

O.H. 2096

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

GM Lordstown Project

Personal Experiences

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Hector Torres Jr.

Interviewed By

Nekia Hilson

On

March 28, 2003

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Interviewee: Hector Torres Jr.

Interviewer: Nekia Hilson

Subject: GM Lordstown

Date: March 28, 2003

H: This is an interview with Hector Torres for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project on Lordstown General Motors by Nekia Hilson at his home, on March 28th, 2003 at 6:00 PM. Hector, can you tell me where and when you born?

T: I was born 1982 at Todd's Hospital on the North Side, Youngstown, Ohio.

H: Can you tell me about your family?

T: Uh, yes. My background us Puerto Rican. My father's Puerto Rico and my mom is black. She was born in Youngstown and my father was born in Puerto Rico.

H: How many sisters and brothers do you have?

T: Uh, two sisters and that's it.

H: And where are you from?

T: I'm from Struthers, Ohio.

H: And what was it like growing up in Struthers?

T: It's alotta white people.

H: And what's the community like?

T: It's a good community.

H: Um, what do your parents do?

T: Uh, they work for, uh, General Motors.

H: And what is your educational background?

T: Um, I'm currently a junior in college for mechanical engineering.

H: At what college?

T: Kettering University.

H: And, what do you do your, I know you have, you guys do internships, so every year you intern at General Motors, is that correct?

T: Uh, yes, that's correct. I do.

H: Ok, what were your work experiences prior to Lordstown?

T: Uh, I really didn't have any besides another internship at Lordstown. A 12 week program.

H: Ok, how did you become involved in Lordstown?

T: Um, from my parents.

H: What made you decide, GMI is a college sponsored by General Motors. Is that correct?

T: Yeah, that's correct. They sponsor other companies too besides General Motors.
Ford, Chrysler.

H: Could you speak up a little? You said and Chrysler?

T: Ford and Chrysler, yeah. Correct.

H: And what type of, is this, does this college specialize with engineering?

T: Yeah, engineering of business.

H: And why did you seek employment at General Motors?

T: Uh, from my parents' influence and good pay.

H: Good pay?

T: Yeah.

H: Um, It's my understanding that you also needed to do an internship with the college,

T: Yeah, that too.

H: so...

T: At least five terms with college.

H: You have to do five terms?

T: Yeah, of co-op.

H: When you say co-op, that's just another word for internship?

T: Internship, yeah.

H: Ok. And, what year did you start doin' you co-op out there? Your first year?

T: Uh, May, 2000.

H: And what did they have you doing?

T: Uh, my first year, I was the training supervisor and training department.

H: In the what department?

T: Training, training.

H: Training?

T: Yeah.

H: Ok. What are your responsibilities as a training supervisor?

T: Basically, it's to facilitate and teach the classes and settle for the classes. That's about it. Make sure the employees come.

H: Do you think it was a issue with you bein' so young? Did you have a issue with tryin' to train people who already there who had time on the job, prior experience such as maybe 15 or more years? Did you have a problem with dealing?

T: Sometimes, yeah, you had that problem, but people get over it and realize that you're smarter than them. So they get them.

H: At what plant where you at? Where you at the Lordstown Plant?

T: Uh, correct, Lordstown fabrication.

H: Ok, so you were at the fab, and not the car plant.

T: Yeah.

H: Whats the fab do different compared to the car plant.

T: The fab create the metal and they assemble the door panels and the hoods for the [unknown] Cavalier and Sunfire.

H: Ok, and then is it then shipped over to General Motors or...

T: Yeah. Shipped over either by, by train or by uh, trestles.

H: Now can you explain your hiring process as far as did GM look at your academic grades, did you have to go through a series of testing?

T: Uh, basically, no. Not for the hirin'. You have to be goin' to college and you have to have a certain GPA and you have to either be a business major or mechanical, or you know, so kinda engineerin' major. I get hired off of the [unknown].

H: And whats the GPA need to be?

T: I guess 3.0 or 85 or 80 and above.

H: Ok. Did they make you take a drug test?

T: Yes, you have to take a drug test.

H: No, during your time at General Motors, do they retest you, or do you only take one drug test?

T: No, you only take one drug test.

H: And how many months do you work at the Fab Plant?

T: You work there six months out of the year. Three months on and three months off. That's a year.

H: Ok, so with three months in school and then three months at GM. So you go to school year round?

T: Right.

H: Okay. And what area, I know you mentioned your first job, you were a supervisor. What about your second job? What did you do?

T: My second job, I was another supervisor in, in the press room.

H: In the press room?

T: Yeah.

H: Could you explain to us what your duties were in the press room?

T: Yeah, basically making sure everybody was doin' their job whatever area I had.

H: And how many people where supervisor over?

T: Um, about 30. Thirty to fifty between there.

H: Ok, and how did you adjust to being a supervisor cause I've noticed your African-American, part Puerto Rican. So how did you adjust, and you're also young, how were you able to adjust coming in, young, having no prior experience with supervising, but yet you were able to step in and supervise.

T: I guess from my networking skills, talkin' to people, and bein' in the plant. I mean, [unknown].

H: Now did you have any encounter any type of, um, issues. What were some of the daily issues that you encounter being a supervisor?

T: Uh, just sometimes the employees didn't wanna work fast enough. They wanna work at their own pace, which is fine with me. As long as I have my parts there, I don't really care. So, that was about the only issue, but it was pretty, that issue was heh! Wasn't too many issues.

H: Ok, can you describe typical day? Can you take us on a walk as far as when you first pull into the parking lot, can you describe to us what you do next?

T: Uh, you come in through the door. You check in, get your bags. Go into, make sure you put on your safety glasses, go into the plant. Then you pretty much go check in, make sure everybody's in, see who's in, see who's not on your computer, computer screen because they check in. Then after that, you just go outside make sure everybody's on the job. If anybody's absent, you gotta replace them with somebody else, and that's about it. Just keep it runnin' all day. That's about it. All you gotta do.

H: And how safe do you feel that the Fab Plant is?

T: Uh, I guess it's pretty safe. I never encountered any kind of danger. I never got cut or anything, so I guess it's safe.

H: And, being an African American, Puerto Rican, um, did you encounter any type of racist, racism?

T: No. Nope, none at all. I mean, not to my face. Maybe, sure, maybe behind my back, but not to my face though.

H: Do you ,uh, do you know of any issues out at the Fab Plant?

T: Yeah, I heard issues, yes.

H: What are one of the issues, could you give us an example?

T: That one of the, um, [unknown], she was a black lady, and I guess they put lynch on her locker and that's about it I guess.

H: So what happens to an employee once she encounters racism were as like you said somebody places a lynch rope on her locker. Who does she go to?

T: I guess she goes to her committeemen and then he goes to maybe the president of the UAW for the plant and then he probably go to maybe the plant manager or the direct or something. Maybe they would resolve it that way. They'd come to labor relations, um, if she knows who did it, [unknown], because they could be lookin' at a lawsuit. Probably to the plant manager.

H: No what was the outcome this certain person's situation?

T: Um, she actually filed lawsuit and I guess it's still goin' in the courts right now. But she still works there and she filed a lawsuit.

H: Now how is management relationship with the workers?

T: Uh, management and salary, I mean, management and hourly really don't get along too well. It's like, you know, dogs tryin' to trick each other and what not. It's not really a good relationship.

H: So like when you say they try to trick each other, can you give us an example of an incident that might have occurred out there?

T: They never tried to trick me, but maybe some workers will if their inspectors, they'll save certain parts back, even if they're not, slow down, just slow down the line. You know, inspect a little bit longer just because they don't like the supervisor. So...

H: Now does the fab plant encounter this issue a lot?

T: Yeah. I'd say so.

H: And how do you guys correct the issues? How do you know if...

T: You really can't do nuthin' about it! Heh-heh!

H: Now is this due because of their labor rep?

T: Yes, because basically the union, you really can't do anything about it.

H: Do you feel that the union is stronger out at the Fab Plant?

T: Uh...

H: Compared to when you first started working out there.

T: It's the same probably. No, actually, I think they're getting a little bit weaker. They, like they not getting' as much stuff as they want now. So, yeah.

H: So, are they a big influence?

T: Yeah, they're influence, but, but their influence is getting' littler because management is starting to away more, less, more of the benefits.

H: So when you say GM benefits, what type of benefits are they...

T: Takin' away like, they finish all their parts they can leave early. You know, they're takin' that away from 'em. They have to keep on working until [inaudible]. In other words, they work hard [unknown] and whatever they do. Because they get a certain rate to build like in their shift. But, GM's take that away, so they just got to keep on workin' and work.

H: So how many hours do the employees work?

T: Uh, I guess eight hours a day, forty hours a week.

H: And how many hours do management or co-ops work?

T: We work more. We have to come in fifteen minutes before. I mean, like, yeah, at least fifteen minutes before the shift, say at least like hour after the shift, do stuff. So probably about nine hour, nine hour day. But we don't work as hard! Heh! I work easy.

H: And have you ever encountered any gender relations, any gender relationship problems, issues, as far as do men feel about the women in the work place?

T: Uh, I heard of there being problems, but I never seen any, so, but I heard of problems.

H: For example, could you give us an example of a problem you heard of?

T: Like, uh, an intern had on, maybe, some like a shirt. She probably had like maybe a nice body and I guess one of the [unknown]s said something to her. I don't know. I can't remember what they said.

H: So is a lotta sexual harassment out there?

T: Yeah, I guess you could say that, yeah.

H: Now is it typical for there to be women to get sexually harassed in the Fab Plant?

T: I mean, I dunno if it's typical, but I guess if...

H: It occurs.

T: I guess it occurs, yeah.

H: Now, I know you guys have summer help that also come into the plant during the summer lay-offs. Now I've heard stories about, um, some of the people who are already there who are permanent, permanent workers. I heard there is a big issue between permanent workers and the summer help. Do you think the summer help gets made fun of by the permanent workers?

T: No, I wouldn't say that. I'd say that the summer work works harder than the regular workers because they try to prove somethin' so they can get another, like a real job. So, I say, maybe the other workers might get mad because they work harder than them and but I say some workers work harder [inaudible].

H: Now with you being in management, how often do you get to meet with the, um, head plant supervisor? I know at the car plant, it's Maureen. Who would it be at the fab plant?

T: Uh, it would be Bruce Pearson and I guess whenever he wants to he'll come down and see you and go to his office.

H: How, how often is it mandatory for you guys to meet with him?

T: I think we meet like maybe once ever four months mandatory. But if you're like on staff, then they meet ever week, maybe two times a week, three.

H: Ok. And how affective do you think this is?

T: Uh, them meetin' two or three times a week is just the fact that for whatever kind of issues there is, but never really affected me too much at all.

H: GM just had, um, lay-offs to the employees, um, were they were offered about a week. How do you feel about that? Or about lay-offs period. How do you feel about GM layin' off their workers.

T: I believe that lay-off because they are not sellin' their products the way they expect to and that's why they lay-off and have to, so they don't overcharge people.

H: How has the closing of the, how has the, um, I'm sorry. How has foreign steel dumping impacted the plant?

T: The what?

H: Foring, foreign steel dumping. Do you feel it has impacted the fab plant?

T: Huh, I would say no, it has not impacted the plant because we don't do any steel dumping anywhere, so no. We recycle our steel.

H: And, um, out at the Fab Plant, with new technology on the rise, do you see the Fab Plant utilizing more robots in the work force?

T: Uh, yeah. There's some used, more robots, but...

H: And now how does the workers feel about using robots?

T: Well it depends. If it's help their job easier, then they like them, but if they replace some jobs, they don't like it.

H: Ok. And how secure do you feel about your position at Lordstown?

T: Bein' a supervisor is not really a secure position because you have the union and they can fire you whenever they want, so. But, if you have a good education, you really, then it doesn't matter. You can always find another job.

H: Now are there any renovations being made to the Fab Plant.

T: Uh, yeah, there were, they're puttin' in [unknown] hoods and other Pontiac hoods for assembly.

H: And how do you feel about the, um, the car plant getting the new product in?

T: I guess it's good for, um, for the area.

H: And do you see a future for Lordstown?

T: Well yeah, if they keep on buyin' cars, people. If the economy doesn't slip more than it already has, yeah. I guess.

H: And what advice do you have for new comers coming into the plant?

T: Uh, I guess work good and if you really like it, make a career out of it, but if you don't, don't make a career out of it if you don't like it.

H: And is there thing you would like to add to the interview?

T: No, that's about it.

H: Ok, Hector, I want to say thank you for takin' the time out your busy schedule for this interview.

[End of Interview]

I HAVE READ AND EDITED THE INTERVIEW AND, BY MY SIGNATURE,
INDICATE THAT IT IS APPROVED.

Hector L. Jones Jr.
SIGNATURE

5/11/04
DATE