

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
GM Lordstown

Personal Experiences
O.H. 2055

Bonnie Rich
Interviewed
By
Michael Murphy
On
April 20, 2002

ARCHIVE
Oral
History
2055

Youngstown State University

Oral History Program

GM Lordstown

O.H. # 2055

Interviewee: BONNIE RICH

Interviewer: Michael Murphy

Subject: GM Lordstown

Date: April 20, 2002

This project is being funded by the Ford Foundation and the Center for Working Class Studies.

MM: This is Michael Murphy doing an interview for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program and the Center for Working Class Studies; this project was funded by the Ford Foundation. Today is April 20, 2002 and I am here today with Mrs. Bonnie Rich and I'd like to thank Mrs. Rich for allowing me to come here today and interview her. What I would like to start out with is a personal background of you and your family. If I can ask you when did you come to this area or your parents may have come to this area?

BR: I came to this area in September of '68. I'm divorced and remarried, my ex-husband worked for an airline and I grew up in rural Pennsylvania, and we lived in the same area. He went to Chicago to work we got to married and I was out there for a little bit. We moved around so that we could get closer to home and so we ended up here in the Youngstown area.

MM: And what part of Pennsylvania did you come from?

BR: South of Clarion, in a little town called New Bethlehem.

MM: Okay. Is that a steel town?

BR: No, Bethlehem is on the eastern side of the state. New Bethlehem is on the Western side, South of Cook's Forest and Clarion. It's just a little community.

MM: And are your parents from that area?

MM: And the ethnic background of your family?

BR: From what I know it's basically a German and English background, both of them combined. My grandfather did grow up, he was Pennsylvania Dutch, and he grew up with the German speaking German, because of the Pennsylvania Dutch. When his family came over here I have no idea. The last name was Himes so he's German, but my Grandmother is English. Then my father has a German – English background too.

MM: Okay. What kind of work did your parents do?

BR: My mom for most of part was a stay at home mom. My dad worked in Hanley Brick Co. where he made bricks and tiles. He started out in a tile factory and then in Summerville there is a glazed brick company that was the only place that made those glazed bricks in the United States, I think. But then he also, on the side, would lay brick for different people and I could take you back there where he did a fireplace or he did brick on a house or things like that.

MM: Do you remember the name of the firebrick company or was it firebrick?

BR: In Summerville Brick Company was the name of it I think.

MM: Do you remember any dates that he worked there?

BR: He probably started in there about 1957 and worked until, probably retired around '79 or somewhere in there.

MM: Do you have any siblings?

BR: I have one brother and one sister they both live in Atlanta, Georgia right now. My ex-husband started something in my family with the working for airline businesses. My brother saw what my ex-husband was doing so he decided to go into the airline business to and he started out in Chicago also and he worked for TWA, which now is American Airlines and he lives in Atlanta. My sister ended up in Atlanta just because she was down there visiting and liked the area and stayed there.

MM: Yeah it is pretty nice down there. Where did you attend school at?

BR: Red Bank Valley High School in New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

MM: Okay and what was school like for you there? Was it diverse high school?

BR: We are talking rural Pennsylvania the diversity was more would have been more Catholic and Protestant. Basically, not just basically there were no Afro-American's in our area. So, it was strictly, no Spanish or Puerto Ricans or anything like that, basically you were either Italian or German-English decent.

MM: That's where the Catholics were coming in with the Italians?

BR: Yeah.

MM: What were the Italians working at?

BR: Where were they? That's a good question, because it was so isolated and they would have their little communities, I would say that they would be in the brick companies and things like that.

MM: Okay. What was school like for you did you enjoy school?

BR: No I did not enjoy high school it was one of those things where I never felt like I was in with the clicks.

MM: I think we all went through that.

BR: Yes.

MM: Did you go on to college or anything?

BR: Not then, I do have a degree from YSU, but I didn't get in until later years. That's one thing that General Motors helped out with cause they paid for my college education.

MM: Okay. What memories do you have of your neighborhood, did you live in a neighborhood where you were next to houses or was it more rural and farm like?

BR: It was out in the country, but we had a community. We had friends that lived up and down, but it was a blue-collar community and our social life centered around church activities and nobody had a lot of money, everybody was just going from pay to pay.

MM: Okay. You first got married then...

BR: I first got married when I was eighteen and moved away from home and that's been quite a few years ago.

MM: And your kids?

BR: My kids, I have two boys, they are grown up and one has children of his own and married. He has gone to North Carolina to live. My other son lives here in Hubbard, he has the children.

MM: Okay and the one that lives in Hubbard what does he do?

BR: He is working for Kraft right now, in the maintenance. He had gone to school and become an airline mechanic in Atlanta, that's how my brother ended up in Atlanta,

because they were both working for airlines in Atlanta. But through my sons' wife wanting to live closer to home, because she was from this area, he quit that job and came here.

MM: And your work experience prior to being with GM?

BR: My work experience prior to being with GM was almost nothing. I was a mother at an early age, stayed at home most of the time and tried to get a job here and there, but it was really hard with the kids. So, I didn't get one.

MM: Okay, well let's focus on your GM experience. How and when did you get hired at GM?

BR: I got hired at GM on May 17, 1973. I needed the job, because my husband and I had divorced and I had two boys that I needed to support. I got hired because I knew somebody that was in the union and they got me an application.

MM: Okay and what department did you start in?

BR: I started in the body shop at the van plant and for somebody that had never been in a factory and didn't know what she was getting herself into and everything it was quite an amazing experience.

MM: Did you remain in that department or did you move to?

BR: Oh no I was there for twenty-one years and I moved to different departments. I got laid off two different times, one for a six-month period and the other for sixteen months.

MM: But it was always in the van plant?

BR: No. I started out in the van plant. Well, then I did work on the Vegas because after I was laid off I was called over to the car plant for six months. Then I got laid off for sixteen months, and then I worked in the van plant for quite a few years again. Then you were able to transfer back and forth and I went back to the car plant. I worked in body shops in both of them, but I ended up my career there in the trim department.

MM: Okay and can you describe maybe you can describe your first day of walking into such a big plant or describe a typical workday at GM?

BR: Um the first day they were in a way they did it, they do it one of two ways. You either get thrown on a job right a way, which doesn't happen there, they are very safety minded and I was sweeping most of the day. But it gave me a chance to get use to being around the machinery and what was going on. The noise in the body shop was tremendous too. So, but a typical day at General Motors was to get up go to work, take your breaks, eat your lunch, do your job, punch out, and go home. Hopefully you could leave it at that.

MM: Being that you had never been in any other and this being such a large plant what was your first thought when you walked into such?

BR: It was like whoa. Not understanding what was going on seeing all this confusion. To be honest with you there's, the people, the machines, and the noise.

MM: And did you have to swing shifts when working there or did you find a steady shift you could stay on?

BR: Because of my seniority and my family's needs I was one of these people that went from day turn to second shift a lot. When I first got hired there I was on second shift all the time. Then through the years my seniority kept me on what they call the bubble and I wanted to be on day turn at much as possible. So, I had to go back between the two shifts because they would need a certain amount of people on each shift and as long as they needed me on day turn but once there were too many people on day turn I got sent back to second shift.

MM: Bumped. And how did that affect your family life? It's hard to raise children and be on two different shifts.

BR: Well, when it was just me and the boys I was always on second shift and I had to get a babysitter of course and that was hectic trying to find one. And they didn't always have the best babysitter. Then when I got remarried, my present husband works out there too and he has always worked second shift. I can't say always, 99% of his time out there and he was hired in '66 and he's still out there. So, the majority of that time and do mean the majority of it was on second shift. He likes second shift. So, he would be gone in the evenings and that's why I felt like I had to be there on the days. Usually in the summer time when the kids were home I was able to hold day turn and then when they would go back to school is usually when I had to go back on second shift. And it would depend on, he had two girls his oldest one was old enough that she should have been able to keep an eye on the younger ones. So, it worked out and we got through it anyways. The effect on the family every time I made a change there was an adjustment, we had to go through and adjustment period. After you do it so many times you get use to the adjustment and it isn't too much.

MM: If somebody didn't know what GM was in very few words how would or could you best describe with your experience there.

BR: My experience there, General Motors really did a lot for me, but while I was there I didn't like because of the repetitiveness of the job. When you do the something over and over again within an hour and you have to do that job, and when I worked there they weren't working eight hour shifts, my shifts would be nine or ten hours. I very seldom had more than a ten-hour shift. But I would be doing that five and six days a week. There was a lot of over time that I worked. But yet I saw how people would hate their job, but they would depend on that job so much that they would not do anything to get out of there. I hated it and I worked at getting out and when they offered a buy out and I got my

degree at the same time I said goodbye. And there were people that amazed me, as I listened to people and watched them what they would do and the things that they would say. When it came to not working at General Motors they couldn't really trust anything else to even after being laid off and going back to work and stuff people still clung to General Motors for the security of it.

MM: When you say about your schooling, GM paid for your schooling?

BR: Yes, they had a tuition program where I went to college I got my degree in social work and they paid for the tuition.

MM: You only went part time?

BR: I only went to school part time. At one time in my life I was working full time at General Motors, which is forty plus hours, I was going to college at one or two classes, I had a blended family that I was trying to take care of, and I was active in the church too. I did get wore out there was a time that I quit going to college, because it was like I can't do all of this.

MM: The time that you spent at GM how did the working conditions change from starting in '73 until you retired?

BR: How did the working conditions change? That's what I am trying to... well I noticed a difference in the safety of it. They were sort of relaxed, but with OSHA coming in and accidents happening they became more safety conscience. In my viewpoint from where I started to where I ended they would try to placate the employees more, but yet they really weren't. This is where the trust issue comes in, because they would tell us things, they would give us things, and tell us how great they are on one side and then it would no sooner be out of their mouth then they would be back to their old ways and their deceitful ways doing what they had always done. So, they would try to say we're changing and they are still doing it today. They still want the quality and they want to cut corners, you know cut the cost, and we want to do these things and we are going to work with you, but then they wouldn't work with us. So, in retrospect it was just trying, they knew how to play the people to get what they wanted out of the people and that really has not changed.

MM: Did you see any of the technologies that have come in?

BR: Yeah. Now I didn't really see the robots work in the body shop, but I know what happened there.

MM: Did it help your job in anyway or did you see it relieve any kind of?

BR: By the time they brought the, well they had robots in the body shop over when I was working over there and I am sure it took jobs away from people. It never affected my job, because I had enough seniority and I got out of the body shop. When they really put the robots and cut the number of people in the car plant that are in the body shop I wasn't

there I was in trim. They got these robots thinking they would be a good thing and they turned out not to be as good and reliable as the human person that they had. And I am not sure what they are doing right now.

MM: Let's see, did you socialize with the people you worked with inside the plant as to where you would socialize with them outside the plant afterwards?

BR: At first yes and towards the end no, I met my husband at General Motors. It was outside of General Motors.

MM: Was it the nature of the people that you stopped socializing with them or was it your family and other outside callings?

BR: Probably both. When I first, it comes out of your needs and what your looking for in life and I was just newly divorced and when your putting nine to ten hours a day in and you have a family and that becomes your social life too. So, my social life was there. Because it easier to go out after work and socialize then it is, and have the weekends at home to what you need to do at home when you're a single parent it sort of like limits your time.

MM: Some of the places you went out afterwards would be?

BR: We would go out to the bars.

MM: The bars, like Bill's Place or Bill's Place is in Austintown I say Bill's Place because I know GM people would go there.

BR: Well, you know I really didn't, yeah I didn't have any specific hangout, because more hangouts like that for me was with people from outside General Motors on the weekends. Now that I think about it.

MM: I was talking like after shift.

BR: No not after shift, because see I am a morning person so working second shift was really hard on me. So, I would usually go home after work. Now sometimes I would stop for breakfast more often. I rode back and forth, carpooled with Jim and another guy and we would stop for breakfast once in awhile. If I was carpooling, but if I was driving myself I would come home.

MM: If you went to breakfast were there any specific places you went?

BR: Oh some place here in Hubbard.

MM: Oh you'd come into Hubbard. Okay, or the truck stop?

BR: The truck stop wasn't there then.

MM: No? Okay.

BR: There was a restaurant up here that used to be called Dog House and now its, I can't think of what its called.

MM: And did you attend any company-sponsored activities or union sponsored activities?

BR: The Company never really sponsored any activities that I can remember. The union activities at Christmas time they would have a nice program and a nice give away for the kids at Stambaugh Auditorium and I took the boys to that. And then they would have in the summer time, they still have that, they would have a picnic at an amusement park or something like that I would take the kids there.

MM: Okay. How did you feel about working at GM overall?

BR: Overall I am glad not to be working there, but as I look back and I think back about the pay checks that my husband and I brought home and what we were able to do for our kids and things like that that was great. And since I am not working there anymore I can really say that they did provide a lot for me, because they helped me to give my boys a home and what I was in need of then. They gave me a wonderful husband, we were able to provide a nice living for our kids while they were home and it provided a college education for me. And I got to meet a lot of diverse people, because coming from rural Pennsylvania where it was a white population to go out there and there is everything you can imagine out there. Different nationalities, different people, different ways of life, to be able to get such a diverse look at people is such a fantastic.

MM: That's your first experience with African Americans and Latin Americans. As a woman, now most of our questions seemed to be geared towards men and obviously we didn't anticipate in finding too many women to interview. So, I might not have questions geared towards that. So, maybe if you could shed some light on how it might have been different for you working there as a women compared to the majority of men being working out there? I guess the question is being a woman in a man's world.

BR: Being a woman in a man's world, there are several different ways that I can answer that. Because woman in their personalities diverse, they started hiring women out there in '70 and I was hired in '73. So, in some ways those women that went before me broke in a lot of things, but I was one of the first women in the body shop in the van plant. So, I still had to break the ground and at the time I wasn't even thinking about breaking ground. There was a need, as I look back on it now and I think about what happened in the 60's with women going into the work force and continuing more into the 70's and what was going on with Civil Rights and all that stuff.

MM: The woman's movement.

BR: Yeah and all of that. I never looked at myself as being a pioneer, I never looked at myself at being a rebel, but yet I've had people tell me that I am a rebel. For me going out there and I learned so much at General Motors about people. I went out there to do a job and yeah there was sexual harassment, but I wasn't looking at it as sexual harassment, you have to remember I was twenty-four years old. There was a whole world opened to me that I had never opened before. The jobs I got, there were some jobs out there, being the first one the guys would either say your getting easy jobs. They would say that women got the easy jobs so that they could do them, but yet I did a lot of jobs out there that men wouldn't do. I had a strong work ethic so I worked. There were women out there that boo-who'd out there an awful lot so they got the easy job, but you find those things with the men too. I mean we're talking manual labor, I spot-welded. And those were, there were some of them that I wasn't that good at it so I didn't do a lot of spot-welding, but I have done it. They used me as a person to fill in wherever a lot. And that was good, because I don't like doing the same things all the time and that kept me from, you talk to people out there that do the same job all the time a lot of them health problems in the area that they use repetitively. I don't have that because I kept using so much of my body parts, because of the different jobs that I did. So, yeah there was sexual harassment, the guys just loved to put nude pictures in front of my work area to see what I would do. In the male female relationship everything you've heard has gone on out there. I am not going to disclose what I did, but man either loved you or hated you. I became one of the boys and it was the easiest way to do it. And I enjoyed being part of the gang, because they respected me. I am not one to want someone to pity me or anything like that. I didn't want the easy way out I wanted to be respected in a way. Men and women working together your going to find all kind of different things, but if you do your job and you respect men and you want men to respect you its there.

MM: Those that may have given you a hard time was it an age thing, somebody that might have been older and thought that you shouldn't have been there or were the younger men just as bad?

BR: It would have been the younger ones that would have been more disrespectful then the older ones. No you've got to remember I went in there when the plant was young. So, I was just a little bit younger then the median age there. The median age there when I started was probably about thirty years. So, you're not talking of an older population. There wasn't that many people over thirty-five working there. So, and I was twenty-four when I started working there. So, the guys that would treat me disrespectful were the guys that had the personality of thinking women shouldn't be in the work force.

MM: Okay your coworkers you had disrespect from some of them, how was management to you? The immediate foremen's how did they treat you as a women? Did you notice them treating you any different, did they patronize you, not consider your opinion over another coworkers?

BR: Oh well, they would not consider, it was not until the end of my career at General Motors that they would consider my opinion. But I don't know how much more the management wasn't really interested in a whole lot of what the workers had to say. So,

therefore I was even lower on the totem pole, they might listen to a man quicker then they would listen to me.

MM: They might address it but they might not fix it?

BR: Yeah or they wouldn't even pay attention to me. From the foreman's and probably and from the men on the line, they thought I was fair game to hit on. If a man was prone to hit on somebody I was fair game to be hit on. I never got myself into a situation where a foreman used me or missed used me because of my sexuality that just never became an issue for me. Because I always saw it separately and I guess I had enough self esteem about myself that I wouldn't allow that to happen. Those two issues to me in my eyes were always kept separate I never did favors to get better jobs.

MM: Right, but did you see that going on with any of the other women?

BR: Um, yeah.

MM: Okay. And was anybody called up on it? No one pointed it out or no one would say anything?

BR: No it was just gossip going around, talked about nobody seemed to be in control of it just seemed to happen. Again on down the line, but it took for some reason finally started saying hey wait a minute, you can't do these things to me. There was some court cases latter on.

MM: Our men bigger gossips then women?

BR: Men are bigger gossips then women.

MM: I am only asking this because I have worked in both environments and my opinion is yes.

BR: Yes. I would say that they are bigger gossip then women, but women are more caddy. And I have a feeling that its because of the male female relationship. I would rather work with men.

MM: I had the same experience where I worked with a company that it was all women and they could be very caddy, but when I worked with more men they were more gossipy then.

BR: Yeah, you think men aren't gossipy, but that's not true.

MM: The break room was like a hen house when I worked in the mill, they were constantly. Okay and what role did the union play for you in your life?

BR: It was good to have, you see I, the union has evolved in different ways. When the union started back in the '30's and '40's they were in need then. And I still see a need for them today, because places like GM you would still have the sweatshops if it wasn't for them. So, I understand that, but the kids growing up do not understand that. The union, a foreman tried to give me a hard time and I was a good worker. I wasn't there a hundred percent of the time I was sick, my kids were sick, whatever. I had enough good report with the union, all the time with the union, I would go in and tell them this, this, and this and they would say okay they would take care of it. I was never, I was at work most of the time hardly ever on sick leave, I did my job, so there for if I was sick or my kids were sick. I took in doctor excuses, which is a farce to me, but they would still every once in awhile try to give me a hassle. So, I put a call into the union and I would say this, this, and this and the union would write it up and take care of it. And they would.

MM: Did you ever really have to go through the grievance procedure or was it just taken care of?

BR: Yeah it was usually taken care of without the grievance.

MM: Did you ever have to have maternity leave while at General Motors? Or did you see other women go through maternity.

BR: Myself no, others yes.

MM: And did they have problems? Were they given a hard time because of maternity?

BR: I don't think they were given a hard time, I couldn't say that, they weren't given sufficient special privileges. I know of one girl that was able as soon as she got pregnant to go on sick leave, because her doctor said she had to. I know of another girl that was pregnant out there and they did give her a hard time and she should have been taken off her job, because she was constantly hitting her belly, and that girl I don't know if she asked. You're dealing with a lot of different personalities so when you talk to people you have to be careful of what you say and get their perspective. I don't know for sure what she did, but I do know that her baby was born early, because of the constant hitting on her belly. Now who should have addressed that issue, it should have been her, and the union, and it should have been the plant. The company should have done something so that wouldn't have happened. But the umbilical cord started coming away from her uterus.

MM: Because of the constant hitting, well let's follow up on the pervious union question. The plant had a history of being very militant especially in the '70's. Can you comment on that mentality that people attached to the union?

BR: Yeah okay. The rebellion was because of the time that we were in. You had a lot of young people and I am talking 25, 30 year olds out there who were being told by society that it's a me first, so its what I want, what I want is what I should get. And it doesn't matter what I do to you. You've got to give me what I want to me is where all of that come out of. As people pointed out the United States is based on, the rebellious thing

came from our ground roots, because it was people saying that they were tired of living in Europe and didn't want to put up with those things that brought them over here. So, you've got that difference of what it takes to get people to make a change and you have people from West Virginia, people from Kentucky, Pennsylvania, to come here at this plant that were give things that they never thought they would be able to do. And then you had society saying you can have everything you want and it doesn't matter the company has to give it to you.

MM: Did you see a role of Vietnam playing anything with union members? Vietnam was going on at the time did you have Vets that seemed to be stand offish?

BR: No. The Vietnam Vets were very reluctant to talk about their experience. They might let you know that they were a Vietnam Vet, but they really, I didn't know anyone that dwelled on it or even talked about it.

MM: I heard some peoples spin that this militancy might have come from these Vietnam Vets or other Veterans.

BR: I don't really see that happening, because I don't know if the people in power at the unions were veterans.

MM: Okay. So, you missed the strike in '72 then, but you were in a strike?

BR: Yeah I missed the one in '72, but I was only involved in one walk out. This was in the early eighties.

MM: That would be '82 or '84.

BR: Yeah. I can't say that. In '73 is when they had the hooded men and I was new, I think that was in October of '73 and I was out there and I had just gotten my ninety days in.

MM: Was it a walk out?

BR: Yeah, that was the hooded men was out there with guns. Now I was told enough about it that I didn't really go out there. I stayed away from them, but I knew it affected me in that I lost pay. I walked out in '82 or '84 I don't remember when that was.

MM: I do have down here that there were strikes in '82 and '84.

BR: Okay. Strikes, authorized or unauthorized?

MM: I think those were authorized, but they might have been for the other plant.

BR: Anything that happened in the van plant would happen in the car plant. Anything that happened in either plant, because we had the same union.

MM: Okay.

BR: So, we were tied together. I have worked; I am trying to think here... tape is flipped over at this time.

MM: Okay and the union strike that you went through what was it like? Did you have to serve picket duty?

BR: You would have to serve some sort of duty to receive your money from the union. I never really did picket duty; I did more like kitchen duty. Cause they would have stuff in the kitchen and have people in the union on that I was able to sign up to do those things for any of the times we were on strike. This is where I as a person on the line am really powerless. I don't understand the bargaining, and how that went. I wasn't involved in that so to me strike time was a time when you had to tighten your belt and do your picket duty. And you didn't have to go to work, which was like a vacation.

MM: Okay. You mentioned before about people coming in from all over and since when plants did start closing in areas like Flint. How were these transplanted treated when they came to GM?

BR: How were they treated? Well, I to me I treat people okay no matter what. So, there was nothing we could do.

MM: Were they upset if people came in with more seniority, where people bumped?

BR: No, they couldn't do that. They would bring their company seniority with them, but they were like new hires in our plant. So, they couldn't bump or anything. So, I've seen both sides of that. They come in with all this seniority and they are on the bottom of the totem pole again. It would be confusing. And now I've heard that well they go in and they have this seniority and why do they have to go to the bottom of the totem pole? You go the bottom of the totem pole because this is our plant. And it was just job related things, but with me going back and forth between the two shifts all the time I always had the bum jobs anyways. So, that was just my script out there. Because on day turn I would be one of the younger seniorities so I would have to have whatever was open. I'd get bumped back you have to take the open job. So and the open jobs were always the bad ones. So, these people had to do the same thing that I was doing. The only thing they might have felt some discretion about was people not liking them because they did take jobs away from this area. They staid very cliquish, I remember working with some people that their families stayed in St. Louis, because they were brought in and they really didn't want to come here. To them it was just a temporary thing.

MM: How did these people add to the nature of the union at Lordstown? Did it seem different to them?

BR: I am sure that they adapted to it, but I am sure that they felt that they could have done better. But whether they could have or not I don't know, because their plants all closed and ours is still open.

MM: Okay. There were a lot of things written about the Vega and why things went wrong with it and I've even seen articles where the Plain Dealer seems to indicate it was the workers and the workers mentality. Where do you feel the blame or the problems with the Vega?

BR: Well, you have a Vega here that is all rusted out and you have the same car in a Ford same year is not rusted out, where the blame? I am sure that the militancy that was out there affected the product in some way, but I also feel that it was General Motor's problem. Because, my husband drives the cars, he always has from all of them. He would tell you that the Vegas that they were making at the end of the Vega area were a good car. It was product and the mindset of the company. I am sure that the militant had something to do with it.

MM: One of my pervious interviews the one person was put on the line it was his first couple of days and he was put on the line of the Vega to put the doors on. And the only way to put the door one was to dimple the door by shoving his knee in the middle of it. And he had indicated to the manager and his management person said fix it down the line, keep putting the doors on, don't let the line stop. So, would you say, did you see that you had to force things in or would you say that it was an engineering problem with the Vega? And the short time that you spent on the Vega did you see any certain details or problems like that?

BR: I can't say that I did. I can believe that happened, I never saw anything like that. The only thing I remember, the one time I was doing this job and I didn't stay on the job very long. I was supposed to be spot welding around the tail, but I know it was very close to the tail light and the foreman kept say I was putting these dimples, on the outside of the car it would like it was pushed out just a little bit and they kept telling me that I was doing it. I was like how I am doing this. They were saying that I was doing it with the gun I would hit the medal with the gun. Well, when you think of hitting medal you would think it would take a big bang to put even a little dent in it. If I was, from what I could see if I was hitting that medal with a light touch and it was still putting these dimples in it, and I got really upset because they were really after me try to get me to stop doing it. It was like I can't do this, because I can't see how I am doing this I am controlling this the best way I know how and I got off the job really quick. That would have been at the later time and by then, by the time I was working over there in the car plant they were already doing stuff so that the wheel wells wouldn't rust out. To me it was an engineering problem that they were trying to put these cars out in a hurry.

MM: Okay. And did you see any kind of similar problems in the van plant with them rushing through or a certain procedure would cause a dimple?

BR: No. I don't really remember seeing that much. The quality, a human being wants to put out the best product that they can. When you have to do the same things 33 times an hour or 80 times an hour you get to do it automatically after you've done it three days in a row you can do it with your eyes closed. Yeah guys would get up set and they could screw things up if they wanted to, but if you treat people right they are not going to screw up. But like I said back then too treating people right and me first could collide an awful lot. So, I don't know were a lot of that is, but yet my husband will tell you that his first wife had a premature birth, had a still born birth, he had to fight to get bereavement pay for that child. So, that's not treating your people right and that's going back to the sweatshops. We would have had a sweatshop out there if it wasn't for the union and the guys sticking together and fighting for it.

MM: Did you see any; you might say sabotage did they also slow down or cause the line to go down or any incidence of this?

BR: I can't tell you that I saw any incidence of that, but I am sure that it happened. But yet, why it happened. To me you say well why was it happening? Was it a legitimate thing, did we have, to me you have the company on one hand and you've got the union and the unions did get powerful and they did do an awful lot. But still to me it's the company that has the last say. Because they can pull the plug on that factory whenever they want. So, that's powerful tool to have. So, they want things one-way and they didn't treat people right, so, what are you going to do?

MM: Okay. When the steel mills, I always remember my father talking about it, a reputation of gambling, drinking, people drinking on the job, and also pilfering maybe they would take a couple tools home. Would you say that you've seen that at GM too?

BR: Oh yeah.

MM: Drinking on the job?

BR: Yes.

MM: Sleeping?

BR: The sleeping on the job the only people that could sleep on the job were people that had off the line jobs that could build their stock up and then sleep. Or if they were sweepers they could go hide and sleep. The people on the line, the line is moving all the time you can't sleep then.

MM: What would you attribute to this, would you attribute the monotony as to why people would be drinking on the line?

BR: Oh yeah. It took robots to do a lot of the jobs. The drug and alcohol problem out there I would attribute it all to the repetition of the job and the monotony of the job and trying to cope with that kind of work.

MM: Someone pointed out to me before when I was doing these interviews that it wasn't just a worker thing either. Would you say that drinking extended into management as well?

BR: Yeah it did, but alcoholism when its started is hard to stop, just because you put a tie on doesn't mean you can stop drinking the alcohol that you've been drinking all this time.

MM: Okay. Did you see gambling as a problem there?

BR: Gambling being a problem, basically there again it depends on, it's a problem you know about the gambling busts and the football pulls and the tickets that you used to gamble on. They are passed around and its not even thought of gambling. The playing, what is it called, when they pull numbers off a paycheck?

MM: Check pool.

BR: Yeah check pool. That was just an every week occurrence. Playing cards, if gambling was with cards again it would be with the people that had off the line jobs that could go some place and do it. The guy on the line would have his breaks and he might play cards at that time and there might be some money passed back and forth, but I never saw a whole bunch of money being gambled with cards. But you know its how you look at things and if you think its good or bad. To me right now gambling is bad, back then the check pool was a normal thing its like Bingo or like raffles. To me right now I would tell you that God has shown me that raffling things off is not a good thing to do that that is a form of gambling, but with the Catholic background of the Bingos and the raffles that is so strong in this cultural area that raffles and bingo are a part of our culture. So, playing cards and stuff is a part of the culture too and it was a strong part of the culture.

MM: To conclude this interview what would you feel the proudest about your work life out at GM?

BR: I survived! I learned a lot, I grew up out there in a way, my life changed from the person that I was when I went in there to the person I was when I came out. Two totally different people basically that was because of God working in my life, but yet I don't know what the atmosphere is. I've been gone from there since '94, but I saw it wasn't just me that did these things it was the whole plant. But at the end of my career there I could talk to guys that had been there since '66 and '68 and they said that they used to do these things. They used to go out drinking, they used to play cards, they used to gamble, they don't do those things anymore. So, that they matured too.

MM: Okay. Would you have wanted your sons to work at Lordstown after you being there?

BR: No.

MM: And why?

BR: Because I wanted them to have a different type of job because of the monotony. My one son is a member of the UAW, but he works in North Carolina he works for Freightliner and he worked on the line for a while, but he is now become an electrician for them. I don't know how he is treated or what his job is like, but at one time and I hope that he is not working the hours that they did out here in the skilled trades, because that was just you were a skilled tradesmen out here at one point, and I don't know what its like today, but at one point you virtually lived at the plant. And that was not leant to family life at all and I guess that is why I didn't want them to work there. I wanted them to have a more diverse job. So, no I really didn't want them to work there.

MM: You didn't feel they would be happy out there and that's not what you wanted for them?

BR: No.

MM: I noticed during our interview it seemed like you were experience out there had drawn you into going to you went for what out at the university?

BR: Social work.

MM: Was your experience at GM something that drove you to that or your experiences with all those people seemed to?

BR: My experience with all those people I am sure lead to it because out there I learned that people would come to me and felt very free in talking with me and I saw the social problems that my family was part of the social problems. I got a lot of experience in that field. I am not in the field per say today, I own this Christian Book Store, but I use a lot of what I got from my social work here in the store.

MM: Well, ministering and social work are closely related so you are kind of in the field.

BR: Yes they are.

MM: You would say that you see a need for people to have more counseling out there; do you think that was what was lacking in people or from a social point of view?

BR: From a social perspective people needed to yeah they would need more counseling was a needed thing out there. For me to say that I knew a lot of people that had your quote normal life really didn't happen out there too much. You've got to remember that the world has changed, the world needs more counseling, the world to me the world has gotten so far away from God that now they are turned back to God. God is calling us out and we are finally realizing what God is all about, God is changing this area a lot, because Christians people have turned to Christ and given their lives to Christ and have seen what Christ has done and they want more for this area. The black cloud that was over this area from the organized crime that has been brought forth all that has come out of prayer, because people are tired of those things. We are in a different age; we are in a

different generation. My generation was like a transitional generation where we finally we are part of the organized crime, but yet we part of the people that want to get rid of the organized crime too.

MM: Okay and is there anything that we have talked about or anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to bring up or add to this interview? That somebody from thirty years from now will look at this.

BR: Life just keeps going on and keeps changing. I learned that the only thing that you can depend on staying the same is change and change can be good or change can be bad and how you look at change can be the determine factor as to whether a change is good or not. My faith that has grown, God, has promised stability of my life and if through what has happened in my past and what has happened with God in my life as compared to God out of my life, if I can share that with people, even thirty years from now that are listening to this tape. If something that I can say that can help and make them realize that God is the stabling factor in your life then that is why I am here. If when you grow up in an age of unrest and that's what I grew up in, the fifties was to be such a stable time, the sixties, seventies, and now is so unstable. That change has been forever in our lives, in my life. So, as I go through life and I've learned that I know that nothing stays the same. Things will always change so therefore people want something to hang onto and the only thing that I've been able to hang onto is my faith in God. So, that helps me keep stable today.

MM: All right. I'd like to thank you again for giving your time and this opportunity to talk with you today. Our program greatly appreciates you contributing and adding to the experiences so that we can do future work and understanding what, this might be for your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren that they understand what has happened in our lifetime. We have the opportunity to leave this legacy for them now even on a basic level of experiences. So, thank you again.