

Interview with Michael Bennett  
September 14, 2005

At: UAW Local 602 Union Hall, Michigan Avenue, Lansing  
Lead Interviewer: Cheryl McQuaid  
Also Present: John Fedewa, Linda Johnson, Doreen Woodward,  
Kathy Berry, Marilyn Coulter, and Michael Fleming.  
Current Address: 1104 Gidner, Charlotte, MI 48823  
Marital Status: Married  
Children: Four, one stepchild, 6 grandchildren  
Nationality: US White  
Military Service: None

Hire Date: December 16, 1970

Supervisor - Dick Thelen

Power Window buttons - 2nd shift

Laid off: February 1974, returned to work March, 1976

Worked on the sealer line in Paint, some Trim, but primarily in Body Shop on spot and MIG welding, was utility and a Team Coordinator. Went to Final Inspection in Trim and liked that best.

Formerly worked in Owosso as a stocker in a small family operated factory. Money was good but the GM benefits were better.

When he started in Body Shop it was possible to transfer to different jobs every few weeks.

Pranks: Wallet in aisle with grease under it so when you picked it up you got a hand full of grease.

Union Activities:

Was always reading the contract and was able to answer questions for people on the line. In 1982 his wife encouraged him to run for Alternate Committeeperson and he did. He was also the Chair of the election Committee and was elected as Vice President for 6 years (1993 - 1999) under Gary Bernath.

He feels that Committee People can't get things done as easily as in early years. Used to just talk to supervisor and settle matters but now more complicated.

Being Vice President is very nerve wracking. High expectations from membership. Felt his job was more public relations than anything. Feels all Union Leadership should have experience as committee people, know the grievance procedure, and they need to know the contract.

Most appreciated bargain benefit: Health Care

Most gratifying part of job: Getting someone their job back.

What makes us Capital Quality: Comradery of workers.

Strike:

Three day strike in early 90's. Andy Graham was the strike chair and Mike helped deliver coffee and donuts to picketers.

Most Impressive Launch:

J Car

More cooperation between Union and Management made it best launch ever. Gave union say in equipment, job set up, etc.

Management trusted employees.

Retirement:

Still active in Union as Vice Chair of Retirees.

*Retired from the Shop but not from the People.*

Advice to New Hires:

Believe in your Union and get involved in your union.