

# Lansing Fisher Body Historical Team

4-26-03

10:30 am

Interviewee = Richard Sandborn

Interviewer = Doug Radmacher

Seniority = 5-15-55 24 years old.

Military = No

Married = Yes (4) children (2) boys (2) girls

Education = High School Graduate.

- Born and raised in Portland Me. His parents were farmers and he has six brothers and six sisters for a total of 13 children.

He worked on a farm when he was younger and milked cows right down the road where he was born. Then to PEO motors for 2 years. Then they went on strike and Richard then came to Fisher Body. He remembers seeing flyers out that Fisher Body was hiring people in 1955.

He hired into the Body Shop into the "foddering" department. Bob then was a "swing shift" 4 weeks on days and then 4 weeks on nights.

\* First Day = Very scared, petrified, couldn't find his way around. Went to the body shop but then was loaned to the trim shop for about 2 weeks. Then went back to the body shop. This was very back breaking work because of the bending and moving with the line.



Eventually Richard had this problem caused by lead poisoning. Back then some people were ~~lead~~ supervisors "sets" and didn't do very much. He continued to work and while it was tough, most people come to believe that this job was workable.

Also Richard spoke of about very few black men in Fisher Body (plant).

+ Driving in from Portland they were in a 4 man payroll who all used to work together.

\* Probs = says would shut you out off in the booth also fill your air hose with water so when you would reconnect you would get sprayed with water on your face.

# It was not until about 1961-1962 that people were given earplugs, gloves, coveralls etc. Most shifts were between 10 and 11 hours a shift.

In 1957 he was laid off for 1 year and unemployment was only \$35-~~100~~ a week. So he painted barns by hand for \$1.00 an hour that whole year.

Richard stayed in the body shop for most of his 30 years except when he was on committee or President of Local 602. Richard felt that the committeeman in the body shop wasn't doing a very good job. So he went ahead and ran against him in the union election.



(2)

Loydd Coir was the first person to introduce him to the Union. Then Loydd went to the international UAW and Richard assumed the role of President of UAW Local 602.

\* Lunch - mostly brown bag food, the cafeteria food remains very good. Some people went to Honys Place across the street from Fisher Body Plant. Richard also talked about getting people back to work after people were fired for stealing from the plant.

\* Worst thing that happened = the strike of 1970, for 30 years and out. Retirement. Capital of Quality = the workforce was the best, only a handful of bad people. People wanted a job with Quality Cars etc.

Plant Closing = Very sad, hard to believe.

# Richard was going back to the 1970's strike. People lost some money but the gains were very well worth it. We will have a real fight on our hands in the next contract in 2007.

\* Best thing he ever saw = Walter Reuther and the opening of the Block Lake Education Center in Norway Michigan. Also sadness when Walter and his wife were killed in a plane crash.

The Union gave him his whole lifestyle through the years and a rich life.