

**Richard (Dick) Sandborn discusses his career as a production worker
and UAW Local 602 President at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI**

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4
5 Doug Rademacher: This is the Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team. Today, we're here to
6 interview Richard L. Sandborn.
7
8 Richard Sandborn: C, C.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: Richard C. Sandborn.
11
12 Richard Sandborn: Sandborn.
13
14 Doug Rademacher: Uh, today is April 26. We're in the Local 602 Conference Room and the
15 time is [coughing] approximately 10:30 a.m. Um, first we'll introduce the
16 team.
17
18 Cheryl McQuaid: Cheryl McQuaid.
19
20 John Fedewa: John Fedewa.
21
22 Jerri Smith: Jerri Smith.
23
24 Doug Rademacher: And I'm Doug Rademacher. Today again we're interviewing Mr.
25 Sandborn. [0:32] Will you please state your name and spell it for us?
26
27 Richard Sandborn: Richard C. Sandborn, R-i-c-h-a-r-d C. S-a-n-d-b-o-r-n.
28
29 Doug Rademacher: [0:42] And what is your address?
30
31 Richard Sandborn: 3653 East Grand River, Portland, Michigan 48875.
32
33 Doug Rademacher: [0:51] Are you married?
34
35 Richard Sandborn: Yes.
36
37 Doug Rademacher: [0:53] Do you have children?
38
39 Richard Sandborn: Yes. [chuckling] Four, four, I have two boys, two girls.
40
41 Doug Rademacher: [1:00] Where were you born and raised?
42
43 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling] I was born a half mile from where I live right now from my
44 mother's house and dad's house.
45
46 Doug Rademacher: And that would be...

1
2Richard Sandborn: And I was raised there.
3
4Doug Rademacher: [1:11] Portland?
5
6Richard Sandborn: In Portland, Michigan.
7
8Doug Rademacher: And, uh...
9
10Richard Sandborn: Well, four – actually, four miles west of Portland, Michigan on East Grand
11 River Avenue.
12
13Doug Rademacher: [1:21] And would you tell me what did your parents do for a living?
14
15Richard Sandborn: Farmers, farmer and my wife – uh, my mother was a homemaker. She
16 raised 13 kids, six brothers and six sisters. [chuckling]
17
18Doug Rademacher: And you're 13th?
19
20Richard Sandborn: Thirteen. I...
21
22Doug Rademacher: Uh...
23
24Richard Sandborn: No. I was the middle one, six older and six younger. [chuckling]
25
26Doug Rademacher: [1:43] What is your education level?
27
28Richard Sandborn: High school in Portland.
29
30Doug Rademacher: [1:49] Richard, were you ever in the military?
31
32Richard Sandborn: No, I wasn't. I was going to go when a buddy of mine was going to go
33 too. Then we got down to – this was during the Korean War. We got
34 down to Detroit ready to take our physical and he got notice his dad had a
35 heart attack. Well, he wouldn't go, so I wouldn't go. I came back, which
36 I'm probably maybe lucky, you know, I might not be here. [chuckling]
37
38Doug Rademacher: Well, we're lucky to have you here today, that's for sure. Um, you said
39 your parents were farmers. [2:17] What did you do before you hired in to
40 Fisher Body?
41
42Richard Sandborn: Uh, worked on a farm for, uh, C.W. Neff Farm they called it. He was a
43 big, big shot in General Motors. In fact, he built C.W. Neff School out
44 here in Grand Ledge. It was named after him and everything. And I
45 worked there for three years and if I remember right, I think we got, I got

1 \$100 a month plus my milk and butter and meat. I was working in the
2 morning we'd be milking 50 head of cows till night every...
3
4 Male: Hm.
5
6 Richard Sandborn: ...every day, seven days a week, for my brother who, um, kinda managed
7 the farm.
8
9 Doug Rademacher: [3:11] And did you live on this farm or did you still...?
10
11 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. We lived on the farm. In that time I weighed 134 pounds and I
12 wore the same shoes to church and stuff that we wore in the barn.
13
14 Doug Rademacher: And what duties...?
15
16 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling] That's how rough it was.
17
18 Doug Rademacher: [3:25] What duties did you do on the farm? Did, did you take turns
19 covering different, different duties or was it the same one all the time?
20
21 Richard Sandborn: Always we'd [inaudible 3:33] milkin' Guernsey cows. We had a whole
22 herd of them, 50 of'm. And the guy, like I said, he was a big General
23 Motors executive. So he'd come out every morning, he'd check the barn
24 out. We had to put lime down, we had to clean the barn, the stables,
25 everything had to be white, everything had to be white. And then he'd go
26 and check where we had the milkers with his hands and stuff, make sure
27 everything was clean.
28
29 Doug Rademacher: And you say he was with General Motors, [3:58] was he in our Fisher
30 facility or was he...?
31
32 Richard Sandborn: No. [Inaudible 4:00] in Buffalo, New York. He designed the Buffalo
33 plant in Buffalo, New York. He helped to invent the, I think it was what
34 they called the valve buttress at that time. He was one of the inventors of
35 that. He drew a heavy [inaudible 4:13], a lot of money from GM, so that's
36 why he could afford to donate that school out there.
37
38 Doug Rademacher: Hm. Interesting.
39
40 Richard Sandborn: It's still, I think it's still out in Grand Ledge as far as I know. I don't
41 know if it's still named C.W. Neff School but it was.
42
43 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [4:31] [sniffing] [throat clearing] Would you please tell us why
44 did you hire in to Fisher Body?
45
46 Richard Sandborn: Oh, can I say something more before I...?

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Oh, say anything you'd like.
3
4 Richard Sandborn: After that, I went to, uh, REO to work, REO Motors and I worked down
5 there for two years in the Lawnmower Division, uh, piece work, welding
6 hubs in lawnmowers. Of course, they had the truck plant and stuff there,
7 motor plant, and they went on strike and I had three little kids. My wife
8 and I had three little kids at home, I couldn't afford to strike very long and
9 all they'd give us – there's no benefits. There were no strike benefits.
10 They'd give you some doughnuts, some apple cider and that was it, so I, I
11 left there and went, come into Fisher Body [chuckling] because I couldn't
12 – I, I, I'm lucky I did make the change, you know, 'cause I had retired
13 along with a lot of them other guys who had, didn't get a lot of benefits at
14 REO.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: No. That didn't end up [inaudible 5:25].
17
18 Richard Sandborn: Or lost them later I guess anyway. [sniffing]
19
20 Doug Rademacher: So you talk about the strike, [5:30] can you tell us when did you hire in to
21 Fisher Body?
22
23 Richard Sandborn: 5/15/55.
24
25 Doug Rademacher: [5:40] How did you know they were hiring?
26
27 Richard Sandborn: I think they had, if I remember right, I think they had notices out that they
28 were, they were, they needed help then. They hi-, hired a lot of people in
29 late '54 and '55.
30
31 Doug Rademacher: [5:57] Do you have any other family members that worked at Fisher
32 Body?
33
34 Richard Sandborn: I have a son-in-law that works there, [Dave Fisher 6:02] in the Paint
35 Department. And [throat clearing] I had my one, my youngest son who is
36 now a retired athletic director from Flint, football coach or, yeah, football
37 and track coach, he worked there for two days in the Trim department and
38 somebody found out that he was my son and I was president of the union,
39 I guess didn't like him or something for some reason, swung a motor
40 down the line on the trails, hit him side of the head [inaudible 6:33]
41 knocked him out, he quit after two days. [chuckling]
42
43 Female: Oh. Oh my.
44
45 Richard Sandborn: You know, there was things going on then that if they got wind of who
46 you were, some people didn't care much for the union.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Well, that sounds like some story we're going to have to hear about.
3
4 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling]
5
6 Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.
7
8 Cheryl McQuaid: [6:52] What year was that when your son hired in?
9
10 Richard Sandborn: Oh. I have to figure the year. I would think around '72 or somewhere
11 'cause he, he got out of school [inaudible 7:11] 30, 30 [inaudible 7:13]. I
12 think it would be '71, '72 in there. I couldn't, I, I couldn't say for sure...
13
14 Doug Rademacher: Yeah.
15
16 Richard Sandborn: ...'cause...
17
18 Doug Rademacher: Okay. [7:22] Well, how old were you when you hired in to the Fisher
19 Plant?
20
21 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling] I'm 75 now and I hired in in '55. I was born in '31. That
22 would make...
23
24 Doug Rademacher: '31.
25
26 Richard Sandborn: 24.
27
28 Doug Rademacher: 24.
29
30 Richard Sandborn: 24.
31
32 Doug Rademacher: Okay. Well...
33
34 Richard Sandborn: I mean the first, actually to get back to when the first job I ever had wasn't
35 really on the farm. [coughing] [throat clearing] I worked on a, a tiling
36 machine laying tile for [inaudible 7:49] farm tile around the different areas
37 and stuff, you know.
38
39 And there was another deal there somebody looked over at me because we
40 were laying tile and I was what you call riding the shoe behind, you know,
41 and we could only lay 8 each tile and we had 10 each we had to lay that
42 day, so I had to lay it outside the shoe, what they call a shoe trench, you
43 know, and I was layin' outside and all of a sudden the banks come in on
44 me and God or somebody looked over me because I happened to be
45 standing up when it happened and it caught, caught me right up to here.
46 And there was only, there was only two guys there, only one of them had a

1 shovel [inaudible 8:27] a spade and they started digging. The guy that had
2 to run the machine he told me, he says don't move, don't try to breathe,
3 just breathe, you know, but don't try to get yourself out because you'll get
4 more pressure on you. And I survived it all right but if I had been bent
5 over, I'd have been dead. So close, you know, you don't know when your
6 time is. They never laid tile after outside that shoe again after that. Even
7 if they banked the wall up, they still wouldn't, wouldn't do that.
8
9 Doug Rademacher: [8:57] You called it a shoe or a chute?
10
11 Richard Sandborn: Shoe, a shoe, they called it a shoe. You ride it 'cause your feet are on the
12 bottom and you ride backwards, you kick the [inaudible 9:06] together
13 with your shoe, see, so that's why that called it a shoe. It's four foot, you
14 know, three or four foot deep down in the ground and stuff.
15
16 Doug Rademacher: Okay.
17
18 Richard Sandborn: That was for 75 cents an hour. [chuckling]
19
20 Doug Rademacher: [9:21] What shift and department did you hire in to?
21
22 Richard Sandborn: Body Shop and I worked in the solder wheel. I think they called it 4C,
23 Group 4C. Metal finish area was 4B. I think solder was 4C, just beyond
24 where they put the solder on it and then we grind it off, you know.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: [9:44] And you, were you fortunate to have the first shift or second shift?
27
28 Richard Sandborn: Swing shift. [coughing]
29
30 Doug Rademacher: [9:50] What does that mean?
31
32 Richard Sandborn: We all drea-, we all dreaded that. You worked four weeks days, four
33 weeks nights and then they voted one time to extend it to five weeks days,
34 five weeks nights. Then they voted it out. That was always a political
35 issue with everybody too. You had your older seniority people who
36 naturally wanted to stay on days, you know, and you had your younger
37 seniority people who felt that wasn't fair 'cause they had worked straight,
38 you know, they had to work straight nights so that's why you had the
39 swing shift.
40
41 Doug Rademacher: S-...
42
43 Richard Sandborn: They'd get more, the night shift would get more voters out, you know, so
44 they voted for the swing shift.
45
46 Doug Rademacher: Well, that's...

1
2Richard Sandborn: That was quite a few years too.
3
4Doug Rademacher: So it all went back to...
5
6Richard Sandborn: Till you started run in, you know, you run into a lot of problems, family
7 problems and stuff, people have to swing. You had a lot more people
8 gettin' sick and stuff because your environment's different, you know,
9 when you swing shifts [inaudible 10:41], so then they went back to
10 straight shifts.
11
12Doug Rademacher: Hm. [10:46] And do you remember which year that was that they voted in
13 the straight shifts, hm?
14
15Richard Sandborn: I think Joe Santoro was president if I remember.
16
17Doug Rademacher: Okay. Well, we're going to get a little nostalgic on you. [11:01] I want
18 you to think back, how was it to, to, uh, get an application at, at that time?
19 Did you have to stand in line or was, was there a different method?
20
21Richard Sandborn: [Inaudible 11:13]. No. You'd go right in and get an application, easy. No
22 problem at all. You didn't have to be referred by your brother or dad or
23 anybody, you know. I went in and got it, got in there and then a week
24 later they'd call you or maybe sometime hire you the same day. You'd be
25 interviewed. They had some people who were pretty good. Others,
26 management people they were #1, you know, bad guys. [chuckling]
27
28Doug Rademacher: [11:43] Well, will you share with us your first day? Can you remember
29 walking in the doors of Fisher Body? You said you came from a REO, uh,
30 Lawnmower line, so you've done a little assembly work. What was it like
31 to walk in and see an auto assembly [coughing] plant and what was your
32 first day like?
33
34Richard Sandborn: Scared. You know, I was a farm boy, always been more or less born a
35 farm boy all my life, you know. I was petrified. I didn't know whether I
36 could find the department. I didn't know where, if I'd find my way back
37 to the vehicle or not [chuckling] in the parking lot. It was bad. Then I got,
38 once I got on the job, then, of course, I was assigned to the body shop, uh,
39 to grind and solder. Where do you think I went? Trim department. They
40 put me up there [chuckling] and kept me on different, different type of
41 jobs up in the Trim department probably for, I don't know, two weeks. I
42 never saw the body shop for about two weeks. Then they finally moved –
43 when they had enough help up there to do – I was fillin' in kinda, you
44 know, me and other guys, you know. When they got enough help, then
45 they put me back down in the booth wearin' a hood, which I got on the
46 day I retired. I, I got it right at home in my basement. They gave me...

1
2Female: S-...
3
4Richard Sandborn: ...the Labor Relations department gave it to me because I was a high
5 committeeman at that time, you know, and past president of the Local, so
6 they felt they owed me something. I didn't know they was going to do it
7 [chuckling] but they did. [chuckling]
8
9Doug Rademacher: [13:25] Well, early on then you, um, you hired into Body but they put you
10 right up into Trim or did you...?
11
12Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
13
14Doug Rademacher: ...work one day in the Body?
15
16Richard Sandborn: No, I never worked at all.
17
18Doug Rademacher: [13:32] So you, so you, you were taken up...
19
20Richard Sandborn: Well, they just told me...
21
22Doug Rademacher: ...by a supervisor or how did they pick you to take you to Trim?
23
24Richard Sandborn: They just told me when I got, I reported down in the body shop.
25
26Doug Rademacher: Mm-hm.
27
28Richard Sandborn: Then they just, a su-, supervisor took me up there. Hell, I, I couldn't find
29 my way up there, you know, [chuckling] I didn't know where to go. And I
30 was up there. They had me report up there to the same foreman for a
31 while. Then he would, he would loan me out, the foreman up there, to
32 other areas within the Trim department. I don't remember whether it was
33 A or B line, which line I was on for sure or not. I know I was up there. I
34 dreaded it...
35
36Doug Rademacher: So [inaudible 14:08].
37
38Richard Sandborn: ...'cause I wanted a regular job, you know.
39
40Doug Rademacher: Uh-huh.
41
42Richard Sandborn: I didn't want to be stuck all over the place.
43
44Doug Rademacher: But you got to see the Trim department. Um, different people view the
45 different, uh, areas of the plant. There's Body, Paint and Trim. You got

1 to see Trim, uh, then they took you to Body Shop. [14:28] Can you tell
2 me the first day of going down to Body Shop?
3
4 Richard Sandborn: Yeah, I went down there and I think [Bill McGoveney 14:35] was my
5 supervisor and [John McGinley 14:39] was the superintendent down in the
6 body shop. He was a hell of a nice guy. The reason I'm saying that
7 'cause I got to know him. You don't mind me sayin' hell do you?
8 [chuckling]
9
10 Doug Rademacher: No, no. Say anything you want.
11
12 Richard Sandborn: Uh.
13
14 Doug Rademacher: Really, this is, uh, just a piece of history.
15
16 Richard Sandborn: 'Cause I did a lot of negotiatin' with him, see for, uh, when I was
17 chairman of the shop committee for one term over there. I negotiated with
18 him and then when I was president for nine years I did a lot of negotiating
19 with him too, so. You get to know a lot of the higher ups, you know, plant
20 managers and, uh, superintendents.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: [15:12] Can you tell me how the job differed, you know, the body shop
23 job that you got put on, what was that like? Uh, you said you put a hood
24 on but you worked up in Trim.
25
26 Richard Sandborn: Yeah, well, I felt more relaxed and enjoyed it more even though I had a
27 hood over my head. I was on the B line which pumps air. I don't know if
28 you're familiar with what, what the body shop used to be like [inaudible
29 15:37] anything like that today or not, pumped air into your face so you
30 could breathe, you know. And we had cotton battin' for earplugs and then
31 we got gloves. Should, should've got 'em every two or three days but a lot
32 of times if you get a hole in your glove, you'd ask for new gloves, the
33 supervisor would bring you a roll of tape, you take off a chunk and you
34 tape it up and continue your job.
35
36 That's – and, and then I worked in the booth with water underneath me, a
37 pit, there's a pit underneath with, uh, a pit full water, you know. I couldn't
38 stand so I had to squat 'cause I was grinding the rockers on it, what they
39 call the rocker panels all the way across there. And after, a-, after I did
40 that for about a year, I'm really gettin' ahead of myself but after I did it for
41 about a year I had a hernia and I had to go on sick leave on account of
42 that. And they had two other guys had hernias too, so they finally decided
43 they could lower that, you know, their smart engineers decided they can
44 lower that level where you wouldn't have to squat every time at 62 cars an
45 hour, you know, squat down and up, up and down. Not only on the front
46 part of the rocker but in the middle and the rear, three times you had to

1 squat. They lowered that pit and then all we had to do was, was right in
2 front of us, you know, and they lowered the water level. They waited till
3 three guys had a hernia. Which I filed, by the way, I had workman's comp
4 on it.
5
6 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. I heard you say sick leave and I was going to ask you that, so it was
7 deemed work related and you were able to collect worker's comp.
8
9 Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
10
11 Doug Rademacher: Now...
12
13 Richard Sandborn: I should have did one other thing. I should have had these all taken care
14 of too. I should have filed workman's comp and I didn't do that. I regret
15 it right now 'cause it's costin' me \$700 every so often to get new hearing
16 aids.
17
18 Doug Rademacher: I was going to say you said these...
19
20 Richard Sandborn: If I had workmen's comp, they'd pay for it right today.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: ..he's, uh...
23
24 Richard Sandborn: So, I...
25
26 Doug Rademacher: ...pointing to his ears, so, uh, speaking of, uh, the hearing aid he's wearing.
27 [17:42] Um, definitely work related, huh?
28
29 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling] Yeah. [Inaudible 17:46].
30
31 Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.
32
33 Cheryl McQuaid: You said you were grinding the solder.
34
35 Richard Sandborn: Mm-hm.
36
37 Cheryl McQuaid: [17:51] How big was the machine you had to squat up and down with?
38 Was it on a pulley, was it...?
39
40 Richard Sandborn: It's on a pull-, overhead pulley. It developed, uh, I think 30,000 rpm or
41 something, electrical machine, you know, the machine was runnin' off
42 electrical. Big grinder, you pull it down and grind your spot off, you
43 know, and then let, release it back up and then pull it back down for the
44 next part. Of course, when you grind lead, I was grinding lead and I got
45 lead poisoning. That's one of my problems I, I still get, livin' with it right
46 today with my kidneys 'cause I, I got taken out of the booth three different

1 times on account of lead poisoning. And I got taken out a couple times
2 because I knew how to, to shaft them, you know. I knew how to get high
3 lead when I didn't have high lead. [chuckling]
4

5Cheryl McQuaid: [18:45] And did they have you, um, medically checked for lead?
6

7Richard Sandborn: Oh yes. We had coveralls [inaudible 18:52] that had, had one pocket here,
8 you know, that it clipped over, you know. You only had one pocket,
9 [coughing] [inaudible 19:01]. And back then, they, everybody smoked,
10 you know. Well, we couldn't get anybody a lot of times to relieve us or
11 stuff, so we'd carry our cigarettes inside of here and then when the line
12 would stop for an instant, we'd light up, pull our hood off 'cause there was
13 no lead flyin' you know, and light up. Well, them cigarettes over a period
14 of time, years, you know, they had a little bit of lead on them, you know,
15 and that's one of the reasons why we get some lead poisoning out of'm.
16 But we, I mean sometimes we couldn't get nobody to relieve us. We,
17 we'd do things that actually would, you should get fired for. If we got
18 caught doin' them, they're gonna fire you. If you couldn't get, uh, uh,
19 somebody to relieve you, we was on a curve, just before they come to a
20 curve, we'd stick these rag wheels in the, in the line. [coughing] We
21 call'm rag wheels, the grinding wheel, you know, about this big around
22 like [inaudible 19:55].
23

24Cheryl McQuaid: [19:56] About three inches around?
25

26Richard Sandborn: Yeah. And when, when the [inaudible 19:59] come around the corner, it
27 would trip the dog, what they called the dog on it, you know, that little clip
28 deal, and they'd come together. Well, that meant Skilled Trades had to
29 come out there [chuckling] and do some work, you know. It would take
30 about 10 minutes, so we'd get our, we'd get our relief that way. We had
31 our, we had different guys assigned within the booth to pull this all the
32 time so they couldn't catch us 'cause they even had a supervisor outside
33 trying to watch and see what was causin' it but we was one step ahead
34 of'm.
35

36Cheryl McQuaid: So that would afford you a little bit of breakdown time so that you could
37 run to the bathroom [coughing] or have a cigarette. [20:36] How did you
38 fudge it so that...
39

40Richard Sandborn: No. We, we, we had people who, who didn't have time to go to the
41 bathroom. I see'm where they, they took a leak right there, right down in
42 the water 'cause they couldn't, wouldn't get a guy in there. They might
43 wait 15, 20 minutes and nobody would come in. There'd be guys standing
44 out there with the foreman but usually the relief, relief man was the
45 foreman's pet or something, you know, normally back in them days. He'd
46 go in whenever he damn felt like it, you know.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: So teacher's pet isn't just school. They had it...
3
4 Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
5
6 Doug Rademacher: ...in the plant too.
7
8 Richard Sandborn: You bet they did, yeah.
9
10 Cheryl McQuaid: Now you said that you could fudge your lead levels. [21:13] How would
11 you do that? So it looked like...
12
13 Richard Sandborn: Coffee.
14
15 Cheryl McQuaid: ...you had...
16
17 Richard Sandborn: Coffee put, put it up higher.
18
19 Cheryl McQuaid: Really?
20
21 Richard Sandborn: It was always high anyway, you know, fairly high from working in the
22 environment but we found out coffee would. We had a Dr. [Oshner
23 21:30] who was our doctor there. He, he was there for, god, I don't know,
24 probably 30 years and they had a nurse there, uh, [Joe Burch 21:40], who
25 ended up superintendent or, uh, yeah, superintendent of the body shop,
26 that was, uh, nurse was his wife and stuff. He knew about some of the
27 stuff was going on but he never said anything 'cause he was a good guy,
28 Joe was. Some of your supervisors were good guys. They'd work with
29 you and try to help you but others, probably the same way nowadays.
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: [22:04] So if your lead was high, what did they do to get it lower?
32
33 Richard Sandborn: They kept your rate of pay the same and sent you back in the jungle, in the
34 body shop.
35
36 Cheryl McQuaid: Out of the lead booth but [coughing] in the jungle.
37
38 Richard Sandborn: And jobs where you really worked your butt off too.
39
40 Cheryl McQuaid: [22:21] So you were kind of disciplined for high-, having high lead they
41 gave you an undesirable job?
42
43 Richard Sandborn: Oh yeah. You got the most undesirable job. You didn't get an offline job.
44 They had offline spot welders too but they'd stick you right in the line.
45 The one I got was for a supervisor [Ray Robson 22:36] at that time and –
46 is it all right to get in on some of this?

1
2Male: Oh yeah, sure.
3
4Richard Sandborn: And he had – I'd get in, I was where they dropped what they called the
5 floor pan under the, where the line first started, you know, under the frame
6 itself there. I had to get up in the trunk of the car, you step off the step, get
7 up in the trunk, weld around the rear, rear window, get back down off, run
8 around to the front, weld across the front. I mean there was nobody,
9 nobody wanted the job, you know. They'd stick you on that. They
10 figured that would get you over, make sure you'd correct your lead
11 problem, you know, quicker. You wouldn't fake it and stuff, you know
12 what I mean. [chuckling]
13
14Cheryl McQuaid: And you did that 60 plus times an hour.
15
16Richard Sandborn: Oh yeah. And, uh, once again, you'd, I'd wear gloves out e-, every day
17 I'd had gloves be worn out. I'd ask for a new pair of gloves, once again I
18 got that black tape. Uh, [Harold Tap 23:40] was the foreman back there.
19 He – they called him Cowboy. He was a terrible guy. They had another
20 guy, [Don Clark 23:46] was supervisor back there offline spot weld. He
21 was a real nice guy. Everybody liked him. His family lives out here in
22 Grand Ledge I think.
23
24Cheryl McQuaid: [23:54] Now when you had to do around the back window and then run
25 around the front of the car and do the front windshield area, was that spot
26 welding or MIG welding?
27
28Richard Sandborn: Spot welding with a gun. You had to pull a heavy gun down, you know.
29 It wasn't no light gun. You had to pull it down and you had to have them
30 spots, you know, not that far but [inaudible 24:14] so far apart and you had
31 to move with it. If you goofed a little bit, got'm too far apart or not far,
32 not close enough, then they'd get after you.
33
34Cheryl McQuaid: I can't even imagine you had enough time to do all that.
35
36Richard Sandborn: You sweated. You sweatin'. Like I say, I weighed 135 pounds.
37 [chuckling]
38
39Cheryl McQuaid: And then you were hoppin' up and down off the car.
40
41Richard Sandborn: Yeah. Off the, off that flatbed, you know, that the body rides on, yeah,
42 and then gettin' in to the trunk which is greasy and slippery and
43 everything else, you know, and get back up.
44
45Cheryl McQuaid: And raw metal.
46

1Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
2

3Cheryl McQuaid: Sounds like a nightmare.
4

5Richard Sandborn: That was something that if you didn't really need the money and stuff,
6 you'd quit maybe, you know. But if you got four kids and stuff and need
7 the money, I had to have it, you know. It wasn't something I'd want to
8 make a career out of to start out with. [chuckling]
9

10Cheryl McQuaid: [25:09] And how long would you have to do so-, that type of work, that
11 type of job before they would allow you back into the booth?
12

13Richard Sandborn: Well, they usually keep you out like, oh, two weeks or so, then they run
14 you down to the hospital for another check, uh, blood. They take blood
15 out of you and your level was normal, you'd be back down, then they'd
16 put you back on your old job. You always got your old job back, always
17 give you your old job.
18

19Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. You said the jungle and you worked, it was hard
20 work. [25:43] Who worked in the jungle regularly and who taught you
21 how to do those jobs and can you describe what a jungle means? What
22 does it look like?
23

24Richard Sandborn: Just, uh, looked like a lot of heavy machines and stuff, sparks flying all
25 over the place, you know, and, and welding. It was – you, you said MIG
26 welding. Well, this was more or less just plain welding back then and, and
27 a lot of people had problems with their eyes over that, you know, with
28 welding, you know, because they didn't provide the proper shields and
29 stuff for you, you know. And it was made up of I would say probably
30 two-thirds of'm were black people that was back there, minority people
31 that worked in that area. Some, uh, some of us whites but most of it was
32 people like myself who had lead poisoning or some people that they just
33 wanted to shaft around, move'm around the body shop.
34

35Doug Rademacher: And you said you worked up in Trim. [26:48] Were the minorities,
36 Hispanics, blacks, were they kept in particular areas or did you see'm in
37 Trim?
38

39Richard Sandborn: No. Never, I never even noticed them up in Trim much. There were some
40 up there but I never happened to know someone.
41

42Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.
43

44Cheryl McQuaid: You mentioned that you first, when you first hired in you were assigned
45 body shop but you worked in Trim for a couple weeks and you hated it.

1 [27:12] What was it about Trim that you didn't like other than it not being
2 your regular job? Were the jobs hard?
3

4Richard Sandborn: Yeah. The jobs were hard. I just couldn't, for some reason I couldn't
5 keep up and do the, do the things they had me doin', reachin' my hand in
6 over a sharp metal or something, you know, to put a piece of the trim on or
7 somethin'. I just couldn't do it right, catchin' hell all the time from
8 supervisors. And I just didn't – and different job every day, number one.
9 Not the same job two days in a row and that, when I'd leave home I didn't
10 know what I was going to do. That alone kind of petrifies you, you know,
11 'cause you, you don't know whether you're gonna be able to – I always
12 wanted to do my fair day's work, you know, and do a good job but I just
13 couldn't do it up there.
14

15Cheryl McQuaid: [27:53] And was that the norm to put somebody on a different job every
16 day? Doesn't it take a while to learn a job or?
17

18Richard Sandborn: Well, I don't think it was normal but they, they did it with a lot of people,
19 though, you know.
20

21Doug Rademacher: Doug Rademacher. Richard, you said you came from Portland. [28:14]
22 Can you tell me what it was like to drive back in the 50s, the, uh, 20, 30
23 miles one way to get to General Motors, the Fisher plant?
24

25Richard Sandborn: Well, when it was on the night shift it was a lot of fun. [chuckling]
26

27Doug Rademacher: [28:34] And why is that?
28

29Richard Sandborn: When we got out of work. [chuckling]
30

31Doug Rademacher: Oh.
32

33Richard Sandborn: Uh, usually there was, I'd ride with, we'd take turns three or four of us
34 ride together. A guy by the name of [Hitchcock Galinaitis 28:46] we'd
35 take turns driving back and forth and also, of course, Saginaw had nothin'
36 then. We'd come [inaudible 28:55] Saginaw down to Fisher with no
37 problem at all. The only problem might be was your jet plant and some of
38 them gettin' in and outta work but there was no, no businesses out there
39 then. It was all farm land basically all the way to Grand Ledge. And then
40 after we'd get outta work, we'd get out of work sometime 2:00, we knew
41 we had to come to work nine, ten hours, which would be 3, you'd call the
42 – oh what did they call it? [Inaudible 29:22], uh, right by [inaudible
43 29:23] airport, [inaudible 29:24] Elks Club out there by the airport.
44

45Doug Rademacher: Yep. It's still there.
46

1Richard Sandborn: Uh, is it? Well, it used to be Airport Bar, wasn't it?
2

3Doug Rademacher: Airport Tavern is still there, mm-hm.
4

5Richard Sandborn: Airport Tavern, okay. We'd call out there and order our refreshments and
6 he'd have'm waitin' for us. He had a dog by the name of Bonnie I
7 remember. We used to when we'd get out regular hours we'd stop
8 [inaudible 29:44]. We run into a lot of different people there. I remember
9 one night we run into a guy that invited us over to his house. We got over
10 there and he was Governor G. Mennen Williams' pilot and he had all
11 kinds of food for us in his basement and had a real blast for us, all the beer
12 and whisky we wanted to drink. [chuckling] This was 3:00 in the morning
13 but he was just welcoming, you know, working people, see. He was, in
14 my opinion, he was one of our best governors we ever had, G. Mennen
15 Williams, for the workin' man.
16

17Doug Rademacher: We definitely need that.
18

19Richard Sandborn: We're inheritin' right now all the stuff John Engler screwed us for years.
20

21Doug Rademacher: Don't we got our hands full right now trying to keep every job we've got.
22

23Richard Sandborn: Yep.
24

25Doug Rademacher: [30:36] Um, did you hire in by yourself or did you hire in with a group of
26 people?
27

28Richard Sandborn: I hired in by, by myself. [sniffing]
29

30Doug Rademacher: Okay.
31

32Richard Sandborn: There was people hired, you know, a week or two ahead of me but I hired
33 in that same day [inaudible 30:46] by myself.
34

35Doug Rademacher: [30:53] When you first started, were there new hire initiations or pranks
36 that were played on the, the worker back then?
37

38Richard Sandborn: No. I don't – not really. Of course, they couldn't play mu-, well,
39 sometimes in the booth they could play pranks like shut your air off, you
40 know, put a piece of wire or somethin' so you couldn't breathe for a while,
41 [laughter] find out what it was and you had to take the wire out. Or yeah,
42 and also some of the metal finishers who worked beyond us thought we
43 wasn't grindin' enough solder off so when we would take our break they
44 would take our little holes that goes into our hood, they'd put some water
45 in that damn thing [laughter] then so when we would plug it into the air,
46 you know, what we got, a little bit...

1
2Female: [Inaudible 31:41].
3
4Richard Sandborn: ...inside of our face shield. We had a shield, you know, in front of it. That
5 was all wet. We'd have to have a rag and wipe it all off so we could see
6 the work. That happened [inaudible 31:50].
7
8Doug Rademacher: Okay.
9
10Richard Sandborn: Or sometimes we would put stuff on the seam after we got done too to
11 make sure it would kind of mess it up for the metal finisher too, like
12 [inaudible 32:03]. [coughing] [laughter] They had some pranks.
13
14Doug Rademacher: I think the word is paybacks are hell, right?
15
16Cheryl McQuaid: Right.
17
18Doug Rademacher: Um, you've shared some of the places you've worked and, uh, some of the
19 things that you had to, they gave you to wear as far as protective
20 equipment and so forth. [32:28] What was the environment when you
21 hired in and did you see it change over the years as you worked?
22
23Richard Sandborn: What do you mean the environment?
24
25Doug Rademacher: Uh, the work environment. You said you had cotton for your ears.
26 [32:41] When did you see...?
27
28Richard Sandborn: Oh.
29
30Doug Rademacher: ...changes in...?
31
32Richard Sandborn: Oh that probably, oh I'd say probably '61, somewhere in there, before
33 they started givin' us ear plugs.
34
35Doug Rademacher: [32:54] And did you get gloves instead of tape at that time?
36
37Richard Sandborn: Yeah. I think it was about then when we negotiated the gloves for us,
38 yeah, in that area where we didn't have to – we had to buy our own gloves
39 to start it with, you know. They negotiated gloves for everybody and extra
40 pairs and stuff, the committee did.
41
42Doug Rademacher: [33:12] [Inaudible 33:11] how did they do that? How did they, how did
43 you pay for it, out of your paycheck, was it deducted or did you...?
44
45Richard Sandborn: They deducted, yeah.
46

1 Doug Rademacher: [33:17] Did you have to pay?
2
3 Richard Sandborn: It had a, I know it had some listing in there for, you know, so much for
4 your coveralls for, uh, one pair of coveralls a week or if you worked in the
5 booth you had to change 'em every day but they still only charged you for
6 one pair. They did give you the other four pairs if you worked five days.
7 Of course, then, then it was 10 and 11, five nights and days [inaudible
8 33:39]. [coughing] A lot of that was overtime.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: Now this was good money.
11
12 Richard Sandborn: Oh yeah. \$1.75 an hour. That was it. Paid a lot in overtime. Then come
13 to, uh, 19-, I think it was '58 I was laid off for one year. They didn't sell
14 cars at all in '57 and '58, didn't sell very good. And I lived in a tenant
15 house and I went around and painted by hand, painted barns for a dollar an
16 hour.
17
18 Doug Rademacher: You lived in a tent house, now were you [inaudible 34:19].
19
20 Richard Sandborn: Tenant house, in a tenant house.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: Oh, tenant house, oh.
23
24 Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
25
26 Doug Rademacher: [34:22] And you were married and had the kids then?
27
28 Richard Sandborn: Four kids, yeah. I had to survive. We didn't get – I think we got \$35 a
29 week.
30
31 Male: Unemployment.
32
33 Richard Sandborn: No, no. [Inaudible 34:32] itself, you know, you just didn't have it. You
34 had to survive on what you had. [chuckling]
35
36 Doug Rademacher: Now you had coworkers and you developed friendships after workin' in
37 the same area for a long period of time. [34:46] Did you consider your
38 coworkers brothers and sisters or did it come to a time where you felt that?
39
40 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. There were some of 'em, yeah, yeah. Some of 'em, uh, I'd stop over
41 their place, you know, and we'd have a beer or something. We never
42 really run around together too much other than one couple we did a lot
43 [inaudible 35:04]. [throat clearing] We still had one couple we had a place
44 down in Florida in the same park. He died not too long ago. In our park
45 down there we had four people from Fisher Body that retired and it's only

1 a 21 place, 21 units, and I'm the only one that's still alive. All the others
2 [chuckling] died.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: [35:26] And you just returned home from, uh, your, uh...
5
6 Richard Sandborn: Four months.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: ...winter stay down there?
9
10 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. Four months.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: Well, wel-, welcome back.
13
14 Richard Sandborn: Just outside of, uh, uh, Orlando right on Highway 27, right in the middle
15 of the state, south of I-4.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: Cheryl McQuaid.
18
19 Cheryl McQuaid: [35:44] Sir, when you first hired in, when did you, when were you
20 introduced to your UAW committeeman, shop committee person? Were
21 they out on the floor walking around introducing themselves? How did
22 you become familiar with the UAW?
23
24 Richard Sandborn: I'm, I'm thinkin', maybe I'm wrong, I'm thinkin' they, they wore a
25 button. They all had, they had to wear some kind of button indicatin' that
26 they was. There was no benefit reps or nothin', you know. It was just a
27 district committeeman, alternate committeeman and the top
28 committeeman. They wore a button indicatin' what they were 'cause I've
29 got some of'm [inaudible 36:26].
30
31 Cheryl McQuaid: And did you...
32
33 Richard Sandborn: They, they, they wouldn't, they didn't actually introduce themselves, you
34 know, more or less and management [coughing] [inaudible 36:37]
35 introduce them neither, you know. They let you know you had union
36 representation but that was it.
37
38 Cheryl McQuaid: [36:43] Do you remember the first time you need to, needed to use your
39 union representation?
40
41 Richard Sandborn: No, I don't, to tell you the truth. I know I did many a time. [chuckling]
42
43 Cheryl McQuaid: [36:55] How long did you stay in the soldering booth, the lead booth?
44
45 Richard Sandborn: Uh, off and on, 30.1 years.
46

1 Cheryl McQuaid: Really?
2

3 Richard Sandborn: Subtractin' all the time I was president of the local. I was workin' in the
4 booth when I retired. Never advanced out of the booth as far as working
5 on the job, you know.
6

7 Cheryl McQuaid: [37:21] You just, you liked the job? You never put in transfers or?
8

9 Richard Sandborn: Well, I was normally, thanks to the people in my area who voted for me, I
10 was either a district alternate committeeman, [coughing] a district
11 committeeman, a shop committeeman or a zone committeeman or the
12 president of the Local. So I could be thankful for the union that I spent the
13 majority of my time was union activities, you know. I, I mean I was on,
14 on the floor in there, I'd seen a lot of stuff on the floor as a district
15 committeeman, some good and some bad. I was under some committee,
16 top committeeman that were terrific people and there were some that
17 weren't worth a damn, you know. With – I imagine that happens anytime,
18 you know. [chuckling] [sniffing]
19

20 Doug Rademacher: [38:12] Would you please, uh, tell us a little bit about how you got
21 involved with the union? You said they didn't approach you. Tell us...
22

23 Richard Sandborn: Have you, have you interviewed Lloyd Cain yet?
24

25 Cheryl McQuaid: No.
26

27 Doug Rademacher: No. We haven't gotten Lloyd yet.
28

29 Richard Sandborn: Oh. Okay. He's how, he's [inaudible] 38:26] I got involved.
30

31 Doug Rademacher: [38:28] Well, tell us about that.
32

33 Richard Sandborn: Well, I'm gettin' ahead of myself. He, he, he's the one that got me
34 involved as far as bein' president of the Local. You want me to go back to
35 the other alternate committeeman and district before?
36

37 Doug Rademacher: All right.
38

39 Richard Sandborn: [Inaudible] 38:41].
40

41 Doug Rademacher: [38:41] What made you want to be an alternate or a committeeman?
42

43 Richard Sandborn: I just felt it was something, you know, that looked interesting to me and,
44 and I, I felt the people needed representation, you know, somebody to talk
45 for them. I didn't – I can't remember who the guy was that I run against.
46 I didn't think he was doin' his job, so I just run and won.

1
2 Doug Rademacher: Okay, now...
3
4 Richard Sandborn: Now many a time when we had, we'd have a committeeman in the front of
5 the body shop and one in the back. When they'd have a cutback, then
6 they'd go by seniority and one of them committeemen you might lose your
7 job for three or four months or a year or something then you'd have to go
8 back to work on your job, the district committeemen.
9
10 Doug Rademacher: And you served as an...
11
12 Richard Sandborn: And you had...
13
14 Doug Rademacher: ...alternate.
15
16 Richard Sandborn: ...you had to go back into work. If you didn't have a call, you was in there
17 wearin' a hood. You better have, that foreman better, you know,
18 [inaudible 39:37] took the calls, he'd have, uh, names on the people, you
19 better have a legitimate reason to get out there and take that call.
20 [Inaudible 39:45] 8 hours, your, your butt's right back on the line for the
21 next 2 ½ hours if they go 10 ½ hours. There's no hanging out in the Work
22 Center [inaudible 39:53]. You know what I'm talking about?
23
24 Doug Rademacher: Oh yeah. I do know what you're sayin' here. And, uh...
25
26 Richard Sandborn: And they would, they would make damn sure, you know. Management
27 wasn't easy with union at all. It was hard fought everything we had to do.
28
29 Doug Rademacher: So you felt, uh, the people needed a voice, you ran and thought you could
30 do a better job and you got elected, you moved up to committeeman.
31 [40:20] Um, did you consider shop chair and then what made you...?
32
33 Richard Sandborn: No, no.
34
35 Doug Rademacher: ...run for president?
36
37 Richard Sandborn: Well, uh, I got appointed as a shop committeeman for the, for the night
38 shift, you know. The, the other committeeman [inaudible 40:34] district
39 and shop committeeman and I was part-time shop committeeman, you
40 know, not, not where I could serve on the executive board or nothin' but I
41 was shop committeeman there and then, uh, that was that.
42
43 And then I was trustee of the Local at the time, 19-, hm. I was talkin' to
44 my wife about this too. [chuckling] 1966 I was trustee of the Local and
45 Lloyd Cain talked me into or sixty-, sixty-, '65 he talked me into runnin'
46 for vice president with him. I said, "Lloyd, are you gonna, you gonna" –

1 because there was an openin' coming up on the staff. I said, "You're
2 gonna be around here, ain't you? You ain't gonna be goin' down to staff
3 and stuff and dump this on me because I, I just got this farm where I'm at
4 now." And I was farmin' too, you know, and I didn't want a job that
5 would tie me up a lot. He said, "Oh yeah, I'll finish up the one term."
6 Well, he was, if you look on your wall out here, you see [inaudible 41:39]
7 six months and he dumped the presidency on me and I – he called me and
8 he had to, he had to call me into the union hall to convince me to take the
9 presidency 'cause I was about ready to drop out of it all together then, so
10 then I went on to become president.
11
12 Doug Rademacher: And I do look at that picture up there and I you were re-elected three times
13 after that.
14
15 Richard Sandborn: Four times.
16
17 Doug Rademacher: Four times.
18
19 Richard Sandborn: Joe Santoro run against me, [inaudible 42:08], a guy by the name of
20 [Charlie Harper 42:11] who still works at, works at Fisher Body. He's got
21 a place out here in Eagle sellin' cars and stuff [inaudible 42:18] who died
22 not too long ago.
23
24 Doug Rademacher: [Inaudible 42:23].
25
26 Richard Sandborn: Ex-foreman or ex-supervisor at one time.
27
28 Doug Rademacher: So Lloyd left you that and, um...
29
30 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. And I, I, I've told him about that many times. [chuckling]
31
32 Doug Rademacher: [42:35] You, you still speak to Lloyd?
33
34 Richard Sandborn: [Inaudible 42:35]. [laughter] Yeah.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: But you must...
37
38 Richard Sandborn: We, we had some terrific International Union reps. I don't know what the
39 caliber of'm today but I know for a while we didn't have the best around
40 but we had [inaudible 42:48] from 652. He was a fighter for the people in
41 the plant. I mean he'd get right down there nose to nose for you, do
42 anything. And Jim Ramey, who is still active in the Democrat Party and
43 stuff, he's a tremendous guy. I really liked both of'm. I think they're
44 terrific people. Even though where they're from, another Local 652, I
45 don't think you could beat'm. In fact I seen him the other day, Jim

1 Ramey, on TV runnin' Walmart down, terrific, you know. [chuckling]
2 Yeah.
3
4 Doug Rademacher: Still fighting the battle...
5
6 Richard Sandborn: Still fighting for the people.
7
8 Doug Rademacher: ...for the working man.
9
10 Richard Sandborn: And the Democrat Party. There's nobody, anybody more dedicated than
11 he was. [coughing] [clicking]
12
13 Doug Rademacher: [43:31] Um, can you share with us, uh, as we go back inside the plant in a,
14 on a regular day, what did you do for lunch? You said you rode in with
15 people. Did you guys do lunch together?
16
17 Richard Sandborn: Uh, we brown bagged it, you know, put it in a paper sack. [Inaudible
18 43:49] you, you could go to the cafeteria if you wanted to get sick later on
19 or somethin', you know. Most people didn't want to really go there.
20
21 Doug Rademacher: You say...
22
23 Richard Sandborn: The food wasn't that good.
24
25 Doug Rademacher: The food [chuckling] wasn't that good. If you wanted to get sick later,
26 huh, that's pretty good.
27
28 Richard Sandborn: [44:03] Where was it located, the cafeteria?
29
30 Richard Sandborn: It was up on, uh, well, at first it was on the ground floor. It was on the
31 ground floor for a while then they moved it upstairs there. You had to go
32 up that escalator by the body shop office right up there. [coughing] There
33 was some people that I'm sure that used to get away with a lot of stuff,
34 guys on the line some of 'm would cover [coughing] for another guy's job
35 [inaudible 44:31] be up there playing cards maybe sometimes or over at
36 Harry's taking a double lunch hour, you know, if you go out in the body
37 shop, come back in Trim. That was a common thing in some areas
38 especially if you have [coughing] a supervisor [inaudible 44:44].
39 [coughing] I never could do it bein' the union guy, you know, but I knew
40 guys that did it [sniffling] because that was their pets, you know.
41
42 Doug Rademacher: Well, you just shared...
43
44 Richard Sandborn: We called 'm brown nosers or I don't know what you call 'm nowadays
45 but we called 'm different things. [chuckling]
46

1 Doug Rademacher: You just shared about extended lunches. There's a place across the street
2 that's from the Fisher Body plant. It's been there ever since it was, uh,
3 Durant Motor Works. It was called Harry's.
4

5 Richard Sandborn: Yeah.
6

7 Doug Rademacher: [45:14] Can you tell about Harry's Place? Did you ever go there and, and
8 what went, what went on there and talk about that a minute?
9

10 Richard Sandborn: [chuckling] You ever go there, Doug? [chuckling]
11

12 Doug Rademacher: Absolutely.
13

14 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. I went there different times. [sniffing] Usually I went there not
15 when I was workin' too much. I went over there at different times when I
16 was president of the union and stuff or, uh, chairman of the shop
17 committee we'd go over there, you know, sit around the table, talk and
18 stuff. I even had a few beers, maybe a good hamburger. They used to
19 have good hamburgers over there, good food. I think the guy's name was
20 Gus, am I right? Is that the guy that used to run it, one of'm?
21

22 Doug Rademacher: Gus was one of'm. Yeah.
23

24 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. He was a real, real nice guy. Then a lotta times we would go down
25 to the Irish Pub. We'd, uh, hung out down there a lot.
26

27 Doug Rademacher: Okay.
28

29 Richard Sandborn: But I never went over there when I was workin' on the line though, very
30 seldom. I, in fact, I, I didn't believe in it, you know, goin' over there and
31 taking a double lunch hour 'cause I didn't think you should do that. Not
32 for – not act like [inaudible 46:25] guy but I just didn't think it was right
33 that you should be doin' that.
34

35 Doug Rademacher: You wanted to provide for your family, so there's no reason to get caught
36 doin' somethin' where you could jeopardize that.
37

38 Richard Sandborn: Oh, there was a lot of things that people used to do to get jeopardized for
39 stealing. I've run into that a lot when I was chairman of the shop
40 committee or president of the Local. I had many a person come up here to
41 the, the union hall, break down and cry 'cause they'd lost their job, wanted
42 it back. Sometimes they'd bring their wife with them or kids, [inaudible
43 47:00] make you cry to have to give'm the good news or bad news, you
44 know, whichever it happened to be. It was rough.
45

1 Doug Rademacher: [47:09] Can you remember a particular not necessarily name but can you
2 remember a time where you helped someone that stands out in your mind?
3

4 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. I helped a lot of 'em, an awful lot in 1970 during the strike, which
5 was ni-, ni-, 90-some days. We had, we had one guy, I can say his name
6 'cause he passed away now, I don't think he would care, [Gus Galinaitis
7 47:35] was his name. He worked in, uh, he was a, he lived on East Grand
8 River about five, six miles from me. I didn't know him real good but he
9 was, uh, from Lithuania and he had a hard life and stuff and so I would
10 kinda – he was in the sanitation department ridin' one of them sweepers
11 around, you know.
12

13 Male: I know who he is.
14

15 Richard Sandborn: Do you know him?
16

17 Male: Yeah.
18

19 Richard Sandborn: Remember? Oh.
20

21 Male: Yeah.
22

23 Richard Sandborn: Okay, so you know. And he'd been there I think he had just a little over
24 30 years and I knew he had a little problem. He's, he's a little light-
25 fingered, you know. And he was a terrific guy for sellin' you pop on the
26 night shift, third shift. He'd bring a case. He'd go to Horrocks Market out
27 here in Saginaw and he'd buy pop at a real cheap price and bring it in and
28 sell the cans of pop, you know, to the guys on the line then he'd take the
29 empties back in a big plastic bag, huge plastic bag.
30

31 And one night for some reason I think they knew what was goin' on but
32 for some reason somebody either ratted on him or Plant Protection or
33 somebody wanted to turn him in. They stopped him at the gate, made him
34 open the bag up and in the center of the bag where the police in there
35 couldn't see, you know, guards, was a big air motor come out of the Paint
36 department. So they immediately held him up there then they went out
37 and searched his home and he had quite a few different things out there, so
38 they fired him right on the spot, you know. And we, we couldn't get his
39 job back but we finally got management – I wasn't, I wasn't chairman
40 then. I think [Bob Sanders 49:22] was chairman then. But they got
41 management to agree to let him have his full retirement, which meant a
42 hell of a lot to him, you know. Although he's passed away now at an early
43 age, he enjoyed quite a few years of [inaudible 49:35] retirement. He
44 always [inaudible 49:36] the union up too. He was, he was kind of a
45 funny talker. He, he was an alcoholic to start out with but he took the cure
46 and went through it. Turned out to be a hell of a good guy.

1
2 He had a brother, [Bill Galinaitis 49:47] who worked out in, uh, where
3 was it? Material Control I think. He's still alive. He's still alive. In fact,
4 he used – him and Gus and Bill used to, we'd, we always felt sorry for him
5 so my wife and I when we'd go to the Fisher reunion, they, they got a
6 place down in East Bay in Florida about, about 100 miles away, about 40
7 miles from Bradenton. We'd go down there and we'd pick these two guys
8 up because we felt sorry for them, you know, that, that kind of was
9 underprivileged people, you know, [inaudible 50:20]. We'd take him to
10 that picnic. They enjoyed that. I never [inaudible 50:25]. We'd all have
11 to furnish our own meat and stuff or food there, you know. Not – we'd
12 bring meat for additional. I think the union paid for part of the meat and
13 stuff. Uh, Bill and Gus would buy Kentucky Fried Chicken, you know,
14 real fresh chicken, a bucket of it, and then when we got to where the
15 meetin' was, they'd have you open the trunk up and they had a little cooler
16 deal, they'd take half of that out, put it in the cooler for themselves for
17 later. [chuckling] I never forget that. They always did that. You know,
18 them little things you don't, you don't forget but where I laid a
19 screwdriver down yesterday I don't know where it is, you know.
20
21 Doug Rademacher: Yeah. [chuckling] [51:09] So, um, what was the worst thing that ever
22 happened under your presidency that you can remember?
23
24 Richard Sandborn: I think the 1970 strike. That was terrible. We had people, uh, I can't tell,
25 quote their names from the International Union that kinda wanted to make
26 you go right by the book. You know, if they didn't come in and perform
27 their duty, it was over the strike committee, you know, the funds and stuff,
28 they had, they wouldn't get no, no check. And that's, you know, we'd,
29 we'd kinda review every case where they had hardships and stuff, we'd try
30 to cover for everybody 100%, you know, because we figured, hey, we
31 were payin' in the International Union Fu-, Strike Fund all the time, why
32 shouldn't all, all of 'em get it? And it was kind of a constant fight with the
33 – and even some of the people in, uh, that run, uh, oh, I don't – not
34 community service, whatever they call it here in Lansing now.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: Uh...
37
38 Richard Sandborn: [Inaudible 52:10] was head of it one time. He was a fairly good guy but
39 this guy ahead wasn't too good. They were kind of, when you refer
40 people over there for help, you know, we didn't feel they would give 'em a
41 fair shake and stuff. It always seemed to be like 652 got whatever they
42 wanted and we'd get what was left if there was anything, wheat in the
43 chaff, you know, all them deals. That's the way we always felt anyway. I
44 did as a [inaudible 52:35].
45

1 Doug Rademacher: [52:36] Did you ever have any battles with the International on the – as far
2 as trying to, uh, do the best job for your [inaudible 52:43]?
3

4 Richard Sandborn: Well, we had 30 and Out, we had to fight for that. We had to speak at the
5 conventions for it, you know, when they had their different conventions.
6 And, uh, well, first we had to get – it started out about Flint, Jack Wagner.
7 I don't know if anybody remember him. He was the, uh, guy that was, uh,
8 runnin' against [Don Ellis 53:03] for regional director who used – I think,
9 I don't know, I think he's passed away now, [Don Ellis] but Jack kinda
10 stirred it up on 30 and Out. He was what they called a rabble-rouser.
11 Come out of, uh, five-, 599 I think it is, Flint, the Buick Local anyway.
12

13 Doug Rademacher: Right.
14

15 Richard Sandborn: And he kept stirrin' this up at different conventions we had and stuff and
16 finally they, they got enough pressure on there and asked the union to start
17 down to 30 and Out. We got buttons. We had everything. We got it all
18 organized and they got it in negotiation. That's one reason that I, when I
19 retired I said I was, was gonna, I was gonna practice what I preach. I had
20 30.1 years and I left. I physically and mentally I could have stayed for
21 another 10 years but I didn't believe I should do it. I had a lot of other
22 union officers who stayed right there. Some of them stayed 40, 50 years.
23

24 Doug Rademacher: Well, it's a major concern for us in the upcoming, uh, negotiations is
25 whether or not they're going to try to go after that 30 and Out, so I
26 appreciate all you did to, to, uh, establish it and hopefully we can retain it.
27

28 Richard Sandborn: You guys got a rough job ahead of you. I, I feel for you 'cause it, it isn't
29 the union's fault or it isn't totally management's fault. All you got to do is
30 go right down to Washington D.C. and you'll find out whose fault it is,
31 just like with the gas prices right nowadays. It's, it's just terrible, you
32 know, and the prices [inaudible 54:34] go up but if you're a retired guy or
33 if you're just drawing a 40-hour check and maybe they take a \$5.00 pay
34 cut, uh, which Delphi I guess they're gonna try to get them to do. And
35 they all, there's on news comin' in that they, uh, one International Union I
36 guess walked out their electrical workers or somethin' I heard that today.
37 It's rough and there's a lot of people like you say [inaudible 54:59] earlier
38 there, they got resentment against the union. They think the unions give
39 way too much but, hey, the union had to do a lot of this to even have
40 anything, survive. You could point, in my opinion, you could point all the
41 way back when Ronald Reagan was president with the air controllers.
42 That started the whole damn thing. They walked out. What did he do?
43 Fired'm all, hired all scabs.
44

45 Doug Rademacher: Yes. That's [inaudible 55:22].
46

1 Richard Sandborn: And that trick-, and he had that old trickle-down effect, yeah. But yet I
2 watch a TV show the other day and they had four presidents on there, they
3 had Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan, Jack Kennedy and FDR and who
4 do you think was the most popular president of them? This gal who was a
5 contestant she figured FDR and I did too. Ronald Reagan [chuckling] was
6 the most popular president 'cause he was a movie star and all that horse
7 [swearing].
8

9 Doug Rademacher: TV exposure. Well, I'm going to lead you back to a little, uh...

10

11 Richard Sandborn: I'm gettin' carried away [inaudible 55:55].
12

13 Doug Rademacher: That's all right. [chuckling] Um, Lansing Fisher Body was recognized as
14 the Capital of Quality, uh, not only around the country but around the
15 world. [56:09] What do you think was the key to that?
16

17 Richard Sandborn: Well, their workforce is the main thing, you know. They had good
18 workers. There's no doubt about it. You, you had a few that were, didn't
19 wanna come to work maybe, you know, but the, the union negotiated the
20 relief agreement and extra [inaudible 56:27], you know, and covered
21 things for jobs and I think that helps a lot. But mostly your workforce and
22 as time progressed I think you had a little bit better management too than
23 what they used to be.
24

25 Doug Rademacher: Uh, you drove up today, I don't know had you seen it before but the place
26 is coming down now. The, uh, machines...
27

28 Richard Sandborn: I want a brick.
29

30 Doug Rademacher: ...are out there and, uh – you want a brick. [56:54] Tell me what's it,
31 what's it feel like after having put your 30 years in and to see it this way
32 now?
33

34 Richard Sandborn: Rough really 'cause I used to – when I was a shop committeeman and top
35 committeeman naturally you got to work [inaudible 57:10] especially top
36 committeeman, chairman, you know, and I used to go out on 3X out there
37 where you could work, uh, look at the floor there and see [inaudible
38 57:22] playin' football and all that. And I was there when the whole front
39 of the plant was all tore out and the whole brand new front was put in. In
40 fact, I got pictures of that and if I find it I'll, I'll bring'm into you, you
41 know. It was – and the fact that it's gone it's just you can't really believe
42 it, you know. When you got a, a badge, I got a badge at home, you know,
43 when I was hired in, that little old badge, the union card yet. I still got my
44 union card. Makes you [inaudible 57:54] cry sometimes, you know.
45

1 And I keep tryin' to tell some of the younger ones, like my son-in-law
2 hired in in '81, you might better start lookin' around. I said, hey, when
3 that stock market from GM goes down, when I was there and I had stock
4 in General Motors and I retired and I [inaudible 58:17] need some money
5 'cause we just bought a, I didn't want to do it but my wife wanted to buy a
6 cottage up at Crystal Lake and you imagine buying one when you drop
7 50,000 a year I was makin then 'cause I was workin' all kinds of hours,
8 you know, down to 25, 20, 25. [chuckling] That I never thought I could
9 swing, you know, but we did.

10
11 Doug Rademacher: So you've enjoyed your retirement. Um, well, we've asked a lot of things.
12 [58:46] Is there anything we've missed today that you'd like to share?
13 And what, what do you want to tell the young people?
14

15 Richard Sandborn: I, I think a lot, a lot of the 1970s strike I think when I was lucky enough to
16 be president of the Local though sometimes it used to bother me a lot
17 because I've seen a lot of things that people sacrificed for, you know, lost
18 a lot of money but they got a lot of benefits for the people back then. We
19 had to set the pattern. And GM was the target and usually, uh, the union
20 don't like to take on GM very often because it's awful costly when they
21 take on GM for a strike and they try to I'm sure keep away from but that
22 time they did and they, they, I thought they gained a tremendous amount
23 of stuff. It's bad that we have to start losing some of that but in the same
24 time you got to be able to at least have somethin' work for us because the
25 total amount of what I've read in the newspapers and stuff and heard, total
26 amount of people unionized is going down tremendously. And you, then
27 you got a spinoff here of other unions that got out of the mainstream, the
28 Teamsters and three or four others are formin' their other little agreement.

29
30 Gonna I understand put out a big notice indicatin' how these millionaire or
31 billionaires are gettin' paid off, you know, which is I think good and I
32 think the UAW ought to be pushin' that issue more of the, the big, and the
33 Democrat Party too instead of sometimes sittin' idly by. When I happened
34 to watch this morning when Bush was talkin' to on TV – not that I like to
35 watch Bush 'cause I hate the guy to watch. He's just a sarcastic SOB to
36 me. Reid, who's head of the Democrat Party, and Bush was talkin' about
37 the, uh, price of gas and stuff, what's Reid doin'? Noddin' his damn head
38 yes, you know, more or less agreein'. I know he's sittin' by the president
39 but why don't he just sat there not sayin', not, you know, not nod your
40 head at least 'cause to me it makes me think he's kinda goin' along with
41 him in the background and I don't see him out there talkin' too much
42 against. Some of'm now are startin' too, you know. You got Senator
43 Kennedy, Ted Kennedy. And the Kennedys to me was the only thing
44 there ever was. I worshipped them. I remember going home after work
45 crying the day he died, he got shot. I've seen him at conventions,

1 President Kennedy and I've see Bobby Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, they all
2 addressed the conventions.
3
4 But I think gettin' back to what you [inaudible 61:23] me what I had, was
5 the most, one of the most best things I've ever seen was Walter Reuther.
6 That was when they started Black Lake up there. We was one of the first
7 bunch that went up there and we went in there at the Black Lake
8 Educational Center. I was president of the Local then, [John Lewis 61:43]
9 was financial secretary. We went in there and the first thing they did, they
10 make, they made us all put on hardhats and Walter walked around there
11 with Emil Mazey who was financial secretary then 'cause they had
12 Mazey's Bar. I don't know if that's still there yet.
13
14 Jerri Smith: Yep.
15
16 Richard Sandborn: Is it?
17
18 Jerri Smith: Yep. [chuckling]
19
20 Richard Sandborn: And we got to visit that but we was just amazed, the union presidents, at
21 the way that was designed that, number one, no paint then. No paint
22 nowhere and they had everything was built around the trees, you know,
23 everything was built around the trees. We were right there when they,
24 they were still finishin' the buildings yet. That to me really impressed me
25 and I thought the world of Walter Reuther. And I always thought the
26 government used, it was unfair when they went after his brother, Victor
27 Reuther, you know. And then when Walter and May Reuther got killed in
28 a plane crash that, that bothered me a lot too. I got, you know, I ate
29 dinners, you know, in the same area with them different times. And there
30 was never another leader like Walter Reuther. I always think the closest
31 one to him was Leonard Woodcock. Some of'm that were leaders, Owen
32 Bieber, I didn't have too much use for him. I thought he was a company
33 man. Am I speakin' out of turn [inaudible 63:00]?
34
35 Doug Rademacher: No. You're welcome to say anything you like.
36
37 Richard Sandborn: Some of them higher ups I didn't feel, uh, took the average workers point
38 of view too strong. And I did, one other thing we did get to do when I was
39 a shop chairman what I thought was quite interesting, we had one guy on
40 the sh-, shop committee named [Ralph Best 63:19], he, uh, knew [Ken
41 Bidwell 63:22] who was plant manager at that time, he had a place out in
42 Arizona.
43
44 Jerri Smith: We're reachin' 20.
45
46 Cheryl McQuaid: Okay. Keep goin', go on.

1
2 Richard Sandborn: He had a place out in Arizona and, uh, they wanted, uh, he wanted us to go
3 to, to play golf with the, with the plant manager 'cause he, he knew him
4 pretty well, you know. We went up to his house and thank god he wasn't
5 there that day 'cause most of us didn't want to go play golf with the plant
6 manager [chuckling] bein' union official but there's, there's always them
7 little side things, you know. But we enjoyed, uh, the union, uh, really
8 made me, uh, uh – a farm boy I'm talkin' about, you know, come from a
9 Republican family. My dad was [inaudible 64:10] and never started
10 drawin' a social security check till he was 72 years old. Made me look at
11 a different point of view.
12
13 Because I got lucky enough, I always kept track, I got enough time in
14 there, I went to 21 different states, you know, as flyin' all over the
15 country, you know. There's one thing Walter Reuther would never take
16 you, he would never go to Florida, no way, because that was where the
17 head of AFL-CIO was then and they was, I think it was George Meany if
18 I'm not mistaken. I think he was the head of it and they, they lived
19 lavishly down there, you know. Walter said, "Uh-uh, you guys ain't
20 gonna do that." We went to other places, Chicago. We got to go to San
21 Francisco, to LA, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cleveland. A lot of stories
22 about them places. [chuckling] A lot of tickets, [chuckling] some of them
23 he paid for you. [chuckling] I remember makin' a U-turn in Philadelphia.
24 Wife said I couldn't. The shop chairman, Bob Sanders, his wife with him,
25 I made a U-turn. I wasn't supposed to make a U-turn. They wrote me out
26 a ticket and told me, I had Michigan plates on, I had to pay it [inaudible
27 65:23] time. I didn't pay it and I ain't paid it yet but I talked to a guy
28 down [inaudible 65:29] the park I'm at from Pennsylvania. He says if you
29 ever got, get stopped in Pennsylvania again, you pay it...
30
31 Doug Rademacher: [Inaudible 65:35].
32
33 Richard Sandborn: ...'cause it will be on your record. [laughter] You'll pay the interest
34 probably. That's just a side note, you know.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: Well, you've put a lot of years in and we definitely appreciate your
37 interview and all you've done for the labor movement and taken the time.
38 You just got back from your, your vacation or your, your winter home and
39 we appreciate you comin' on in and hope to see you at, uh, the Christmas
40 parties and the picnics and continue to be active and supportin' us and...
41
42 Richard Sandborn: I don't know.
43
44 Doug Rademacher: ...we'll continue to do our part.
45
46 Richard Sandborn: I don't know if Dorothy would want me [inaudible 66:08].

1
2 Cheryl McQuaid: [laughter] I'm sure she does. Thank you, sir.
3
4 Male: Thank you.
5
6 Richard Sandborn: Yeah. It's just been a lot of fun. Um, um, for the union, uh, union can
7 never do you any more than it has for me, you know. It's just been
8 tremendous. I owe everything to them that I got now, a lot of, most of it.
9 I got a, I got a cottage at Crystal Lake. I got a [inaudible 66:34] new
10 motorhome or a mobile home I mean in Florida. And I got a hundred and,
11 140 acres of land and I still farm 40 acres of it, combine my corn with a
12 two-row combine, the only one in Ionia County. I rent out most of it but I
13 still, I raise sheep. I got a bunch of sheep around there. I enjoy it.
14
15 Doug Rademacher: Well, it's definitely been [inaudible 67:01].
16
17 Jerri Smith: Thank you. Yes.
18
19 Richard Sandborn: Last year, when I came back from Florida I had a pacemaker put in me
20 twice. [chuckling] Now hopefully this thing is straightened out.
21
22 Doug Rademacher: Well, you keep tickin' and, and we'll keep, we'll keep, uh...
23
24 Richard Sandborn: [Inaudible 67:14].
25
26 Doug Rademacher: ...we'll keep workin' for you.
27
28 Richard Sandborn: I didn't mean to hold you up all this time.
29
30 Doug Rademacher: Oh no.
31
32 Jerri Smith: We've enjoyed it. Thank you.
33
34 John Fedewa: Thank you.
35
36 Doug Rademacher: Appreciate you giving us time.
37
38 Richard Sandborn: I enjoyed lettin' it out.
39
40 Doug Rademacher: Oh, it's great to have you.
41
42 Richard Sandborn: I appreciate having your offer.
43
44
45/mlc