

1 **Jose (Joe) Rodriguez, a Hispanic American, discusses his career as a production**
2 **worker and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**
3
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 0:00]. Fisher Body Historical Team Interview. [throat clearing]
6 Uh, the date is Tuesday, January 24th, 2006. Uh, we're here in the UAW
7 [sighing] Local 602 Frank Dryer Greenhouse. Uh, first we'll interview –
8 we'll introduce the interviewers.
9

10 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.

11
12 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.

13
14 Marilyn Coulter: And Marilyn Coulter. Today we're here with Joe Rodriguez. [0:26] Joe,
15 would you please say and spell your last name for us?
16

17 Jose Rodriguez: Last name?

18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.

20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Okay. R-O-D-R-I-G-U-E-Z. Rodriguez, [yeah 0:36].
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: [0:37] And your address, please.
24

25 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, 16104 Brook.
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: [0:42] And that is that in...
28

29 Jose Rodriguez: Brook Road...
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: ...Lansing?
32

33 Jose Rodriguez: ... yeah. Um, yeah, Lansing.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: And you're a male. [0:48] And are you married?
36

37 Jose Rodriguez: Yes, mm-hm.
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: [0:51] Do you have any children?
40

41 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
42

43 Marilyn Coulter: [0:54] Uh, one? Boys? Girls?
44

45 Jose Rodriguez: I got, uh, uh, lemme see here, um, uh, 5 boys and, uh, 2 girls.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [1:06] Um, now, where were you born?
2
3 Jose Rodriguez: Galveston, Texas.
4
5 Marilyn Coulter: [1:10] And your education?
6
7 Jose Rodriguez: [Yeah 1:12], uh, high school, graduated.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [1:15] Any military service?
10
11 Jose Rodriguez: No.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: [1:17] What did your parents do?
14
15 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, my dad worked for, uh, [papers shuffling] Lindell Drop Forge and my
16 mother worked for, um, uh, a Holiday Inn; she cleaned – cleaned in there.
17 [papers shuffling] She cleaned [loud click] [inaudible 1:31].
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [1:33] So...
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: ...you were born, um, Galveston, Texas...
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: Right.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: ...but your father worked at Lindell Drop Forge [here 1:38].
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: Right.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: [1:39] Um, you – how old were you when you came to Lansing?
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: I was 14...
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: So...
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: ...14 years old, something like that.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [1:45] So did you live in Lansing?
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, yeah – well, I stayed in Mason, Michigan, and, uh, my dad had a
42 brother here already. And there was a like, a pickle factory. My dad was
43 a driver for this company, you know. So I lived in Mason for a while
44 while my dad drove truck and stuff.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm. [2:07] So, um, what did you do before you hired into Fisher
2 Body?
3
4 Jose Rodriguez: I worked, um – well, I went to high school, graduated, but, um, I worked,
5 uh, construction for Kesler Construction, and, um, like I report to my job
6 about 7. I didn't get to go where I was goin', and, uh, it'd be about 12, time
7 to eat lunch, and then I'd go to work, couple hours.
8
9 Marilyn Coulter: [2:39] What – now, um, before you came into Fisher Body, did you know
10 anything about Fisher Body, Lansing?
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: No, nuttin'. I didn't know...
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: What...
15
16 Jose Rodriguez: ...any-...
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [2:48] Well, what brought you to Lansing?
19
20 Jose Rodriguez: Well, because, uh – oh, we had to move to Lansing, yeah, 'cause, uh, my
21 dad had got a job at Lindell. So I came to Lansing. My dad says, "You
22 better go find a job," you know, 'cause I had a job at a gas station and I
23 was let go and, uh, he said, "Well you better go find a job." And so that's
24 the first place I came was Fisher Body. I was about – I just graduated high
25 school – 18 years old and I got the job. They just called [and 3:16]...
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: [3:18] So you went to high school in Lansing?
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: No, I went to high school in, uh, Eastern.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: [3:22] At Eastern?
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [3:23] At Eastern here in Lansing?
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: Right.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: So, and [then 3:25]...
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: I moved, yeah, after that, yeah.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [3:27] But you, you didn't have any dealings with Fisher Body or knew
44 anybody from...
45
46 Jose Rodriguez: No.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body.
3
4 Jose Rodriguez: No, no. I knew some a the guys, uh – well, once I got in, I knew, uh, uh,
5 two a the guys that worked there. You know Sugar.
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
8
9 Jose Rodriguez: I knew Sug-, uh, Sugar, I worked with him at a gas station.
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [3:45] Oh really?
12
13 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. Sugar. And [Duke 3:47].
14
15 Marilyn Coulter: So...
16
17 Jose Rodriguez: [Yeah 3:49].
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [3:50] So now, what year did you come in to Fisher Body?
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, '64.
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: '64. [3:55] So what was the hire-in process for you?
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: What was the hire-in process?
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. [4:00] Did you stay – I mean, did...
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: No, uh...
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: ...did you go through a unemployment agency? Did you...
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: No, I just...
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: ...[collect unemployment 4:03]?
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: ...I just came right here and they had applications and, uh, I filled them out
38 and, uh – you remember, I think his name was John? He got long
39 sideburns and he's the one that did the hiring. So I just came in and saw
40 him and he told me to come to work.
41
42 Marilyn Coulter: [4:21] How long did it take you to get hired in?
43
44 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, a day or two.
45

1 Marilyn Coulter: [4:24] And do remember what – what was your first day like? Do you
2 remember that?
3

4 Jose Rodriguez: My first day on the job?
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
7

8 Jose Rodriguez: Well, when I first got here, I come in the front door and as you walk in,
9 downstairs it was all Body Shop, you know, and...
10

11 Marilyn Coulter: [4:40] Hm. And this is on Verlinden? You came in the...
12

13 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, Verlinden.
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: ...Verlinden entry?
16

17 Jose Rodriguez: Right through the front door, you go downstairs and as you come in and
18 all you see is Body Shop workers and all that. And I said, "Geez, I hope I
19 don't have to come in here," you know, "work in a Body Shop," this and
20 that, and, uh, a guy say, "No Joe, you're lucky. You go up in 3X upstairs."
21 And, uh, so I went to 3X and I been there ever since.
22

23 Marilyn Coulter: [5:04] So what was 3X?
24

25 Jose Rodriguez: Trim. You know where you used to work?
26

27 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah I know where I used to work.
28

29 Jose Rodriguez: Off the ramp?
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: [5:11] The ramp? So...
32

33 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. That's 3X right there.
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: [5:13] Okay, so it was upstairs on the 2nd floor of the building?
36

37 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, mm-hm. That's 3X.
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: And, um...
40

41 Jose Rodriguez: Oh. [Inaudible 5:24].
42

43 [loud click]
44

45 Marilyn Coulter: So up at 3X in trim. [5:27] Um, d-, do – what, what were you doing up
46 there? What'd you think when...

1
2 Jose Rodriguez: Well, when I first went up there I, like I said, I did lotta jobs and, uh, they
3 put, you know, seatbelts in; I did that. They put rear backs; I did that.
4 Cushions; I did that. I did steel plates. I did all them jobs up in there.
5 And, uh, and, and, and I just hung out for a long time and then the guy
6 says, "You wanna go in Utility?" And I says, "Yeah, okay." So I went on
7 Utility and, uh, and, and some days I wanna go in, some days I didn't
8 know, you know, who's working, who wasn't. I didn't feel like goin' in
9 that day, you know...
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [chuckling]
12
13 Jose Rodriguez: ...do them jobs. So, uh, but I did go in and, um, and after that I became,
14 um, uh, a relief man. I did all the jobs, trunk trim and, you know, all the
15 jobs that they had there, you know?
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [6:24] So you knew a lotta different jobs...
18
19 Jose Rodriguez: Uh-huh.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: ...but for those people who don't un-, what, what is a – what does a utility
22 person do?
23
24 Jose Rodriguez: Utility person is, uh, a extra man that, uh, if somebody don't show up, I
25 gotta go do that job.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah. [6:35] So you hadda learn a lotta jobs.
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah, I got on all the jobs...
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: [6:39] About how...
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: ...just about.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: ...big was the department just about?
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, well I worked, I just worked in 3X all my life, you know.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: [6:47] So how many, well, like how many jobs...
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: How many?
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: ...did you have to learn about?
44
45 Jose Rodriguez: Oh, okay. I had...
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: 5?
2

3 Jose Rodriguez: ... I had...
4

5 Marilyn Coulter: 6?
6

7 Jose Rodriguez: ... to learn about, oh, about, now, I knew about 15 or more.
8

9 Marilyn Coulter: [6:59] 15 or more jobs?
10

11 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: Wow. [7:01] So then after you did Utility, you said you went into relief.
14 And what's Relief?
15

16 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, relief is, uh, you got, uh, I think it's, uh, 6 people, uh, less than that,
17 and you give'm, uh, relief, like a – I don't, I don't know if it is now, but I
18 used to give'm like 15 minutes, you know?
19

20 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
21

22 Jose Rodriguez: Each one 15 minutes. First time around. Everybody 15 minutes, first time
23 around, and then you come back after lunch and you give'm another break,
24 you know? And they go do what they had to do.
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: [7:35] So in 1964...
27

28 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: ...what was it like for um, a His-, a Hispanic man to work? Were there
31 many Hispanics in the plant when you came in?
32

33 Jose Rodriguez: Oh, yeah. Well, on my side, I worked at 3X and very few there, you
34 know? But on the other side a the plant, there was a lotta Mexicans, you
35 know.
36

37 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 7:57].
38

39 Jose Rodriguez: Lot, lotta guys.
40

41 Marilyn Coulter: [7:58] So what was it like for you? Were there any new-hire initiations?
42 How did people treat you when you came in?
43

44 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, well they were all crazy [inaudible 8:07] you know, they, they did a
45 lotta stuff, and, uh, you know, I had good times and I had some bad times
46 with some people up in there and, um, yeah, so.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: [8:21] Can you tell us about some a the good times?
3
4 Jose Rodriguez: Oh the good times?
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah. Can you remember any of the...
7
8 Jose Rodriguez: Uh.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: ...good times?
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, just, you know, I – some days I didn't have to work, you know? I
13 just took it easy, sat around, watch everybody else do their jobs. And the
14 guy says, "Just hang around and just be extra. If I need ya, I'll call ya."
15 You know? So that's what I [did 8:42], you know.
16
17 Marilyn Coulter: [8:42] So you just went and visited.
18
19 Jose Rodriguez: I just hung around and if you need me, I go do somethin'. You know, go
20 pick up this part and take it over there and, you know. I've had some good
21 bosses up in there [though, uh 8:55].
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: What...
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: Except for, you know, [inaudible 8:58].
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. [8:59] What made a good boss?
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: Well, uh, well, I've had like, uh, [Jerry Knight 9:05] and, uh, um – oh, I
30 can't remember their names, but they're all good, they treat me right, you
31 know. And I – when I, when I hired in at first, I – and I was wow, I guess,
32 you know, 'cause I used to like to mess around. I'd take a guy's driver bit
33 out and, you know, the boss is [like 9:24] "I know you did it, Joe. Give it
34 back to'm." You know? So I said, "Okay, I will." And, uh...
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: Well...
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: ...so I, I gave him his driver bit and, uh, – you know, everybody come in
39 and have problems and stuff and they would tell ya about'm. You know,
40 sometimes you ignore'm and sometimes you get on'm and, you know, it
41 was a little crazy in there.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: [9:46] So you said you used to take people's drive-, you tooks people's
44 [driver 9:45] bits sometimes, so there was...
45
46 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 9:50]. [9:50] So what k-, what other kinda pranks were
3 played or did you play?
4
5 Jose Rodriguez: Oh did I play?
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
8
9 Jose Rodriguez: [coughing] Uh, let me think. I had some wild stories up in there but...
10
11 Marilyn Coulter: [10:06] Can you share one with us?
12
13 Jose Rodriguez: [chuckling] Uh, I was, uh, [chuckling], I don't know, it's kinda [wild
14 10:14] to tell you. Um, I worked up in, uh, 3X...
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
17
18 Jose Rodriguez: ...and I was all by myself up in there, and, uh, cars are going out, you
19 know, and, uh, I-, it's like I had a – my stomach was upset and stuff, and I
20 had to go to the restroom, you know, and my relief man, he was way at the
21 other end of [inaudible 10:41].
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: [coughing]
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: I'm the only guy up in there. People come up there and see stuff, but I was
26 the only one working up in that 3X, and I had to go to the restroom that
27 day real bad, and, uh – but my relief man, he worked, uh – you know the
28 plant...
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [sniffing]
31
32 Jose Rodriguez: ...as you get here, uh, but, uh, like I said, he worked about, uh, way on the
33 other side of the plant and I had to call him to, to come take my place, and
34 that took, uh, at least 20 minutes, you know.
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: [11:09] So you had to call him on the phone?
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: Call him on the phone to come take my place, and I think I left the job or
39 somethin'. I had to go to the restroom, and, [chuckling] and the restroom's
40 on the 1st floor and up on a second floor. And, uh, I mean, my stomach
41 was real bad or somethin', I, I didn't feel right and, uh, as I was strollin',
42 uh, I don't know if I waited for him or not, but I took off and then he come
43 up, bought me some coveralls and stuff, I didn't know that but – anyway, I
44 took off and, uh, um, the restroom's on the 1st floor, so, now, like I said,
45 my stomach is really upset [chuckling] and...
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [11:50] So you walked off the line?
2
3 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, I went, I went – the restroom was on the 1st – you had to go all the
4 way downstairs...
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
7
8 Jose Rodriguez: ...to the Body Shop. That's where the...
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [throat clearing]
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: ... restroom was.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
15
16 Jose Rodriguez: And I'm up on the 2nd floor, and I had to get down to downstairs, and, and
17 as I was goin', I had a little accident, you know.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Oh no.
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: I was, you know, goin' to the restroom, [chuckling] you know, I was goin'
22 down the stairs – I don't know if I should tell you this, but, you know, um,
23 I had a little accident, and then I said, "Oh my God. Oh it's comin'." You
24 know, "It's comin'" – you know, whatever it is.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [12:27] You had to go to the bathroom.
27
28 Jose Rodriguez: Bathroom, [inaudible 12:29].
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
31
32 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. Yeah, uh, anyway, I got all the way down there and, uh, and, uh, I
33 said, "God, this is" – and I was – I mean, I just went all over myself and
34 "This is crazy," and, uh, so I, I made it downstairs, sit down, and I, I just
35 pooped all over me – you know, myself; I was sick, you know. And I
36 said, "God, I'm like" – now I had to go all the way back up and tell my
37 relief man that, uh, you know, I had problems, you know, and that...
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: You needed to go home. [laughter]
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: ...I needed to go home. Well, he, uh, he – I think he bought me some
42 coveralls, you know.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh.
45

1 Jose Rodriguez: So I had to put them on, you know? So that was one, one of my stories
2 [you know 13:13].
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [13:14] So the bathrooms were very far....
5
6 Jose Rodriguez: Very far away.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: ...away.
9
10 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 13:17].
13
14 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm. Yeah I worked on the 2nd floor, and...
15
16 Marilyn Coulter: [13:20] And sometimes that was difficult.
17
18 Jose Rodriguez: But they had a women's restroom on the 2nd floor, but I couldn't go there.
19 Maybe I should have, huh?
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah, you should have.
22
23 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
24
25 John Fedewa: [chuckling]
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: [laughter]
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: It said women. You know, I shoulda went. But mine...
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: But some...
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: ...mine said men, so I had to go all the way down.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: [13:34] So sometimes the bathrooms were really, really far apart, and...
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...and give yourself time.
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: And it's hard to get reliefs and stuff.
44
45 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: [13:43] So, um, did you f-, work day shift? Night shift?
2

3 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, I hired in, uh, on nights. Let me see, hired – no, hired in on days. I
4 was there for maybe 3 three months and somebody on nights bumped me,
5 so I had to go nights, and I did some jobs there, but I think most of the
6 time I spent on the day shift.
7

8 Marilyn Coulter: [14:04] What was the d-, was the – what types of differences did you
9 notice between working day shift and night shift?
10

11 Jose Rodriguez: Well, just the people. There wasn't no difference [inaudible 14:12].
12

13 Marilyn Coulter: [14:14] When you say just the people, just...
14

15 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
16

17 Marilyn Coulter: ...were they older people? Were they younger people?
18

19 Jose Rodriguez: Um, well...
20

21 Marilyn Coulter: Men? Women?
22

23 Jose Rodriguez: ... they were all – like I hired in – well, there was – yeah, there was all
24 kinds a people, yeah.
25

26 Marilyn Coulter: [14:26] So when you were in the plant and then you're on a line, what
27 types of jobs did you build?
28

29 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, okay...
30

31 Marilyn Coulter: Do you...
32

33 Jose Rodriguez: ...like...
34

35 Marilyn Coulter: [14:39] Do you know what kind of vehicles were you...
36

37 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, I was...
38

39 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 14:41]?
40

41 Jose Rodriguez: ...building, uh, Ninety-Eights, Cutlasses, and all them cars, and
42 convertibles, station wagons, I had to built, uh, Ninety-Eights. And, uh,
43 like I said, I did everything in there.
44

45 Marilyn Coulter: [14:56] So now did you real-, I mean, w-, was it hot in there, was it, was it
46 dirty work? Was it hard work?

1
2 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, it was, uh – back in the days when I hired in, people smoked. Uh,
3 they smoke anywhere, you know. Cigarette's gone, smoke more. And at
4 that time, I smoked too, you know, so.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
7
8 Jose Rodriguez: I was younger.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: [15:17] So you were allowed to smoke and you...
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: Yup.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: ...had time to smoke while you were working?

16 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah, you just [blowing sound] put it down, grab it up.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: Yeah.
19
20 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: [15:25] Well what types of things did you do for lunch?
23
24 Jose Rodriguez: Oh for lunch? I'd go to Harry's.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [15:30] And what's Harry's?
27
28 Jose Rodriguez: [Inaudible 15:32] – you know Harry-, uh, Harry's Bar? Across the street?
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: [15:37] Oh, so was it just a bar? Was it a place to – you could eat also, or?

32 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, you could eat, and, uh, and, uh, uh, have lunch there and everything,
33 yeah.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: So that's...
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: This, this is when, uh, I'm getting a relief man, then I could stay a little bit
38 longer.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: Uh-huh. [15:52] And so you could go there and have lunch or...
41
42 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: ...have a beverage?
45

1 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, have a beverage, and people go back to work, and, uh, and, uh, you
2 know.
3

4 Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 16:04]. Cheryl.
5

6 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [16:07] Joe, there's stories that there's a underground
7 tunnel to Harry's from Fisher Body. Have you ever heard that? Do you
8 know if that's true?
9

10 Jose Rodriguez: Never heard of it.
11

12 Cheryl McQuaid: Never heard that one?
13

14 Jose Rodriguez: No.
15

16 Cheryl McQuaid: [16:17] Another thing, you said that when you first hired in...
17

18 Jose Rodriguez: Uh-huh.
19

20 Cheryl McQuaid: ...there were Hispanics working across the plant from you.
21

22 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, the other end of the plant.
23

24 Cheryl McQuaid: The other end of the plant? [16:26] What was...
25

26 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
27

28 Cheryl McQuaid: ...at the other end of the plant?
29

30 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, they did – I did soft trim, they did hard trim. You know, put the
31 windshields in, they put the moldings in; all the hard stuff, you know, they
32 did over there.
33

34 Cheryl McQuaid: [16:39] But there were no other Hispanics working in...
35

36 Jose Rodriguez: Well, there was a...
37

38 Cheryl McQuaid: ...soft trim?

40 Jose Rodriguez: ...there was a few where I worked. Not, not many.
41

42 Cheryl McQuaid: [16:44] Not many?
43

44 Jose Rodriguez: [Nah 16:45], but then, you know what, [inaudible 16:47] – yeah, it was
45 most of'm were at the hard, hard trim. I think a lot of M-, Mexicans. I

1 think they had al-, they were there – well, all more seniority than I had,
2 you know, so.
3
4 Cheryl McQuaid: [16:58] Did you ever see any kind of racial or harassing-type situations in
5 the plant?
6
7 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
8
9 Cheryl McQuaid: [17:07] Could you share s-, a for-instance...
10
11 Jose Rodriguez: Um.
12
13 Cheryl McQuaid: ...with us?
14
15 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, yeah, I worked with a guy and, uh, you know, and, uh, uh, well, he's
16 my friend and all, you know, but, uh, I worked with him, and, uh, I says,
17 uh – he wanted to do a job, and I said, "Well the last guy they sent down
18 here" – he was a brother, black dude – said "the last guy they sent down
19 here, uh, they told me he, he, he didn't have to work here, you know? He
20 said, "What?" I said...
21
22 [coughing]
23
24 Jose Rodriguez: ... "The last guess who worked here, he told me he didn't have to his job,"
25 you know, so, uh, he just took off. He didn't want to do anything. So,
26 yeah. But, uh, yeah, there was a lot of racial stuff goin' on.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: How did you – Marilyn Coulter. [17:53] How did you deal with that?
29
30 Jose Rodriguez: Well, I, you know, like me, I, I get along with everybody, so, you know, I,
31 I mean, I didn't have no, no, no, uh, enemies or anything like that. Just all
32 the brothers, all the Chicano and white guys get along. We all hung out.
33
34 Marilyn Coulter: You all hung out. [18:14] So...
35
36 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: ...so you basically hung out with like a multicultural group.
39
40 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
41
42 [cough]
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: [18:19] Were there many Hispanic/Latino supervisors...
45
46 Jose Rodriguez: Uh.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: ...when you were hired in?
3
4 Jose Rodriguez: Matter of fact, I was supposed to be one when – 'member when paint come
5 up?
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
8
9 Jose Rodriguez: That new paint department? Uh, uh, what was his name? Uh, I can't
10 remember the boss's name, but, uh, at that time, paint department come up,
11 and, uh, he asked me, "Joe, uh, would you like to be, uh, a Spanish, uh,
12 speaking foreman" or whatever, and I was nervous at the time, and I didn't
13 really – I wanted to do it but I didn't want to do it because, um, you know,
14 I was nervous and scared or somethin', and, uh, he said, "Well, we're
15 looking for somebody who can talk Spanish," you know, go up in paint
16 and do all that stuff. Anyway, I didn't do it, so.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [19:06] So now, in '64 when you came in, were there many Hispanic
19 supervisors?
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Was there what now?
22
23 Marilyn Coulter: Many Hispanic supervisors in '64...
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: Oh.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: ...when you came in? Or were [there any 19:18]?
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: Not, not, not where I worked, [inaudible 19:20]. I think, uh, [Herada
30 19:22] was.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: Okay.
33
34 Jose Rodriguez: [inaudible 19:24]. I...
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: ...I think he was...
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: [19:29] If-, if I may, um, for – you obviously speak perfect English. Do
41 you know what it was like for those who maybe didn't speak English?
42
43 Jose Rodriguez: [scoffing]
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: Did you ever have to translate for co-workers or...
46

1Jose Rodriguez: Uh.
2

3Marilyn Coulter: ...were you ever called upon to do that for co-workers or anything like that
4 who couldn't speak Sp-, English?
5

6Jose Rodriguez: Oh, there – no, I just remember working with one guy, he was from
7 Mexico, and he couldn't really speak that good English, but I did help him
8 out [a little 19:56]. But that was a long time ago, yeah. [inaudible 20:00]
9 wanted to know where the restroom was and all this stuff, and...
10

11Marilyn Coulter: But...
12

13Jose Rodriguez: But as far as where I worked, um, there were not many Mexicans, just
14 [inaudible 20:12].
15

16Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [20:13] So, um, what did, um, they do for, um, like breaks? I mean,
17 what, what kinda...
18

19Jose Rodriguez: Okay...
20

21Marilyn Coulter: ...things did...
22

23Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
24

25Marilyn Coulter: ... you guys do, though?
26

27Jose Rodriguez: Alright, we had, uh...
28

29Marilyn Coulter: To pass the time.
30

31Jose Rodriguez: We had, uh – okay, I work, I worked on the line, and then we had a
32 wagon, people come with a wag-, push a wagon and they'd give you
33 coffee or you could buy coffee, buy [inaudible 20:41]...
34

35Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 20:41].
36

37Jose Rodriguez: ...you know? And, uh, that's was one of my breaks. 6 minutes. The
38 wagon would come and we'd take a break for 6 minutes. You go get your
39 coffee, whatever you wanted to eat or whatever, and then the line would
40 start, start back up and, and then I would give them relief, you know, so.
41

42Marilyn Coulter: [21:01] So did that wagon come...
43

44 [sniffing]
45

46Marilyn Coulter: ... once a day?

1
2 Jose Rodriguez: Um.
3
4 Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 21:04]?
5
6 Jose Rodriguez: Twice a day. Once, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [21:09] Now, is that something that they still have...
9
10 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: ...today or?
13
14 Jose Rodriguez: No, that, that's be gone...
15
16 [throat clearing]
17
18 Jose Rodriguez: ...a long time. The new contracts [and they 21:16] eliminated them; the
19 wagons and all that.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: [21:19] Now, there was one thing that you said, you had gave me the
22 names of some people. I'm going to digress a little bit. You said that
23 there were some names of some people who made good supervisors.
24 What made a good supervisor or a bad supervisor? What did you look
25 into people to see what a good supervisor...
26
27 Jose Rodriguez: Well...
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: ...[was 21:37]?
30
31 Jose Rodriguez: ...all I looked at is, um, how you treat me, you know? If they work with
32 me good, I treat'm good, and if they were kinda bad, I'd – to me, I, you
33 know, I would [chuckling] do bad things to them, you know? But, you
34 know, a good boss, you gotta treat'm right.
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: And I've had most of'm been real good, but, uh, I had a few bad ones.
39
40 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [22:01] Joe, could you give me a for-instance? What,
41 what kind of things could you do to retaliate to a bad boss?
42
43 Jose Rodriguez: Oh, um, you had to do your job, so I couldn't really mess up on the job,
44 but, you know, like, uh, Herada. We've talked about Herada. He was
45 kinda bad and, uh, he told me to do some things and, uh, you know, uh,
46 like, uh, "Go cover that job over there." So I went and covered it, you

1 know, I had to do the job because, you know, he was my boss, but still, uh,
2 you know, I – he was tellin' me some things, and I dunno, he said
3 something to me one time, and I forget what we's talkin' about, and I
4 grabbed him by his tie, and he had a tie, you know, and I grabbed it like
5 that, and the tie came off, because it was one a those clips, clip-ons, you
6 know. So I couldn't do nuttin' to'm. You know, I didn't want to do
7 anything to'm because he's my boss, but, uh, he got me so fired up and, uh,
8 you know, I just-, I wanted to retolurate, but I, I, I really didn't want to
9 touch him because he's my boss. But yeah, he had one a those fake ties,
10 and I'm glad it was fake 'cause, uh, [chuckling] [inaudible 23:21].
11
12Marilyn Coulter: [23:22] Did anything happen to you after pulling your supervisor's tie off?
13
14Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah, he went and told my head boss and, uh, head boss come over and
15 talk to me, said, "Joe," uh, uh, "there's some things goin' on here. You're
16 not," uh, "You haven't been," uh, "acting right" or something. The boss
17 tell you do somethin', then you go do your job, but then again he tell you
18 somethin' else that you're not acting right. So, uh, he told me somethin' –
19 uh, I forg-, he, he just come up with a buncha lies and stuff, you know,
20 that I knew wasn't true, but [inaudible 23:55].
21
22Marilyn Coulter: [23:59] So, um, you, um, said that you had – so did you look at the people
23 that you worked with as family?
24
25Jose Rodriguez: Okay, I-, like I said, I been there 38 years. I've met lots a guys, lots a
26 people, and there's – there've been some good buddies and bad buddies
27 and – you know, not really bad, but just good people and some [inaudible
28 24:30].
29
30Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
31
32Jose Rodriguez: But, uh, well, yeah, some guys that I really got close to, you know. Uh,
33 you know, [I asked 24:45] for, uh – they helped me out a little bit when I
34 was, you know, caught up at some jobs and stuff.
35
36Marilyn Coulter: [24:53] So now, did these relationships – I know they helped you when
37 you were working, but did any of these friendships that you had, did any
38 of them go outside of the plant?

40Jose Rodriguez: Yes, I had, uh, uh, [Delbert Cook 24:53]. Uh, he'd come to my house.
41 You know, he, he would come over, and we'd play some cards and stuff.
42 And guess who he came with? Herada.
43
44Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
45
46John Fedewa: [chuckling] Oh no.

1
2 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, he sure did.
3
4 John Fedewa: [laughter]
5
6 Jose Rodriguez: [Inaudible 25:21]...
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [25:21] He brought Herada to your house?
9
10 John Fedewa: [laughter]
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: [25:23] How'd that make you feel?
15
16 Jose Rodriguez: And he was goin' with, uh, a [woman 25:29] boss.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: The head boss?
19
20 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, head boss, yup. And, uh, so she came over, too, and, uh, and, uh, my
21 wife didn't like that too well, 'cause, uh, I told her she was married or
22 something, I don't remember. Yeah, Delbert Cook, Herada, his lady
23 [inaudible 25:48] at my house. Not just once, two or three times they
24 come over, play cards, what have ya, and, uh, he was kinda loud. "Who
25 runs this place?" And I said, "Well, I'm married, I got a family, and I like
26 to keep my stereo down 'cause my wife's sleepin', and the kids, and the" –
27 "No, this is my house. I run this place." I said, "Sit down. I'm tryin' to be,
28 you know, respectful here. I got a family goin'." Ya know. But that's the
29 way he was.
30
31 Marilyn Coulter: [26:18] So you played cards...
32
33 Jose Rodriguez: Yup.
34
35 Marilyn Coulter: ...outside or did you play...
36
37 Jose Rodriguez: Outside...
38
39 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 26:21]?
40
41 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, well that'd work, too, ya know. Oh yeah, that's another thing I did.
42 I played a lotta cards. Uh, matter of fact, on my relief, I was a euchre
43 player. I played euchre all the time.
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: [26:31] Played euchre?
46

1Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
2

3Marilyn Coulter: Oh.
4

5Jose Rodriguez: Euchre, yeah.
6

7Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [26:35] In '64 when you hired in, were there a lot of
8 women in 3X that worked on the line? Or, uh, just a couple? Do you
9 remember when...
10

11 [throat clearing]
12

13Cheryl McQuaid: ...the masses of women hired in?
14

15Jose Rodriguez: Okay. Um, yeah, up in 3X where I come from, uh, there was, uh, I think,
16 uh, Mary – her name was Mary. I can't remember the last name. Yeah,
17 she worked there, and there was about three or four up in there. There
18 weren't that many, but later on they started hiring on women, [you know
19 27:11].
20

21Marilyn Coulter: [27:11] How did you feel about the women that came in?
22

23Jose Rodriguez: Oh, it didn't bother me. Uh, there's another one there. She smoked – I
24 mean, she didn't like cigarettes. She worked down there with, uh – I can't
25 remember these people's names [inaudible 27:30].
26

27John Fedewa: [laughter]
28

29Jose Rodriguez: You know? Uh...
30

31Cheryl McQuaid: That's okay.
32

33Jose Rodriguez: I keep forgetting.
34

35 [throat clearing]
36

37Jose Rodriguez: Um, she didn't like cigarettes [inaudible 27:36] – or she smoked a lot, and
38 the other guy that worked – I used to relieve her and the other guy, and I
39 go to relieve, uh, relieve her, she'd light up a cigarette, and my buddy, he,
40 he didn't like that, you know? He complained to the boss that she would,
41 you know, light up a cigarette, come back s-, be smokin' and stuff, and he
42 put a complaint against her and stuff for, for him not smokin' at all and she
43 smoked, so he didn't like that, and...
44

45Marilyn Coulter: [28:03] Was that [Vicky Burton 28:04]?
46

1Jose Rodriguez: Huh?
2
3Marilyn Coulter: Vicky Burton?
4
5Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. There you go.
6
7Marilyn Coulter: In fact, she smoked 2 different types...
8
9Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
10
11Marilyn Coulter: ...of cigarettes; she smoked Vantage...
12
13Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
14
15Marilyn Coulter: ...and she smoked...
16
17Jose Rodriguez: [Right 28:13].
18
19Marilyn Coulter: ... Winstons.
20
21Jose Rodriguez: Vicky Burton. [inaudible 28:14].
22
23Marilyn Coulter: She smoked two different type a cigarettes.
24
25Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
26
27Marilyn Coulter: [Inaudible 28:17].
28
29Jose Rodriguez: Yup, she – yeah, you, you – she's knows who I'm talking about. Yeah...
30
31Marilyn Coulter: Yeah, I...
32
33Jose Rodriguez: ...it's Vicky Burton.
34
35Marilyn Coulter: ... remember Vicky Burton.
36
37Cheryl McQuaid: [28:22] So what happened with that?
38
39Jose Rodriguez: Uh, well he, uh, he called, uh, he called one-, my-, he called one of the
40 head supervisors and he somethin' he, he didn't appreciate her smokin',
41 this and that, so the boss just told her, ya know, "You gotta-, if you go on
42 your break you can smoke, but if you come on the line, you can't smoke."
43 That's before we non-smoking [inaudible 28:43]. So, he told her that she
44 couldn't smoke while she was working, this and that.
45
46Cheryl McQuaid: [28:48] Because it was offensive to her partner?

1
2Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
3
4Cheryl McQuaid: [28:51] Otherwise she'd been able to...
5
6Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, to smoke...
7
8Cheryl McQuaid: ... smoke?
9
10Jose Rodriguez: ...but they, they done away with all that cigarette stuff. Yeah, but he, she
11 was smokin', yeah.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: [28:57] And that was probably, what, in the late '70s?
14
15Jose Rodriguez: Uh, yeah.
16
17 [sniffing]
18
19Jose Rodriguez: Early '70s. Vicky. Mm-hm.
20
21Cheryl McQuaid: [29:04] Did you ever see anybody in the plant get hurt? Did you ever see
22 any accidents happen or...
23
24Jose Rodriguez: Um, I know some guys, you know, that – well, see, I hurt myself. You
25 know? Uh, I got a cut on my leg and it wouldn't stop bleedin', and, uh...
26
27Cheryl McQuaid: [29:23] How did that happen?
28
29Jose Rodriguez: Uh, I, I banged it on a – oh, yeah. Cars were comin' down the line like
30 that and, uh, I think I was crossing the line and I bumped it on, uh, one of
31 the rails that carried the cars, and it cut my leg, and I have a bad right leg,
32 and, uh, it just wouldn't stop bleedin', so I go to hospital, and, uh, they
33 couldn't stop it neither. So they sent me to emergency, downtown. And,
34 uh, I forgot what it's called; it's something that doesn't start bleeding for a
35 while and then you – it does quick.
36
37Marilyn Coulter: Hemorrhage.
38
39Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, somethin' like that. And so, uh, I stayed there for 2 or 3 hours and
40 quit.
41
42Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter. [30:09] So you told us before about how far you had to
43 go to the restroom. Did you have to walk yourself to the hospital? Did
44 they come and get you...
45
46Jose Rodriguez: Um.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: ...when you cut your leg? How did you get to the hospital?
3
4 Jose Rodriguez: Okay, uh, yeah, at that time, a relief man called, uh, called this guy, uh – I
5 don't know who he called, but they come and got me on a, like a buggy or
6 somethin' and took me down to the hospital. Yeah.
7
8 Marilyn Coulter: [30:32] Do you remember about what year that was?
9
10 Jose Rodriguez: Oh. [chuckling] That was, that was about – [inaudible 30:40] that's just
11 recently, uh, just before I retired. Uh, it's been about 3 – maybe about 7
12 years ago.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: [30:50] So late '90s?
15
16 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. Yeah.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: So Joe – [Marigold 30:55] Joe, you hired in in 1964.
19
20 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
21
22 Marilyn Coulter: [30:59] So I take it, um, you know, you – did you ever go through any
23 strikes and how was that...
24
25 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
26
27 Marilyn Coulter: ...for you? Do you remember anything about the strikes?
28
29 Jose Rodriguez: Yup. So, uh, yeah, strike time, uh, there was some people out, outside
30 and, uh, interviewers, like CB-, well not CBS, but...
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: [Channel 10 31:17]?
33
34 [throat clearing]
35
36 Jose Rodriguez: Channel 10, Channel 6. "Well, how's the, how's the strike affect you?" I
37 said, "It don't bother me." I said, "I don't own a house, I ain't got no boat
38 to pay for. I ain't got nuttin'...
39
40 John Fedewa: [laughter]
41
42 Jose Rodriguez: ...to work for 'round here, just my check, paycheck. That's all I'm worried
43 about.
44
45 Marilyn Coulter: [chuckling]
46

1 Jose Rodriguez: "Why'd you" – "what about a check?" I said, "Well I got gets," "I get a
2 little bit of somethin' but not much," but "What about your house?" I said,
3 "I ain't got no house, I ain't got," you know, "I ain't no land or anything to
4 pay for. You know, you could put me on a strike [inaudible 31:43]. Yeah,
5 I got nuttin' there.
6
7 Marilyn Coulter: [31:46] Do you remember how long you were on strike?
8
9 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, let's see, I think we went on strike in, uh, way back in the '70s or
10 somethin' like that. Probably a month or two or somethin'.
11
12 Marilyn Coulter: [32:01] Um, what did you during the strike?
13
14 Jose Rodriguez: Um, I just stayed home – uh, I had to come, come up front, and I had to
15 picket. I'd picket out front [inaudible 32:13] you know all these gates you
16 got, you gotta – some of the guys gotta picket and, you know, just stand
17 there and carry a sign and stuff. Play cards. You know.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: Hm. [32:24] So, question: So, um, did you ever get involved – outside of
20 your striking, did you ever get involved with your union?
21
22 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, I just, uh, just my union [band 32:36] and, you know, I had got a lotta
23 guys come and [inaudible 32:41] but I just don't – just a union guy
24 [inaudible 32:45] union.
25
26 Marilyn Coulter: [inaudible 32:47]?
27
28 Jose Rodriguez: The safety [inaudible 32:49] strike guy or somethin'.
29
30 Marilyn Coulter: Oh yeah.
31
32 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. [He'd come up 32:52]. Other than that, though.
33
34 [loud click]
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: [32:56] Joe, you...
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: Mm.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: ...you, you've been as, uh, trim, in 3X trim...
41
42 Jose Rodriguez: Right.
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: ...for your whole time. 1964.
45
46 Jose Rodriguez: Right.

1
2 Marilyn Coulter: Now, I know that there's some changes that you notice. What are some of
3 those changes that you notice from 1964 to 2005? What are some of those
4 changes you notice?
5
6 Jose Rodriguez: Well, as I, uh, walk into Fisher Body, I went downstairs – this early '60s –
7 and, uh, the Body Shop was right there, and I said, "God, I hope I don't
8 have to go in there," 'cause all the jobs were, you know, real nasty. Guys
9 would come out and, and, uh, you know, I just didn't want to work in
10 there, and, uh, so, uh, the boss, he moved me to 3X because it was nasty
11 and stuff, and there was hoses hangin' all over the place, and – but today it
12 – the Body Shop is a preferred place to work, you know, 'cause lotta, lotta
13 guys work in there, and, and I had some good friends in the Body Shop
14 that worked there, and one of 'em used to come up and grab my paper I used
15 to read all the time and, uh, he's "I ain't got nuttin' to do. I just want to
16 read your paper and stuff." So he'd come up and – yeah, but that Body
17 Shop was one a the nastiest places. I didn't wanna work there.
18
19 Marilyn Coulter: [34:12] What were some of the other things about, like, 3X? Um...
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Oh, okay. Uh, yeah, it was – working up in 3X, like I said, I did a lot of
22 jobs. Um, uh, there was a place up in there where you could, uh, go up on
23 the roof and, uh, and, uh, across the street'd be football games goin' on, I'd
24 check a game out here and there, and then I'd have to get back to work,
25 but, uh, I could see the game goin' on, and, and, uh, you know, and
26 watched a game or two.
27
28 Marilyn Coulter: [34:46] So and that was at Sexton High School?
29
30 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, Sexton.
31
32 Marilyn Coulter: [34:49] Now, um, where – I know that you say that the B Line.
33
34 Jose Rodriguez: Mm.
35
36 Marilyn Coulter: Was there an A Line? A C Line?
37
38 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah.
39
40 Marilyn Coulter: A D Line? How many vehicles were...
41
42 Jose Rodriguez: Okay...
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: ...[inaudible 35:00]...
45

1 Jose Rodriguez: When I, when I hired in there, there was a A Line was the Cutlass line,
2 and, uh, it was, uh, some other car that ran down there, and the B Line
3 was, uh, the Ninety-Eights and the station wagons and, uh, you know, and
4 then they, they got together – this was early '60s and '70s and '80s, and,
5 uh, and then they hooked up together and they were side-by-side, you
6 know. But, um, yeah.
7

8 Marilyn Coulter: [35:26] At s-, at one point, did they not take the one and put the A Line
9 and put it downstairs, yes?
10

11 Jose Rodriguez: Y-, uh, that was – yeah, that's right. After that, they, uh, they took the A
12 Line and sent that downstairs.
13

14 Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
15

16 Jose Rodriguez: Cutlass and – I forget what other car [inaudible 35:47].
17

18 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid. [35:50] Joe, can you tell us any other things you used to
19 do just to pass the time to have – to get through the n-, the jobs were so
20 monotonous. What'd you do for run?
21

22 Jose Rodriguez: Okay. Well, like I said, while I worked there and stuff, I played lotta
23 cards. Lotta euchre.
24

25 Cheryl McQuaid: Any money on those card games?
26

27 Jose Rodriguez: Oh, yeah, [papers shuffling] [we-, yeah 36:11]. Have money, you know, a
28 dollar dollar or whatever, and, uh, lotta guys wouldn't pay anyway, but,
29 uh...
30

31 John Fedewa: [laughter]
32

33 Jose Rodriguez: ...we still had bets and stuff, you know. But yeah, that's while I worked
34 there, just every day I, I think I – on my breaks, I played cards. Euchre.
35 Yeah. That's all you could do in there, yeah, play euchre, and, uh, some
36 guys would take a break, go to sleep, but I, I played lotta [papers
37 shuffling] cards and, uh, matter of fact, all them, all them days I went
38 there, that's all I did was play cards and, and, uh, you know.
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: [36:46] Joe...
41

42 Jose Rodriguez: Hm?
43

44 Marilyn Coulter: ... I know – and he sat there and – this is Marilyn Coulter – and I could to
45 Jose 'cause I know, he doesn't remember, we used to dance on the line

1 when the line broke down, too. When the line would break down, we
2 would do that.
3
4 Cheryl McQuaid: [37:00] Do you remember that, Joe?
5
6 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: You do?
9
10 Jose Rodriguez: I remember her, yeah.
11
12 Cheryl McQuaid: [37:00] Were there radio wars? I'm sorry. Cheryl McQuaid.
13
14 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah. Yeah, we had radios up in there, and they play a song now and then
15 and you got to movin', get to move, you know, bump, bump along and,
16 heh, yeah, we did it, yup.
17
18 Marilyn Coulter: [37:18] Um, you talked about cards. Did they have check pool – did you
19 participate in the check pools? The football pools?
20
21 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah, that's another thing. Yeah. Sure did. I, uh, went to Harry's for
22 lunch and, uh, there was a fella inside the shop that, uh – there was 2 or 2
23 of'm that had card games, uh, pool games, squares; you buy a square, you
24 put money in it, and if you hit, you win. You know, so, that – you have to
25 pay that off at lunchtime, then we go to Harry's Bar, you pay that off at
26 lunch and, uh, if you win, you get your money; if you didn't, you had to
27 pay the man. Yeah.
28
29 Marilyn Coulter: Okay. [37:54] Did you ever win the check pool?
30
31 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah.
32
33 Marilyn Coulter: The football pools?

35 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah. Yeah, I won.
36
37 Cheryl McQuaid: [37:58] Was it good money?
38
39 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, in the 100s, 200s, yeah.
40
41 Cheryl McQuaid: Oh wow.
42
43 Marilyn Coulter: So, now...
44
45 Jose Rodriguez: Now everything quits. I don't...
46

1 [laughter]
2
3 Jose Rodriguez: You know, I, I retired. Ain't no games goin'. Ain't nothin' goin' on no
4 more.
5
6 Marilyn Coulter: [38:12] Um, when did you retire, Joe?
7
8 Jose Rodriguez: 2003.
9
10 Marilyn Coulter: 2003.
11
12 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
13
14 Marilyn Coulter: [38:17] So, um, what's one of the things – is, or is there anything that you
15 miss about working? Outside of doing the check pools.
16
17 [paper shuffling]
18
19 Jose Rodriguez: Yeah, I, I just miss, uh, I miss my friends goin' in, you know.
20
21 Marilyn Coulter: Have you ch-...
22
23 Jose Rodriguez: I – oh, go ahead.
24
25 Marilyn Coulter: [38:31] Have you kept in touch with any of those friends?
26
27 Jose Rodriguez: Oh yeah, I, I – yeah, I got – I call [inaudible 38:38] – now that I retired,
28 uh, we have a party at, uh, Rookies. [Danny Bell 38:44]? You know
29 Danny Bell? And, uh, and it's about – we started about, like, 5, that was a
30 good meet. Now we got, like, almost 30 that we'd hang out once a year,
31 we'd get together and we eat dinner and drank beer and, you know, just
32 talk about this and that, and then I go to breakfast with, uh, well, you
33 know, over at Harry's with some of the fellas, you know, have a little
34 breakfast and stuff. Other than that, though, I, I miss, you know, I miss
35 goin' in and – I don't mind being retired, but I miss the fellas I worked
36 with, you know.
37
38 Marilyn Coulter: Mm. [39:22] While you were here, um, they used to call Lansing the
39 Capitol of Quality. What do you think that they – why do they call it the
40 Capitol of Quality? What made us special?
41
42 Jose Rodriguez: What, what make it special, huh? I guess good quality work. I, I mean,
43 you know, I, I, like...
44
45 [papers shuffling]
46

1 Jose Rodriguez: ...way back in the days Fisher Body, you know? It's – when I heard it was
2 Fisher Body and, to me, that's, that's all I know it by is Fisher Body, but,
3 uh, know how you say quality, I guess the work that we do, [we 39:57] put
4 out good work or somethin'.
5

6 Marilyn Coulter: So the workers put – you did good work. [40:01] Now you said you were
7 always known as Fisher Body. While you were there, Fisher Body had a
8 lot of name changes. How do you feel about that?
9

10 Jose Rodriguez: Uh, well one guy – I mean, far as-, I, I just hear that they gonna change the
11 name, so I never really go beyond thinkin' anything else. I mean, they
12 change the name to somethin' else, you know? I always call it Fisher
13 Body. It's always been...
14

15 Marilyn Coulter: Fisher Body for you.
16

17 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
18

19 Marilyn Coulter: [40:25] So, um, as we come to a close, you worked there for 38 years.
20 Uh...
21

22 Jose Rodriguez: And I coulda went [inaudible 40:33]...
23

24 Marilyn Coulter: You lived in Lansing, and, um, now the plant is closed they're getting
25 ready to tear it down.
26

27 Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
28

29 Marilyn Coulter: [40:38] How do you feel about that?
30

31 Jose Rodriguez: Well, it – you know, you walk in there and, uh, kinda – I kinda hate to see
32 it go down 'cause I have a lot of memories in there.
33
34 [cough]
35

36 Jose Rodriguez: You know, lotta memories in there, lotta fellas I work with, you know, and
37 I just hate to see it torn down. But hey, I guess you gotta move on, you
38 know?
39

40 Marilyn Coulter: [41:08] Well, uh, is there anything that you'd like to share with us that we
41 haven't touched on?
42

43 Jose Rodriguez: No, and like I said, it's – I mean, I can't say everything I want to say, but,
44 uh, uh, you know, I – 38 years in there is a long, long time, and, um, uh,
45 it's a lot of people I've met, you know, and, and lotta – you know, I mean,
46 I go dif-, I, I played cards with a lot of people and I smoked back in there,

1 smoked back then, drank a lot, and, and, uh, just can't see those people no
2 more. I mean, you know, they – I retired and they retired and just can't
3 see'm no more, I mean, you know.
4
5Marilyn Coulter: Okay. Well, Joe, thank you for giving us your time and sharing your
6 memories with us.
7
8Cheryl McQuaid: Thank you, Jose.
9
10Jose Rodriguez: Mm-hm.
11
12John Fedewa: Thank you, Joe.
13
14Jose Rodriguez: Uh-huh, thank you, yeah.
15
16
17/rt