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January 16, 2006

To Mr. Earl Nicholson Jr. and the Interviewing Committee

An Addendum to the Statements and Notes Given at the Interview

First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me and having patience to listening to me express of some of my experiences while employed at Fisher Body GMC. In the interview, I was asked to tell of some of my happier and serious times in the plant. I gave a few. However, I just couldn't remember a lot of them. I thought of some afterwards. Here are some of them. I recall being elated when Fisher Body became a "Closed Shop" in 1955. "Closed Shop" meant that every employee must join the union or join the outsiders. Before that time, I would get incensed by some co-workers bragging to me about getting the same benefits I was getting and not being a member of the union. That move shut their mouths. But I recall a few people quitting rather than join the union. The next issue, if one can call it an issue, someone in management wanted me to try out for supervision.

I was given papers to read and ponder. My mind was already seventy-percent negative. But I told my foreman I would take the papers home, look them over, talk with my wife and give him my decision in a couple of days, which I did. This was in 1969 and I had made out an application for a job in Jig Repair. I had a feeling someone might have been trying to impede that. I brought the papers back. My mind was made up. I told my foreman: "Thanks for the encouragement, but I'd rather not venture into that line of employment. I don't have the ability to be a leader of people, and when I go home at night I don't want to take my job with me." He thanked me for my decision, saying he thought I'd make a good supervisor. Six months later, I was in the Layout Dept. as a trainee for jig and fixture repairman.

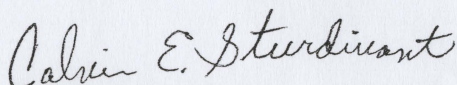
To complete this addendum, I was glad to be able to retire in relative good health. It had been my hope, maybe even my prayer, to walk out as I had walked in. To a larger degree, that was true. Of course, it's a different in your walk at sixty-three than it is at twenty-five. And I thank the union for leaning on the corporation for the benefits to help make my retirement viable. That day when I retired, there were a few of the big wigs at my dinner. Weithorn, the plant manager, would have been there, but he was in Europe. I was just so overcome with emotion. I could hardly contain myself. I felt both sad and glad. After the dinner, I got out of there because tears weren't too far away. With all of the handshakes, well-wishes, congratulations, it was a bit heavy.

Going by the plant guards was not easy at all. They knew me and gave me firm handshakes. I got away fast. When I finally reached my car, I opened the door, got in, sat for a bit. There was a song on the radio by some rock group; I don't recall who it was. It might have been Simon & Garfunkel. But I remember this line that said: "When I was young, did I know all the answers?" Or something like that. I cried like a baby and drove off.

The next day I started studying at Lansing Community College, and I might add here, I was late for class. But be that as it may, I had enrolled in a writing class, and it wasn't easy. But I got a lot of help and encouragement. A few of the faculty personnel suggested I go to the Lansing State Journal and see if they would print my articles. It was "Black History" month and I had written a piece about an old aunt of my father's who had been a slave and used to talk to my younger brother, eldest sister and me about her ordeal of being set free at the age of nine. Along with that, she just encouraged us children to study hard, learn all you can so we could be somebody.

The lady at LSJ thought it was a wonderful story and was just amazed by the content. Yes, it would be printed. Even after I got home, she called me to inquire if it was fictional? No, lady it is really, really true. I told her. The LSJ printed the articles I don't remember the date in February, but it coincided with the day Mr. Nelson Mandela of S. Africa was released from prison. What a coincidence! I might add I received comments from a wide spectrum of people, including an asst. principal from a Lansing high school. Well, enough about me now. I hope you're not thinking that I am wading in the waters of narcissism. Believe me. I am not.

By the way, the term I was trying to remember last Friday regarding some people being superstitious about 13 or Friday the thirteenth, is Triskaidekaphobia. Try that tongue-twister.


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