

1 **Derrick Quinney, an African American, discusses his career as a production worker and**  
2 **UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**  
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4

5 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body historical team interview. Today is Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>,  
6 2006. The time is approximately 11:24. First, we will – we're at UAW  
7 Local 602, Frank Dryer Greenhouse. We will first begin with giving the  
8 interview team.  
9

10 Earl Nicholson, Sr.: Earl Nicholson.

11  
12 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.

13  
14 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.

15  
16 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.

17  
18 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.

19  
20 Gary Judy: Gary Judy.

21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: And Marilyn Coulter. Today we're here with Derrick Quinney. [0:27]  
23 Derrick, will you please, uh, spell and pronounce your name for us?  
24

25 Derrick Quinney: My name is Derrick Quinney, D-E-R-R-I-C-K Q-U-I-N-N-E-Y.

26  
27 Marilyn Coulter: [0:39) Your address, please.

28  
29 Derrick Quinney: 2010 Wellesley, W-E-L-L-E-S-L-E-Y, Drive, Lansing, Michigan, 48910.

30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: [0:49] How much seniority do you have?

32  
33 Derrick Quinney: Twenty-seven years.

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35 Marilyn Coulter: [0:54] Are you married?

36  
37 Derrick Quinney: Married with, uh, 2 children.

38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [0:57] Boys, girls?

40  
41 Derrick Quinney: Boy and a girl.

42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: [1:01] Were you raised in Michigan? Where were you born?

44  
45 Derrick Quinney: Uh, originally born in Bossier City, Louisiana. Um, came to Michigan in  
46 1957, um, with my dad. We, my family migrated here from Louisiana. My

1 dad came here with the, uh, hopes of, uh, getting a job in the north in the  
2 auto industry. That's how it all began.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: Oh. [1:26] So what education level do you have?  
5  
6 Derrick Quinney: Um, product of the public schools here in Lansing. Um, some union  
7 education, of course, as well as, um, 2 years at LCC and, um, life  
8 experiences.  
9  
10 Marilyn Coulter: Life experience. Okay. [1:44] Uh, any military?  
11  
12 Derrick Quinney: No military. In fact, that's quite interesting. I'm glad you asked that. Um,  
13 um, also during the time of the Vietnam War, uh, is when my mil-, my  
14 eligibility for military became, um, active and, um, it was during that time  
15 in – uh, I turned 18 in April of, um, '73 and, um, in May of '73, uh, is  
16 when President Nixon, uh, brought the troops home from Vietnam. So,  
17 although I find it somewhat difficult to have any admiration for a lot of,  
18 uh, individuals or the, uh, republican party, I do find Ni-, Nixon to be near  
19 and dear to me simply because he, uh, saved me from having to go to the  
20 war, so [laughter] it's kind of interesting how that all happened. I was, uh,  
21 like many folks, fearful of the possibilities of that happening. Again, that  
22 war, like the war today, we find that it was just, uh, a tragedy. We lost a  
23 lot, a lot of people in that war for reasons we still don't at this point  
24 understand or I don't know if we'll ever understand but, uh, um, I was just  
25 blessed in the regard that, um, I didn't have to go to that, um, and be a part  
26 of that, so [throat clearing] that's the history as far as my military  
27 experience is concerned.  
28  
29 Marilyn Coulter: [3:09] Derrick, can you tell me, what did your parents do?  
30  
31 Derrick Quinney: My, um, dad, um, was a, as I mentioned earlier, a, uh, employee here at  
32 Fisher Body. My mom, uh, started out as a domestic, um, working  
33 cleaning homes, um, around the city. She also did some, uh, nurse's aide  
34 work and then, uh, finally became employed over at the Oldsmobile  
35 facility on the, uh, [Chadsey 3:37] side until she retired. Um, raised 5 kids.  
36 I'm the oldest of 5. Um, pretty much, um, work and, um, my parents were  
37 very, um, I recall them fondly. My dad, uh, was, um, worked hard, played  
38 hard and was hard on us as kids, you know. My mom was probably the  
39 strength of it all. I mean, she, she held the household together and, and,  
40 um, um, was a big influence on all of us in our, uh, in our waring here in  
41 the city. Again, like I said, 4 boys and a girl. I'm the oldest of 4, the girl  
42 being the youngest. Um, all doing well, uh, families, homes, jobs. Uh, my  
43 parents played a major role in, uh, our development in what I am and what  
44 they are today as far as their, um, involvement in community and, um,  
45 outlook on life and, as a whole.  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: All right. [4:41] Well, before we get into your work history, you want to  
2 talk a little bit about what you knew about the plant before you came? You  
3 said that your father worked at Fisher Body. Now, did you live near the  
4 facility at all?  
5

6 Derrick Quinney: Actually, um, we, um, grew up right here, um, like I said, in the city on the  
7 west side. Um, lived on Lenawee Street, which is less than 6 blocks away  
8 from here. I can recall, um, as a kid comin' up, uh, it was interesting. My  
9 dad worked nights along with – there was a group of, uh, folks in the  
10 neighborhood. Uh, O.J. Richardson, uh, Cecil Bethany, uh, Al Bethany,  
11 um, um, and those guys used to – what happened is they would all carpool  
12 to work and they would start at, uh, O.J.'s house and they would kind of  
13 like, uh, drive down, you know, drive down Lenawee Street and they'd  
14 just pick'm up as they would go along the way there.  
15

16 They would all just gather together and come on over to Fisher Body, so I  
17 do recall how that all happened and it was almost routinely every day and  
18 I can, I can remember – of course, my dad worked 2 jobs at the time, so,  
19 uh, we'd go to school, we'd come back home and he would just be gettin'  
20 up and getting ready to go to, go to work, so it was always, uh, a point in  
21 time where, it, it's, it would always be like at the last minute tryin' to get  
22 things done to get ready and get ready to go to work. I, um, I mentioned  
23 earlier, my mom was a domestic so, um, she would be at work and they  
24 never saw each other throughout the week because she was at work and he  
25 was on his way goin' to work, so at some point in time I became the, uh,  
26 the cook, bottle washer, babysitter, the whole nine yards looking after my  
27 siblings and also kind of preparing meals, if you will, for my dad, so that's  
28 kind of how I got into, um, the, the domestic side of it, if you will, in terms  
29 of, uh, my ability to, you know, kind of take care of myself and prepare  
30 meals now, a lot like I do at home for my wife even [laughing] today, so  
31 ...  
32

33 Marilyn Coulter: [6:44] Derrick, ...  
34

35 Derrick Quinney: Yeah.  
36

37 Marilyn Coulter: ...can you tell me, um, what did you know about your father's work?  
38

39 Derrick Quinney: Um, I knew that he worked in the body shop. I knew that, um, he was, um,  
40 busy. I mean, he worked all the time. I mean, he, it just seemed like that's  
41 all my old man did was work and, like I said, he worked hard and he  
42 played hard. When he wasn't working, he, you know, liked to socialize  
43 with his friends and, and, uh, partake in, you know, the alcoholic  
44 beverages and things of that nature but, uh, he worked in the body shop.  
45 He was, uh, the utility person, um, he worked, um, in the solder  
46 department, um, he worked, um, just a number of different jobs

1 throughout the, the facility there and, um, was very popular, I guess. You  
2 know, a lot of guys knew him and he knew a lot of folks in the facility  
3 and, and, um, he also tells a lot of fond, uh, and humorous stories about his  
4 experiences here in the facility and such, so ...  
5

6Marilyn Coulter: [7:45] As a child, did you ever get a chance to come into the facility or  
7 near the facility?  
8

9Derrick Quinney: I remember they used to have, um, plant visits where they would have  
10 like, uh, different model, um, what do we call those now, uh ...  
11

12Marilyn Coulter: Changeover.  
13

14Derrick Quinney: Changeover, well not changeovers but when they were, um – I remember  
15 one time in particular when they would have a family outing, a family  
16 night or somethin' that would allow folks to come to the facilities and take  
17 the tours of the plant, and I remember some of the concept vehicles back  
18 in like the '60s that we thought were just like space-age kind of stuff that  
19 were goin' on there. I liked like the Toronados, the '70 Toronados and  
20 stuff like that, those vehicles. Man, it was just unbelievable, uh, uh,  
21 designs and all of the features and so forth that those cars had and  
22 whatever and we were just, you know, so awed at what, um, what was  
23 going to be or what the possibilities were in terms of those kind of things,  
24 so I do remember those.  
25

26 I also remember, um, like in the, uh, front of Verlinden Avenue there, um,  
27 uh, the windows used to be opened up and stuff and we would, you know,  
28 come by there throughout the night. You know, my mom used to take us  
29 to the old Tastee Freez right over here off of Saginaw Street; we'd come  
30 by at night and look there and you'd see people standin' on the outside  
31 looking in those windows and com-, talkin' to folks. I, I guess that's what  
32 they were doin' [chuckle]. I don't know what was goin' on there but, uh,  
33 yeah, I remember those times.  
34

35 There's, there's somethin' else I want to talk about too as far as my  
36 childhood. I used to play, um, uh, sandlot baseball and we used to hold,  
37 we used to play a lot of our games over at, uh, West Side Park, and during  
38 the days or the mornings during the summer when we're out of, of course,  
39 out of school or whatever, we used to have to ride our bikes or walk to  
40 West Side Park or whatever. I can remember the walk from Michigan  
41 Avenue to the end of Fisher Body being the longest walk [laughing] there  
42 was. I mean, when I got past there, I was home-free then. I knew either  
43 way, either way, comin' or goin', when I walked past that, I mean, it just  
44 seemed to be such a mammoth facility. I mean, the size of it and this, this,  
45 this, uh, yeah, that was, that was somethin' that was pretty interesting. I'd  
46 go walk the cl-, walk there or, like I said, ride my bike. I'd have my

1 baseball cleats and my baseball glove and my baseball uniform and it was,  
2 uh, it was always, uh, somethin' that was, uh, pretty special walkin' by  
3 there, 'cause I was always so curious about what was inside of there, you  
4 know, and if I'd ever end up there.  
5

6Marilyn Coulter: [10:08] Did you ever have any interaction with any of the other employees  
7 outside of your father and the other neighborhood gentleman?  
8

9Derrick Quinney: Well, my, um, my uncle, Wayne [Lathan 10:16] used to work there. He  
10 used to spend a lot of time there. Sam Haney was another one. I mean, a  
11 lot of folks, uh, uh, Jay Pfeifer, um, Elmer Pfeifer. There wa-, I mean,  
12 everybody in the neighborhood. I mean, if you, if you had – [throat  
13 clearing] I shouldn't say everyone, but the majority of the folks that lived  
14 in the neighborhood also worked at Fisher Body or had some sort of ties  
15 with the, uh, with, uh, Fisher Body, Oldsmobile, one of those facilities  
16 [inaudible 10:41].  
17

18Marilyn Coulter: [10:42] So what did the neighborhood think of Fisher Body havin' – what  
19 was it like to have a factory as a neighbor? From your sch-, from your  
20 high school and in your neighborhood – did it affect your environment?  
21

22Derrick Quinney: You know, it's, it's funny how that all came into play. As a youth, we  
23 didn't really pay much attention to it at the time, but over the years, um,  
24 you talk about the sounds of the city or the, the environment in, itself – uh,  
25 Fisher Body, Oldsmobile, um, the Drop Forge plants, all of those kind of  
26 things – they were sounds, they were, um, just products of the, the, the  
27 workplaces around here that, that were, um, that had some significance  
28 there. I remember in my latter years, and even when I started working here  
29 at Fisher Body, how folks were complaining about the stinch that was  
30 coming out of the, uh, stacks and so on and so forth. As a kid, it was just a  
31 part of that whole environment and, of course, there were no  
32 environmental regulations or things of that nature, but I can remember  
33 many a day going outside and cars would just be covered with, you know,  
34 sediment from the stacks and emissions and so forth comin' out of those  
35 facilities. Um, it was, it was just a part of the environment. That's what we  
36 did, and nobody really had any complaints or made any noises or anything  
37 about that.  
38

39 I can remember nights when, like, the hammering and the pounding from  
40 the Drop Forge facilities and so forth – that used to put me to sleep. That  
41 was [laughing], that was my lullaby at night in a lot of cases, you know,  
42 and, um, that's just the way it was. The, the vehicles, long before they, uh,  
43 expanded Martin Luther King, now Martin Luther King – when it was  
44 Logan Street, I mean, it was just, what, 4 lanes all compressed right there  
45 together in the neighborhood – that was just, that was just the product of  
46 the neighborhood. I mean, the trucks goin' up and down and the, the

1 sounds that that made throughout the night continuously because it was  
2 constantly runnin' all the time.  
3  
4 Um, Olds Avenue. I mean, that was just, it was just a constant merry-go-  
5 round, if you will, of trucks and vehicles passin' down through there. Um,  
6 the, uh, parking lots used to be just full of cars all over the place down  
7 through there and it was just, uh, it was, uh, it was, it was life. That was  
8 the way it was. I, um, remember, uh, when I went to Sexton High School –  
9 I spent a year over at Sexton and we used to practice out there in the field  
10 and we could see the big green, we call it the big green monster, over there  
11 and be out there playin' and practicin' or whatever we were doin' out  
12 there and, um, you know, the, the, the emissions that were comin' out of  
13 there and the sounds and what have you. That was just all a part of the  
14 community. It was just all a part of our history. That was our, that was our  
15 livelihood. That was our folks' livelihood. That's, that's what provided us  
16 the, you know, the quality of life that we had, which was, for me, um, I  
17 wouldn't trade any of it. I wouldn't trade none of it at all.  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: [13:33] Now, as a child, when you were over at Sexton playing on the  
20 field, did you ever notice any workers on the roofs looking, watching you?  
21  
22Derrick Quinney: Yeah. At night, you know, they used to do that. Particularly, you know,  
23 game nights or whatever, I can, you know, folks would be up on the roof  
24 and my dad, in some cases, would be up there on those roofs lookin' out  
25 too. That was their, um, way of being able to attend but not physically  
26 because, of course, they had obligations at work or what have you, but  
27 yeah, they would be up there and you would, you know, um, he'd come  
28 home and, you know, give us, critique our games and whatever, so yeah, it  
29 was pretty cool to see that up there, or notice that.  
30  
31Marilyn Coulter: [14:08] What about the trains? GM had, we had trains comin' in and out  
32 of the facilities. Did, was that part of your youth?  
33  
34Derrick Quinney: Yeah. Well, that, that too. Yeah, all of that.  
35  
36Marilyn Coulter: [14:15] Did you play on the trains [inaudible 14:16]  
37  
38Derrick Quinney: The train – no, I never, I never played on'm, uh, that's where I [left  
39 14:19]. Of course, they were pretty strict too in terms of – you know,  
40 what, what my parents told you to do or not to do, you adhered to it. I  
41 mean, there wasn't no questionin' it, no judgin' it or, I mean, I probably  
42 stretched, you know, took some risks of some things but, for the most part,  
43 um, my folks, uh, when they laid the law down, you adhered to it. It  
44 wasn't no, you know, questionin' it or judgin' it or anything else and, of  
45 course, like a lot of times too, in those days – I say those days like it's a

1 long time ago; well, it was a long time ago but, uh – the, the entire  
2 community, I mean everybody, was a part of it.  
3  
4 It didn't matter and, and your folks, the people that my, my folks knew  
5 and this that, that, uh, went through that adage it takes a village to raise a  
6 child, I mean, that was in fact the truth. I mean everybody. Didn't matter  
7 black, white, whoever it was, your teachers, your, uh, neighbors, uh, folks  
8 in the community – if they saw you, you know, gettin' out of line or  
9 steppin' out of line for whatever the reason were, was, 9 times out of 10 it  
10 was gonna get back to your parents, you know, and I was always fearful of  
11 those kind of things 'cause the consequences in a lot of cases weren't very  
12 pleasant [laughing], you know, but, uh...  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: So, Derrick, across from Fisher Body there's a place called Harry's.  
15 [15:35] Did you ever go to any of the neighborhood, um, establishments  
16 around there as a child?  
17  
18 Derrick Quinney: As a child I, uh, no I didn't. No, I didn't. in fact, I didn't know much about  
19 Harry's until, actually, I hired into the facility there and started goin', you  
20 know, for lunch and cashin' checks and things of that nature. I, uh, for the  
21 most part we had our boundaries. Again, we could, you know, hang out in  
22 or, you know, travel within or what have you and, um, probably, uh, for  
23 us, you know, St. Joe, Sexton High School, you know – it's youth I'm  
24 talkin' about now – um, uh, Michigan Avenue to the, to the north and  
25 probably, uh, Main Street to the, to the south and, you know, that was  
26 pretty much geographically where we hu-, where we hung out at and that  
27 was our, our village so to speak, if you will. We ...  
28  
29 Marilyn Coulter: Well, okay, I was gonna ask you. So now, you went in there and your  
30 father came in, so your father worked here. [16:30] What brought you into  
31 Fisher Body? Did you think that as a child over at Sexton that you would  
32 be workin' in the Fisher Body?  
33  
34 Derrick Quinney: No. As a matter of fact, it's interesting you ask that because my dad was  
35 always one who put a lot of emphasis on education and makin' sure "you  
36 don't wanna have to come in there, son, you don't wanna do that kind of  
37 thing," you know, and "whatever you can do, um, you know, to better  
38 yourself, you know, I'd like to see you do those kind of things," and, and,  
39 um, of course, there were a series of incidents that occurred that, for me,  
40 um, um, it just worked out to be that way. The timing of what all and, uh,  
41 the economy and, and, um, uh, I, um – at 17, I was a parent. I became a  
42 parent, okay?  
43  
44 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible] [17:19].  
45

1Derrick Quinney:

And, um, there were a lot of things that changed in my life as it relates to those kind of things. Um, after the situation happened, um, again, I talk about my parents and their strong influence or what have you. My mother was just like hellbent on making sure that I was gonna hold up to my responsibilities as a man and do the things that were expected of me and, above all, um, I was going to be responsible for my actions – raising a child and taking responsibility for that and, more so than anything else, um, making sure that the, uh, lady who was, uh, uh, the mother of my child, I was not going to abandon and make sure that I took care of those kind of things.

So, [throat clearing] after that happened, they, uh, they, my, my, my parents and my now in-laws were, um, very instrumental too with us being able to continue our education, move forward and do the things that we had to do and, um, so I was, you know, immediately, um, all of the extracurricular activities I had, all the fun then as a single young man without any responsibilities all changed for me. You know, I had responsibilities now. I had to go to work. I had to provide. I had to do what was necessary now as a parent because I had parent responsibilities now, so, uh, I sa-, my dad, you know, I said he always insisted that I, that I not or try if at all possible to avoid going into, uh, General Motors.

I got a job at New York Carpet World. When I was, um, 18, 19 years old I started working at New York Carpet World there. I started as a, um, stock person. I used to, you know, cut remnants, cut carpet roll remnants and things of that nature and, ironically enough, um, Doug Rademacher and I, that's where we first ran into each other, at New York Carpet World. We were both, uh, young kids, teenagers at the time or whatever. Doug was there and, um, initially I started out in, like I said, stockroom and deliveries and cuttin' carpet and things of that nature and eventually I advanced or moved up to sales. And, uh, in sales at, in those days, in the late '70s or whatever, it was, it was okay but, um, starting out [throat clearing], particularly at retail, there were times when, you know, depending on the business environment, the economy and things, you know, there were weeks where, you know, if business is going well, I can eat prime rib, you know, but if the business wasn't going well and sales were down, I was eatin' potted meat and peanut butter, you know, and, so, um, and, and at that time, if I recall, I didn't have – there were no healthcare benefits, things of that nature, that were there and, again, um, I had responsibilities.

I had a family or I, you know, wanted, I wanted, I wanted somethin' a little bit more secure for me, somethin' a little bit more consistent as far as, um, incomes and so forth so that I could provide for my family and, um, it was at that point in time when, um, I looked at my old man, had a conversation with him and it, uh, came to be. I mean, General Motors was



1 hiring, and I can remember those, that time in 1978. It was, I want to say it  
2 was like April/May of 1978 and they, again, were having this big, uh,  
3 exodus of folks that were hirin' or takin' in and I recall, um, getting in a  
4 line on, um, I don't know what day it was but there was a line from the  
5 Verlinden entrance of Michi-, uh, Fisher Body all the way down Verlinden  
6 Avenue towards Michigan Avenue and around the corner. People were  
7 lined up [throat clearing] just wanting to get into that place, you know.  
8  
9 And, of course, my, one thing my dad, I do recall him saying, after we had  
10 the conversation about me goin' there was, um, the pay was consistent,  
11 benefits were available to you and if you went, you know, and you did  
12 what you were supposed to do, um, you were gonna find it would be a lot  
13 more better for ya, economically and also for a way of being able to  
14 provide a means of, uh, um, uh, providing for your family. So that's what I  
15 did and, low and behold, I got in there.  
16  
17 I will say that I think that, um, back in those days, too, a lot of, um,  
18 whether or not your considered for employment there also had a lot to do  
19 with, um, your, um, experiences or relationships with folk in the facilities;  
20 for example, my dad. Um, a lot of doors have probably been open for me  
21 as far as my involvement, as far as, uh, my employment at General  
22 Motors, my employment in, or my activity and my involvement in the  
23 labor unions, things of that nature, I give a lot of credit to him for [throat  
24 clearing] at least allowing me, um, access to because of the folks that he  
25 knew and the folks, uh, what folks thought of him during that time and, of  
26 course, it was up to me once I got in the door to carry my own weight and  
27 my own load, if you will, but, uh, it was certainly, um, a credit to him, I  
28 think, in, in folks that, or relationships that he formed, that was able to  
29 open some doorways for me.  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: So, it's 1978.  
32  
33 Derrick Quinney: Seventy-eight, yep.  
34  
35 Marilyn Coulter: You've gotten hired in.  
36  
37 Derrick Quinney: Mm-hm.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [22:41] What department were you hired into?  
40  
41 Derrick Quinney: I was hired in the body shop.  
42  
43 Marilyn Coulter: In the body shop.  
44  
45 Derrick Quinney: [Inaudible 22:46] [laughing]  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Now, your father had hired in the body shop.  
2  
3 Derrick Quinney: Yes.  
4  
5 Marilyn Coulter: [22:50] What was your first job like and, tell me, was it what you had  
6 expected? Was it what your dad had told you? Was you, were you  
7 surprised by anything?  
8  
9 Derrick Quinney: I was surprised by it all. In fact, I was just, I walked in and, and it's funny,  
10 um, in, in '78 in the body shop they still had to, before they, um, they used  
11 to transfer, um, the, the jobs from one site to the other and I used to, I had  
12 this job where I drove a, a truck, a finger truck where they would transfer  
13 the bodies from one line to another and they'd put'm on the hoist and then  
14 they'd...  
15  
16 Interviewer: [Inaudible 23:39]  
17  
18 Derrick Quinney: My first job in, uh, in hiring in in Fisher Body was, um, a line feeder. Um,  
19 the jobs, the bodies would go through the process, the build process in the  
20 body shop and as they got to the end of the line, end of the process in the  
21 body shop, myself and my partner were on what we called finger trucks  
22 then. It was a vehicle that you stood up on and you had to st-, to steer it  
23 and it had a, a, uh, clamp or a grip on the side of it to where you would  
24 pull up at the end of the line, um, the, the, co-, connect with the carrier of  
25 the vehicle and transfer it to a hoist where they would then take'm and  
26 put'm on what we now know as the carriers that go through the rest of the  
27 process and, um, they would take'm and the next step in the build process  
28 would be go to the paint shop. And, um, I did that for, uh, my first, uh, 89  
29 days, I guess it was that I was in there.  
30  
31 It was kind of interesting to do that at first 'cause, I mean, to hire in right  
32 off the street I know a lot of folks that I hired in with, they were down  
33 there in the jungle and all those kind of jobs where they were the least  
34 desirable, if you will, and in those days the body shop was probably just  
35 horrific in terms of the work environment and whatever. It was dark. It  
36 was dank. It was, uh, smoke-filled. It was, yeah, and if I envision it, I used  
37 to think when I was, you know, of course 20, 22 years old, I, you know, all  
38 day long we would be down there and, and, uh, I would always think, god,  
39 I'm sure glad I don't have to work in those areas down there.  
40  
41 Marilyn Coulter: [25:09] Derrick, what's the jungle?  
42  
43 Derrick Quinney: The jungle is, uh, uh, the body shop, actually. It was, if, if, if you could  
44 imagine, envision, um, and my dad used to always talk about this too, how  
45 in the body shop there was, um, the weld guns and things of that nature  
46 and there was just a lot of cables and, and like I said, it was dark, it was

1                   dank, the, they, they, and they referred to it as the jungle because all the  
2                   cables and it looks like vines in a forest or in a jungle where trees and  
3                   limbs and stuff were just all over the place. There was really no structure  
4                   or anything, it just – they walked in there and if there was a job or an  
5                   operation that they wanted to set up, they would, they would just put it in  
6                   there. There were no, um, no considerations or anything. They just made it  
7                   all happen, you know.  
8

9Marilyn Coulter:       Derrick, you were lucky enough to have hired in to what was considered a  
10                   preferred job.  
11

12Derrick Quinney:      Yeah.  
13

14Marilyn Coulter:      [26:02] Do you feel that your father had anything to do with that or some  
15                   people knowin' your father had anything to do, do with that, or were you  
16                   just a good luck, good luck of the [inaudible 26:10]?  
17

18Derrick Quinney:      I wanna say it was probably a little bit of both of those. I think, again, um,  
19                   um, of course, in those days they just walked in there and they grabbed ya,  
20                   you know. If you were a, you know, it didn't necessarily matter about  
21                   your, your, your, um, your skill level or whatever. If they needed, um,  
22                   guys, you know, 6 foot tall, 200 pounds or whatever to do a specific task,  
23                   they just grabbed you, it didn't matter, you know.  
24

25Marilyn Coulter:      [26:32] Grab you from where?  
26

27Derrick Quinney:      Uh, from, from the, the pool of new employees that came into the place  
28                   there. Just ...  
29

30Marilyn Coulter:      [26:38] How, how large was your pool?  
31

32Derrick Quinney:      Uh ...  
33

34Marilyn Coulter:      [26:39] So, do you remember how many people you hired in there with?  
35

36Derrick Quinney:      Um, I'm gonna guess probably when I first came in there was probably  
37                   maybe 10, 15 of us all that came in and, um, again, they just went down  
38                   the line. Now, um, fate, law of averages, luck of the draw, um, my old  
39                   man knowin' who was in there – it was probably a little bit of all those  
40                   things that probably helped or benefitted me or allotted me to be in that  
41                   position at the time.  
42

43Marilyn Coulter:      [27:02] Do you remember any special talks or any special equipment that  
44                   you were given to go and work down in the jungle?  
45

46Derrick Quinney:      You had safety – oh, in the jungle, oh yeah [laughing], that was ...

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: [27:13] Or where you worked at?  
3  
4 Derrick Quinney: ... that was, that was, that was a, a dreaded day in the jungle because, um,  
5 of course, we'd all been told that, that eventually they were going to, to  
6 make the, uh, change to where the, the, the build process, where there was  
7 no longer the need for the transfer to have to feed these lot, these jobs  
8 from one, uh, station to the next and, of course, when that came into place,  
9 I was, uh, I was, uh, just [laughing] depressed because now what I had  
10 avoided for so long was gonna be, was inevitable that that's where I was  
11 goin' – into the jungle – and, of course, I went in there and, um, um, I'll  
12 never forget the first day I walked down through there and, uh, those,  
13 those, uh, weld, spot welders and things of that nature, I mean, it was, oh  
14 my god, it was, it was a sad, sad day [laughing] when I had to leave that  
15 finger truck to go down there, because I didn't have to, I wasn't – I  
16 remember guys that worked in the body shop in the jungle area there with  
17 those, workin' usin' those spot welders that would come out and their,  
18 their clothing would just, you know, like shirts and stuff would look like  
19 cheesecloth, you know, because of those, those, those, the weld flash and  
20 so forth that was comin' back on'm and whatever, you know, it was, it  
21 was, uh, pretty bad. It was pretty bad.  
22  
23 Of course, then when I went [throat clearing], after, um, being taken off of  
24 the, uh, as a line feeder off the truck, I then got a job where I used to, um,  
25 um, put the floor, floor pans –I was at the very beginning of the process  
26 where the carriers would come down and we would put the floor pans on  
27 the carriers and that would start the build process there, so it really wasn't  
28 that bad. I, um, had my experiences with the spot welders but after I hung  
29 up 2 or 3 guns that stopped the line from going down, they figured that  
30 probably wasn't somethin' that [chuckle], that I [chuckle] needed to be  
31 part of, so they hurried up and got me of there and I was, uh, believe me, it  
32 didn't disappoint me at all that I, they took me off of that.  
33  
34 Marilyn Coulter: [29:20] When you hired in there as a new hire in both finger truck and/or  
35 down in the jungle, were there any kind of new hire pranks or initiations  
36 that you had to go through down there?  
37  
38 Derrick Quinney: Oh yeah, there was, there was, um, um - of course, everybody there, you  
39 know, the, the folks, and again, a lot of folks knew my dad or, you know, I  
40 knew folks in the, in the, um, that were from the neighborhood and so  
41 forth that were in there and a lot of'm, you know, a lot of'm were  
42 encouraging to me, you know, and, um, um, never – pranks, of course, you  
43 know, there were always, always pranks and jokes and that kind of thing  
44 there. I can't really think of any one prank in particular that, uh, uh, stood  
45 out, though, that, um, that took place there but, uh, it was just kind of  
46 interesting how, um, for me, you know, I would have a lot of

1 conversations with, um, some of the, the, the seniority folks that had been  
2 in the place there and whatever and, and my whole thing was I was never  
3 gonna be there for the long period of time. I was just gonna be there long  
4 enough to get me enough money to start my own business so I, you see, I  
5 always wanted to aspire, I wanted to be a, a, what I thought then was a, a,  
6 um, some type of involvement with entertainment.  
7

8 I wanted to have a bar, I wanted to be in the cabaret or something like that,  
9 and my, my, my friends outside of the facility, we all shared that same  
10 dream, so we were all gonna, you know, work to save our money and, and  
11 pull it all together and get us a bar, you know, go into some sort of bar  
12 business or the restaurant business or somethin'. Somethin' to where I  
13 wasn't gonna be buildin' cars and workin' in this place forever and a day,  
14 you know, and, of course, all that changed over a period of time. And I  
15 can remember when I would share those stories with, um, individuals that  
16 were already in there, they would just kind of look at me and laugh and  
17 kind of shake their head [chuckle] because apparently they all shared that  
18 same, uh, thought when they first went in there about how they were  
19 never, um, didn't expect to be there for, you know, the, the work  
20 experience or the time that they were in there.  
21

22 So that was kind of interesting. I, um, of course, then, you know, after I  
23 hired in there and got married and I had already had, uh, uh, a child, um, I  
24 bought a house, then I bought a car, then, you know. I remember the first  
25 home I bought. It was, I bought a home for, um, 12,000 dollars in 1979  
26 [laughing]. Um, 200 dollars a month, land contract, 200 dollars a month  
27 was my payment on my home.  
28

29 Uh, of course, then, you know, 22 years old, you, you got so many what  
30 you would consider priorities or, and things of importance to you at the  
31 point in time where, you know, of course, I can work, you know, the kind  
32 of money we were makin' those days, I could work, um, 3 days a week, 4  
33 days a week and, you know, it wasn't that big a deal. I could still cover the  
34 expenses as far as my mortgage was concerned. My wife had a job, so,  
35 what, you know, the, the, the, uh, attendance wasn't as much a priority at  
36 that time as it became later on when, of course, I bought a car and I bought  
37 another car and I bought furniture and I bought all these things, so, you  
38 know, it's kind of funny how you evolve from, you know, what you'd  
39 consider you, you could blow off a day or whatever the point is now, you  
40 know, I wanna, I wanna be there 6 days, I wanna be there 7 days a week  
41 [laughter], you know, so...  
42

43Marilyn Coulter: So the dream got further away and reality became [inaudible 32:51].  
44

45Derrick Quinney: Reality became more of, uh, uh, the, the true story or true side of what it  
46 was all about.

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: [32:57] Now, when you went from one job you, they discontinued your  
3 finger job? Or you got ...  
4  
5 Derrick Quinney: Yes. Yeah, they were, um, as, as always, becoming more efficient in what  
6 it was in reducing, um, the amount of manpower, I guess, if you will, from  
7 one to the other, you know. Automation came into play and they just, you  
8 know, engineers came in, designed a way in which they could eliminate  
9 that job and, you know, move on to somethin' else.  
10  
11 Marilyn Coulter: [33:26] Derrick, in 1978, were there women in the body shop?  
12  
13 Derrick Quinney: There were. Um, uh, very few, but there were, and, you know, I talked  
14 earlier about, um, how, uh, they used to, uh, just kind of like visually look  
15 at individuals and pick and choose who were, you know, going or who  
16 would be, um, adapt at doing specific jobs or whatever and, and,  
17 interestingly enough, a lot of the, uh, women were a lot larger in stature  
18 and so forth that, that had some of the jobs there and, of course, um, being  
19 male dominated in the body shop area there, too, you know, it was kind of  
20 interesting how the, uh, mannerisms and the, uh, conversations and, uh,  
21 um, just how they would interact and what have you, [throat clearing] uh,  
22 today just wouldn't be tolerated in the work place. I mean, it was just ...  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: [34:20] Can you explain that for us a little bit?  
25  
26 Derrick Quinney: Well, just, the, the, the engaging in conversation – what now would be  
27 considered, um, you know, violations, if you will, as far as, uh, harassment  
28 or sexual ori-, you know, harassment, those kind of things there. I mean, it  
29 was just common nature there. I mean, they cursed, they, they smoked,  
30 they chewed tobacco, they [laughing], whatever the case was. There was  
31 just no, um, um ...  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: [34:49] What'd you do for lunch and things like that?  
34  
35 Derrick Quinney: Um, throughout ...  
36  
37 Marilyn Coulter: I mean ...[34:57] So, what did you do for lunch, Derrick?  
38  
39 Derrick Quinney: Uh, at lunchtime, it, it's funny. You, earlier you asked about, um, Harry's.  
40 Um, I remember when, uh, we would go out for lunchtime and, of course,  
41 my coworkers at the time, we would all leave and, you know, of course,  
42 you get that 32 minutes, 33 minutes for lunch or whatever and it'd be just  
43 like this mad exit. There's folks runnin' outside to go and get their groove  
44 on, I guess, if you will, for whatever it was and, and, uh, I remember when  
45 Harry's was nothin' more than, literally, a hole in the wall. It was, uh,  
46 nothing like what it is today. I mean, they used to have, uh, single-bulb

1 lights hangin' down from the wires and so forth in there and you'd go  
2 there and, uh, fried bologna sandwiches and pickled eggs and beer.  
3  
4 That was, that was lunchtime kind of stuff, you know. You rush in there  
5 and, of course, everybody would run in there and, and, and it's funny how,  
6 um, the routine that they had in terms of bein' able to provide you or serve  
7 everybody at, at, you know, that, that short period of time that ya had to, to  
8 get in and out of there, you know, and we'd go there and, depending on  
9 who, uh, who had money, I mean, at the point in time throughout the week  
10 – you know, they would, you know, somebody would buy today and if  
11 you had money tomorrow, it would be this, kind of like this round robin  
12 thing, you know, in terms of who bought lunch or whatever the case may  
13 be and we'd run out of there and, and, like I said, you, you get your little  
14 groove on and hurry up and run back in there so that when the line got  
15 ready to start up you were all in place.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: [36:25] Derrick, how did they serve you over at Harry's?  
18  
19 Derrick Quinney: Uh, you kind of walked in there and, uh, the, the, waitresses and, of  
20 course, Harry was out there too, you know. He knew everybody that was,  
21 that was comin' in and out of the place there and, you just tell what you  
22 want and there was no, um – I used to be, uh, just kind of amazed at the  
23 memory that they would have. They'd holler out things in the, you know,  
24 throughout the place and before you knew it your lunch was there and it  
25 was all set. Of course, booze was, was the, uh, uh, the beverage of choice  
26 at the time too, and they just kept it flowin' the whole time, you know.  
27  
28 And on Fridays, which was, uh, "the day," – of course, Friday was payday  
29 and stuff, you know, and you would go in there and I remember those, uh  
30 – in fact, I still probably got a couple of those, uh, the old, uh, checks now  
31 that the cardboard, uh, the little card checks that they would have, and  
32 what used to always amaze me about Harry's or Shop Stop, uh, all of  
33 those little places right around there, is how you would go in there and  
34 they could cash – I don't care how many checks you had or how many  
35 folks wanted to cash their checks at that time, they would cash those  
36 checks and never miss a beat. You know, they always – I don't ever recall  
37 them not havin' money when you wanted to cash the checks, and they  
38 used to keep the change, you know, whatever the change was off the –  
39 that's what the, the fee was for cashin' your checks at that time, you know.  
40 I can, I was just amazed at how they could do that for, of course, the  
41 nightshift, the dayshift, and everybody else that would come in there.  
42  
43 And the other thing that amazed me, too, is how, um, I guess it was just  
44 the, the respect, or I never heard of them being, um, robbed or anything  
45 like that, but, uh, it was just pretty amazing [inaudible 38:13]. I just, I just,  
46 even today, I mean, I guess it's still [inaudible 38:16] – well, of course,

1 they're no, they're no longer doing that but right up until the time I left  
2 you could go in there and they would always cash your checks for you.  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: [38:24] Derrick, given the fact that they were right by a plant, were  
5 lunches expensive, inexpensive? What would you say?  
6  
7 Derrick Quinney: Um, no more than any place else. I mean, if, if, with me, if you walked in  
8 and you had the money, whatever it was you wanted you got it, [laughing]  
9 you know what I mean? So, I don't really, I can't really say to make the  
10 comparison as to, you know, one place or the other. I mean, you had – it  
11 was what it was. Either you went the same way or the store right here on  
12 Michigan Avenue or you went to Harry's, Art's or the shar, uh, Shop Stop.  
13 I said Art's – Harry's, Gus', I guess, or the Shop Stop to, you know, get  
14 your lunch or whatever unless, you know, you brought it with ya.  
15  
16 Marilyn Coulter: You went, you, you know, you were raised in Lansing.  
17  
18 Derrick Quinney: Mm-hm.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: [39:14] What was it like when you're working for the plant and you start  
21 working from people from all these other communities? What was that  
22 like for you? What was the interaction like?  
23  
24 Derrick Quinney: Um, kind of [throat clearing], it was, it was, it was, um, how do I wanna  
25 put this? It was, uh, different. It was, it was, and when you, you stop and  
26 think about folks that, um, I would venture to say for the first time that  
27 ever even worked with people of color and, and, and been around them or  
28 what have you. Um, for the most part, I don't ever recall any, um,  
29 altercation – eh, maybe 1 or 2, but, you know, you just take'm for what  
30 they were worth and, um, uh, judge those people and just move on. It was  
31 those folks that, you know, you, you interacted with because we all had  
32 [throat clearing], um, one commonality, and that was providing a living  
33 and, you know, trying to survive and make it there or what have you, so  
34 really, for me, I don't, I don't recall, uh, early on there being any, um, um,  
35 tension as far as that goes.  
36  
37 And if, if you sensed that – there was some folks that [throat clearing]  
38 were maybe reluctant or you, you, they had to really, uh, work to engage  
39 in conversation or what have you but, um, overall – and I would, I would  
40 think that a lot of that probably, for me, was a lot easier simply because of  
41 my experience in the retail business prior that where I worked with or  
42 engaged everybody, you know. I mean, it didn't matter who you were as  
43 far as I was concerned – black, white, red, or whatever – you were a  
44 commission and I was gonna make [inaudible 40:58] [laughing], you  
45 know, so for me it wasn't that way, although I do, um, recall others that,  
46 you know, would, were constantly having, um, conflicts, if you will, with,



1 with coworkers or what have you because of, obviously, uh, uh, cultural  
2 differences and things of that nature, but, for me, for the most part, um,  
3 um, you know. And, and, and as far as the, um, uh, supervisors, there were  
4 some that were there that were probably, um, uncomfortable or, or set in  
5 their ways and because they were in a supervisory position they could, you  
6 know, make life a little harder for you, I guess, if you will, or what have  
7 you, and you kind of knew who those individuals were.

8  
9 Um, the person that comes to mind for me was, was, uh, Charlie  
10 [inaudible 41:49]. You all heard that name, I'm sure in your interviews  
11 around here or whatever. Charlie was, uh, different. I mean, you know, but  
12 it was his way or no way. You had to conform with that, you know, and,  
13 and, and at the time, um, uh, for me, it was, um – I used to have a  
14 conversation with my dad about Charlie, you know. My dad and Charlie  
15 got along well but they had obviously come up through the ranks together  
16 and developed some sort of a mutual respect, I guess, if you will. for one  
17 another to where it was, uh, the way that it was but, for me, uh, bein', uh,  
18 the young whippersnapper comin' in there with a flip attitude or whatever  
19 the case may be or whatever, you're just, you know, just young, you know  
20 what I mean?

21  
22 We didn't necessarily see things eye to eye and, of course, I look at it now  
23 as a much older man and being, being able to look at it at a lot broader  
24 perspective or whatever, he had a responsibility for what he had to do and,  
25 you know, like I said, it was his way or the highway, you know, in a lot of  
26 cases, and, of course, that dreaded day when my, uh, line feeder job ended,  
27 it was Charlie who took me down in the jungle so [laughing] it wasn't –  
28 Charlie was this big guy, you know, and he was real gruff and, you know,  
29 he, he spoke and, you know, there was no, no waverin' one way or the  
30 other with him, you know, and I can remember that day and he was  
31 walkin' in front of me and I was walking head hung and just kind of  
32 shufflin' along going there and, of course, you know, the, the sparks and  
33 the dark, dank, and the cables hangin' all over the place or whatever.

34  
35 Man, oh man, that was, that was a sad, sad day then when I went down  
36 through there, but [throat clearing] – I remember, too, how, um, um, when  
37 I first hired in there and, of course, you know, like, a lot like now, you  
38 know, when they would give you the line time, you would go in there and,  
39 and, uh, of course, you start out at 6:18, I think is the time that we started  
40 back in the '70s or whatever and, and you'd go in there and you'd work  
41 and, of course, I got other priorities and I just want to hurry up and get in  
42 here and get my little time on and get back outside so I can go hang with  
43 the fellas and go play basketball or go do whatever I wanted to do at that  
44 time, you know?  
45

1 And, um, you know, you go in there thinkin' 8 hours and before you know  
2 it sometimes you'd be there 9 hours, sometimes you'd be there 10 hours or  
3 whatever, you know, and, and you just see – like in the body shop, we  
4 used to see them cars, those jobs, just rollin' down through there and it  
5 was just, like I said, gray pieces of metal just rollin' down through there  
6 and I used to ask myself, "Who in the hell is buyin' all these cars?" you  
7 know [laughing] 'cause it was just, it was just continuous, you know, and,  
8 all you saw all day long were cars rollin' down through there and then,  
9 um, of course, you know, you, you've gotten together with your little  
10 coworkers and you want to hurry up and get outside so you can go and get  
11 what you would consider the priority at the time, whatever it was, hangin'  
12 or goin' to do whatever and, and, uh, 8 hours is what they come around  
13 and tell ya and, you know, the next 10 or 15 minutes, you're goin' 9 hours  
14 or whatever, you know, and, and, I used to – I remember sometimes  
15 envisioning [throat clearing] what hell must be like, you know, [chuckle]  
16 with the sparks flyin' around and dark and smokey and, you know, and it  
17 just, it was just one of them things, man. It was, it was a real, um,  
18 experience. It was. It was.  
19

20Marilyn Coulter: [45:14] Did you – were you on second shift or first shift?  
21

22Derrick Quinney: I was, I worked first shift and, you know, surprisingly – that's another  
23 thing, too – uh, hired in on the dayshift and I would think probably out of  
24 the 23 years that was in the plant I probably worked a total of maybe 2  
25 years on the nightshift total. I was just, I was fortunate. I was lucky for  
26 that reason. I don't know how or what. I mean, it all just kind of worked in  
27 there. It just all kind of like fell into place for me, but, yeah, I didn't, I  
28 didn't spend much time on nights at all. Of course, again, you know, I talk  
29 about ...  
30

31Marilyn Coulter: It's gonna be [inaudible 45:51]  
32

33Derrick Quinney: ... the priorities and so forth and things of that nature. When I was, when I  
34 first hired in there, it wasn't long after that I had this DJ service, okay?  
35 And I would play, you know, and during the day I would work and at  
36 nights I would, uh, I would, uh, DJ. So I was like, you know, all the  
37 different little night clubs and night spots around here or whatever, I  
38 always had – that was like my second job or whatever, if you will, or my  
39 little hustle on the end, so [throat clearing] it just always worked out to  
40 where, um, um, I was fortunate enough to be able to do that.  
41

42Marilyn Coulter: [46:25] Derrick, did you always work in the body shop?  
43

44Derrick Quinney: No. No. as a matter of fact ...  
45

46Marilyn Coulter: [46:28] How long did you work in the body shop?

1  
2Derrick Quinney: I worked in the body shop from '78 to probably about '81, I guess it was.  
3 At that point in time, um, I had an injury and, um, got injured in the body  
4 shop and, um, had to have knee surgery and I was out for probably, um,  
5 I'm gonna guess maybe 6, 8 months, and when I hired back in there, or  
6 when I came back, returned back to work, um, of course, you had to go  
7 through, um, the, um, medical, to get clearance or what have you and there  
8 was, uh, there was a woman that worked in personnel – her name, um, um,  
9 uh Donna – I can't remember what her last name was, uh, um, real short,  
10 petite, uh, black woman who worked in personnel and, for whatever  
11 reason, I had to go and see her. And it was at the time that she and I got to  
12 talkin' and I, you know, she would come down on the nights, on those  
13 Friday nights when I was playin' in the clubs or whatever, her and  
14 [inaudible 47:21] and Chuck Reynolds and [throat clearing] a few other  
15 folks and I got to knowin' them and whatever and had a little conversation  
16 with her and next thing I knew I ended up in the paint shop. I always  
17 thought I wanted to go to trim.  
18  
19Marilyn Coulter: [47:31] So it was who you knew, huh?  
20  
21Derrick Quinney: Well, I, yeah.  
22  
23Marilyn Coulter: [47:34] Can you tell us a little bit about your injury? How did you get  
24 injured?  
25  
26Derrick Quinney: I was in the, um, comin' out of, uh, work and, and it was in the winter of, I  
27 want to say like December, and you'd have to come up those stairs comin'  
28 out of the plant of Verlinden Avenue, the main stairway right there, and I  
29 came out of there and, uh, it was icy on the stairwell or whatever and, of  
30 course, I'm, you know, runnin' up the steps and went over the stoop and  
31 fell and just hit my knee right on the, the rung of the, the, the, of the  
32 stairwell, the steps right there and just tore it up. It was horrible. [chuckle]  
33 I mean, of course, a big guy like I am, too, when I hit my knee and all the  
34 force that came down on it, it just, um, just really messed up my kneecap,  
35 separated and tore all that up and everything and, so, um, yeah.  
36  
37Marilyn Coulter: You called yourself a big guy. [48:23] How big ...  
38  
39Derrick Quinney: Uh, 6'2" probably at the time, 185, 190. Uh, it was, it was a good size and  
40 like smaller than what I am now. [laughter]  
41  
42Marilyn Coulter: Given the factor that ...  
43  
44Derrick Quinney: Those were the days.  
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [48:38] Given the factor that, um, you hurt yourself on the stairs going  
2 into the plant, was that considered workers' comp or sick leave or ...?  
3

4 Derrick Quinney: Uh, comp comp. And, you know, they didn't necessarily – for me, it was  
5 never really challenged at that point in time. I guess, you know, they, you  
6 know, I just went through the process and – of course, I had to have, uh,  
7 knee surgery at the time and, and during those days, um, it was never  
8 really challenged or questioned, although, you know, um, of course, I was  
9 aligned with some good physicians too that always made sure that, um,  
10 they took the time and would go the extra mile, if you will, to make sure  
11 that you were covered and, and you had, you know, the coverage of your  
12 physicians or whatever and it was never really challenged.  
13

14 Marilyn Coulter: You've gone out, you've been injured, you've come back in.  
15

16 Derrick Quinney: Donna, I wish I knew who Donna's name, Donna, I could tell you what  
17 Donna's name was. But I, I don't remember but I had a conversation with  
18 her and, again, like I said, I thought I always wanted to go to trim. Uh, low  
19 and behold, after once I got in there I realized, and got to movin' around a  
20 little bit more, I'm so glad I didn't go to trim [laughter]. I wouldn't know  
21 what to do.  
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: Dayshift? Nightshift in paint?  
24

25 Derrick Quinney: Dayshift, uh, dayshift in paint, hired into paint, or went back to paint and,  
26 um, uh, went in the, uh, the sealer line. I worked in, uh, on the sealer line.  
27 Jay Johnson, uh, Willie Thompson, um, Nate Hall, uh, all those guys, uh,  
28 were, Joy, Joy, is it Joy Clink?  
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.  
31

32 Derrick Quinney: Yeah, Joy Clink. Um, those are some folks that come to mind in terms of,  
33 uh, people that I, I worked for in those areas. Um, worked on the sealer  
34 line there, um, with, uh, Leo Shane and Maxine Johnson and, um ...  
35

36 Marilyn Coulter: [50:32] Can you tell us what a sealer line is?  
37

38 Derrick Quinney: Sealer line is where they had, uh, again, they, they, I guess there was a  
39 cleaner version of the jungle where, again, you saw all these cables and  
40 hoses and stuff hangin' down and they used to have, um ...  
41

42 Interviewer: Wands.  
43

44 Derrick Quinney: ... wands, I guess, that you would use to apply, um, a sealer along the  
45 seams and crevices of the jobs throughout the body to, to, for a number of  
46 reasons: To seal leaks on'm, um, to keep'm from, uh, uh, any wind noise

1 and things of that nature that were probably, um, considered product, uh,  
2 um, inefficiencies or whatever. The sealer line was the process, again, they  
3 were, you know, on both sides of that, that, that process right there, folks  
4 were just lined up all the way through there and we would apply this sealer  
5 on different parts of that and, uh, the first, the first job that I had was the,  
6 uh, I was applyin' sealer in the like the trunk compartments or what have  
7 you and the roof and seams all the way around, that process.  
8

9Marilyn Coulter: [51:33] Derrick, how did the plant culture, the, the paint shop culture  
10 differ from the body shop culture?  
11

12Derrick Quinney: A lot cleaner, um, um, a lot more, um, diverse in terms of, uh, women and  
13 men workin' both in there, um, a lot brighter, although, um, um, yeah, it  
14 was just, it was just a completely different process overall. I mean, it was,  
15 folks were, I don't know, I don't want to necessarily say anymore  
16 friendlier, but you certainly had the, um, ability to engage and see a lot  
17 more folks, unlike it was in the body shop where, of course, with those  
18 weld guns and things of that nature, that was your, your main partner all  
19 the time was that gun because of the job, so, so, were just kind of  
20 continuous down through there so...  
21

22Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you said that there were women in the body shop who were  
23 harassed. [52:29] What would be considered harassment and stuff like  
24 that?  
25

26Derrick Quinney: Uh ...  
27

28Marilyn Coulter: [52:32] How did the interaction in the paint shop between men and  
29 women? Was the same type of behavior going on? Had things gotten  
30 better for women?  
31

32Derrick Quinney: Uh, mentality was pretty, was starting to change at that time I think,  
33 although, I talked about women in the body shop originally, uh, you know,  
34 just whatever interactions that guys did, I guess you wouldn't nec-, there  
35 was, there was some limits but as far as like the cat calls or goosin' people  
36 or what we call goosin' people where you would, what would now be  
37 considered inappropriate, uh, touching and things of that nature there,  
38 were, it was, it was, um, all fair game in the body shop as far as, uh,  
39 [throat clearing] that goes. Of course, when you came up to paint you were  
40 allowed to be a little bit more, um, I don't want to see casual but you, your  
41 dress was a lot more, um, it changed. You didn't necessarily have to wear  
42 the coveralls all the time and things of that nature. You could wear your  
43 regular, you know, street clothes or whatever, what you consider  
44 appropriate for work and what have you but, um, the, the entire, the look,  
45 the atmosphere was, um, a lot more open, I guess, if you will, a lot more,  
46 you could engage folks a lot better and, um, aesthetically, it was just a lot,

1 um, it was a much more, um pleasant environment as opposed to the body  
2 shop.  
3

4Doug Rademacher: Derrick, you worked in the body. You said somethin' about bein' a DJ and  
5 spinnin' records. [54:02] Did music become a part of the environment in  
6 your workplace?  
7

8Derrick Quinney: Oh yeah. It was very much a part of it. Sometimes that was all. I mean,  
9 um, in fact, I still have the first, uh, what now they call boom boxes that I  
10 hired into that plant with and I remem-, I remember the day I went to  
11 Sears and purchased this box that was my – it had a dual cassette deck in it  
12 and, you know, big sp-, you know, and I would, you know, that was, for  
13 me, that was like the, um, my companion. That was my, um, I used to call  
14 it my sanity box, you know what I mean? In order to be able to keep me,  
15 like the music and the sounds and stuff like that, that was my way of bein'  
16 able to, to make it through the day. I would bring my music or I would  
17 listen to the radio and whatever and songs and things like that that would  
18 help me – I still got that radio. I still got it. It still plays. It still works, you  
19 know, it was back in [blows air] I'm gonna say '81 when I bought that  
20 thing.  
21

22Doug Rademacher: Well there was a ...  
23

24Derrick Quinney: [Inaudible 55:04]  
25

26Doug Rademacher: [55:05] There was a time – did you ever have what they called radio wars?  
27 Did you ever have to go through that? Where a coworker had their music  
28 and didn't like your choice of music? Did you go through that?  
29

30Derrick Quinney: Wait. Yeah, yeah. There was, there were times but you kn-, again, we just  
31 always seemed to work it out. I, I would be considerate, I guess, if you  
32 will. I wouldn't, I wouldn't play those kind of games. It was kind of trivial  
33 as far as I was concerned. I would just keep it to whatever was condu-,  
34 comfortable at my workstation because, you know, as always, I worked in,  
35 like I said, in the, uh, along the sealer line there, and, uh, I had this guy  
36 where he used to do the permagum. We used to put, apply permagum on  
37 like the doorways and things of that nature there and, of course, it was  
38 always constantly having to go back to your workstation so I just kept it to  
39 whatever was comfortable at that time and not bother other folks.  
40

41Marilyn Coulter: [56:02] Derrick, you did the sealer jobs and things like that but how did  
42 working in the paint department differ from working in the body shop?  
43 What type of things did you, were the biggest differences for you?  
44

45Derrick Quinney: Um, the, the, of course the jobs were a lot different there. In, in the paint  
46 department there was a lot more emphasis on, um, again, I talked about

1 working on the sealer line, um, making sure that, um, applications of, for  
2 example, sealer or, in the one other job that I had, the permagum jobs,  
3 where covering the seams or making sure, um, that specific, the priorities  
4 as far as the build process were a lot, a lot more different there. In the  
5 body shop you just, it was all about welds and puttin' it all together,  
6 whereas you moved up in the process or along the build process starting to  
7 put, uh, finishes, I guess, if you will, smoothing off the rough edges and  
8 things of that nature, that was all a part of what the paint process was,  
9 particularly in the early stages of that, the sealer line and, of course,  
10 sanding the jobs down or whatever, smoothing them, all getting them  
11 ready for the next phase which was actually applying the paint or  
12 whatever.

13  
14 Um, in the paint department, um, there were a couple of things. Um, I talk  
15 about, of course, the environment being a lot better, a lot brighter up there,  
16 a lot more, um, uh, diverse as far as, you know, men and women are  
17 concerned. Uh, some of the things that were different, though, is, uh, like  
18 in the paint department you're workin' with a lot more chemicals, uh, in  
19 the air, things of that nature. Um, a lot of the, uh, sealers, a lot more of the,  
20 uh, cleaning, um, um, products and so forth that you had to apply to the  
21 jobs and whatever, the, the, then, um, well just a part of the process. The  
22 smell was a lot different, um, I can remember depending on what part of,  
23 or what areas you worked with in the paint department, um, how the paint,  
24 you know, and the floor and stuff, how sticky it was in there and having to  
25 walk through paint all the time and, of course, you became a lot more  
26 conscious, too, of, um, the shoes you wore outside the plant as opposed to  
27 inside the plant because, you know, all it takes is one time to, to walk over  
28 in your car or somethin' and you track that paint outside from, into your  
29 car or at home in your house or somethin' like that. It was just, it was, uh,  
30 just real bad as that goes.

31  
32 But the other thing, too, is, uh as far as the difference in the paint  
33 department was the jobs. There were a lot more, um, finesse involved in,  
34 in the processes and I can remember how I used to struggle initially when  
35 I would be broken on a job, uh, trying to keep up with the job and bein'  
36 concerned about making sure that I had it done right because not only did  
37 you have to apply, be it a sealer or the permagum, right, there were certain  
38 specifications and ways that they wanted it all done and, of course, you  
39 got, you know, your inspectors down at the other end who were lookin' at  
40 it with a fine-tooth comb and, you know, they were critiquing you and all  
41 the time hollerin' and screamin' about not gettin' this done right and that,  
42 that and, of course, you had the, the water test too that you had to go  
43 through and, and making sure that, you know, your operation wasn't one  
44 where, you know, water problems or leaks in the jobs and so forth, all  
45 those kinds of things, so it was, uh, it was an ongoing process. And one  
46 day, you know what I mean, you could, you could be on your game one

1 day to where, you know, you wouldn't have a problem and then, uh, the  
2 next day you might have multiple water leaks, so whatever the case is.  
3  
4 And so much of that process as far as the assembly process is concerned is  
5 so much dependent upon folks in the process be it before you or after you  
6 in terms of how successful or how efficient you're gonna be at your job,  
7 um, be it like in the body shop if there was a weld or somethin' that was  
8 out of place or whatever, that could certainly alter, you know, the outcome  
9 of what your process was gonna be there and how you were judged or how  
10 efficient you were or how did, how good you were able to do your job, so  
11 it was just, um, and that's somethin' that we all began to learn later on in  
12 the process, too, when, um, quality and productivity became so much  
13 more of the forefront in terms of the emphasis. I mean, it was always an  
14 emphasis, if you will, but, um, the later that you went through the process,  
15 I just seem to think that they put a lot more emphasis on it at that time.  
16  
17 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you said that you had radios in the paint shop.  
18  
19 Derrick Quinney: Mm-hm.  
20  
21 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00:22] Did you have radios in the body shop also?  
22  
23 Derrick Quinney: Um, I don't recall there bein' a whole lot of radio-, oh maybe some  
24 operations but for the most part it was just so noisy down in the body shop  
25 and so hectic and, and things to where, you know, it just, that wasn't, um,  
26 no, no, I don't recall havin' – I never had one in the body shop anyway.  
27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: [1:00:42] After being in the body shop and the paint shop, did you, well  
29 you said you went out for lunch ...  
30  
31 Derrick Quinney: Mm-hm.  
32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: ... in the body shop.  
34  
35 Derrick Quinney: Mm-hm.  
36  
37 Marilyn Coulter: Now, were you still able to go to body shop when [inaudible 1:00:56] out  
38 to lunch when you were in the paint shop?  
39  
40 Derrick Quinney: Oh yeah. You could, uh, of course, you still only had 33 minutes to get it  
41 done but I mean it was like a, it was like a sprint, you know, from the time  
42 the line stopped until you had to get back there. It was just so hustle and  
43 bustle and everybody was doin' the same, you know, just, or, actually, I  
44 say everybody, not everybody, but a large number of folks would, um, if,  
45 if goin' out for lunch was a priority to get whatever you wanted to partake  
46 of as far as lunch is concerned, if that was a priority, you'd rush out there.



1 I can remember [throat clearing] we'd rush out and when I was in the paint  
2 department, Sav-Way. Um, you'd go over there and, of course, whatever  
3 you wanted for lunch you would rush over there to get it an then, um, sit in  
4 the cars with, you know, your coworkers or whatever and, and we just all  
5 had it right down to a science, you know, and, uh ...  
6  
7 Marilyn Coulter: [1:01:55] Can you tell me what Sav-Way was, please?  
8  
9 Derrick Quinney: Sav-Way is the convenient store right across the street on the, uh,  
10 Michigan Avenue, from the, uh, Michigan Avenue entrance as a matter of  
11 fact, which is where we would go in and out of there at. We used to go  
12 over there and the, uh, I'll never forget, Ms. [inaudible 1:02:10] was the,  
13 uh, woman who owned that. And again, I knew her long before I went into  
14 the plant there. She was just like one of the neighborhood, uh, uh,  
15 personalities, you know, that was in the area there and she, Ms. A knew  
16 everybody. She knew your parents, she knew your kid. I mean, she was  
17 just, she was there my whole life, you know, and, and, um, just had that  
18 kind of relationship with her. Very friendly, uh, very pleasant to work with  
19 and, you know, just, that was just the way you go. You go in there and get  
20 those polish sausages and, of course, Ms. A sold, uh, lottery tickets,  
21 cigarettes, alcohol, booze, pop, whatever it was you wanted in there at the  
22 time, that's what you went in there and you did, so.  
23  
24 Marilyn Coulter: [1:02:49] When you hired into the plant, were there many supervisors of  
25 color in the body shop or the paint department or more so in one than the  
26 other? Do you remember?  
27  
28 Derrick Quinney: Um, more in the paint department. I don't, I'm tryin' to think if there  
29 were, if I knew of any, um, um, supervisors of color in, I guess there was.  
30 Uh, there was, uh, [Finney 1:03:13] Price was there. Uh, O.J. Richardson  
31 was there. Um, um, Shane, Joe Shane I think was a supervisor down in the  
32 body shop. Um, and the Nicholsons, uh, [Thes 1:03:29] Nicholson and,  
33 um, Earl Nicholson was there. Uh, and those were all individuals who,  
34 again, there was just like this, this bond or this relationship because they  
35 knew you, you knew them from the community, from the neighborhoods,  
36 uh, relationships that they'd formed with my father and what have you so,  
37 I mean, yeah, they knew, even know I didn't know them personally,  
38 personally, they knew a lot about me and that's how a lot of things were  
39 gettin' back to my old man when I stepped out of line about something  
40 'cause they knew your daddy, you know what I mean?  
41  
42 Marilyn Coulter: [1:04:01] Now, in paint department, it was ...  
43  
44 Derrick Quinney: In the paint department, it was, uh, it was a tie [laughing]. It was a whole  
45 different environment up in the paint department. There was, uh, uh ...  
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [1:04:10] Didn't you have Cleve Stepter?  
2  
3 Derrick Quinney: Cleve Stepter was there. There was, uh, um, uh, Nate Hall was there.  
4 There was Jay Johnson that was there. There was, um, Willie Thompson  
5 was in the paint department. Um, uh, those names come to mind. And, and  
6 I say that only because Nate and Willie Thompson, it was, they were a  
7 couple characters when I first walked up in there, them were. Uh, they,  
8 they, um, had come through the ranks and made it to like the supervisor  
9 level and, and, you, they just seemed to be a little bit harder, I guess, if  
10 you will, or tougher or more stringent, uh, you know, just, you had to play  
11 by the rules with them, you know. And, of course, you found out later on  
12 as you went through that process that they were probably, probably more,  
13 um, plated by the, plated on the edges more than anybody else but, of  
14 course, when they we-, when they, when they achieved that role or that  
15 status of supervisors, you had to walk the line a lot tougher with them  
16 than, than, um, others did I think, you know, and it was just, I don't know,  
17 the egos, attitudes, uh, whatever you want to call it that made'm act that  
18 way or whatever.  
19  
20 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you seem to have a, a really nice personality and, um, you went  
21 out to lunch with friends. [1:05:27] Were there any friendships that you  
22 made inside the plant that extended outside of the plant and still exists  
23 today?  
24  
25 Derrick Quinney: Oh, tons of'm. I mean, you know, we spent so much time in there  
26 together. You spent more time in, uh, at work, and that's the same way as  
27 it is now. When you do, um, you know, a lot of time with your own  
28 personal family members or what have you and, um, those relationships  
29 that you, you know, you went through the good times, the bad times, the  
30 ups and lows, the highs and lows, and, and, um, just, just personal  
31 experiences because, um, you know, when you had a specific job or  
32 operation in there, you, you developed a relationship with your partner and  
33 hopefully a lot of times you enjoyed whoever it was that worked opposite  
34 you because that was, that was your, your, your workers, your friends, you  
35 just developed those kind of relationships with'm.  
36  
37 So, you learn about their families, their history, their, their health  
38 experiences, whatever it was about those individuals you knew that and,  
39 and I would certainly say that a lot of those, even today – you know,  
40 another thing that, that really, really sticks out, though, for me is, um,  
41 regardless to what, um, your relationships were with individuals, it seemed  
42 like during, like, the holiday periods and stuff like that, those times were  
43 really, really kind of special, too, in terms of, you know, we'd all get  
44 together like for Thanksgivin' or Christmas or birthdays like that and you  
45 would, um, um, folks would bring food in and you'd have food, Christmas  
46 parties and little gatherings in your little departments and whatever and

1 those were always kind of over and above, kind of special, you know, and  
2 like the, how, um, attitudes would change, I guess, if you will, and folks  
3 became a lot closer together and it didn't matter who or what you, you  
4 know, it just didn't matter, you know, and people just came together a lot,  
5 a lot closer in those times. And I can remember those bein', um, pretty  
6 special, pretty special.  
7  
8 I remember, um, in the body shop, for example, John Villegas was, uh, a  
9 guy down there. John Villegas used to make, um, he used to sell, uh, uh,  
10 tamales and breakfast [dinner 1:07:43] and breakfasts all the time and he  
11 would, every morning he'd come around and he used to have his little  
12 route that he would make through there and he could, uh, he would make,  
13 uh, breakfast sandwiches and what have you and folks would buy those all  
14 the time and he would, uh, always had a pocket full of money too. He'd  
15 loan you [chuckle], loan ya money and do different things like that but,  
16 um, uh, you know, and I know John today and it's, it's one of those  
17 relationships, uh, that just, just kind of, just evolved from that and, you  
18 know, everybody here in this room here. I mean, those relationships too. I  
19 mean I, I remember, um, just, because again, I talked about the times, the  
20 experiences, the, uh, uh, things that we did over our, um, work experience  
21 or whatever that, you know, just a part of our life, a part of our history  
22 that, that, you know, you just never forget and you form those  
23 relationships and those bonds and it's always, um, really special.  
24  
25 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you said there were, there were – Villegas – [1:08:42] were there  
26 many in-plant vi-, um, in-plant vendors?  
27  
28 Derrick Quinney: [laughter] Yeah. There were tons of in-plant vendors, you know, the, the  
29 variety of, uh, uh wares that they were vending just [laughing]...  
30  
31 Marilyn Coulter: [1:08:58] What type of things – what type of things could you purchase  
32 inside the plant?  
33  
34 Derrick Quinney: [laughter] Just about everything you wanted and you thought you wanted  
35 was, uh, available to you at, uh, some point in time there, uh, things that,  
36 uh, you know, like, uh, like I said, you know, food and, and, um, um, I'll  
37 just leave that to the imagination.  
38  
39 Marilyn Coulter: [1:09:19] Did you ever have any of the skilled tradespeople do anything  
40 special for you? Inside the plant or out.  
41  
42 Derrick Quinney: Um, inside the plant. You know, skilled trades guys, they pretty much,  
43 unless, you know, you had relationships with'm or what have you, um,  
44 and you could, uh, maybe have someone in your workstation if there was  
45 somethin' that you wanted to have done in particular that would be, uh,  
46 uh, make it a little bit more, uh, comfortable or conducive for you to be

1                   able to work or what have you, those kind of things [throat clearing]. If  
2                   you had relationships or, you know, a tie with them, you know, you might  
3                   ask them to do something along those lines.  
4

5                   They talk about – I remember they talk about government jobs and things  
6                   of that nature. They'd get somebody maybe to construct a, a locker for you  
7                   or something that would, you know, those kind of things. It was, it was,  
8                   uh, always there and, uh, uh, it was, uh, important that, um, they can make  
9                   your life miserable or they can make your life hell up in there if you, if, if,  
10                  if you wanted it. And, I guess, you know, when I say, uh, make your, your  
11                  work environment more conducive, um, I guess it would be what we  
12                  equate to, um, uh, ergonomic conditions today or what have you that make  
13                  it more acceptable and more comfortable for you to be able to pull or to do  
14                  a specific task. You know, a lot of times, um, the, the hoists and balancers  
15                  on jobs or whatever could make a difference as to how you felt at the end  
16                  of the day when you went home. If you had to fight against a particular  
17                  piece of equipment all the time, that would certainly be a lot more taxing  
18                  on you physically than if it, you had a, a situation where they would, you  
19                  know, balance it or make it to where it was a lot more easier for you to  
20                  handle it, you know, different situations and such. So yeah, the, uh, uh,  
21                  skilled trades guys were, uh, real important in those areas.  
22

23Marilyn Coulter:       Doug Rademacher?

24

25Doug Rademacher:     Derrick, you said you had a family before you came in, so you grew up  
26                               quickly as a young man. [1:11:23] But I'd like you to share a little bit  
27                               about the changes every 10 years. You grew up in the plant. Can you talk  
28                               about how it changed? Like, I noticed a change on my own and I've  
29                               worked with you. Every 10 years, did you notice a different, the way, uh,  
30                               new people hired in versus the change of attitude, the change of work  
31                               ethics, some things like that?  
32

33Derrick Quinney:       Well, you know, when, when we hired, when I hired in in '78 [throat  
34                               clearing], after that there was a long period of time before there was  
35                               another hiring process. I say a long time, I'm probably gonna say '80, the  
36                               mid to late '80s, again, before they actually brought some other folks in  
37                               there and it was, uh, uh – change? Yeah, there was, there was a change.  
38                               Um, in fact, my brother, uh, Carlas, came in behind me and, um, he had no  
39                               idea what it was like to work in, you know, a manufacture and assembly  
40                               plant or what have you and, to, uh, to just see the, uh, the, the hard knocks,  
41                               I guess, if you will, of what he had to go through and having experienced  
42                               those already was just kind of, kind of, both comical and, um, enlightening  
43                               to see other folks have to go through that. Yeah.  
44

45Marilyn Coulter:       [1:12:42] Derrick, can you tell me at this point what was probably one of  
46                               the most funniest things you ever saw happen in the plant?

1  
2Derrick Quinney: Hm. The funniest things I ever saw happen in the plant. Um, god  
3 [chuckle], uh, [throat clearing] I remember, uh, uh, David [Arrington  
4 1:13:09], his name, they call him Woody. Uh, he and this guy, uh, Joe  
5 McGee worked up in there and, you know, those kind of guys were always  
6 – they were the real pranksters, if you will, in the paint department. And  
7 just how they would engage with, uh, other individuals at points in times  
8 and, and, um, [throat clearing] of course, they would, you know, fill your  
9 gloves with, you know, sealer sometimes or things of that nature. That was  
10 kind of pranks there but, um, just how, like, culture differences, I kind of  
11 talked about those early on too and how Woody, um, was, he was just a  
12 character anyway. I mean, he could make ya, you know, you could just go  
13 the whole gambit of emotion with Woody, but he was just a real, real  
14 comical in his mannerisms and his daily activities and what have you, um,  
15 he just comes to mind in particular.  
16  
17 I ca-, I can't think of any one incident per se that was, um, really the most  
18 comical or something that really, really sticks out. It's just, every day was  
19 a new adventure when you walked through those, uh, turnstiles in there.  
20 You just, you just saw it all, you know, and a lot of things that others  
21 would maybe perceive to be, uh, comical or, uh, I don't know, out of the  
22 ordinary. I mean, at some point in time, it was just a way of life up in there  
23 and you just went in there and you dealt with it and came on back out of  
24 there, you know?  
25  
26Marilyn Coulter: [1:14:26] Do you have a favorite moment?  
27  
28Derrick Quinney: Uh, like I said, you know, probably more the, uh, the times when, you  
29 know, around holiday periods and stuff when, um, everybody would kind  
30 of come together, 'cause it'd be a whole different mindset. I mean, during  
31 those times, I mean, um, people were just a lot more, um, conscientious  
32 about others, um, feelings, I guess, if you will, and it was just the whole  
33 ti-, the, the togetherness and folks willing to just come together and, and  
34 share special moments or whatever, you know, and, um, yeah, those, those  
35 times were, um, were pretty special.  
36  
37Marilyn Coulter: We're gonna change gears a little bit, Derrick. You said that your father  
38 was union active and you – [1:15:20] Um, how did his union activity  
39 affect your work life, how did it inspire you, and did you do any union  
40 activities?  
41  
42Derrick Quinney: Yeah. Um, my dad was involved in, in the, um, union and he was the, um,  
43 uh, civil rights chair I think is what they called'm before. Um, it's now  
44 changed, the, uh, title. Uh, fair practice and, fair practice and, I can't  
45 remember exactly what the title was now but it was, might have been civil  
46 rights and fair practices or somethin' like that, but he was involved in that

1 and I can remember [throat clearing] his, um, friends and what have you  
2 when he first got involved, how they used to heckle him and make fun of  
3 him and, you know, call him a sellout or whatever for becoming involved  
4 in the union and, um, how, you know, he was, um, um, kind of out of the  
5 ordinary because then, you know, there was, there was a lot of apathy  
6 there and particularly for people of color. Um, they just didn't feel  
7 included in the process or whatever and, and, you know, when my dad  
8 went there he, uh, he took a lot of, uh, uh, I wouldn't call it criticism but  
9 they certainly heckled him and made fun and things of that nature, but  
10 didn't make him any difference. He stayed there and continued to do  
11 whatever and, um, uh, just kind of, you know, made his way through and,  
12 uh, it certainly, um, was a time when, you know, he would share  
13 experiences and, um, some of the causes that, uh, were near and dear to  
14 him.

15  
16 I can remember like in the '70s, um, when, um, the, uh, 30-and-out was,  
17 uh, really significant as far as being able to retire and so forth and I  
18 remember, too, how, um, with automation changes and what have you,  
19 they used to, uh, they were adamant about not wantin' robots to come in  
20 through the plants, you know. "We don't want them robots in here!" That  
21 was eliminatin' jobs and that was, you know, puttin' folks out and things  
22 of that nature and, I mean, they struck for that for a long, long time. I don't  
23 remember exactly how long. I want to say like 10, 11 weeks or somethin'  
24 like that and I can remember that time when that was all goin' down and I  
25 can remember actually goin' and having, uh, eaten, given commodities  
26 and so forth to, to put food on the table because they were, they were out  
27 on strike at that time, you know and, and, uh, of course, and my dad would  
28 come home and he was very adamant about those things.

29  
30 Of course, when I went in there after hearing some of the stories of some  
31 of the, uh, physical demands that the work put on them, you know, I was  
32 so damn glad they had robots [laughter]. 'Cause some of those jobs, I  
33 mean, you know, let's face it – I mean, the 30-and-out clause was put in  
34 there for a couple of reasons. I mean, if you spent 30 years in there  
35 scufflin' and grabbin' them damn, uh, oops, those, uh, those, uh, welding,  
36 spot welding guns or whatever, you fightin' that and not only those, uh,  
37 the physical demands that that put on you but also at the time, now being a  
38 lot more conscious about, you know, work environments and occupational  
39 exposures and things like that, the environment, the air and all those kind  
40 of things, if you lived 5 years after you came out of there, you, you, you  
41 beat the, you beat the odds as far as those things were concerned, you  
42 know.

43  
44 So, uh, yeah, that was, it was just a whole different, uh, environment for  
45 him as opposed to me when I came in there with, you know, the addition  
46 of automation or the introduction of automation and whatever. The work

1 was nowhere near as physical demanding as it was in those days. I  
2 remember him comin' home and tellin' stories about how, you know, I  
3 had the luxury of, uh, I talked about the finger trucks movin' bodies from  
4 one station to the other. They used to – he'd tell stories about where guys  
5 walkin' in there and if, you know, you were 6 foot, 200, 210 pounds or  
6 whatever, you were gonna be movin' jobs all night long. You physically  
7 would take and push those cars from one station to the other in there or  
8 what have you and you did that for 8, 9 hours a day, I mean, come on  
9 [laughter], boy, that was ...

10  
11Marilyn Coulter: That was work.

12  
13Derrick Quinney: That was work. That was when men were men and, of course, you know,  
14 another thing that I want to talk about, too, is like I remember hirin' in  
15 there and how, um, the older guard, if you will, when you came in there,  
16 um, they would, they would, um, like um, I talk about on the sealer line  
17 for, in particular, you know, they would provide – at work they'd give you  
18 gloves, they'd give you glasses, they'd give you things like that. Some of  
19 them older guys in there would, you know, like they were puttin' our  
20 hands and workin' with solvents and thinners and cleaners and stuff like  
21 that. They would never wear personal protection equipment, you know, I  
22 mean, that's when men were men. You know, real men don't wear  
23 personal protection, you know. And, you know, and, and, and the work  
24 that I do today, which is, you know occupational health and safety, uh,  
25 kind of things, I've become a lot more educated and a lot more aware of,  
26 um, a lot of the shortcomings, I guess, if you will, that a lot of folks  
27 experience now as a result of not actually using personal protection  
28 equipment.

29  
30 A guy that comes to mind in particular for me is Bo Green. I don't know,  
31 you guys probably – Bo Green worked in the paint department. I'm  
32 thinkin' Bo retired. He probably had 50 years up in there or whatever, but  
33 he worked in the paint department, in paint mixing. I imagine he done a  
34 multiple, multitude of jobs while there, but Bo Green would come in and  
35 he never, I mean he'd work in the, the thinners, the solvents. He worked in  
36 the, the paint booths. He was, you know, uh, repairin' the guns and all that  
37 kind of stuff and he would walk in there and he would never wear any  
38 kind of respirators. He would never wear gloves. He'd wash his hands in  
39 them solvents and then just dry'm and go back out and smoke a cigarette.  
40 He'd chew tobacco. He did all those kind of things. Well, you know,  
41 unbeknownst to him, you know, he was ingestin' a whole lot of that stuff,  
42 or those chemicals were absorbin' into your blood stream and whatever.  
43 And in his latter years before, you know, of course, he, he expired, he, um,  
44 a lot of that had to do with the lack of, uh, education or being, um, um,  
45 hardheaded, I guess, more than anything else about not usin' that kind of  
46 stuff.

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you use the term oleum. [1:21:57] Can you tell us what that was  
3 and did, was that used quite a bit throughout the plant?  
4  
5 Derrick Quinney: Oleum was, uh, nah, more so in the paint department. It was, um, one of  
6 the thinners, the solvents, the cleaners that they used to clean the surfaces  
7 on the, uh, on the jobs or whatever and I guess it would be equivalent to  
8 anything else when you, you, of course, on, in the days when, you know,  
9 you had to clean and it was, it was probably used for multi-, multiple uses,  
10 but it could clean anything [laughter], you know, it's fine. Sealers,  
11 chemicals, paints, solvents on yours hands and stuff and we used to just  
12 use that, that was just ...  
13  
14 Marilyn Coulter: One of the strippers ...  
15  
16 Derrick Quinney: ... one of the many, uh, yeah, um, chemicals that we were exposed to in,  
17 um, in our work environment. And, you know, I don't think it was – up  
18 until like 1985 or after the '80s when they finally started actually educatin'  
19 you as to what it was that you were working with and some of the, um,  
20 um, hazards that were associated with some of the stuff that you were  
21 workin' with. I mean, you think about it, over 8, 8-hour period or 9 hours,  
22 however long you were workin' and you multiple that by the number of  
23 days that you're workin' around these chemicals and what have you, um,  
24 they could have some really, really nasty effects on you physically, on  
25 your respiratory systems and, you know, for women of childbearing age or  
26 whatever, and men for that matter, you know what I mean? Just the, the  
27 outcome of, um, some of those things and the exposures to those kinds of,  
28 those, those chemicals and what have you. It just, uh, it, um ...  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: Unbelievable, isn't it?  
31  
32 Derrick Quinney: It, uh, it certainly had a, an impact on a lot of people, um, as far as their  
33 health issues are concerned. Even today, you know, and I don't know how  
34 many of'm have been impacted by that and I would, I would be curious to  
35 know, although I don't know how we would be able to record those kind  
36 of things, the effects on our children as well. Like, for example, in the  
37 body shop, uh, when they, in the old days when they used to apply the, uh,  
38 lead and solder to the joints and what have you. You know, now, today,  
39 lead exposures are somethin' that, I mean, [laughter] you know, after the  
40 educational process or whatever, the fiscal impacts that that can have on  
41 an individual, be it the ones that were there firsthand or, you know, bein',  
42 workin' around those, those chemicals all day long and then, unbeknown  
43 to us, we come out of the workplace and we take that stuff home and  
44 expose our family members to it, our kids, our spouses or what have you  
45 or just folks in the community. How those things would have an indirect



1 but yet a direct impact on how our, you know, how our, um, health issues  
2 and things would be [inaudible 1:24:37].  
3

4Marilyn Coulter: [1:24:38] Derrick, I want to get back to – you said – now when did you  
5 first start getting involved with your local union?  
6

7Derrick Quinney: You know what, um, it was probably in, in like, in the early '80s. I wanna  
8 say '82, '81-'82. Um, it's funny how this whole thing started. I was, again,  
9 workin' upstairs on the sealer line and, um, dreading having to come in  
10 there every single day to, to do the work. I, I say dreaded. I, it was a way  
11 of providing me a living so, you know, I knew I had to go but at the same  
12 time, uh, myself, I, I just kind of looked at it as, there were, there was a  
13 better way, you know. And I remember, um, a group of folks comin'  
14 around that, you know, were folks that I'd seen workin' in the plant but  
15 this, they started United Way campaigns, United Way drives, and these  
16 folks would come around and they would actually get off the line.  
17

18 They would, they would work for an extended, designated period of time  
19 [throat clearing] doing, uh, United Way campaigns and they would come  
20 and get you off the line and go and, you know, solicit you for, uh, United  
21 Way contributions and things of that nature and I got to lookin' and I  
22 thought I sure would like to get some free time [laughing] out here, and  
23 that's eventually how it started out. I'll be honest, you know, as an escape  
24 from the, the leash, if you will, that you had as far as the end of the sealer  
25 line or that, that gun would go as far as your work or whatever, you know,  
26 and they were comin' in, they wore nice clothes and they would get out  
27 and get to intermix and engage others and, throughout the plant or  
28 whatever, and, um, Rudy Reyes was, was the guy, you know. For me,  
29 Rudy was the one I just kind of, he was the chair I think of Community  
30 Services at the time and he and I just kind of – I expressed a, an interest in  
31 wanting to do that and he kind of picked me up and brought me on there  
32 and it all started from there. Um, it started.  
33

34 I got involved in Community Services and, of course, started going to  
35 union meetings a lot more and doing things of that nature and it just, it just  
36 evolved from there. I talk about, uh, um, this greenhouse. This greenhouse  
37 has, uh, it's got a lot of memories in here. I mean, because this is where  
38 the Community Services committee would meet a lot of times and during  
39 United Way campaigns this was our holding area, I guess, if you will, in  
40 between, um, you know, goin' out and doin' solicitations or what have  
41 you here. I remember doing, uh, sellin' old newsboys. I remember the gate  
42 collections. I remember all that kind of stuff where, where we'd kind of  
43 congregate here and, um, put our plan together as far as strategies  
44 and whatever and go out there and implement it, and I remember comin' in  
45 here and myself and [Dorothy Alema 1:27:24] and Art Luna and, um,  
46 Rudy and, and, you know, we used to count money in here from, you

1 know, the old gate donations and stuff that we used to do. All right here.  
2 [throat clearing]  
3  
4 Marilyn Coulter: [1:27:37] Derrick, when you did that union activity, were you excused  
5 from your line?  
6  
7 Derrick Quinney: Yeah. Um, we would, um, for whatever period of time that you were  
8 going to be gone they would have, um, utility, um, folks or whoever the  
9 extra folks in the area were to cover your job and what have you for that  
10 period of time. Um, a lot of folks used to resent that and, uh, I used to get  
11 a whole lot of grief as a result of, um, getting, uh, out of what they  
12 perceived or what they thought was gettin' out of work. They used to hold  
13 a lot of resentment about those kind of things and ...  
14  
15 Marilyn Coulter: [1:28:16] What about supervisors?  
16  
17 Derrick Quinney: Um, I never really, you know, they, I never really heard'm vocally to me  
18 express, you know, any kind of, you know, uh, feelings one way or  
19 another about it but I'm sure that, you know, my coworkers, um, held  
20 some resentment about those kind of things.  
21  
22 Marilyn Coulter: So, would, you would get off the line for a period of time to do a  
23 nontraditional assignment and then come back. [1:28:46] How did – was it  
24 hard to get back into the fold?  
25  
26 Derrick Quinney: It was hard to get back into the fold 'cause, 1, once you got away from that  
27 leash it was hard [laughing], always hard to come back and get back into  
28 the fold and that but, uh ...  
29  
30 Marilyn Coulter: [1:28:57] What about in terms of people?  
31  
32 Derrick Quinney: Uh, no. I mean, they may have had some, um, uh, you know, feelings or  
33 resentments one way or the other but, you know, I mean, you take that  
34 with a, with a grain of salt because, you know, um, uh, insults, if you will,  
35 or, you know, criticisms and stuff, that was as much a part of the work  
36 environment as anything else. So, you know, you took it for, you know,  
37 you, you, you know, considered the source in which it was comin' from  
38 and whatever. I always held a position at, um, my activity or my  
39 involvement was something that, you know, for those individuals who  
40 would have those criticisms and whatever I would just, uh, you know,  
41 [inaudible 1:29:38] you know, you had the same opportunities that I had to  
42 get involved and do these kind of these so, you know, either you come on  
43 and let me show you what's goin' on or don't.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: [1:29:51] Stepping away from that for just a moment, in terms of  
46 employee involvement, nontraditionalist job assignments, employees

1 getting taken away from the line to do other things, how instrumental do  
2 you think that was, getting that hourly involvement to help in changing  
3 our product and making it great?  
4

5Derrick Quinney: I think that, um, it had a significant impact. Um, I talked about how, like,  
6 in the mid '80s how they started making folks more aware of occupational  
7 exposures and things of that nature. I remember, uh, early on, too, when  
8 they used to, when they first implemented this Quality Work Life  
9 program. QWL is what they used to call that, and I remember, um, Bruce  
10 DeLand and, uh, Barry Class and Frank Stone and, um, Cheryl, you might  
11 have been, were you, when did you come in this? 'Cause I remember you  
12 bein' a part of my, um, uh, transitioning ...  
13

14Cheryl McQuaid: I was in registration and training.  
15

16Derrick Quinney: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember, you know, that part of that too. And  
17 Quality Work Life was somethin' that, I think out in the early, in the early,  
18 early, early stages of that, um, really went a long way in terms of making  
19 folks at least aware of what the heck was goin' on as far as the, um, um,  
20 our, um, our, um, process as far as the work is concerned and what a, a lot  
21 of what dictated that, too, was the, uh, start, if you will, in the mid '70s  
22 with the oil embargos and things of that nature and the imports starting to  
23 come in to our, um, into the country, you know, because of the high gas  
24 prices and what have you, the imports were then perceived to be a lot  
25 more fuel efficient and things of that nature as well as over a period of  
26 time that began to become a lot more, uh, uh, a lot of folks buyin' a lot  
27 more quality, better quality and so forth than what we were providing  
28 here.  
29

30 And, um, it's been, you know, through my history and my experience and,  
31 you know, different training programs and classes that I've attended that,  
32 um, I understand now how that all evolved, too, in terms of, uh, the big 3  
33 if you will in the '60s and the early '70s just not really having any  
34 competition so to speak as far as the auto industry was concerned, so we  
35 were free to be and do whatever the hell we wanted to do and, you know,  
36 we could build the big gas guzzlin', the big monsters and everything else  
37 and we really never had no competition. But then, with the influx of the  
38 imports that started comin' in here, we had to become a lot more  
39 competitive now because we were starting to lose that gain, if you will, in  
40 terms of our freedom and the ability to just sell or put whatever product  
41 out there on the road and, and, and folks would buy it, you know. Now we  
42 had to become a little bit more conscious of that. And the introduction to  
43 Quality Work Life and all those kind of things because now everybody  
44 had to understand what our position was and how the productivity and the  
45 quality of the vehicles now that we were putting out on the street was a lot  
46 more important to us all. That's why those programs were, uh, introduced.

1

2 Marilyn Coulter:

[1:33:01] In terms of, um, your union activity, can you just give us a list of the different positions or positions that you've held in the plant?

3

4  
5 Derrick Quinney:

Community Services, uh, was the first and, with that, that evolved into a lot of other things. Like I said, you know, um, Rudy Reyes, as far as my union involvement was concerned, he was probably the first, um, person that I came in contact with and encouraged me to get involved and things and, um, my, him putting me on Community Services, uh, committee, of course, of course, that required that, you know, you get more, a lot more involved and a lot more active and, um, you know, for him, uh, for me, I hold a lot of fond memories as far as that goes, as far as Rudy is concerned because he was, um, he was an activist. He was, he was, he cared about people and [inaudible 1:33:59] Community Services, um, share a position that he held. Well, he took a lot of criticism for a whole lot of things.

16

17 One thing I can never criticize Rudy about was his willingness to go out  
18 and help others, you know, in whatever capacity. I remember the times  
19 when he and I would be together doing United Way campaigns or, uh,  
20 other activities and whatever and, you know, people would come up and  
21 ask him to borrow money and he would just, you know, if he had it on  
22 him, it wouldn't, it wouldn't matter, you know, and I remember there was  
23 a time or two when we were leavin', "You got 20 dollars?" and I'd give  
24 him 20 dollars and he'd turn around and give it to somebody else  
25 [laughter], you know, and I'm thinkin' what the hell, you givin' my – you  
26 know, but that's just the kind of guy he was. If he had it and he could help  
27 somebody else, he would give it to'm, man. For those reasons, um, I got a  
28 lot of respect for Rudy in that regard 'cause the one thing about him was,  
29 was he would always give of himself and reach out to others and try to  
30 help them. Again, like I said, he, uh, he took a lot of criticism for a lot of  
31 different things but I've never known and today still, uh, um, if you were  
32 in need of somethin', he would, uh, he would certainly be the guy from  
33 that.

34

35 And from that, that evolved because of relationships that I formed in the,  
36 in Local 602 to other things that kind of spread out, uh, um, um,  
37 community services, union label. Uh, Doug Rademacher and I, we, we,  
38 we've done a lot of things together, uh, um, in that capacity. Uh, he made  
39 me, uh, really educated me about the necessity to, uh, get involved and  
40 advocate for, um, selling union-made products and pushing American-  
41 made products and things of that nature. Um, he's, you know, one of the  
42 guys that, um, today and always has been, I mean, um, very, very much a  
43 part of those kind of things. But in those relationships, too, uh, Marilyn, I  
44 mean, you and I, on the civil rights committee, uh, um, things that we'd  
45 done over the years and, uh, some of the programs, uh, black history  
46 programs and things and how we would sit around the table and try to

1 strategize and come up with ways of, um, introducing various programs  
2 and putting some things together and stuff. That goes a long way.  
3

4 Uh, the [clue 1:36:11] committee, um, um, um, my first, um, run at a, um,  
5 uh, elective position, I think it was [throat clearing], uh, sergeant at arms  
6 after I finally got my confidence in there and, and, uh, thought I wanted to,  
7 uh, run for an elective position. I ran for sergeant at arms and was  
8 successful at that. Um, Alvin Presley, uh, once I got involved and started  
9 to attend union meetings on a more consistent basis, uh, Alvin Presley was  
10 the one who introduced me to the A. Philip Randolph Institute and, you  
11 know, a lot of times I wonder if it was only because I was just the only  
12 guy standin' there or he really thought [laughter] [inaudible 1:36:55] fill a  
13 specific position, "Hey, you want to do A. Philip Randolph? Come here!"  
14 you know, and, you know, and that's how I got involved in that, uh. Al  
15 Presley, he was a, he was another one of those probably real instrumental  
16 in terms of, uh, supporting and also encouraging, you know, anticipation  
17 and involvement as far as, uh, union activities go. I remember, um, uh,  
18 who was, uh, the guy that, um, Alvin Presley's adversary there for a long  
19 time?  
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: Terry Ward.

22  
23 Derrick Quinney: Terry Ward. I remember some of the, uh, confrontations that, uh, um, took  
24 place in those times and how, you know, even though, well it was, I was  
25 gonna say even though they necessarily didn't want to come out and say it,  
26 it came right down to, like, racial lines and what have you in a lot of  
27 instances, too, in terms of, um, who was gonna lead, you know, Local 602  
28 or whatever, you know, and those kind of things, and I remember Terry  
29 Ward and his, uh, followers or his contingency and how they would come  
30 in there and, um, when Al was elected president, how they would just  
31 come in there and purposely try to disrupt and create havoc in union  
32 meetings and things of that nature and they would come in there  
33 sometimes and, you know, specific issues or somethin' that was goin' on,  
34 and I can remember so vividly how they would come in there and they  
35 would blow the union meetings up.  
36

37 You could always tell when there was an issue that was goin' on to where,  
38 um, there was gonna be somethin' that required a vote, 'cause those, the,  
39 the Terry Ward contingency, when Alvin was in office, they would come  
40 in there and they would just fill the hall up, you know, and they would  
41 come in there and whatever the issue was, they would, you know, act on it  
42 and, more often than not, they knew to load the hall up to make sure that  
43 they had the votes on their side. They would get whatever issue they want  
44 and then literally just walk right out of there. You know, and I mean the  
45 way in which they done it, too, I mean was a laughing, kind of "ha ha"  
46 joke to them, you know.

1  
2 Marilyn Coulter: [1:38:52] Did that ever affect the plant? People in the plant? Were the  
3 people in the plant ever aware of that? Do you think?  
4  
5 Derrick Quinney: Um, probably. I'm sure that there were those, uh, although, they say, you  
6 know, we never had caucuses in our plant or in our local or whatever.  
7 Yeah, I'm sure that they did. I know that there was those divisions that  
8 were there. And they were there more so, not necessarily because of one  
9 leader having his or her abilities or whatever. I would certainly say that,  
10 that race certainly played a whole, a significant role in, in, in, uh, those  
11 kind of things. But, um, it was tough times and, you know, particularly  
12 for, um, Al. I can only imagine what it was like, uh, um, being in a  
13 leadership role and also having to deal with that side of it as opposed to  
14 just everyday operations and what all it entailed in terms of holding that  
15 membership together over there at that time.  
16  
17 Um, you know, it's interesting how when we first, uh, you know, as  
18 upstarts, we would come in there and you'd see folks in elected positions  
19 and different things and different chairs and, of course, the more you got  
20 involved and the more you got exposed to, um, like your international reps  
21 and your regional directors and things of that nature and how you'd  
22 always aspire to want to get in those positions or what have you, you  
23 know, they, they look glorious and they look glamorous until you actually  
24 sit in those seats to find out just how much responsibility there is in those  
25 positions and the, uh, the amount of stress, too, because not only now is it,  
26 is it you that you have to be, uh, accountable for but the entire livelihood  
27 of your members and then you multiply that by their family members and  
28 whatever, there's a ton of responsibility that, uh, um, the average person  
29 just doesn't, particularly average rank [inaudible 1:40:51] individual who  
30 does not want to get involved or has no involvement whatsoever and to  
31 make sure that they get a paycheck and only when times or situations fall  
32 upon them to where they, you know, the, you know, my healthcare or this  
33 situation or my benefits are affected in one way or the other. That's only at  
34 that point in time that they really become concerned.  
35  
36 Marilyn Coulter: [1:41:12] Derrick, can you tell me what is it like, though, to be an active  
37 chair, because chairmanships, like you said you were the citizenship  
38 legislative chair – those chairpersons, they're not full-time – what is it like  
39 to be a chairperson per se and runnin' the line? Like, for example, I know  
40 sometimes as chairmanship and part of union activity you'd have to do a  
41 turnaround trip to Washington C and then, Washington, D.C., and then  
42 come back and go to work. Can you tell us, like, what that was like to  
43 wear the hat of a worker and a chairperson?  
44  
45 Derrick Quinney: Um, complex more so than anything else. I mean, you, you take into  
46 account just your regular everyday operations and you got, you know,

1 your family involvements you gotta be involved in and then for those  
2 individuals who step up to the plate and want to take on more  
3 responsibility, if you will, is just bein' able to try to put all those things  
4 together because, I mean, you're accountable for whatever it is and you  
5 certainly want to do the best at whatever, um, you are now deemed as the  
6 leader of a specific, uh, committee or whatever.

7  
8 You want to put your best foot forward and be able to do that but, um,  
9 yeah, a lot of that, too, dependent upon, um, the support that you have  
10 from the union to make available to you the resources as well as the um,  
11 um, time to be able to carry out your operation and then, um, a lot, too,  
12 had to do with the relationships that you had with, um, supervisors,  
13 management and what have you in terms of them being, um, willing, I  
14 guess, to be able to afford you, to be able to, to carry out your activities  
15 because, uh, you, for example, in, uh, civil rights, I can recall having  
16 engaged you in, you know, different things or working on specific projects  
17 with you and how you, you know, in between your breaks, which is the  
18 time where you're supposed to be able to sit down and get a little rest, if  
19 you will, from whatever you're doin' throughout your, you know, regular  
20 operation throughout the day, you know, runnin' and, you know, from the  
21 telephones or tryin' to go and meet with someone else and carry out  
22 different, uh, uh, responsibilities or making sure that you tied all of the,  
23 the, the loop holes or the open ends, I guess, together to make sure that  
24 this was all gonna happen was, um, it's somethin' again that only activists,  
25 you know, um, bein' in their right minds or not, would take on those  
26 responsibilities that you had done, so.

27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, you've, you've held many hats. Currently now you are the –  
29 [1:43:49] what's our title, please?

30  
31 Derrick Quinney: I am the, um, health and safety director for the Michigan State AFL-CIO.

32  
33 Marilyn Coulter: So your job from a line worker totally [laughing] evolved. [1:44:01] What  
34 are some of the other misconceptions that people who may not know any  
35 factory workers? What are some of the things about the workers  
36 themselves that people would be surprised to know about?

37  
38 Derrick Quinney: Um, you know, because we benefitted so much from folks who've gone  
39 and fought the battles before us and achieved, uh, through, like, the  
40 collective bargaining process or whatever, the quality of life and what  
41 have you that we have, um, folks on the outside that have no clue  
42 whatsoever perceive us as being, um, spoiled, perceive us as being  
43 overpaid, perceive us as being lazy, perceive us as being, um, um, um,  
44 unappreciative of what it is that we have. Um, those folks really don't  
45 have a clue and, you know, what, if you stop and look at them, a lot of it  
46 has to do with envy for the most part because of the things that we've been

1                   able to achieve. Um, not knowing the history, it's easy for folks to  
2                   formulate those kind of opinions about what it is that, you know, we have  
3                   or the gains that we have or what have you, but, uh ...  
4

5Marilyn Coulter:       [1:45:17] What about education levels?  
6

7Derrick Quinney:       That, too, you know. Again, because of, uh, the collective bargaining  
8                   process, a lot of the folks that are out there that have, um, education levels  
9                   that exceed, far exceed what mine are but yet when we step up to the plate  
10                  and we, if you will, they measure your quality of life or your income  
11                  levels and things of that nature and a lot of times they formulate opinions  
12                  that I'm not deserving of or that, uh, uh, I got a free ride, I guess, if you  
13                  will, and things of that nature so, um, uh – you know, nowadays,  
14                  education levels are so much more, uh, in play with what we're able to do  
15                  because of the changes and, and, and the manufacturing of the changes  
16                  and the skills and so forth that aren't necessarily required. In fact, just last  
17                  week I had a conversation with a guy who told me about when he hired in  
18                  in the '50s, how you can literally walk into Fisher Body and get a job, you  
19                  could quit at the end of the week and go on the other side of town and they  
20                  would walk you right in there [laughter] and give you job. I mean, it was  
21                  just that plentiful and the work was that much more, um, uh, accessible to  
22                  folks out there and how, you know, those kind of things. But today that's,  
23                  that's hardly the case, it's hardly the case.  
24

25Marilyn Coulter:       Derrick, you grew up just a few blocks from Fisher Body. You've been  
26                   there and you've been through the name changes. Now, as we come to a  
27                   close, Fisher Body as we know it is no more. The big green monster is not  
28                   gonna be there the way we used to. [1:47:02] How does that make you  
29                   feel?  
30

31Derrick Quinney:       Like, um, a significant part of [throat clearing] my life, the community, the  
32                   world is, uh, changing. I mean, it's, it's, uh, you know, what we – what  
33                   I've grown to know and become a part of is, is, uh, is, uh, a part of me  
34                   that's gonna be missed. The comfort that all of this provided and for me  
35                   and everyone else who is no longer gonna be there and the unknown is,  
36                   uh, very, very much, um, uncertain as well as, um, [throat clearing]  
37                   uncomfortable I guess would be the best way to put that.  
38

39Marilyn Coulter:       [1:47:57] Um, is there anything that you'd like to share that we've haven't  
40                   touched on?  
41

42Derrick Quinney:       Just that, um, for me, having had the privilege of, 1, getting, um, hired in  
43                   at General Motors. And I say that is a privilege because it's certainly that  
44                   because those were certainly – when we were kids comin' up, although,  
45                   like I talked about, my dad not wanting me to get involved or ge-, having  
46                   me come there, he wanted me to become educated and move on to bigger



1 and better things – those jobs in the auto industry were certainly the more  
2 preferable jobs because of the money, the quality of life, and the things  
3 that that provided and the security that went along with that as well. Um,  
4 the relationships that I’ve formulated through there. My involvement with  
5 the labor movement has certainly been one that has, uh, changed my life  
6 and the lives of, uh, many others, I hope, and I think, um, has moved on  
7 even to, um, my immediate family. My kids having seen those kind of  
8 things and seeing how their involvement in, um, trying to make a  
9 difference or change in others, in others, to better for others or what have  
10 you is, is certainly something that, uh, has been a plus for me and, um, just  
11 givin’ them something positive to look at is, uh, has been a big change.

12  
13 Um, my relationships, again, I, many, there’ve been many that have, have  
14 certainly evolved from that and my community activism has certainly  
15 opened doors in the community that, um, I know wouldn’t been there in a  
16 lot of cases and, um, I’m just appreciative of those things. Uh, even today,  
17 um, at my, uh, position with the, uh, AFL-CIO. It’s because of my, um,  
18 commitment to wanting to help others and to make difference and what  
19 have you and, uh, I’ll be honest about it too, some politics were involved  
20 in that but politics is involved in any and everything that we do, um, have  
21 certainly opened doors and done things. Um, I’ve traveled places. I’ve  
22 been to, um, um, been involved in things that have just been life-changing  
23 and also, uh, uh, expanded my horizons, my view on specific things  
24 [throat clearing] and it’s, it’s all been good. I just, uh, I’m appreciative of  
25 all those things and, and hopefully I’ve made some, uh, some differences  
26 in other peoples’ lives.

27  
28 Marilyn Coulter: Well, um, Derrick is also – he’s being somewhat modest – um, he is also  
29 the state president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. He is, also has been  
30 the police commissioner. He’s also sat on the board of United Way. He’s  
31 been very active, and he has shown both his union and his company proud  
32 and you’ve made me proud to be able to have this interview with you  
33 today and I want to say thank you.

34  
35 Derrick Quinney: Thank you.

36  
37 Doug Rademacher: Thank you, Derrick.

38  
39 John Fedewa: Thank you, Derrick.

40  
41 Earl Nicholson, Sr.: Thank you, Derrick.

42  
43 Michael Fleming: Thank you, Derrick.

44  
45 Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Derrick.

46

1 Gary Judy: Thank you, Derrick.  
2  
3 Jerri Smith: Thank you, Derrick.  
4  
5 Derrick Quinney: I appreciate that. Thanks.  
6  
7 Marilyn Coulter: Derrick, I can't let you get away yet. We said thank you, but what I want  
8 you to do is to make clarification there. You were UAW and you are the  
9 Michigan State AFL-CIO Health and Safety Director. [1:51:26] Does that  
10 mean you're not UAW anymore? And how did that happen?  
11  
12 Derrick Quinney: Actually, um, I am and always will be, first and foremost, UAW, okay?  
13 That's how it all began. That's how I all got started in this involvement.  
14 The AFL-CIO is the umbrella organization, if you will, of all of labor  
15 unions throughout the um, uh, country. Uh, here at the state level, um, I  
16 held the position in the plant as the, um, assessment coordinator for, um,  
17 team leaders, uh, orientation and assessments for folks that were evolving  
18 from when, um, um, what we would call utility people or at this point in  
19 time to what they call now group leaders and such. And I held that  
20 position for about 8 months, I guess. Uh, with that, um, the opportunity to,  
21 um, interview and apply for a position, uh, Tina Abbott, who's the  
22 secretary treasurer for the AFL-CIO, um, saw, noticed my involvement  
23 and different activities or what have you and, uh, suggested that I put in an  
24 application to, um, um, put in for the health and safety director at the  
25 AFL-CIO. I, uh, applied for the position and, um, was blessed enough to  
26 be able to get the job.  
27  
28 Of course, um, there were, I talk about, um, your involvement and folks  
29 having to, to, to sign off, I guess, if you will, or whatever. It had to go  
30 through the entire UAW hierarchy, um, whether or not, 1, I would be  
31 considered and I'm sure that they look at, um, at that time, your  
32 commitment, your involvement, um, your worth, I guess, if you will, in  
33 being able to further causes and whether or not you'd be deserving of, um,  
34 um, holding or being able to, to, deserving of, um, involvement or  
35 participation as far as those things are concerned. And with that, they,  
36 along with an agreement through General Motors, agree to extend you  
37 what we call union leaves and, uh, with that, um, although I am now with  
38 the AFL-CIO, um, my, a union leave is, was granted to me to allow me to  
39 continue to do those things and still be able to, um, hold my, my  
40 membership or my allegiance to, uh, the UAW and Local 602 as a dues-  
41 paying member, and I now, uh, lead, uh, the UAW or I now represent  
42 UAW Local 602, but I also work as a, uh, member of organized labor for  
43 the AFL-CIO.  
44  
45 Marilyn Coulter: [1:54:15] So, you continue with your seniority, correct?  
46

1Derrick Quinney: Yes. My seniority will accrue the same as, um, as if I were, uh, actively  
2 working here at Local 602 in the, um, now new Delta facility as a, as a  
3 result of that.  
4

5Doug Rademacher: Just to finish up on that, then I would like – Doug Rademacher – [1:54:40]  
6 Derrick, since the people that are gonna listen to this do, uh, just, do, uh,  
7 papers on and studies for their papers for college, what would you tell a  
8 person about the auto industry and the importance of getting involved in  
9 politics and your local community activities?  
10

11Derrick Quinney: I think that that is, um, paramount [throat clearing]. Not only in the auto  
12 industry, just whatever, um, um, involvement or how society impacts you,  
13 wherever you fall in the, in the, the, uh, um, mix of, of, uh, your society or  
14 your, your income levels, your education levels and things of that, or just  
15 personal beliefs, things that you believe in [throat clearing]. I think that  
16 involvement is, uh, it's a must if you want to make or impact change in  
17 terms of what's goin' on or what happens around you. Not only you as an  
18 individual but, uh, your family, your kids, um, your, your, your, um,  
19 parents and, whatever it is. You can either be a part of a change or you can  
20 sit back and let change impact you without having any, um, say about  
21 what goes on around you and, um, if you do that, then I guess you have to  
22 accept whatever, whatever happens to you.  
23

24Marilyn Coulter: Um, Derrick, as we come to a close yet so again I want to say that, um,  
25 number 1, you know, I think you're an awesome father, since your son is  
26 going to school to become a doctor, and pulling great grades.  
27

28Derrick Quinney: At the MSU, by the way.  
29

30Marilyn Coulter: At the MSU ...  
31

32Derrick Quinney: [Laughing]  
33

34Marilyn Coulter: You have been a stellar member of the community. You have shown the  
35 face of UAW and you have made us proud of 602; 602 has always had a,  
36 um, history of turning out excellent leaders and we are glad and proud that  
37 you have made a good showing in the public of us and good luck in your  
38 career and continued success. Thank you.  
39

40Doug Rademacher: Thank you, Derrick.  
41

42John Fedewa: Thank you, Derrick.  
43

44Earl Nicholson, Sr.: Thank you, Derrick.  
45

46Michael Fleming: Thank you, Derrick.

1  
2Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Derrick.  
3  
4Gary Judy: Thank you, Derrick.  
5  
6Jerri Smith: Thank you, Derrick.  
7  
8Derrick Quinney: Thank you all and I'm certainly not worthy of all those accolades but I'll  
9 accept them anyway [laughing].  
10  
11  
12/kd