

(11:24 am) Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team

Interviewer - Marilyn Coulter

Interviewee - Dennis Quinney

Security Fisher (8-21-78) AF-CIO ()

Married - Yes (2) children (1) boy (1) girl

Education - High School - some College

Military - none

* Come to mich in 1957 from Louisiana with Father looking to get a job in the auto industry and to stay in Lansing.

* Father worked at Fisher Body, Mother started as homemaker until hiring in at Oldsmobile. 5 children were raised (4) boys (1) girl.

* Dennis grew up on Fenwick St about 6 blocks from Fisher Body. People along this street car pooled all on the same street. Dennis was oldest and with Dad on nights Mother also working. He took over most of the household duties. He still lives there today.

* He remembers people looking in the windows at Fisher Body during the day shift. He also remembers how long and large the Fisher Body building was. Taking a long time to pass.

- Growing up in this city or neighborhood this was a place of importance and good paying jobs building cars and parts.

The streets surrounding the city were always full all the time. The community and peoples livelihood was the basis of the factories

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inside the city. Also the railroad tracks in the neighborhood were busy all the time.

* Demick's parents were very strict and there was not much variation from this rule.

* Reason for hiring = Becoming a father at age 17 his parents made sure that he was going to fulfill his obligations to his child + lady.

Starting out at New York Carpet World Demick made some money but not always enough.

* In 1978 Demick spoke to his dad about hiring in at Fisher, so he had to ~~be~~ stand in a long line. Basically because of the wages and the long term health care benefits.

* First Day = Very overwhelmed by it all inside the plant. As a line feeder, as cars come to the end of the line in the body shop. Demick operated a finger truck which was a vehicle that moved car bodies from one line to another. Also he observed the "jungle" which was where the welders were and hoses, cords etc.

* Demick believed that his father had some influence on his employment at Fisher Body.

Problems = Many different things went on.

He wasn't going to be there very long but this changes after his child needed to be taken care of. Demick bought his first house at age 22 - and could make the payments and buy a car and also taking away the baby.

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In 1978 there were very few women in the Body Shop

Also in the beginning there were alot more harassment and different kinds of pranks.

= Lunchtime and breaks = Most people went out for lunch, 33 minutes, to Honey's across the street from Fisher Body. Mostly Fried Bologna Pickled Eggs and beer. Then run back to Fisher Body to be there before the line started.

* Fridays were payday and checks were cashed, numerous people cashed their paychecks and always keep cash on hand. Things here were relatively cheap.

Diversity in the plant = Very different, first time working with white people and also black people on a daily basis. Demits felt his previous experience in the retail field helped him cope with the situation here.

* Demits always wondered who would be buying all these cars, the body shop was a place that was dark, noisy, etc.

* 1978- to 1981 he worked in the Body Shop. Demits was injured in 1981 on the slipper stairs and had to go on sick-leave and workmens comp. He had to have knee surgery on the knee he injured. Then he returned to work and went to the sealer line up in the paint shop. The sealer line was on operation where sealer was

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= used to fill seams and holes on the body.
Body vs Paint = Cleaner in Paint, more
women, easier work etc. One difference
was the clothing you would wear, a pleasant
environment, being able to talk to people.
There was a big ~~factor~~ factor on the line.
This sometimes would cause a Radio Wars between
2 employees. But this was always worked out.

Working in Paint vs Body = Paint had more
emphasis on quality, covering the seams and
holes in the metal. Sealer line was most
for this because it was the beginning of
the paint shop. This also brought about
more chemicals, more thinner, sticky floor,
different shoes inside the plant and outside.
The jobs in paint were harder because
they had certain ways the jobs needed to
be done. Very quality oriented department.
Supervision of Work = There were more in the
paint shop, than in the body shop. Some
of these supervisors were friends in the
different neighborhoods surrounding the plant.

A Friendships inside and outside the plant = I think
said there are many of these built because
you spent so much time together each
day 8, 9, 10 hours. You found out about
their families and likes and dislikes.
A. During holiday and special events

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People would come together closer than just working together everyday. Some of your life was spent together each day.

* There were many vendors in the plant.

Everything from food to money etc.

* Gant jobs, were jobs that skilled trades did for employees. These things would make your job easier or harder depending on how your relationship was with them.

* Funniest things happen in the plant = Jewish cant alone one event as the funnest, but everyday was different everytime you walked into Fisher.

* Favorite Moment = Holidays, people would come together and there was no animosity.

* Union Activities = Demich's dad was involved in the union, he was civil rights chairperson. But back then he was beratted because he was a person of color. But he still continued as a very good civil rights chairperson.

* Demich spoke about how the old days there was no personal protective equipment being used by the older employees but in later years these older gentlemen are dying ~~very~~ early from some of the chemicals that they inhaled in their early years. This makes a difference with childbearing, old age, family etc.

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Union
activity

→ 1981-82 Union Activity = United Way
Contribution Committee, Community Services, selling
old newspaper boxes, Collections etc. Some
of Dennis' co workers had animosity and
bad feelings toward ~~Ray~~ Dennis =

* Employee Involvement = Beginning Dennis felt this
made a big difference and that each one of
you job. This also brought more quality in
the plant.

* Community Services - Union Involvement. ~~Ray~~
Rudy Byrnes was a major factor in Dennis' ~~involvement~~
involvement in the beginning. Rudy was the
kind of guy who would reach out and
help someone if they were in need. Union label
with Doug Rodomacher. Civil Rights Committee with
Marilyn Coulter, CIUW committee, Sergeant at
Arms of Local 602. Attend union meetings on
a regular basis. Al Presley introduced

Dennis to the Asa Philip Randolph family.
Alvin Presley and Terry Ward had some
conflicts between them. There were many
confrontations between their groups also. This
was also a rose factor involved in this
confrontation, the memberships was exposed
to this on a plant floor level everyday.

* Being a chairperson and works on the line =
Very complex. Your family, your work life,
and all other variables are involved.

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You want to do the best job possible, Having a relationships with co workers, with supervision and the union etc.

* Currently = Health + Safety Director for AFL-CIO Union.

Today there are people who don't look at the people who struggled before us in health care, collective bargaining process, wages. There are some people who think we are lazy, spoiled, overpaid etc.

* Plant Closing = a significant part of Demick's life, the neighborhood, the world is changing, the comfort that this has provided for him. This may be uncomfortable as the future comes.

The privilege of getting hired in at Fisher Body. These preferred jobs, The labor movement, trying to make changes in others and having something positive to look forward too. The relationships that have formed over the years. Traveling different places with his jobs. Hope he has made a difference in other people's jobs and lives.

* Clarification from UAW to AFL-CIO Demick is and always will be UAW AFL-CIO is the umbrella of all unions. Demick was leader for training to team leaders in the plant.

Tina Abbott saw or heard of

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Dennels work in these works and was offered a job by the AFL-CIO. This come to an interview and a job.

The UAW and CIO granted Dennels a Union leave to become Health & Safety member of the AFL-CIO.

* You should become involved in the Union or politics, ~~and~~ if if you want to make a change, or you can set back and accept whatever comes your way.