

**Barbara Rossi discusses her career as a GM salaried
executive assistant at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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5 Cheryl McQuaid: This is Cheryl McQuaid. I'm with Lansing Fisher Body historical team.
6 We're in the Labor Relations conference room. It is November 7, 2005, at
7 approximately 10:30 a.m. We're preparing to interview Barbara Rossi. Uh,
8 first, we're gonna go around the room and state everybody's name that's
9 present.
10
11 Michael Fleming: I'm Mike Fleming.
12
13 Marilyn Coulter: Marilyn Coulter.
14
15 Doreen Howard: Doreen Howard.
16
17 Linda Johnson: Linda Johnson.
18
19 Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher.
20
21 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
22
23 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:28] Barbara, would you please state your name and spell your last name
24 for us and your address, please?
25
26 Barbara Rossi: Barbara Rossi, R-O-S-S-I, 5434 West Willow Highway, Lansing,
27 Michigan 48917.
28
29 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:42] And are you married? Do you have children?
30
31 Barbara Rossi: Yeah, I'm married, but I don-, do not have children.
32
33 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:47] And what is your educational level?
34
35 Barbara Rossi: I have a BA through Michigan State. I was a schoolteacher for 3 years,
36 and then I also have a Masters in Management through Aquinas.
37
38 Cheryl McQuaid: [0:59] Could you tell us what your hiring date is at Fisher Body?
39
40 Barbara Rossi: July 1st of 1981.
41
42 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:06] And do you remember that day?
43
44 Barbara Rossi: Yes.
45
46 Cheryl McQuaid: [1:08] Could you tell us a little bit about it?

1
2Barbara Rossi: Yes. Um, just a little p-, prelude to this is, um, the week before, I, when I
3 hired in, I was working at, uh, Michigan Employment, Unemployment
4 Service there. We helped in the hirin-, hiring of hourly people in 1981,
5 and, uh, we interviewed like, 10,000, approximately 10,000 people. And,
6 uh, so, anyway, um, they had an opening in a salaried position here at the
7 plant, and, um, got a call from, my boss got a call from, um, Bob
8 [McMonagle 1:39] that works here, that worked here at Fisher Body, and
9 he said we have an opening for a salaried person. Could we interview
10 someone? She said I'm looking at somebody right now I want you to
11 interview. So I w-, I found out about it on Wednesday. That Friday I was
12 interviewed here. The following Monday, I was called to firm up the offer,
13 and the following Wednesday I started here. So it was quite a whirlwind
14 type of a thing. My first day here, I was overwhelmed because not only
15 did I have to learn my job, but I had to go across the way – 'cause I was, I
16 worked in, uh, uh, Employment...
17
18 [coughing]
19
20Barbara Rossi: ...um, as a clerk, and I had to go across the hall to learn [sickness and
21 accident 2:12], um, to be their vacation replacement when those clerks
22 weren't there. So in the morning, I would go and I would, um, I would
23 learn my regular job, and in the afternoon, I'd go to my other job and learn
24 that. So my first day was overwhelming. I thought what did I do, why did I
25 take this job. And, uh, but, everybody was very nice to me. There was a
26 whole group of people that introduced themselves to me and made me feel
27 very comfortable, but it was a very overwhelming posit-, uh, feeling when
28 I first started here.
29
30Cheryl McQuaid: [2:41] And what about the first time you walked out on the plant flo-,
31 floor?
32
33Barbara Rossi: I wore a dress, and my dre-, and I thought now, I know how, how factory
34 people are, that they tell you how they feel about things. I walk out on the
35 floor, and I had a dress on that had red and white stripes on it, and right
36 away I heard someone say hey candy cane! So I knew I was accepted.
37
38 [laughter]
39
40Barbara Rossi: So, I just went over, and I talked to the guys, and it was just a lot of fun,
41 um. But it was, i-, it's the just warmth you feel when you walk out on the
42 floor. It's just really nice pe-, they're genuine, they tell you the truth, they
43 don't mess with ya. If they don't talk to you, then you know you're in
44 trouble. Because they don't like you. [laughter] So... [so funny. 3:19]
45
46 [laughter]

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: Mike, you have a question?
3
4 Michael Fleming: Yes, I do. Barb, you came in in '81. [3:25] What year did you get your BA
5 and your Master's?
6
7 Barbara Rossi: 'Kay, I, uh, my BA was in 1976, and my Master's was in 1986.
8
9 Michael Fleming: [3:33] Okay, so, uh, was it through working here that you were able to get
10 your Master's degree?
11
12 Barbara Rossi: Correct, yes.
13
14 Michael Fleming: [3:40] Can you talk about that, how the educational program worked for
15 you?
16
17 Barbara Rossi: It was great. Um, I, uh, it was very hard because when you work full time
18 and you go to school, you're very, very tired.
19
20 [coughing]
21
22 Barbara Rossi: But Aquinas, um, they were one of the few groups – see, I was gon – I
23 wanted to go to Michigan State to get my Master's, but I was told flat-out
24 the last year you're gonna have to take time off from work, and I thought I
25 got a job, I wanna work.
26
27 [coughing]
28
29 Barbara Rossi: So, I ended up going with Aquinas because they had a night program that
30 was all night. And now that, fortunately that has changed. Um, and
31 Aquinas was ju-, it was just a really good program. They had an extension
32 service here, so I rarely had to go to Grand Rapids where they're s-, they're
33 located. And it was, it was a good program. It was very tiring, but I really
34 learned a lot, and I apply both, from both of my degrees I apply so much
35 to my job every single day.
36
37 [throat clearing]
38
39 Michael Fleming: All right. Says you were a schoolteacher.
40
41 Barbara Rossi: Mm-hm.
42
43 Michael Fleming: [4:35] Um, did you have an opportunity to, uh, teach while you were here
44 in any of the departments that you, um, work in?
45

1 Barbara Rossi: Yes. Well, uh, I think teach every single day. When I work with people, if
2 they, uh, you know, th-, um, I try to make peop-, I, my husband always
3 gives me a joke about, um, I, you're always, you're an independent
4 woman. And what I try to do is, I, I don't mind, you know, doing the work,
5 but if I can help someone else provide for themselves to – and it was hard
6 because it's harder to teach somebody than it is just to say okay I'll just do
7 it. Because then, because what you've done is you've empowered
8 somebody else to do their work. And instead of just trying to, you know,
9 people are like, me, me, I gotta do it myself, and all that. If you teach
10 someone, if you take time to teach them how to do something, then they're
11 off and running, and then they can teach somebody else how to do it, too.
12 So you've empowered people. So I use my skills every single day.
13

14 Michael Fleming: Great.
15
16 [inaudible 5:24]
17

18 Cheryl McQuaid: [5:28] You said that you hired in, in the salary employment office?
19

20 Barbara Rossi: Yes. Hourly employment.
21

22 Cheryl McQuaid: Ho-, hourly employment.
23

24 Barbara Rossi: Hourly.
25

26 Cheryl McQuaid: [5:33] How long did you do that job, and where did you go after that?
27

28 Barbara Rossi: I called those pregnancy, uh, class, er, times work because when I worked,
29 I worked at the state. I worked 9 months in Treasury, 9 months in MESC,
30 and then 9 months in hourly employment here, and, uh, Don Chenoweth,
31 um, was the plant manager here, and I always thought he must think I'm a
32 real goof-off because every time he'd walk by, um, our area, it was during
33 lunch hour 'cause he'd go upstairs to the cafeteria and eat. And then when
34 he'd come down he'd always pass by our area and just wave at us. And
35 we'd always be laughing and goofing around because, um, from 12 until 1,
36 we were closed, uh, to the general public in order to get our work done. To
37 get to do filing, 'cause at that time we still had the old-fashioned
38 typewriters and stuff, and we wou-, and we, it was a good group to work
39 in. So we were always laughing and having a good time. He's probably
40 thinkin' you're an idiot. And, uh, 'cause you know, you're just always
41 laughing and stuff. Well, when the opening came up, and h-, and h-, when
42 his secretary retired, he asked me to, if I wanted to be interviewed, and I
43 said sure. And I had never spoken with the man before. And I was
44 interviewed, and I was hired to work up there. And then I was there ever
45 since until the, this closedown now. And now th-, I'm going back to hourly
46 employment. That's where I'll be working now.

1
2Cheryl McQuaid: Oh, really, at the new plant.
3
4Barbara Rossi: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
5
6Cheryl McQuaid: [6:45] So you will be going there?
7
8Barbara Rossi: Uh, not the new plant. We service both 602 and 652, so our location will
9 be Building 66. It's basically where to put us, 'cause there's 6 of us. And so
10 there's really not that room out at Delta. Even though we service Delta,
11 we're gonna be at 66, and our move date is Wednesday.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Oh.
14
15 [oooh]
16
17Barbara Rossi: And who is the coordinator? Me. [laughter]
18
19 [laughter]
20
21Cheryl McQuaid: You're very busy.
22
23Barbara Rossi: Oh yeah. Yep.
24
25Cheryl McQuaid: Um, Doreen Howard.
26
27Doreen Howard: Um, you talked about your degree, and that you, um, got your Master's
28 while you were here. [7:21] Did you take advantage of, um, the benefits,
29 uh, what's it called...the TAP program?
30
31Barbara Rossi: I don't know what the TAP program is.
32
33Doreen Howard: The tuition assistance...
34
35Barbara Rossi: Oh, oh, yes, yes.
36
37Doreen Howard: ...program?
38
39Barbara Rossi: Yes, definitely. Oh, yes. They paid my education. Definitely. GM did.
40 Yep. I am very grateful. [laughter]
41
42 [coughing]
43
44Cheryl McQuaid: Yes, Doug Rademacher.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: Barb, you've worked for a, a number of different, since you took the job
2 for Mr. Chenoweth, there's been a change in, in, uh, plant managers over
3 the years. [7:58] Can you share a little bit about each one of those...
4

5 Barbara Rossi: Mm-hm.
6

7 Doug Rademacher: ...particular managers?
8

9 Barbara Rossi: Um, I've worked for 4 plant managers. Um, Don Chenoweth being the
10 first, and he was wonderful, but he was a taskmaster. Very detail oriented,
11 and, I mean, we worked, I literally worked 7 days a week when he was
12 here. 'Cause our plant worked 6 days a week, and I came in Sunday just to
13 see what he was up to. 'Cause he – I would walk in, and we, h-, he had a
14 file drawer for all of his paperwork that he wanted to either type or file or
15 whatever, and he would have so much in there that he c-, he couldn't even
16 close the drawer. So I would come in Sunday just to work on that. It was a
17 very good experience because I learned a lot from him, um, about how the
18 plant runs and everything, 'cause I was – it was basically, I was like his
19 right-hand person. Not, not, not [throat clearing] production-wise, but just
20 everything else. I really learned a lot about the business. And then my
21 second, the second plant manager I worked for was Frank Shotters, who
22 was just the opposite of, um, Chenoweth, um, he was, he was detail
23 oriented but not to the point that Don was. Um, but Frank was very classy,
24 um, he was a regional manager before he came here. He was equivalent to,
25 uh, Doug [Tracey 9:05], and the reason why he was brought here is
26 because in '85 when we merged, there was a lot of animosity between
27 Fisher Body and, uh, Oldsmobile, and so they had to get rid of both plant
28 managers, so Don Chenoweth was sent to one – another plant, and Mike
29 [inaudible 9:22] on Olds' side was sent somewhere else. And then Shotters
30 came in to blend us to get us to get along with each other, and talkin'
31 about, speakin' about the union's side of it, um, there was a push by
32 management to try to have the 2 unions merge, and Shotters said I'm not
33 gonna do that. There's 2 entities here. We're gonna keep them separate. So
34 his word was solid, um, and, uh, he was wonderful to work for, and you
35 would never know if he had a bad session with his big bosses. He would
36 always come in, and he was always even keel, he was always very cool
37 with us. Ac-, he reminded me a lot of Ronald Reagan, when Ronald
38 Reagan was in office, how cool and calm he was during everything and
39 how he really, um, uh, knew how to work with people, an-, um, and then
40 the third plant manager was, of course, Jim Zubkus, who was ex-, exactly
41 the opposite of, um, of, uh, Shotters. Very outgoing, very outspoken.
42 Sometimes could be brutal, but he never meant it, and that's the problem
43 with Zub, is people misunderstood him. He really had a big heart. Really,
44 and I really learned a lot from him, too. Then the last plant manager is
45 Amy Farmer, and just the opposite again. I always say my job is dealing
46 with personalities. Not the work. The work [banging] always has to be

1 done, has to be done now. [banging] Not tomorrow, but now. And, uh, so
2 all the bo-, j-, the job is the same, it's just the personalities change. You
3 have to learn how to deal with each person. Amy is superb. I mean, she is,
4 um, I think out of all the bosses, she's the best I work for. Because she had
5 compassion. Um, not only the knowledge but the compassion, and she
6 really accepted us for what we were. Not, you know, not like, um, you
7 know, you're just a person or just a-, an entity. She really knew – she
8 understood you and, um, knew what your capabilities were, but if you
9 weren't doing your capabilities, she didn't have any trouble saying hey,
10 [coughing] [banging] step up to this issue now. But I really loved working
11 for her. So those are my 4 managers.
12
13Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming.
14
15Michael Fleming: [11:26] When, when you talked about, um, Chenoweth and, um,
16 [inaudible 11:29] was it?
17
18Barbara Rossi: Mm-hm.
19
20Michael Fleming: Those two were here, and they split. [11:36] At that time, did it just go to
21 one manager for both sides?
22
23Barbara Rossi: Exactly.
24
25Michael Fleming: [11:38] Uh, could you talk about that a little bit? What, how did that, how
26 did it work out? [inaudible 11:41]
27
28Barbara Rossi: It was tough. Frank, um, Shotters handled it well. I mean, he was a
29 regional manager who had handled, like, 5 or 6 plants at one time. He had
30 to come in and deal with a lotta animosity because everybody was bitter,
31 you know? How come we have to consolidate, and that was a very hateful
32 time. Um, and, he just knew how to work with people, and, and not that
33 everybody would be happy with his decision, but they all understood it,
34 and they all respected'm for it. Um, he had a sign on his, on his desk that
35 said I will listen to all objections that you have to what I am going to do,
36 but the final person that will make the decision is me. Meaning I will
37 listen. He is fair. He – I watched him one time when there was a very
38 touchy issue going on, and he changed his mind completely because of
39 one person coming in and talking to him about it and showed him a
40 different viewpoint. Very open-minded man. So yeah, he had to deal with
41 a serious situation.
42
43Cheryl McQuaid: Doug Rademacher.
44
45Doug Rademacher: [12:38] Barb, would you tell us about the time you came in in '81 'til
46 present and the, the amount of women to men ratio; has it changed, and

1 did you like working for a woman plant manager over the men? Share
2 about [inaudible 12:56].
3
4Barbara Rossi: Oh, I liked them all. I, I, uh, I, um, Amy, you would only know she's a
5 woman because she's – looks like a woman. As far as her attitude about
6 work...
7
8 [throat clearing]
9
10Barbara Rossi: ...it's the same. Very ha-, driven person. A hard-working person. So I
11 don't see the difference. I, I was really worried about her coming in
12 because, ya, you hear all these horror stories about people until you
13 actually get to know them. She is just the opposite of what I thought she
14 would be. I thought she – 'cause, see, you always hear about women that
15 make it to the top that they could care less about the women below them,
16 they just will smash'm, you know? And she was not like that at all. She's –
17 but I think an exception to the rule. I really do. I, um, not that I've dealt
18 with a lot of women that have powerful positions, but just from what you
19 hear, horror stories you hear from friends and all that, that women that get
20 those positions, they just forget who, where they came from. And Amy
21 never forgot where she came from. Ever. So I love working for her. As far
22 as the ratio, it has tremendously increased. I think when Amy came in,
23 then, then, um, uh, what's her name, Karen [Dealy 14:00] came in as the
24 quality director. Then we had Pat [Greneville 14:03] that came in as the
25 director of material, so, yeah, there was a big difference in management, I
26 think, management level, getting more women in there. As far as ev-, all
27 the rest of us, I think it's been pretty much even keel, f-, as women and
28 men ratio, was pretty even keel. But as far as managers, big difference as
29 the years went on.
30
31Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter.
32
33Marilyn Coulter: Um, Barb, coming from the office area, and Lansing's always been
34 considered the capitol of quality. [14:35] What do you think about that,
35 what do you think, um, we attribute that to?
36
37Barbara Rossi: We all care. We all take ownership for what we do. People don't get it –
38 when I go somewhere else – I have, um, my husband's side, they're all
39 from Detroit. They're all Ford workers, okay. They can't figure out, you
40 have two unions, two assembly lines. They can't figure that out. Even
41 Detroit GM cannot figure that out, you know, I have to explain to them
42 what we are here, and I, and it's because we care. Um, we're smart, it's a
43 smart workforce. Um, we, and we all get along. We-, not that we don't
44 have our disagreements, but we all get along. And they, and nobody can
45 figure that one out. It's simple. [laughter]
46

1 Marilyn Coulter: Barb, um, this, a little bit away from the work thing. I know that we've
2 done some things that are more or less some people-building things, some
3 outside activities. [15:35] You wanna tell us about some of the activities
4 you were involved in and some of the projects that we've done here in the
5 plant?
6

7 Barbara Rossi: What do you mean by, um, outside...

8

9 Marilyn Coulter: Well, if I'm not mistak-, I know we've do-, we've done things like variety
10 shows, and music shows, and things like that [inaudible 15:47].
11

12 Barbara Rossi: Oh, yeah. Um, this, okay, 1985 when we consolidated, um, Oldsmobile,
13 [Town 15:54] Police in particular, brought over, um, a talent show that
14 they did ever year. And, so, I wan-, and it was kinda like a selfish reason.
15 I'm a dancer, so I wanted to learn about the other group. I wa-, an-, and
16 what better way to get to know somebody when you socialize, because
17 when they pe-, when people say when you go out with other people you
18 work with, you know, wha-, how, what's the benefit of that. You get to see
19 a-, another person in a different environment. And you really learn a lot
20 about the person. So I thought, okay, I'm gonna join this group. Because I
21 am a dancer, it's not a problem. And we opened and closed the variety
22 show, the talent show. And, um, I got to know all the managers, and just,
23 and it was just a really good experience for me. I had a blast. And, uh, and
24 that's what was nicely brought, that human element into the plant, um,
25 when we had those – the talent show. And that was just a lot of fun. We
26 had a good time with it. So, I don't know what else, um, that's basically
27 what I was involved with was the talent show. I don't know if there was
28 other things you were thinkin' of, too.
29

30 Marilyn Coulter: Didn't know what other types of things. [16:52] Did you guys have
31 holiday parties, Christmas parties, you celebrate birth-, birthdays, any
32 types of things like that [inaudible 16:57]?
33

34 Barbara Rossi: Um, there, um, y-, we-, um, okay, you know how it is when you organize
35 birthday parties. People go why do I have to give money, and blah, blah,
36 blah. So I would always end up makin' the cake myself, bringin' it in, and
37 then if somebody wanted to chip in for a gift, that was fine. I never pushed
38 anybody because ya got some of the guys, and I'm not saying you...
39

40 [laughter]
41

42 Barbara Rossi: ...some of the guys going I don't wanna spend that kinda money. The
43 women, I never had trouble. I'm sorry, the women I never had trouble
44 with. So that's why I just kinda, like, did it myself. But we always had a
45 good time. I, I never forgot peoples birthdays. So...
46

1Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming.
2
3Michael Fleming: I noticed you, you do do some things, um, um, personally on the outside.
4 [17:37] You, you volunteer for, uh, the Diocese?
5
6Barbara Rossi: Yep, Diocese of Lansing. Uh-huh.
7
8Michael Fleming: What do you...
9
10Barbara Rossi: Um, there's, um, my husband, when I, I met my husband through, um, I, I
11 went to a dance th-, through the Catholic church. And, uh, then, eventually
12 when we got engaged and stuff, he was involved in this group over at,
13 downtown at St. Mary Cathedral. And it's a group of people that are
14 handicapped, either mental – mentally handicapped or physically
15 handicapped. And in order to give the caregivers a chance to get together
16 and, um, to have experts come in and talk about different fields about, um,
17 their particular situation, what my husband and I would do is help, um,
18 like, there'd be a pizza party for the, the handicappers, while the caregivers
19 are off, um, you know, in their meeting. And, uh, then I also, because I do
20 a lot of, um, of, uh, um, crafts, I would bring a craft in, and we would
21 work on it together, like, build something that they could take home, and
22 so I've been doing it for sev-, many years now. And it's just been a great
23 experience. Um, and what makes it hard is you see the caregivers that are,
24 like, in their seventies and eighties, and you worry about the people that
25 they're caring for. They worry, will there be someone there to take care of
26 their son or daughter. And this is really touching. One of the guys, he, he
27 was so worried about his daughter because she, you know, he didn't know
28 who would take care of her, who would the guardian be if he and his wife
29 should pass away. Well, his daughter died suddenly of a brain tumor. And
30 she, they did not know she had cancer. And I guess this is a very, uh,
31 peaceful way to die when you have a, a brain tumor because you don't feel
32 the pain. And so she died very peacefully, and he said here, here I was
33 fretting over what, how this pers-, how I would take care of my daughter,
34 and God ha-, already had it handled. Not that he wanted to lose his
35 daughter, just the idea that, um, that He does provide. So I thought that
36 was really neat. I mean, just a neat group of people.
37
38Michael Fleming: You mentioned your husband. [19:39] What does your husband do?
39
40Barbara Rossi: He works at Board of Water and Light. He works at the computer
41 department there. So he runs all the computer systems. And I call him for
42 help all the time. [laughter]
43
44 [laughter]
45
46Cheryl McQuaid: Doug Rademacher.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Barb, you've got a lotta energy, and you, you said you took on the
3 responsibility of baking the cake, putting some things together. I'd like to
4 know about the recognition that was shared back to you. [20:07] Have you
5 ever received any special, uh, uh, award or anything that you were
6 recognized for the work you've done over the years?
7
8 Barbara Rossi: I, you know, what a reward is for me is to tell me I did a good job. I don't
9 like appraisals because I figure – tell me if I'm doin' something wrong, I
10 wanna know. If I'm doin' something right, I wanna know. So I've always
11 gotten, um, praise, um, you know, there's mo-, been monetary. We all get
12 monetary awards when we do, you know, something that, li-, like, well,
13 the last thing I did was, um, I worked on a project, um, I, I inherit-, I work
14 in finance also, and I do the joint funds. Well, I revamped the whole
15 system, and, um, Amy rewarded me with a monetary award, um, and it
16 was, I was, I didn't expect it 'cause I was doing my job. And that's what I
17 have a hard time with, you know, the suggest-, I know suggestions are
18 good and all that, suggestion program is, but if you got a better way to do
19 a job, you just do it, you know? You don't expect to be rewarded for it, the
20 – but I do like it when I get a nice compliment because compliments cost
21 nothing, okay. And they mean everything. And they're invaluable. And
22 that's why I try, when somebody does something that helps me out,
23 because when I call, people go oh, what does she want because uh, you
24 know, eh, but see, I'm calling because the plant manager wants something
25 done. And so I try to call back, when something's been completed, say
26 thank you for helping me out with it, you know? Maybe sometimes I miss
27 somebody, and I don't mean to. But I always try to let people know I'm
28 very grateful for what they've done. It's – I think it's important. I think
29 praise is, like, cost nothing. It means everything.
30
31 Michael Fleming: Well, like, that, I was gonna...
32
33 Barbara Rossi: Oh!
34
35 Michael Fleming: ...say, well I can say. Now I, I'll agree with that because [inaudible 21:52]
36 gold stamps, and, uh, [inaudible 21:56], you know, pats on the backs, uh...
37
38 Barbara Rossi: Yeah!
39
40 Michael Fleming: ...you know, any time you can give praise, it does, it does make a
41 difference. Now we wanna talk about, um, your work environment, we,
42 we touched on a little bit in your office. [22:14] Um, when it came to
43 holidays and it came to the family environment i-, in your office, could
44 you talk about the culture you had there?
45

1Barbara Rossi: It was nice. Yeah, I, um, very busy, very hectic. You never know from one
2 moment to the next when it – all hell would break loose. But, um, you
3 know, when things w-, something was, w-, th-, there was a crisis that had
4 to be handled. But as far as respect with each other – 'cause you see, when
5 you know somebody respects you, when the ma-, when you know the
6 manager respects you, you can do a lot. And I never had that problem
7 where, oh, you know, I don't trust her to do the job and all that. It was just
8 like, here's a job, take care of it. And, uh, and, and, that's what i-, in fact,
9 that was kinda like a compliment. I di-, I was gone for about 6 months on
10 a temporary assignment for Zub where I went over to EDC West, and we
11 had 10 people working with me on calling the customer and thanking them
12 for buying, um, our Grand Ams. And I thought, why do I have to do this
13 assignment, and then Jim Edwards, the quality control director at that
14 time, said it's a compliment, Barbara, because Zub brought it up, and he
15 said I need somebody to head this up, and they said we're busy. So let's
16 give it to Barbara to do. So I never felt like I was demeaned in any way
17 because I was a secretary. I was always treated with respect, and, um, an-,
18 it was just, it was just a really good environment. And there, I'm no-, no-,
19 not saying that there weren't hiccups here and there, but basically
20 everything could work its way through, and we could get the job done
21 together.
22

23Michael Fleming: The working relationship was great. [23:38] Talk about the parties, the
24 Christmas parties, the Thanksgiving parties, uh, w-, di-, did you all do
25 stuff in that environment that was outstanding that you can remember, uh,
26 can you, can you think of one particular one, for example?
27

28Barbara Rossi: Um, well, I know with Chenoweth, he always had it at his house, which I
29 thought was really nice. He and Laurie would put the party on, parties on
30 there. And after that, it would be, like, at a different hotel or some-, stuff
31 like that where it was very nice, and, uh, it was just nice to meet the
32 spouses and get to know them, and because really, in a social
33 environment, you get to know more about people and you, and you get to
34 – there's like a special connection there. Not just in work environment but
35 also in the personal environment, too. So, yeah, it was just, um, I really
36 enjoyed all the parties I went to, um, i-, the retirement parties were a lot of
37 fun. The last big one that we had was for [Wilkie 24:30] Hopkins, and that
38 was real special. And each manager's different. 'Cause I would say what
39 kind of a party do you want now that you're retiring? Do you wanna have
40 a sit-down dinner? Do you wanna have, like, a gathering? You know, like
41 a cocktail party, what would you like? So you always tr-, I always try to fit
42 it to the personality of that person, what they would want. And it was just
43 always a nice environment.
44

45Michael Fleming: On-, one, one more question I'd like to ask. Y-, you've been here for, oh
46 twenty years easy.

1
2Barbara Rossi: Twenty-four.
3
4Michael Fleming: And, uh, GM vehicle. [24:59] What type of vehicles do you drive, and do
5 you have a problem with your family driving GM vehicles?
6
7Barbara Rossi: No, no, none. Always been Oldsmobile. Um, my dad, we, well we now
8 have a Pontiac, um, LeSabre because we look at the ratings of the cars and
9 everything. And plus, I always look at the dealership, and Allison Buege
10 over at Glenn Buege is, is always – they're impeccable. I, I get a lot of
11 complaints about ca-, oh, not a lot. When I do get a complaint about a car,
12 I remember who the service – who serviced that car, and I will not be goin'
13 there. If i-, if there's, if it's a good, and I, and I, there's always been good,
14 uh, rapport with Glenn Bu-, Glenn Buege's group, so that's why we have
15 our LaSabre. And then the Jimmy truck that my husband has, we bought
16 from Jim Zubkus. So [laughter] he, he drove it, his wife – and in fact, I
17 wanted to make sure it was a good car. His wife came here for a meeting
18 one time, and I, and I was looking out for her to let her in the, in the, um,
19 into the building, and she was so cute. She walked i-, she didn't know I
20 was watching her. She was walkin' around the car, checkin' it out to make
21 sure it was okay. I thought, I gotta, I, I h-, must buy this car. [laughter]
22 And that's why we have this Jimmy truck.
23
24Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter.
25
26Marilyn Coulter: Um, Barb, you live close, relatively close to the Fisher Body plant. [26:12]
27 Um, were you originally from Lansing? Are you from...
28
29Barbara Rossi: Yes. All my life. Born and raised here.
30
31Marilyn Coulter: [26:14] Where'd you go to school?
32
33Barbara Rossi: Ca-, uh, St. Therese, uh, Elementary School, and then Catholic Central
34 High School.
35
36Marilyn Coulter: Being a Lansing resident, um, what did you think about the Fisher Body
37 plant bef-. [26:25] When you were a kid growing up here, did you have
38 any, any contact with the plant back then?
39
40Barbara Rossi: I did not know Fisher at all, I, but I knew Oldsmobile 'cause my dad
41 retired from 652. So I knew, an-, I, my whole neighborhood went to, s-,
42 work there at Olds. Um, Fisher Body was just an entity I just would see. In
43 fact, when I was teaching in Grand Ledge, I would be-, a gal used to live
44 in the neighborhood here, and I would pick her up 'cause we carpool
45 together, and we'd always drive by this big, green building, but I re-, I
46 knew it was, I knew it was part of GM, but I didn't know exactly what we

1 built. And I remember the fir-, when I first came here, okay, I'm thinking,
2 all right, I gotta learn about this car. And so I'm thinking now, how does
3 the body sh-, body shop relate to the paint shop to the trim shop, okay I'm
4 going, okay, you gotta put the body together first, then you paint it, and
5 then you trim it out. Then you ship it over to chassis. And that's how I
6 remem-, remembered how, what this building did. So, yeah, but I really
7 did not know that much about Fisher before I hired in.
8

9Marilyn Coulter: Um, one other question. We-, being here and being the fact that you're
10 more or less on the salary side, [27:25] did you ever have to go to any
11 strikes that were here?
12

13Barbara Rossi: Um, not really. The one day, I think it was what, about 8 years ago when
14 Flint struck, and then we had to leave. I guess, um, I, the, I ne-, never had
15 to cross a picket line if that's what you're askin' me. I never had to. And,
16 uh, so I never had to go through anything like that. But I remember the
17 day that we kinda struck, and I can't remember the exact date of it, but I'm
18 just thinking, you know, I-, it's like everybody was like, they knew they'd
19 be coming back, but it was, not like there was any animosity there or
20 anything. The only thing that bugged me was the newspaper people
21 always have to be around, and they, and I, I watched this one woman, she
22 was a little, tiny reporter, and she had high heels on, and these, these, o-,
23 and our guys were trying to leave, and she's following them down,
24 clicking down the, uh, sidewalk trying to get an interview. And these guys
25 are going get a-, get away from me, you know? And she's tryin' to get an
26 interview. I'm just li-, and that's what bothered me the most, is how the
27 local media deals with everything, you know? We knew how to handle
28 ourselves here. And they were just, I just couldn't stand it that she was
29 doing that to'm. That's the only thing I remember about that one little mini
30 strike that we had.
31

32Marilyn Coulter: As we get ready to go through this decommission and you come through
33 the building and it's all quiet and stuff and you don't have the hubbub of
34 the people, [28:44] what's the feeling like now?
35

36Barbara Rossi: Sad. I re-, I'm gonna miss this place. I'm gonna miss the heritage that was
37 here. 'Cause we are a good group of people here, you know, and it-, and
38 it's like we're being sh-, uh, I don't know if you remember [Shirley
39 Sanbourne 28:53], she worked in, um, in Engineering, and she said, you're
40 bein' just thrown to the wind. And that's kinda like how I feel. Not that
41 we're all not gonna land on our feet, but it's just kinda, like, sad to watch
42 everybody go every which way.
43

44Marilyn Coulter: Mm-hm.
45

46Barbara Rossi: It's sad.

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: Doug Rademacher.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: Barb, the, the work environment where you work has changed many
5 times. We had, uh, payroll at one time, it disappeared. Payroll's come
6 back, uh, departments...
7
8 Barbara Rossi: Now we're goin' back again. [laughter]
9
10 Doug Rademacher: ...departments come and go. On the plant floor...
11
12 [throat clearing]
13
14 Doug Rademacher: ...the workers consider themselves brothers and sisters. [29:32] does that
15 environment exist in, up in the...
16
17 Barbara Rossi: Yeah. We care about each other.
18
19 Doug Rademacher: ...in the main office?
20
21 Barbara Rossi: Mm-hm.
22
23 Doug Rademacher: [29:37] Do you, have you developed a friendship that's extended outside
24 of this plant with you and your husband, from your, from your coworkers?
25
26 Barbara Rossi: With – oh yeah, yeah, yeah. We, w-, um, there isn't anybody here that I,
27 that I, you know, could not call, we could not tal-, I could not call and say,
28 you know, I've got this problem going on, you know, an-, and it, it's just,
29 in fact, personally there's been, we've had, there's, some of the coworkers
30 and I have had some really heart to heart talks about personal issues, um,
31 and it's just, it's just nice because we're not alone, you know. That's the
32 one thing when you're goin' – like my mom's been very sick for the last
33 two years, and she's in a nursing home, and it's, that, there isn't anybody
34 that I could not talk to about it, like, Amy was just so wonderful with me
35 through that whole thing. A-, we can all relate. We're not alone, you know,
36 all the experiences we're going through, it's not the first time someone has
37 gone through that, and if, w-, we gotta rely on each other and trust each
38 other to help get through it. And that's why we're born on this earth, is to
39 help each other. There's not no big secret, you know. That's what it's all
40 about. Is to be – is to take care of each other.
41
42 Michael Fleming: Um, again, you, you...
43
44 Cheryl McQuaid: Michael Fleming. [laughter]
45

1Michael Fleming: ...thank you. You've been here for some time, and as you were here
2 through the three or four plant managers you've been through, there's been
3 some name changes within the facility. Uh, we went to BOC, then we
4 went to LCA, uh, now we're goin' to be LDT, uh, what, Fisher Body seems
5 to ring out more than anything else. [31:04] Could you explain to us what
6 you all call it in your arena and what, what you refer to it as?
7

8Barbara Rossi: This building, you mean?
9

10Michael Fleming: Yes.
11

12Barbara Rossi: Um, well, for me, what really got me going every time we change our
13 name is – I order new stationary. And I said, nuts to this, so I just had an
14 electronic form where I just have the GM logo on it, and then I can just
15 change the name as it happens. For me. I can't speak for everybody else,
16 but I still think of this as Fisher Body. For me, it will always be Fisher
17 Body.
18

19 [watch beep]
20

21Barbara Rossi: Outside world is Fisher Body, in fact, I love it when I call [canteen 31:40]
22 when we would order dinners and stuff because they still have us down as
23 Fisher Body, and I'll say, this is Barbara from Fisher Body wanting to take
24 care of a charge, and, so, for me, I can't talk about the world, but for me,
25 it's still Fisher Body. Always will be. The names mean nothing to me.
26 [laughter] Those other names mean nothing to me.
27

28 [laughter]
29

30Cheryl McQuaid: Marilyn Coulter.
31

32Marilyn Coulter: Barb, for anybody who was coming down into the front office to work and
33 gonna deal with employees, [32:11] what's the best advice you'd give to
34 them as far as [inaudible 32:14]?
35

36Barbara Rossi: Listen first. Um, I would get calls, you know, especially when there's
37 something wrong with their car. I would get a call, and, and, I'm the last
38 resort they're calling. They're upset, they're swearing, they're j-, and, so I
39 just let them talk. And then once they're done talking, then they realize
40 how awful they sounded, and I'll say, okay, I know you've g-, done this all,
41 I know you've got paperwork showing that you've got this, you have this
42 lemon of a car, um, you've got all that paperwork. Give me a copy. Let's
43 see what we can do on our part. Because I said, we are, our d-, our
44 customer is the dealer. It is not the person that buys that car. So, they, so
45 the dealer, if they're not servicing that car – that's why service means a lot
46 to me. If they're not servicing that car, all the plant can really do is say fix

1 it. You know, don't give this person a hard time. Fix the car. There's
2 enough documentation there to do it. So, one – and I get that, all that
3 paperwork from the person, and then I would just say, okay, um, w-, w-,
4 this is who I'm gonna give the paperwork to. It's usually the, uh, director
5 of Quality Control. This is the person's phone number, and I'm gonna give
6 all this paperwork to them. So there's a connect, they know that – where
7 I'm gonna send it, they know I'm, that it's gonna be handled. Doesn't mean
8 I'm gonna get the results that they want, but at least our plant will review
9 it. And they will review it with the customer person that's in charge of,
10 that works, the GM person that works ri-, wi-, like, Jay Stokes that works
11 for Pontiac. He, he's, um, GM. He works with the Pontiac dealers. So
12 that's what, what I do. So I listen first. The best thing is to listen first.
13 [banging] What does the person need? Then see [banging] what you can
14 do to help that person.
15

16 Marilyn Coulter: [33:53] Do you find that that also goes over with working with the internal
17 customers, being the employees on the line?
18

19 Barbara Rossi: Oh, yeah. Everybody. Everybody. I mean, you gotta listen first. Find out
20 wha-, wha-, what's goin' on. And another thing that would drive'm crazy
21 too, [laughter] is somebody would come down upset about something. I'd
22 say write it down. And they'd go, well, why do I have to write this down? I
23 said because it organizes your thoughts. And then, 'cause when my boss
24 gets it, my boss is probably not the person that's gonna fix it. It's gonna be
25 who, who he or she gives it to. So if you gotta it all written down, your
26 phone number's on there, and when you, w-, like, let's say it's, um, you
27 know, something's not, you know – there's a heating problem out there.
28 Just say if I don't hear back from you within a week, then I gonna take it
29 elsewhere, you know, because if you put an end date on there when I'm
30 gonna take action, then all of a sudden it's just, like, there's that due date
31 on there. So that would drive everybody crazy, but I think that's the best
32 way. When you organize your thoughts on paper, ya got it in writing, ya
33 got your phone number on there, the date you brought it in, and then my
34 boss can easily pass it onto whoever will handle it. [banging] So that's
35 how I deal with problems. [laughter]
36

37 Cheryl McQuaid: [35:01] Barb, do you have a favorite memory of this building, co-workers,
38 that you'd like to share with us?
39

40 Barbara Rossi: I have a lot. I don't even know where to begin.
41
42 [laughter]
43

44 Barbara Rossi: Um, boy. Well, I gotta, um, Betsy [Seezer 35:15], when I first, when Amy
45 first asked me to take on [inaudible 35:18] financial work, Betsy was
46 doing joint funds, and I'm not a financial person. I've only taken one

1 accounting class, and I was just a mess. I could not even figure out what a
2 debit or credit was. And I remember, I was, I would go home crying every
3 night. And I said, Betsy, I just can't do this job. And she said yes you will.
4 We'll, we'll get through it. And she helped me through everything. And I
5 just, she means everything to me. She is a little pistol. Beautiful little
6 redhead, but she is the best. And tha-, that's my f-, that's the thing that
7 meant the most to me, um, as far as work – you know, there's a lot of other
8 personal i-, things that have really meant a lot to me, but, I, you know, I'd
9 rather not, you know, share those, but, um, but, as far as work, re-, uh,
10 relationship, that was so nice of Betsy to help me through that.
11
12 Cheryl McQuaid: [36:03] How about all of the different programs that you've seen come
13 through? There was the Millionth Grand Am, the Best Launch Ever, were
14 you a part of any of those? Um, did you enjoy them?
15
16 Barbara Rossi: Not to the extent that Linda Johnson and John [Rosendahl 36:20] were,
17 but if, if there was like, odds and ends that needed to be done, but there
18 group was just outstanding. And what I loved about [Rosendahl 36:25] is,
19 he's very calm because he's done this a, a million times, and you'd have
20 managers that would be like chihuahua mode, like, well, did he do this,
21 [banging] did he do that? And I said, John'll take care of it. Trust the
22 group. And it was always done. So that's what I'll always remember about
23 that, is that every launch, every, every big event that was done, was done
24 outstanding because of the group that Linda wor-, Linda's group. And
25 [Rosendahl's 36:51] group. Yup.
26
27 Cheryl McQuaid: [36:53] Does anybody have any more questions for Barb?
28
29 Male: I just wanna tell you that it's been a real pleasure...
30
31 Barbara Rossi: Thank you.
32
33 [throat clearing]
34
35 Male: ...and you, uh, we appreciate havin' you working for our organization and
36 being a part of yours.
37
38 Barbara Rossi: It was fun. Thank you.
39
40 Michael Fleming: [inaudible 37:02] Thank you very much.
41
42 Cheryl McQuaid: You've energized my day, I just love listening...
43
44 Marilyn Coulter: Yes.
45
46 [laughter]

1
2 [inaudible 37:07]
3
4 Barbara Rossi: You're welcome.
5
6 [inaudible 37:10]
7
8
9
10
11
12
13/hj