

Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team

1-2-06

9:15
am

UAW 602 Frank Dyer House

Interviewer Cheryl McQuade

Interviewee = ~~Frank~~ Tom Fountain

Seniority = 9-4-68 Ret = June 2005

Married = Yes (6) boys

Military = Yes 2 years 1966 in Germany

Education: K-12 and 2 years college at LCC.

Reason for Hiring = Friends were already working at Fisher and the best wages that were around.

★ Started at Helsons in Greenville MI then went to Army for 2 years and then to Fisher Body.

★ First Day = was in the trim shop, very hard working the line for approx 10 years. Then went to skilled trades worked "utility" in the trim shop which means on absentee replacement person for absent employees.

Tom felt there was some friction between hourly production and skilled trades dept.

★ Favorite equipment = The crane, and being able to operate this comfortably.

★ Special Favours = one of your friends or co workers wanted lockers built or something made.

These were called "gawb" jobs in the plant.

Also jobs were brought in from outside the plant were performed in the plant.

★ Tom grew up on a farm and this means mostly self sufficient for his family.

Raised beef and milking cows around 200 acres

(7)

Fisher vs Gibsons = These union shops were a little bit different but still some wages.

* Lunches & breaks = brought lunch in from home, ate off the wagon that came around twice a mto. but

* Punks = Put into the trunks of the cars going down the line. Put in the trash can butt first. Being taped by duct tape to a steel wheel. Back then they were about a 10 hour pay.

* Son said that we had approx 6500 people work there. He moved to Louisiana from Lakeview and bought a house right across the street from the Fisher Body plant.

Sometimes Son + friends would go across the street to Womys Lounge, for approx 30 mins for lunch and not usually after work.

* Son mostly would work 7 days a week. This takes up some time with your family.

* Son worked at Fisher Body and he met his present wife at Fisher and is still married to ~~him~~ her at present day.

* When Son hired in there was just a few women on production or skilled Trades. As the years went on more and more women came into hourly production.

* Friends + co workers = not too many close friends outside the plant.

* Production vs Trades = Production was about

(3)

the same as skilled trades. You made friends with each other in both settings.

B Women = Most of them come in around ~~the~~ the late 70's and 80's, and until the present.

A Not a whole lot of animosity between whites and minorities in skilled trades dept.

A Tom thought that changing shifts was hard for him, but mostly on midnights a lot of guys slept on the weeks.

Tom chose millwright because he felt this trade would fit him best. This means they would keep the line moving. Moving cars or fixing chains on the production line. They would use things called "idiot sticks". These were long orange bars about 6-8ft long and 1 ft wide. The biggest car pile up was approx 20 cars on an incline in the plant. Each one of these feels the car carrier and the car is about 3 to 4000 pounds. Only one time would Tom remember about a person being caught between two car carriers but not seriously injured.

A Supervision in Trades = Tom felt they are professionals, but some bosses just want to get the line running, but good bosses will take safety in mind of their own employees to keep them safe.

(4)

Line speeds were able to be sped up when the production is needed more.

The tracks + conveyer is approx several miles long.

* Dirtiest job performed = Paint shop, primer booth opens, sticky paint that would not come off.

* Happiest moment = Retirement, buy pizzas, bring your family in the plant. Friends + co-workers

* Union involvement = Not much other than voting in all general elections.

= Capital of Quality = Some felt that the working relationship between labor and management. People took pride in their work each and every day.

* Plant Closing = Some was there 37 years and he thought long and hard when he walked out on the last day. It wasn't just a building but the memories that went on inside the building.