...  
38

39Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
40

41Fonnie Price: ...to diversify but that wasn't even my doin'. I was [inaudible 26:07]...  
42

43Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
44

45Fonnie Price: ...to the way things were.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: So a couple things. Now, now [inaudible 26:12] jump back to one thing.  
2 You said you guys made beds and slept.  
3  
4 Fannie Price: [laughter]  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Where – what [inaudible 26:18] what type of...  
7  
8 Fannie Price: I probably shouldn't tell that.  
9  
10 [laughter]  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: [26:19] ...what types of places did you sleep and were there not [inaudible  
13 26:22] and things [tapping sound] like that inside the plant?  
14  
15 Fannie Price: Uh, not as much as you would think, ya know. But the, uh – on top of the  
16 ovens and...  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
19  
20 Fannie Price: ...it's always warm up there and, uh, in the summertime the, [tapping  
21 sound] the, the, [inaudible 26:37] houses. [The air all c-, cool 26:38], ya  
22 know. The air is cool going through there so you just picked a place and,  
23 and, uh, [thumping sound] you'd have your bed. Uh, you didn't have to  
24 work until [tapping sound] the line went down.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
27  
28 Fannie Price: So you would just rest till the line went down mostly.  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
31  
32 Fannie Price: And then you'd...[creaking sound]  
33  
34 [clicking sound]  
35  
36 Cheryl McQuaid: [27:03] Mr. Price, could you please tell me a little bit more about your  
37 booth experience? You were in there for 10 years. Could you tell me a  
38 little bit more about the, the atmosphere, some of the things that you did  
39 just to get the day [papers shuffling], goin' through the day. I mean you  
40 couldn't talk to anybody. You were readin' lips. [thumping sound] Um,  
41 could you just tell me a little bit about [tapping sound] the booth?  
42  
43 Fannie Price: Well, okay. Uh, it – we had, we had takin' the job. It was un-, undesirable  
44 job to most people. But we had worked there so long that, uh, we really  
45 enjoyed it, ya know. Because it was our own little world and [tapping  
46 sound], uh, we played games and bring a book in and you could sit there

1 and read the book. There was very jobs at that time where you could read,  
2 ya know. But people didn't – the, the supervisors didn't, didn't bother you  
3 much because you were doin' the job and you were doin' the undesirable  
4 job. [clicking sound]  
5  
6 And, uh, we would throw discs at each other and, because we had the head  
7 protection, and, uh, we wouldn't hurt each other or anything. We'd throw,  
8 uh, [snuff covers 28:15] and throw discs and, uh, we just played most of  
9 the day. We would just play. You do our job [clicking sound] and then  
10 you'd read or play. There was some people in there that would, uh, you  
11 know not to fool with him. Okay. So, uh, there's always people like that.  
12 But there were always people that wanted to play all day. As a matter of  
13 fact, the guy that played that more than anyone was the guy that g-, di-, the  
14 guy that got to be the president of this union. [laughter] [thumping sound]  
15  
16Female: Dick...  
17  
18Gary Judy: Bennett. [coughing in the background] [28:50] Was it Bennett?  
19  
20Fonnie Price: No. I'm tryin' to figure his last na-.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: [Sandbor 28:54]...  
23  
24Fonnie Price: Sander, Sandburn.  
25  
26Female: Sanborn.  
27  
28Fonnie Price: Sanburn [chuckle]. He and I used to play all day. And, uh, oh, he was one  
29 guy. But anyway, I couldn't believe that he was president of the union but  
30 anyway [laughter]. We, uh, we, we played a lot and, uh, we protected each  
31 other. And the supervisor wouldn't fool with you because if, uh, they had a  
32 problem, they would take you outside and talk to you. And, uh, and if, if,  
33 if the guy ahead of you or behind you knew what the problem was, he  
34 would have to [inaudible 29:30] straighten it out. So we'd keep them from  
35 coming in there and bothering us and things. So we just kinda, uh, helped  
36 each other and we got the job done.  
37  
38Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith here. [29:43] Uh, could you explain to us exactly what the  
39 discs are you were talkin' about and you were throwing?  
40  
41Fonnie Price: Well, those are, those are round disc objects that you put on the machine  
42 [tapping sound] to grind the different bo-, parts of the body. [tapping  
43 sound] And that's [coughing in background] what makes it spark. You  
44 gri-, what you do, you, you grind the discs against the body and make it  
45 smoother. [Inaudible 30:05]  
46

1 Jerri Smith: [30:05] Are they paper, metal? [clicking sound]  
2  
3 Fannie Price: They were made out of a cardboard type thing.  
4  
5 Jerri Smith: [30:10] So they weren't heavy or?  
6  
7 Fannie Price: Oh, no. They were jus', uh.  
8  
9 [sighing sound]  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: [30:15] So was it sandpaper-like?  
12  
13 Fannie Price: Sandpaper like. It was sandpaper [thumping sound] on the, on, on the, that  
14 were flat, uh, pieces of cardboard [to make it sturdy 30:25]. They just  
15 called'm discs I guess.  
16  
17 Cheryl McQuaid: Um, you had mentioned that you would shoot sparks and depending on  
18 how you angled the, the machine [thumping sound], you could shoot  
19 sparks and aim'm at somebody.  
20  
21 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
22  
23 Cheryl McQuaid: [30:41] Were those sparks ever shot toward a supervisor?  
24  
25 Fannie Price: Oh yeah.  
26  
27 Cheryl McQuaid: [30:46] And was there any kind of disciplinary measure because of that?  
28  
29 Fannie Price: Oh, no. No.  
30  
31 Cheryl McQuaid: [30:50] No?  
32  
33 Fannie Price: That's why most of the time they would pull ya outside to show ya what  
34 your problem was, what their problem was. And they would talk to ya too  
35 then, when they take ya outside. But, uh, they, they, they would just – it  
36 wasn't do-, they weren't maliciously done. That was just the part of the  
37 game, ya know. [chuckle] Shoot sparks at the supervisor.  
38  
39 [laughter]  
40  
41 Fannie Price: That was just, uh, part of making the day. And he wouldn't get angry or  
42 anything 'cause he really expected [inaudible 31:18]. He might even grab a  
43 machine and shoot'm back at ya.  
44  
45 [laughter]  
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: [31:21] So if you shot sparks at someone, it wasn't somethin' that hurt  
2 them?  
3  
4 Fannie Price: Oh, no. No.  
5  
6 Cheryl McQuaid: [31:28] Just scared'm maybe?  
7  
8 Fannie Price: No, not really because, uh, they probably worked in there themselves and  
9 they know, ya know, they're familiar with sparks. And it's jus' – it looks  
10 worse than what it is. It was jus' shootin' sparks at someone.  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: Mr. Price, I wanted to ask you. You said that you didn't eat inside that  
13 booth because of the health reasons. [31:50] So what did you do for lunch  
14 and where did you eat your lunch?  
15  
16 Fannie Price: Uh, well we'd go to the cafeteria for lunch. Or anytime you're i-, you're  
17 workin' in a booth and you come outside – you have gloves on in the  
18 booth – and when you come outside, you le-, you leave your hood and  
19 your gloves. And there's, uh, the washbasins on both sides of the booth. So  
20 you come out here and wash your hands.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
23  
24 Fannie Price: And you wash your face. And then [clicking sound] you go and you eat.  
25 Or if you come out for a coffee break, you come out and you wash your  
26 hands before you have coffee.  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: So you said you went into [clunking sound] the cafeteria. [32:22] Was the  
29 cafeteria close to the body shop?  
30  
31 Fannie Price: Uh, it was centrally located where all of the departments could go to the  
32 cafeteria. The paint could go, the trim, body shop.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [32:34] So how much time did you get for lunch?  
35  
36 Fannie Price: I'd get 30 minutes for lunch.  
37  
38 Marilyn Coulter: [32:39] So there was enough time to wash up, take all your equipment off,  
39 wash your hands, go up to the cafeteria, sit and eat, and then walk back, do  
40 your job and?  
41  
42 Fannie Price: Right. There was no, ya know, there was no deviation 'cause, ya know, the  
43 line started, you had to be there. [chuckle] So if you s-, you [were there  
44 when the line stopped, 32:55] you there [coughing in background] when,  
45 when the line started. And it was enough time. [thumping sound]  
46



1 Marilyn Coulter: So now, you said also that you read in the booth?  
2

3 Fannie Price: Right.  
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: [33:02] So is that when you took time to do your studies for your...  
6

7 Fannie Price: No.  
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: ...you never read your textbooks at work?  
10

11 Fannie Price: No. It was too dirty in there.  
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: Oh, so you...  
14

15 Fannie Price: It was too dirty in there.  
16

17 Marilyn Coulter: It was too dirty. Okay.  
18

19 Fannie Price: And, and, ya know, it was only, I only, I would only have 1 class, ya  
20 know. I didn't need to work [inaudible 33:17]. I, I – as a matter of fact I  
21 didn't want anyone to know that I was goin' to school in the first place.  
22 And the second place, uh, ya know, I, I could do my schoolwork at, at  
23 home.  
24

25 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. Okay.  
26

27 Cheryl McQuaid: [33:33] Why didn't you want anybody to know you were go-, goin' to  
28 school again? I'm sorry I.  
29

30 Fannie Price: Well, [laughter] uh, [thumping sound] there's all kinds of people, ya know.  
31 Uh, I didn't want anyone to think that I was tryin' to be better than them or  
32 anything. So I, I would do what I would do [tapping sound] [inaudible  
33 33:52] and then I would keep it to myself.  
34

35 Female: [Inaudible 33:56] [creaking sound]  
36  
37 [clicking sound]  
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: 1955, 1965.  
40

41 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [34:04] [clicking sound] What was the climate like for you? In the  
44 community, what did people think about factory workers? How did it  
45 affect your community back then?  
46

1Fonnie Price: Oh, we were the community. And it was considered, always considered a,  
2 a good job if you worked for Fisher Body.  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5

6Fonnie Price: [Inaudible 34:21] because it was one of the desirable things, working at  
7 Fisher Body or Oldsmobile. And, uh, you were accepted in the community  
8 and, uh, we were all – just to give you an example, ya know, back in those  
9 days, uh, most of, most of th-, most of the black people lived on, [paper  
10 shuffling] pretty close together on the...  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
13

14Fonnie Price: ...West side. And, uh, like when it snowed, we didn't have snow blowers  
15 and that type of thing. But I remember wh-, back in 1958 or 59 or  
16 something like that, we had a big snow and the whole community just get  
17 out there in the middle of the street and shovel the snow in the street. So  
18 we would have it so the firetruck could get through. I mean it was just a  
19 community thing, ya know. And, uh...  
20

21Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
22

23Fonnie Price: ...if, if somebody cooked, barbequed over there, then, um, [tapping sound]  
24 you better cook a lot of it 'cause, ya know, people are going drop – come  
25 over and.  
26

27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
28

29Fonnie Price: I joined the church in, Friendship Baptist Church, in 1955. And, uh, they  
30 just took me in as a...  
31

32Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
33

34Fonnie Price: ...uh, ya know, just like I had been a member for years. They took my  
35 whole family in, ya know. It was just a community thing. And it – [but I  
36 don't know then if they knew I was 35:39] working at Fisher Body.  
37

38Marilyn Coulter: [35:41] And even [inaudible 35:42] – now in a sense, though, even though  
39 it wasn't necessarily Fisher Body, Friendship was close to Oldsmobile,  
40 yes?  
41

42Fonnie Price: Uh, mm-hm.  
43

44Marilyn Coulter: [35:50] And how did that work? Bein' in a church that worked so close to  
45 a factory?  
46

1Fonnie Price: Well, it was our church, ya know. [The factory 35:56], both Fisher Body  
2 and Oldsmobile. [Isn't 35:58] just a black church.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5  
6Fonnie Price: And it, it worked fine.  
7  
8Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [36:03] And at that time it was one of the larger black churches  
9 in Lansing, correct?  
10  
11Fonnie Price: It was one of the larger and more permanent [clicking sound] churches.  
12  
13Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. Okay, um. [papers shuffling] So [inaudible 36:13]. So now we're  
14 gonna go back fa-, fast forward to when you become a millwright.  
15  
16Fonnie Price: Okay.  
17  
18Marilyn Coulter: So you're doing that, you have your 3 years, you're getting ready to go in  
19 to do that. [36:24] So you get your jour-, you get your journeyman's card?  
20  
21Fonnie Price: I get my journeyman status, mm-hm.  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: [36:28] And then what happened? [clicking sound]  
24  
25Fonnie Price: Uh, [clicking sound] right away they started bugging me about being  
26 supervisor. [chuckle] [throat clearing in background] And they had moved  
27 me – they would move me around to learn [scratching sound] different  
28 phases of the job. Because I had been [thumping sound] so concentrated  
29 on, in, in one area. They were reluctant to take me outta the area because I  
30 kept it running pretty good. But anyway, so, th-, they started to [clicking  
31 sound] move me around and, uh, it wasn't everybody that [inaudible  
32 37:00] wanted me to be a supervisor. [tapping sound] But, uh, I finally did  
33 come in as a supervisor and, uh, [clicking sound] they put me over into the  
34 shippin' department, shippin' bodies to, to, uh, Oldsmobile...  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
37  
38Fonnie Price: ...across the street over here. And, th-, they hadn't built that part over  
39 there at that time. And, um, [coughing in background] [clicking sound]  
40 the-, he didn-, he, he didn't tra-, they didn't train me.  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
43  
44Fonnie Price: Ya know. [chuckle] You-, you're supervisin' most of the company and,  
45 and, and then you work with a new, another supervisor for 2 or 3 weeks...  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
2  
3 Fannie Price: ...until you get the lay of the land [thumping sound]. But they just put me  
4 over there. I don't know if they was tryin' to see if I could do it or tryin' to  
5 make me fail or, or what. I don't know what the reason was. At the time,  
6 [clicking sound] I, I didn't resent it [inaudible 37:54] I didn't think too  
7 much about it, at the time. [thumping sound] Uh, they just called me in  
8 and then t-, and I went into the office and they said, "You g-, you got  
9 shippin' [today 38:02]. [thumping sound]  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
12  
13 Fannie Price: So [thumping sound] I just went on to work.  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: [Uh 38:07]...  
16  
17 Fannie Price: And, uh,...  
18  
19 Marilyn Coulter: Go ahead.  
20  
21 Fannie Price: Go? Okay. And then, [sigh] I guess I, I don't know what happened. But  
22 anyway I, I, I just went in and I told the guys that, uh, I was new and I  
23 didn't know what I was doin' and I need your help. So [that's it 38:23],  
24 [laughter] that's what, that's what happened to me.  
25  
26 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Now I wanted to go and I know that skilled trades is its own world  
27 in a sense...  
28  
29 Fannie Price: Yeah.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: ...different from production. But how did those other production [creaking  
32 sound] workers feel knowin' that here you were, an African American  
33 man, getting ready to go into the trades and then [tapping sound] getting  
34 ready to become a supervisor. [beeping sound] [throat clearing in  
35 background] 38:47 How did they...  
36  
37 Fannie Price: [chuckle]  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...take it? Did you ever see...  
40  
41 Fannie Price: Well...  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: ...anything?  
44  
45 Fannie Price: ...yeah, a lotta guys said that, ya know, that I wouldn't, th-, that I wouldn't  
46 be able to make it, ya know, because the, the guy, the white guy is not

1 gonna to do it, ya know, [beeping sound] they're not gonna even need a  
2 supervisor.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Fannie Price: And then, and some of'm was really behind me and, [inaudible 39:05]  
7 "stick with it buddy, you can do it." And some of'm were, ya know,  
8 jealous and, ya know. Ya just...  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: [39:14] So you got both?  
11  
12 Fannie Price: Yeah, you got both ends of it. But, uh, [thumping sound] I, I just never  
13 said – I just, ya know, it was just never a problem with me. I said, "Hey,  
14 [thumping sound] I gotta job over here. Granted I know I can do it. I can  
15 do it better than anybody else in the world." [chuckle]  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
18  
19 Fannie Price: If I can [clicking sound] make it here, [thumping sound] I can make it over  
20 there.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
23  
24 Fannie Price: So – but I says, "I can do this." So I just, [puffing sound] I always ask for  
25 help. I always did.  
26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.  
28  
29 Fannie Price: And I always got it. The guys just would [inaudible 39:42] know. It's  
30 somethin' about people that you, you – instead of, [banging sound] ya  
31 know, bein' the boss, ya know, we all work in the [inaudible 39:53] here  
32 and that was my attitude and it just worked. [thumping sound] Ya know, I  
33 asked for help over there and I got it. But I would do – if we're – this is  
34 our department. This is our department. [thumping sound] What ya need  
35 you let me know and I'll get it for ya, ya know.  
36  
37 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
38  
39 Fannie Price: And I did because, ya know, I would be on their side, all the time. If a guy,  
40 [inaudible 40:15] if, if one of the workers' father in Tennessee sick, I say,  
41 "You go and you take care of your father and when you're finished, you  
42 call me and," ya know, "you come on back to work." [clicking sound] But  
43 I, I would help them, then they would help me.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: Oh. And was that just Fannie Price's way of doing things or was it  
46 something that...

1  
2Fonnie Price: [Inaudible 40:41]  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: ...as an employee you knew what you would like to have seen in a  
5 supervisor and maybe you did or didn't see it, so when you had [creaking  
6 sound] the opportunity?  
7  
8Fonnie Price: I, I didn't analyze it. [thumping sound] I guess I didn't analyze it that way.  
9 It was just hey we're all working here together. As long as you workin'  
10 with me, I'll work with you. [clicking sound] And that was just my attitude  
11 [clicking sound] about everything. If you needed, [inaudible 41:05] you  
12 get 1 pair of gloves a week. If you wore your gloves out or you lost your  
13 gloves, you [scraping sound] get another pair [throat clearing in  
14 background] of gloves without even sayin' – without even askin'.  
15  
16Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
17  
18Fonnie Price: Ya know. [tapping sound] Who cares about whether you use 1 pair of  
19 gloves or 2. But tha-, back in those days, [thumping sound] ya know, that  
20 was a big thing [thumping sound]. You could get 1 pair [inaudible 41:21]  
21 [thumping sound]  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: [41:24] So how long – so you stayed a supervisor until you...  
24  
25Fonnie Price: I stayed a supervisor...  
26  
27Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 41:29]?  
28  
29Fonnie Price: ...[thumping sound] uh, for like a year and a half and then, [thumping  
30 sound] ya know, they cut back and I had to go back to hourly and  
31 [thumping sound] then I would have to go be a supervisor in another  
32 department type of thing.  
33  
34Marilyn Coulter: [41:43] How did that transition [scraping sound] [thumping sound] work  
35 for you?  
36  
37Fonnie Price: [sigh] [chuckle] I went in with the same attitude everywhere I went.  
38  
39 [laughter]  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: [41:49] So was it a difficult transition for you?  
42  
43Fonnie Price: Uh, I, I, it, it could've been I guess, but I wouldn't let it be 'cause I just  
44 wouldn't allow it to be, ya know.  
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [42:01] And because you were a good supervisor, when you came back  
2 people didn't mind you comin' [thumping sound] back?  
3  
4 Fannie Price: Well, I had a reputation I guess as bein' kinda easy.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
7  
8 Fannie Price: But I would get the job done.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
11  
12 Fannie Price: And, and, and a lotta [thumping sound] guys wanted to work when they  
13 were asked to work with me. [thumping sound] They wanted to work with  
14 me. And I always did say with me [clicking sound]. And, uh, they didn't  
15 work for me, [thumping sound] they always worked with me.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [42:27] Did you have the same social rapport with [papers  
18 shuffling] your, uh, fellow supervisors as you did with your fellow  
19 [inaudible 42:34]?  
20  
21 Fannie Price: Yeah, I got along with the supervisor pretty good 'cause I played golf.  
22  
23 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
24  
25 Fannie Price: And I drank with him. We'd party and we'd play golf and I would bowl  
26 with him [thumping sound] [inaudible 42:51].  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: [42:52] So you did a lot of the activities...  
29  
30 Fannie Price: I did a lot of the activities...  
31  
32 Marilyn Coulter: ...outside?  
33  
34 Fannie Price: Outside.  
35  
36 Marilyn Coulter: [42:55] And you had, um, did you have supervisory friendships that  
37 extended outside of the plant until this day also?  
38  
39 Fannie Price: Yes. Mm-hm.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [43:03] So then you went back and forth from being a mill-, a  
42 journeyman millwright to a supervisor and...  
43  
44 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
45  
46 Marilyn Coulter: ...did at any point you became permanent as a supervisor?

1  
2Fonnie Price: Oh yeah. I became a permanent supervisor and then I stayed on for years  
3 and, uh, then they decided that they wanted to make me a general  
4 supervisor. [clicking sound] Then I had to go through that period again.  
5 Oh my goodness. [laughter] But I said, "I can do anything." I – my s-,  
6 [thumping sound] my supervisor called – my, the superintendent, plant  
7 engineer called me in and he said, uh, uh, – I knew that they would, would  
8 move me around, ya know, to different places and, uh, he called me and  
9 said, "We want to make you a general supervisor." He said, "What do you  
10 think about that?" He said, "Can you do it?" I said, "I can do anything."  
11 [laughter] I said, "I can do your job," ya know. [thumping sound] I said, "I  
12 can do anything."  
13  
14Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
15  
16Fonnie Price: Ya know. Uh, the, the thing that made the wh-, all the difference I think to  
17 me – what made the difference [coughing in background] in, in that plant  
18 for me, uh, – and I did it kinda unknowingly – was when I went to school  
19 and I got ahead ofm...  
20  
21Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
22  
23Fonnie Price: ... ya know. And I came in and, and, and got the, uh, reputation of being  
24 smart, ya know.  
25  
26Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
27  
28Fonnie Price: Because I had gone to school and I knew...  
29  
30Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
31  
32Fonnie Price: ...some things that I had to, to know when I went into trades, so I kinda  
33 got the reputation of being smart, which I was not. I just learned some  
34 things early. [thumping sound]  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: Gary Judy.  
37  
38Gary Judy: I have a question. You mentioned that, ya know, when you started out you  
39 wanted to get ahead..  
40  
41Fonnie Price: Mm-hm.  
42  
43Gary Judy: ...and, and, uh, moving from production to, uh, [thumping sound] to a  
44 journeyman, to a supervisor, and then to a, a general foreman. [45:01] Did  
45 you see – did you get the pay increases that you expected? Was it more or  
46 less than you expected or...



1  
2Fonnie Price: Well.  
3  
4Gary Judy: [45:09] ...was you happy with the, the increases that you saw?  
5  
6Fonnie Price: I was happy with the increases that I saw because, uh, I didn't really know  
7 what to expect. Uh, [inaudible 45:20] I had a lot of go-, good friends that  
8 was hourly [clicking sound] still and I knew what they were making 'cause  
9 I would take the checks to'm [thumping sound] and everything [inaudible  
10 45:28] pay'm [thumping sound] all the time. And my pay was much better  
11 than theirs. And, uh, uh, when I got to be general supervisor, they gave me  
12 a big raise, ya know. And then I got merit raises every year. Uh, uh, so it  
13 was all [thumping sound], all – money was always good. And, uh,  
14 [thumping sound] they, uh, they gave me a key to the executive, uh, uh,  
15 cafeteria and, uh, I'd go to lunch up there [inaudible 46:02], ya know. And,  
16 uh, [thumping sound] they'd have a big lazy Susan there with, uh,  
17 [clicking sound] uh, full of nuts and [tapping sound] mints and stuff.  
18 [laughter] [Inaudible 46:13].  
19  
20Gary Judy: [46:13] So, so that was a special, uh, dining area for, for – you had to be a  
21 general...  
22  
23Fonnie Price: General, uh,...  
24  
25Gary Judy: ...supervisor or up...  
26  
27Fonnie Price: ...of, uh. Mm-hm.  
28  
29Gary Judy: ...to eat there?  
30  
31Fonnie Price: That's right. And, uh...  
32  
33Gary Judy: [46:23] Can you tell us a little bit about that? How –...  
34  
35Fonnie Price: [laughter]  
36  
37Gary Judy: ...what the difference between the 2 cafeterias were?  
38  
39Fonnie Price: Okay.  
40  
41Marilyn Coulter: [46:29] Well, actually there was a difference between 3 cafeterias, was  
42 there not?  
43  
44Fonnie Price: There was just 2 cafeterias.  
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: Oh. [46:34] So [throat clearing in background] the regular hourly  
2 supervisors ate with the hourly personnel?  
3  
4 Fannie Price: Right.  
5  
6 Marilyn Coulter: Oh, okay.  
7  
8 Fannie Price: And, uh, th-, you had to have a key to get into the executive cafeteria.  
9 And, and you go in and you sit down and – at a chosen place wherever –  
10 and, uh, and, and you'd have people that wait on you and bring what you  
11 wanted. And if you wanted it made special, you'd make, you'd have them  
12 make it special. [creaking sound] But it was, it was, uh, it was, that was – I  
13 tell you, uh, I was the only, I was the only black in there [inaudible 47:10].  
14 I was the first black [people 47:11] in there, ya know. And boy, I'm telling  
15 you, that was hard, ya know. [papers shuffling] But I said, "[Inaudible  
16 47:19], I'm the general foreman. I'm goin' in there and I'm gonna make it."  
17 And when I fir-... [laughter]  
18  
19 [laughter]  
20  
21 Fannie Price: ...when I first went, I would go in and I tell ya the worst part of the day  
22 was [inaudible 47:29] havin' to go to that cafeteria at lunchtime, ya know.  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 [laughter]  
27  
28 Fannie Price: But I said, "Hey." I, I, I – 'cause I, I had a lot of friends [on 47:36]  
29 supervisors, ya know, and we'd go out together and all that kinda stuff.  
30 And I said, "I'm gonna make it. I'm gonna do it until I'm comfortable with  
31 it," ya know. [humming sound in background] And pretty s-, [clicking  
32 sound] and when I first went in I would go in and, and, yo-, you know,  
33 people are a habit, [tapping sound] ya know. You, you – when you go to  
34 sit [thumping sound] every day [scraping sound] you sit, [thumping  
35 sound] [throat clearing in background] sit that place every day. I'm beatin'  
36 on the table. And, uh, eh, I went in and I didn't know where anyone else  
37 was sittin'. Whatev-, I just went and found me a seat. [laughter] And, I,  
38 that's the where I sit. And, and, and it was – they were givin' me a little  
39 room and stuff, ya know, at first. And, uh, then pretty soon, uh, everybody  
40 else started to kind of [papers shuffling] migratin' to where I was, ya  
41 know. [thumping sound]  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
44  
45 Fannie Price: And [thumping sound] then, uh, it, it, then it got to be the place where  
46 [scraping sound] lunchtime was the best part of the day because we would

1 have a ball in there, ya know. And, uh, I was right there with them and  
2 they were all enjoying and everything. And they would – a lot of the guys  
3 that wouldn't work with me outside was, uh, [scraping sound] workin' with  
4 me on the inside the cafeteria. Not workin' with me, I mean, uh...

5

6Marilyn Coulter: Socializing.

7

8Fonnie Price: ...socializing, ya know, on the inside.

9

10Gary Judy: [48:49] So was it still the same, uh, half hour lunch or did that change  
11 from...? [clicking sound]  
12

13Fonnie Price: Uh, most of the guys had an area of responsibility and, uh, they had to be  
14 there at a certain time. But we were not as, ya know, if you stayed over 10  
15 minutes or so, or 15 minutes, you could, you could do that. [thumping  
16 sound] Ya know, that was just – they were a little more lax in there. We  
17 didn't, ya know – you set your own schedule. Uh, [clicking sound] most of  
18 the guys were makin' out their own work schedule.  
19

20Marilyn Coulter: [49:18] So did you also use preferred parking also?

21

22Fonnie Price: Yes. Uh, we had preferred parkin'. We had a supervisor, general  
23 supervisor parking area, [thumping sound] [coughing in background]  
24 general supervisor. Uh, it was on one side of the street and the hourly and  
25 the supervisor go on the other side. And, uh, yeah. And you, you didn't  
26 have your name on your parking space, but it's just like a s-, with your seat  
27 in the cafeteria. Ya, you, you have habits and you always do the same  
28 thing so you always parked in the same spot [inaudible 49:50]. And there  
29 was – oh, that's Price's parking space, then I'll park over here, ya know.  
30

31Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

32

33Fonnie Price: And it was kind of like that.

34

35Gary Judy: Uh, now you were in there when they changed that parking where,  
36 [thumping sound] where the supervisors and superintendents had their  
37 own special parking lot and it was [creaking sound] changed to where  
38 everybody had to park in the same lot. [50:16] Was you still there then  
39 when...  
40

41Fonnie Price: No.

42

43Gary Judy: ...that happened?

44

45Fonnie Price: I left there in 1984 and they changed that in 1984.  
46

1 Gary Judy: Yeah, I was the person that got that changed.  
2  
3 Fannie Price: [Did you 50:24]?  
4  
5 Gary Judy: Yeah.  
6  
7 Fannie Price: Well, I – they never changed it while I was there. And they, they still had  
8 the executive cafeteria when I was there. Uh, uh, but, uh, it, it was – they  
9 changed [tapping sound] it right after that. Right after I left they changed  
10 that and they changed, they changed it to where [thumping sound] al-, ya  
11 know, everybody would eat in the same place...  
12  
13 Gary Judy: Yeah, that was, uh, Frank Shotters and me, if you remember Frank. He  
14 was the plant manager back then. [papers shuffling] [50:49] Was he there  
15 when you was there?  
16  
17 Fannie Price: ...[inaudible 50:43]  
18  
19 Fannie Price: No, [uh-uh 50:50. He wasn't there [sighing sound in background].  
20 [Inaudible 50:52] he came after me.  
21  
22 Gary Judy: But they started the [EPG 50:54] programs. [50:55] Did they have that  
23 when you were there?  
24  
25 Fannie Price: No, they didn't have that either. [laughter]  
26  
27 Gary Judy: Oh.  
28  
29 [papers shuffling]  
30  
31 Fannie Price: No.  
32  
33 Gary Judy: Oh.  
34  
35 Fannie Price: But, uh, [papers shuffling] yeah, I left. [Inaudible 51:05] but at the time  
36 just before I left, uh, I was a young man. I was 55 years old when I retired.  
37 And, uh, [clicking sound] I had – to me, I had been in the glass office for  
38 years and years and years. I mean I – over there I had my office had glass  
39 on 3 sides. And, uh, I, I, I had been just observed, ya know. For s-, it, it  
40 appeared to me that I had just been observed, ya know, [inaudible 51:48]  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: You were in a fishbowl. [laughter]  
43  
44 Fannie Price: Yeah, I was in a fishbowl, ya know. And I, I just got tired of it. I got tired  
45 of it. [thumping sound]  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
2

3 Fannie Price: They started grooming me to be a superintendent. I didn't know [clicking  
4 sound] what they were talkin' about. That was when they were talkin'  
5 about, uh, uh, uh, joining Fisher Body and Oldsmobile together. And, uh,  
6 they started [clicking sound] grooming me to be a superintendent and I  
7 asked him, my super-, my boss, I asked him, ya know, if, if I was doin' a  
8 good job for him. And he said that I was doin' an excellent job, so I said,  
9 "Why are you [inaudible 52:30] me if I'm doin' such a good job?" And he  
10 said that, uh, he needed a superintendent and I was gonna be it. And I said,  
11 "I don't want to be a superintendent," ya know.  
12

13 What he was gonna do – I was, I was, been in skilled trades all the time. I  
14 always had. I had, I had industrial truck, painters, uh, the welders, small  
15 tool repair [clicking sound], mechanics, and shipment. That was all my  
16 responsibility and sanitation on both shifts. That was my responsibility.  
17 And I had learned to do that job and I had learned to do it well. I could do  
18 my job and go play golf in the afternoon.  
19

20 [laughter]  
21

22 Fannie Price: Uh, so I knew I was doin' a good job, but he was goin' to make me a  
23 superintendent. And he was goin-, uh, make me a superintendent over  
24 sanitation in both Oldsmobile and Fisher Body.  
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
27

28 Fannie Price: And even though he was promotin' me, I felt like it was a demotion. I  
29 would've been superintendent with my own car and all that stuff, office on  
30 that side and an office on this side. Uh, but I was in skilled trade. I was  
31 skilled trade. I didn't wanna be sanitation superintendent. [car sound in  
32 background] And I didn't want to be in the fishbowl anymore. [chuckle]  
33 [thumping sound]  
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
36

37 Fannie Price: And so I said, "Well, th-, then I'll retire."  
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
40

41 Fannie Price: So I retired.  
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [54:19] So you retired?  
44

45 Fannie Price: Mm-hm.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [54:22] Um, is there anything – it's been an awesome story and an  
2 awesome journey, and is there anything that, um, that we haven't asked  
3 you that you'd like to go on the record? People knowing about your life as,  
4 at Fisher Body.  
5

6 Fannie Price: [chuckle] I don't know, uh, I hadn't even thought about a lot of those  
7 things that [inaudible 54:53]. [clicking sound] It's been a long time since I  
8 left. I don't know. Jus-, just for the record, I'll say that, uh, I really enjoyed  
9 working, [clicking sound] working there, with General Motors. I really  
10 did. They really provided me and my family with a better than average  
11 life.  
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

14

15 Fannie Price: We were [scraping sound] middle class or whatever, ya know. But my  
16 kids had a lot of things that a lotta other kids didn't have...  
17

18 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
19

20 Fannie Price: ...as a result of me workin' at General Motors. And they always treated  
21 me fairly, ya know. Always treated me – there was some occasions when  
22 things happened, but that's just life.  
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
25

26 Fannie Price: Uh, but it was always a pretty good, pretty good, uh, place to work. And I  
27 always looked at General Motors as a family, ya know. I live with part of  
28 my family and I liked, I liked it and I thought they were on my side. And  
29 they would tell me that, that they coerced me in to be, to go from hourly to  
30 salary. They said, "you'll live better and you'll work better and, and when  
31 you retire you'll have a better retirement." And they lied to me about that  
32 and I'm resentful of that.  
33

34 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
35

36 Fannie Price: I really resent that. Uh, when I worked, when I worked th-, I had a key to  
37 the executive, I had executive dining room, I had a place to park, I made  
38 good money. I got bonuses, raises. All those things were forthcoming to  
39 me.  
40

41 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
42

43 Fannie Price: And they, they indicated that, that it'd continue to be that way...  
44

45 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
46

1Fonnie Price: ...when I retired.  
2

3Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.  
4

5Fonnie Price: But the moment I retired, they walked me to the door, they gave me my  
6 [clock 56:50] and put their foot in my behind.  
7

8Marilyn Coulter: Mm.  
9

10Fonnie Price: As a salary employee, 'cause you, you, you're talkin' about hourly here and  
11 then, uh, – but listen I'm telling ya the way they treat the salary employees,  
12 their retire is ridiculous.  
13

14Marilyn Coulter: [Really? 57:07]  
15

16Fonnie Price: It really is. Uh, sinc-, since I retired, I tried to get a bunch of the retirees to  
17 go together.  
18

19Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
20

21Fonnie Price: We have breakfast together out here, uh, once a month and talk about this  
22 and that's all we do is talk about it. But they don't – since 1990, since  
23 1995, I have not had a raise of any kind.  
24

25Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
26

27Fonnie Price: From General Motors.  
28

29Marilyn Coulter: [Mm 57:42].  
30

31Fonnie Price: Now you think about that. An-, uh, that's over 10 years and I haven't even  
32 had a cost of living increase in my pay. But they have taken \$159 a month  
33 away from me...  
34

35Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
36

37Fonnie Price: ...to pay my insurance. [throat clearing in background] I retired in 84 and  
38 I had 2 raises since then. Now that's 22 years without a raise. That's livin'  
39 on what you were makin' 22 years ago. How would like to do that, ya  
40 know? Just think about that.  
41

42Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
43

44Fonnie Price: [Inaudible 58:12] know what you made 22 years ago. I'm not sayin' that  
45 I'm in poverty, but I am sayin' that they don't treat the salary employees

1 well. [Inaudible 25:23] hourly employees and the union, they get a bonus  
2 every year.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Fannie Price: I don't get any bonuses...  
7  
8 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
9  
10 Fannie Price: ...or raises.  
11  
12 Marilyn Coulter: [58:34] Do you think that's why some line supervisors come back to the  
13 line before they retire?  
14  
15 Fannie Price: No, because they don't believe that General Motors would treat'm that  
16 way. I talked to, uh, to, uh, salary employees now that are my friends...  
17  
18 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
19  
20 Fannie Price: ...I tell them don't retire [inaudible 58:53], but they can't, they can't go  
21 back to hourly now. But when they could, I said, "Don't retire as an  
22 [inaudible 58:57], retire as a salary employee."  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 Fannie Price: Because... [thumping sound]  
27  
28 Gary Judy: [59:01] S-, s-, s-, Gary Judy, so do you see a, a need for more unions in  
29 this country after bein' treated the way you were treated?  
30  
31 [throat clearing in background]  
32  
33 Fannie Price: But of course. The salary [thumping sound] should organize. Salary  
34 should organize and they should have reunion and, and, and they shouldn't  
35 allow ju- – we don't, we don't have no voice. [clicking sound] We got, we  
36 – 1 year, uh, 3 or 4 years ago, at the auto show, you might a, I don't if you  
37 guys have heard about it or not, but at the auto show we got th-, we got the  
38 buses together to take salary employees down to the auto show. And we  
39 called the newspapers and we was, we were picketing down there at the  
40 auto show.  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.  
43  
44 Fannie Price: And, uh, they said you can't picket down here. [laughter] But we did  
45 anyway. But it was cold. But, uh, we gotta article in the free press and our  
46 pictures [clicking sound] and things. [squeaking sound] But it didn't



1 amount to a hill of beans because General Motors knows that they have  
2 the upper hand and we, we don't have a voice and there is nothin' we can  
3 do about it.  
4

5Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
6

7Fonnie Price: And they just raised my insurance again this year without a raise in my  
8 income [chuckle] since 1995 they, uh, raised the [clicking sound].  
9

10Marilyn Coulter: So, um, I – even though you, um, felt that, um, after you retired you were  
11 done wrong...  
12

13Fonnie Price: Mm-hm.  
14

15Marilyn Coulter: ...and the door was shut on you, [sigh] [thumping sound] Lansing Fisher  
16 Body [squeaking sound] has always been considered the capital of quality,  
17 people wanted bodies made by Fisher. [100:51] What would you attribute  
18 that to? What made our workforce different?  
19

20Fonnie Price: Oh. I bein', bein' the supervisor [inaudible 100:01] have to say it, it was  
21 the supervisors. No, I, it was the quality of people. The quality of people  
22 here in this city. They so work-orientated, ya know. And most of the  
23 people that I came in contract with, uh, were just normal people. But they  
24 did some excellent work. And that, that's just, that's just the way it is here  
25 in this city.  
26

27Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
28

29Fonnie Price: Ya know. People are just work-orientated. They do quality work.  
30

31Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body [creaking sound] has been a part of the city of Lansing for  
32 many, many, many years. Now the doors have closed and soon the  
33 building will be coming down. [101:43] Being a resident of Lansing and a  
34 retiree from there, how does that make you feel? What do you think about  
35 that?  
36

37Fonnie Price: Oh, man. You just feel like there's somethin' missin', [thumping sound] ya  
38 know. I just drove by the plant over there and it just gives ya an empty  
39 feelin', ya know, to just, [thumping sound] to see that, ya know. You just  
40 don't wanna, you don't wanna to see it. They gonna tear it down.  
41 [thumping sound] And you just, [clicking sound] you just hate to see it,  
42 you really, really do, ya know. You feel like somethin's missin'. But as far  
43 as Fisher Body itself, I just think it's, it's been a wonderful journey, ya  
44 know. I enjoyed workin' at Fisher Body and it will always be, ya know, I  
45 get a warm feelin' thinkin' about it, even though I can't say the same thing

1 for General Motors, ya know, as a whole. But, uh, Fisher Body [clicking  
2 sound] was a good place to work.  
3  
4Marilyn Coulter: Mr. Price, I wanna say thank you for sharing your memories with us and,  
5 ya know, it was awesome. And all I can say is thank you for paving the  
6 ground for people to come behind you.  
7  
8Fonnie Price: [Inaudible 102:48].  
9  
10Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Mr. Price.  
11  
12John Fedewa: Thank you very much.  
13  
14Fonnie Price: All right.  
15  
16Gary Judy: Thank you. I really enjoyed your interview.  
17  
18Female: Awesome. [chuckle]  
19  
20Fonnie Price: Thank you.  
21  
22Marilyn Coulter: I really, really do. I really – that is just...  
  
24  
25  
26/ce