

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

GM Lordstown

Personal Experiences

O.H. 2049

Norman J. Parry

Interviewed By

Erin Timms

On

March 20, 2002

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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GM Lordstown Project

INTERVIEWEE: NORMAN "JOE" PARRY

INTERVIEWER: Erin Timms

SUBJECT: GM Lordstown

DATE: March 20, 2002

This project is being funded by the Ford Foundation.

T: This is an interview with Joe Parry. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2002. Interview by Erin Timms at the home of Joe Parry. GM Lordstown Project. What was your childhood like? Where did you grow up at?

P: Where did I grow up at? I grew up in Warren, Ohio and no I don't remember much about my childhood. I have a memory for nothing. I really don't. My memory is so spotty. Now, if somebody would mention something, I could go from that, you know, like an event, if it'll trip a memory but for me to just sit here and remember what it was like. I don't know. I could do the same thing with last week.

T: What did your parents do for a living?

P: My mother was a house wife and my father worked as a master electrician at about fifteen different places in his lifetime. Never long enough in one place to get a pension from it. They either shut down or whatever, but he was busy, always worked two jobs and sometimes three jobs because he had his own electrical appliance repair business on the side. But he was busy, busy enough so that we could spend our summers at Geneva-on-the-Lake, while he stayed home and worked and the rest of us got to play on the sand.

T: Were you up there a lot?

P: Every summer for eighteen years from May until September. That was our summer home.

T: What was your first job?

P: Shining shoes.

T: Where at?

P: At Geneva-on-the-Lake. One of the best jobs I ever had, considering how much money we were able to make in an hour compared to twenty-five cents a shoe.

T: So, how much did you used to make?

P: Honestly, it was supposed to be twenty-five cents to shine a pair of shoes, but people were big tippers and people would give us five dollar and I'd have to go get change and just kind of like never come back with the change, so that was an easy five dollars. Now, we're talking a ten or eleven year old, so we were able to scoot out. I peeled potatoes at Burns Barbeque at Geneva. I worked in a hotel. Flipped burgers in Youngstown for a short period. Then, I went into the military. After the military, I came out and bounced around a couple jobs, ended up at Lordstown.

T: How did you get hired at Lordstown?

P: Walked in the door, while others were walking out the door.

T: What date were you hired?

P: September 27, 1968. The day that will live in infamy.

T: What was your first job out there?

P: First job out at Lordstown was what they called the lead line. That's where the seams of the roof are put together and instead of using glue, they used lead spread it around with a paddle. I didn't last long there because I kept catching the paddle on fire. You had to be good and I wasn't good.

T: You were right in the beginning of Lordstown. What was it like out there when you started?

P: Very busy, very busy. We were still doing the three month changeovers in the summer and I wasn't there long enough to collect unemployment, so I went to work for the railroad for our shutdown. Then, when Lordstown called me back I went back to Lordstown and that's where I remain.

T: What was your next job after you left the lead line?

P: Then, I went into the cushion room where we made the seats from scratch for all the cars. I did that for a few years in which time they built the van plant behind us in an area where we used to play ball. They were done with it. Building the van plant, I was transferred over there into the paint department and I did a whole bunch of different things in the paint department, sanded them, painted them, sealed them, masked them off, re-sand them, fixed the mistakes and then when they decided they were going to knock down the van plant, I transferred over to the car plant. That was a big day. I went from building twenty-four vans an hour to building a hundred cars an hour at the same hourly rate. Any time I might have screwed GM, that's the day they got their money back from me. I lost thirty pounds in a month. I started over on the chassis line wearing thick aprons and thick gloves trying to plug stuff together. It was a messy job. As soon as I could, I bid off that job. I had a couple of incidental jobs, ended up for a couple of years putting the headlights in. Then, I went into the inspection department. They weren't allowed to call it inspectors because the union negotiated that classification away and if they recalled then a lot of paper with recall rights so they called it monitors instead. Same thing as an inspector but they changed the time so they wouldn't have to go by the contract. Now, that was the union that did that, brother Al Alli.

T: How do you feel about Al Alli?

P: If I would have known he was going to croak, I would have hung in and stayed there. He was one of the reasons I got out when I did. Just a rip off artist. He never lost a penny but everybody out there lost a week's pay here and a week's pay there because he would be fired and we'd have to go out and settle his grievance. In the process of settling his grievance, his record was paid and cleared where the rest of the plant didn't get paid and cleared. We just lost however many days of work we lost, we lost. He was a rip off artist.

T: My last interview said that nobody had the power Al Alli had.

P: Exactly, he had a goon squad, big time and they would set people up to run against him and had the candidate, you know, they pumped the guy up, made it look like it was actually having an election like you had something to choose from and then come election day they would just slam him, pulled the rug right from underneath the guy. Actually, there was never any competition, but it made it look good. It was just a crooked operation from beginning to end and I'd say it's probably just as crooked today, but not as obvious as it was then. Those officials we had then, for the most part, are retired now, but they were all able to get their families in there, where we weren't connected. You couldn't even get an application for a member of your family and I'm sorry to say that's going on today. Just put your time in and get out.

T: So, would you like to elaborate on how you feel about your union or no?

P: I'm outta there, okay. They like to think I owe everything to my union. The union got me this and the union got me that. Well, it seems to me that I was the union. All of us on the line were the union, so what we got we got for ourselves. It wasn't no tooth fairy that

handed this to us. We were the ones that went on strike. We were the one that did what we had to do. Like I said, there's no tooth fairy out there, but the union would like to think that somebody up high granted us what we have. You pay attention; little by little you're losing. They've been talking about that car out there for five years and the only thing they've accomplished is reduce the workforce and that's what they're after. I'm outta there, goodbye.

T: You were hired in 1968, were you involved in the 1972 strike?

P: Yes.

T: Do you want to tell me a little bit about it, the wildcat strike of 1972?

P: Well, you have to be more specific.

T: How were you involved in any of the strike? Well, any of the strikes, you can tell me anything.

P: Same thing. You're outta of the building. You're on the picket line doing what you're told, not knowing a whole hell of a lot about anything that's going on. You're told you're on strike and no benefits and there you are like a good soldier doing what you're told to do. Don't ask questions because there are no answers. That's one of the benefits on being on (inaudible). I don't have any regrets on what we won. I just don't like their attitude that it was given to me by somebody else. I think we earned what we got and I feel like the idea of taking some of the benefits back from the people who made the union while those on the international level of the union haven't lost anything. As a matter of fact, their retirement package when they transferred to the international is better than those of us who they work for, which the employer which is myself and my rank and file union members get less of a package than our employees, which is our union reps and it doesn't take long for them to forget from where they come.

T: (Inaudible two words) for the people you work with?

P: A whole bunch of really nice guys. A whole bunch of crazy guys and I mean in the medical term, crazy, on medication, taking control of what they do and what they don't do and they do get away with it. It's as simple as not taking a pill. They get a month of paid vacation or they can blow up somebody locker and be cover because hey, the man is crazy. He's under the care of a doctor; whereas if you don't have the paperwork, you blow up somebody's locker you know you're outta there. There's a whole bunch of things that go on. As you know, we had a big problem with cars being stolen out of the parking lot, which was an arranged deal. You made a connection. They told you if you was going to lose the car in bankruptcy, you just didn't want to pay for it anymore, insurance purposes you were told where to park your car and it was taken care of. They caught my committeeman, my union rep. He was a contact man and he got caught. You know he never lost a day's work. He was paraded on T.V. in orange coveralls with a big P on the back and on the leg on the 6 o'clock news. Now, that's a felony committed on

company property, on company time, and he never lost a day's work. He's still employed. He's still a union rep, ran unopposed. Now you get caught taking a pair of gloves out of there, okay, you're fired. Now, it might be for six months and the union will get you back, but you're outta there, so it depends on who you are, what you do. Now, I forget the question.

T: That's all right. Tell me about some of the people you work with. You're doing actually quite well.

P: There are people out there who I worked with for twenty-five years. You see them every day going in, going out. You wave to each other. You wish them a Merry Christmas or whatever and you never know the guy's name and he doesn't know your name because you never sit and talk. You just see each other everyday. Yeah. We had a couple of classroom situations, you know, that's when basically we all discovered that because I'd finally meet the guy in the class where we'd have to interact and so you see them every day and so forth and you don't know the guy's name. That's pretty ecstatic. There is a lot of guys out there and not a day goes by that somebody doesn't ask you do you know so and so. Well, I might have heard the name but to put the face on 'em, you know, there is a lot of times where it's that guy there. Oh, okay. Yeah, I know that. I've known him for twenty years. I just never knew his name. That happens all the time. All the time.

T: So you didn't find a lot of camaraderie out there? You didn't end up spending a lot of time outside of the plant with these guys?

P: Oh, yeah. My best buddies and I all work together. We'd meet after work, work on my house, work on their house, go camping together, go boating together, stuff like that, but we also noticed too like it goes in five and six year increments. You hang with this group for a few years and then like splinters and next thing you know you're with this other group. It just kind of rotates. It's weird in a way, but it's pretty much how it was. You just, you know, play baseball after work, sip a couple after work. Then if you move from one end of plant to the other you run into a different group and kind of separate from the guys you was with just because it's not convenient to run back and forth. Then you start to hang with the group you work with. It makes it different. Some people work out there in a little hole and they never come out at all, where other people, say like a tow motor driver, who gets around the plant, okay, he obviously knows more people because he get around, but I could name you five, six people that, yeah, if I could remember their names, that was on the job the whole twenty-eight years they were there. They did the same job. The tire that they're putting on the car might have changed, but they still put the tire on the car and that's what made them happy and that's what they did.

T: Do you ever find your work monotonous out there?

P: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Christ, very much so.

T: How'd you beat it?

- P: Well, you get to that it's so monotonous and you're like a robot, you basically do the job pretty much without thinking about it, so that's why some guys were able to read the newspaper at the same time or do different things to distract like maybe you and I will switch jobs for a half hour at a time or something. Just little things like that. Maybe try to do your job a different way, say, instead of putting the right hand tire on, maybe you'll put the left hand tire on, whatever. Bid on a different job, okay, change jobs completely. There are a couple of things you can do.
- T: You talked about a lot the stress between the union and the other workers. Do you feel that same pressure from management? Do you feel there's a lot of hostility between the two groups?
- P: At times there was over the years, and that was this and you always thought well you want to be the foremen when he's done being foremen and actually the foremen was having more pressure applied on them by their boss than what the foremen can do to me because I had my buddies to stick together with me and it's so easy to play with a foremen's head, so easy because he's dealing with ten of us and we could have him in circles where he's got to answer to his boss and more often than not I'd see management when I would say... actually her foremen. A lot of foremen went out of there in nets since they lost their... Well, we have a friend, I won't mention names, but we have a friend. He and I both know that they did that to him. No, I wouldn't be a foreman. At would contract time, the pressure was always on them. They would take their benefits away prior to our contract to set an example that management has lost dental and eye coverage. Now, you should give it up. Well, we didn't give it up and a month later management would get their dental and eye coverage back or they would cut their pay. They would pay strictly eight hours, although they were working ten hours. They'd pay them eight and many people on the line made more money than the foremen did 'cause we were getting the overtime. Even if our line shutdown, I could go down to final repair and work. Some days you can just laugh at it. Just laugh at it and I didn't let that stuff bother me. You could see it coming and you could see when they want to cut people, you know. What they try to do. I've been thrown out simply because I said I wasn't going to do it. They would add to my job and I'm not going to do it and we'd get in a big hustle. The next thing you know I got out for three days for not doing it. The problem was that I did do it, while I was standing there telling them I ain't going to do it, but they can't see straight enough to see the fact that I was doing the whole time I was saying I'm not doing it. When I get back into the plant I'll take three days off, I'm not going to argue. I'm outta here. Come back in and show be the jobs I didn't do and they had the sequence numbers and they couldn't show me. Well, this is done, that's done, that's done. You mean I didn't do it, so I just had three days off without pay. Well, now I just got the pay with three days off. That happens a lot, but a lot of that's one reason I'm out of there. Between management and the union, mostly the union, because I expect it from management. [laughs] Blood pressure. I just got to the point where I was seeing what's going on and nothing I could do about it, and my blood pressure just going up and going up and I just said get the hell out of here. I don't need this. I had my thirty years in. I was okay to leave them and I left. Years ago, not long after I hired in. I don't know how the story got started but through the union of all the UAW members, Ford, Chrysler, GM

only one-third of the UAW lives long enough to collect a pension. We're talking thirty years and of those that do retire, one-third of those die in the first year and a half and that has always stuck with me. Around the thirty year mark I had a half a dozen of people that I worked with all these years that have died for one reason or another and since I've retired there is another half a dozen that died within two years. You say, well, you know, a lot of different causes but still many didn't get to enjoy their retirement at all. Just in the union newspaper that came out this week there are ten that died and they just retired here last year. They worked thirty years, enjoyed their retirement or if they did get to enjoy it, less than a year and they're no longer with us.

T: Do you still go to the union hall?

P: No. Nothing against the union hall, it's just that I never remember to go. The retirees meetings are the first Monday of every month and I don't usually remember that until maybe a Tuesday or a Wednesday, but that's pretty much the only reason why I don't go. I keep telling myself, "Well, I outta go the next time," but I never remember, so I don't go. I meet my fellow retirees all the time in the stores but not in a union setting.

T: Do you think working conditions improved over the years?

P: Oh yeah, big time. The, what do you call it, ergonomics, the different tools how they make them for the worker to use, you know. That was a big help. I also think there is naturally people taken advantage of. I can't do this. I can't do that. It's 'cause they don't want to do that and they're not made to do that. The decision was to do any job there is to do. It's either that, or go home and mean it they guy would do it unless he actually has a physical thing, but don't go out bull riding on the weekend and come into the plant tell them you can't put spare tires in the trunk, especially when you a mechanical lift to help you. It's just you don't want that job. You'd rather put decals on the side. Yeah, that ergonomic thing that was a real big help and OSHA. They contributed a lot and at the same time they have added a lot of expense to the product.

T: Did you see any accident out there when you were there? Major safety accidents?

P: Oh yeah. I mean, most of them were accidents, and you could sit behind the guy and say they should of done this. They should have done that. Well, why didn't you say that the day before. Anybody can play Monday morning quarterback and an accident is an accident, but you have to have an attorney. [laughs]

T: Were you affected by the unemployment of the eighties?

P: Nope, worked my butt off in overtime ten hours a day, six days a week.

T: How do you feel about the schedule? How did it affect your life?

P: What I did like about it in the cold, dark winter months you could go on eight hours, five days. As the sun stayed out longer you were in the plant longer. You could count on it



year after year. Summertime you're going to work overtime. In the winter, when you don't mind being inside working, that's when you're at home. You can count on it. It never fails, never fails. They got lots full of cars out of there and we're working all the overtime they can have us and it all has to do with public demand. People buy cars in the summer not so much in the winter and when they're not buying them you have to stockpile them for when they are ready to buy them, because most people don't like to order cars. They go on the lot and pick them out.

T: When the van plant closed, how did the affect you when you worked there?

P: I thought it was a rip off. It didn't affect me as far as my employment went, because we're the same local and I just transferred car... we all did, just transferred over to the car plant and they increased their production, so therefore we didn't actually have anybody laid off. They increase the production because they had more people, so that worked out good there. I though it was a rip off because it was a boldface lie why they close it. They were going to ship them up to Flint. Well, we knew that was a damn lie. The factory in Flint wasn't big enough to the hold the van. Their paint ovens, their dip tanks, and their welders: the vans were all too big. You can't build a van with the same robot you do a Cavalier and you can't run them through the same ovens. The van is much bigger, so it was major thing, but they went through the bullshit of telling us and they brought the guys down from Flint. It went on for six months just bullshit. They shut us down and they did what they tended to do all along. They acted like they were going to build a new Flint, but they didn't. They built it in Canada. It's cheaper to build it in Canada. We always had a van plant up there. They would come down and look at our van plant and they didn't have the initial cost of building the plant and staffing it originally, but they always staffed it too many. Then, you cut back. Well, it's always hard to cut back on employees because you're adding to everybody else and that's not easy to do, so we would try things out and they'd check us out; how efficient we were operating. Well, they would do the same thing. If we had ten people, they would start with six, so they eliminated four. They were getting away with it because we didn't know any better. The six people would do the same that these ten were doing and, of course, it's cheaper to build a vehicle in Canada because of national health, your benefit package. They don't have medical and dental. That's all national health. That does not come out of the corporation's pocket, so therefore it's cheaper and that's what they did. They built the damn things in Canada, but they went under the pretense that they were going to move it to Michigan and anybody that had been around for six months knew that wasn't going to happen.

T: What do you think about the installation of robots in production?

P: Well, with robots I've seen them tear each other out of the floor. They say garbage in, garbage out. Instead of having one mistake, you have a hundred mistakes before you find out if it's out of sync. Sure it saves a lot of money on man power, but when they act up and don't behave right you can lose a hundred pieces and I'm talking about the whole roof of a car. I've seen the robot get screwed where it kind of crushed a rack of roofs. What do you do then, you know? Where if it was a person, he would do one roof and

know it's screwed up and not do it on the second one, but the robot takes them all. I've seen them hacked up. The robots in Lordstown are another example of the people on the fifth floor not knowing what the people on the first are doing. If you want to build ninety cars an hour, why would you purchase a robot that's only capable of producing seventy-eight cars an hour? Why would you do that? Then for months you're down because you can't make your production. You can't make your production but you have a robot back there. I can't pull them out of that press any faster than what they're going in. Now, the rest of the plant ended up with the situation they got out there where one-half of the plant gets lunch hour and the other half don't. One-half is relieved for lunch and the other one shuts down, but shutting down in the chassis line gives the body shop a chance to build up the bank and it's simply because the robots were used. They were rejected from another plant, and they brought them into Lordstown with big ha ha. The fact of the matter is the robots would not keep up the production that they wanted, so you had to adjust the entire plant around the robots and then if you had a screw up. They were slow to start with, but if one was to break down or malfunction then that just complicated it that much more and to this day they're still running that. One-half of the plant is taking a half hour off for lunch and the other half is being relieved for lunch just to fill that void. What are you going to do?

T: What management styles have you seen changed over the years?

P: Well, they got rid of their shirt and ties. I've always been friends with management outside the plant. A lot of the foremen who were friends, at one time they worked beside me as hourly men then went in to be foremen. Even the general foremen, outside the plant we were personal friends and there we don't talk shop. I know their kids. They know mine. I've been to their birthdays parties, you know, first communions. They've been to ours and there is a line there. You got your job to do. I got my job to do. There was a classic story one time about that and the big boss of the department; he just couldn't figure it out. My foreman spent a week trying to get me thrown out. I wasn't on the job. I was in labor relations reading every newspaper waiting for them to decide if they were going to throw me out. It took them a week to get around to doing it and they did throw me out. The next day is Sunday. I'm at the foreman's house tending bar for his son's first communion and the superintendent of the department came in because (inaudible). We're all friends, you know, he just could not figure this one out. Battle of oil and decided Joe it's like this. Business is business, pleasure is pleasure and it's been going on for years. The hourly guy; he's got it better than management because we work as a group where upper management will put foremen in a bind and wants things done they know they can't do and they'll ridicule them and belittle them and try everything to make him perform to do something they know they can't do. I've seen a lot of them went out in bags or in nets. It's just like losing, but at the same time right now with all these people retiring. A lot of management is retiring and they're not being replaced. What they're doing is there going out the door, locking up their pensions, and then they're coming back on a three month contract and doing the same job but the pressure is off now. If they screw up, what are they going to do, fire them? No. They can tell them to leave but they're collecting their pension, but that's their way of keeping costs down. I've seen a lot of management changes. I've seen a lot of union stuff that's one example

how the union is sucking up to get that new car. It took two years for them to replace me, when I retired and they'd have the guy on day turn come in four hours early and they had the guy on night turn stay four hours late so that would cover the third shift. For the longest period of time they didn't have enough people on the line, so for the first two hours everyday the foremen were actually doing a job on the line and no squabble out of the union. Then the union and I have got to squabble because they should be on the line working and they're not. They're on the floor representing. How many committeemen does it take? According to the grievance, the committeeman should be doing his job until he gets a committee call then go and answer the call. The committeeman hasn't worked a job on that line in twenty-five years. He is so busy doing what? Nobody knows that his alternate committeeman is also off the line because the committeeman is in the meetings and the alternate is talking to the union guy with a complaint, supposedly. If you negotiate and everything is taken care of well how come I haven't seen a committeeman in three months because he the other shift. What the hell? They don't have any grievances. What are they negotiating? You know, it's one of their deals.

T: \_\_\_\_\_ jobs? (Question cut off)

P: Yeah, eliminated my job. Now, I have an alternate committeeman. The committeemen as I told you they're never available. They're always negotiating something, so I got this alternate committeeman who had less seniority than anybody. Everybody that he represented had more time than him. He didn't have enough time to hold our classification, so the job come open and I'm going to bid on it. I keep waiting. When are you going to put the job posting up? According to the contract it's got to be up, you got to bid on it. Well, he him hawed around and finally said, "We're not putting it up." I said, "What do you mean you're not putting it up?" He says, "Because I'm taking that job." I said, "Well, you don't have enough seniority to take anything and the contract says you'll post that job. Oh, but we're not going to do it; I'm taking the job. Well, what's your job now and he told me, "I don't have one," because he's supposed to have a job as well as being the alternate committeeman. What do you mean you don't have one? "Well, I'm an extra" I said, "Wait a minute asshole. They have too many because of budget time they're eliminating, so I had a job and they eliminated it. You don't have job and you're still here. What the hell is the name of this game?" We'll pay all of ya or what. You eliminated an existing job to keep a guy that doesn't have a job and the guy that doesn't have a job, you know, with no seniority. Long story short, I got the job. Then I said the hell with it and I transferred out of the department. I went into another department where I found...I worked for a female doing a spectacular job (?) and I wasn't the only one who thought so. My committeeman was dating her. Now, we're in negotiations, they're adding to jobs, eliminating others, and there are no complaints being filed. Well, that's possibly because my grievance man was dating my foreman or forewoman. That was a cozy arrangement there. Long story short, she was married. Not to him. She got pregnant and got transferred and I got the hell out of town. I retired. It's what I was telling you earlier about the blood pressure and the stuff I was seeing going on out there. You let me get ripped off and bite your tongue for so long and I get a paycheck with a little extra something in my paycheck that was given to me by the committeeman not management. It's management who should always pass out the checks. The

committeeman passes them out and there's an extra hundred dollars in there. What the heck's this for? He looked at me and says "Settled grievance." Well, he says "Joe that's alright you've been pretty good this year." Mainly because I didn't file a complaint over the dating situation that I ran into where others wanted to. They do what they wanted to do. I didn't file a complaint or nothing or made a lot of noise about it, so that was my little hundred dollar hush money and I'm thinking you said I had the money left over. Where the hell does a committee man get money left over? That thing kind of told me that that's how management was taking care of things, keeping the grievances down by settling no existing grievances at letting the committeeman pick who gets the little extra here and there.

T: A few people in management, especially over last couple of years, the elimination of jobs and you even mentioned it earlier. The longer you worked out there the more you saw the elimination of jobs. How did it affect how you worked and what you had to do?

P: Yeah and then you'll see new kids come in up the street and all they want to do is walk around with a clipboard while you got the guy out there he's sixty-two years old, you know, he's putting tires on cars and you don't think he deserves a break or are going to let this person who has been there six months, you know. You see it all the time and it gets to you. One department will be cutting back and the other department has people standing over there doing nothing. You see it. It's obvious and there's nothing you can do about it. Who are you going to complain to? Those are people that are involved, so it's pretty much...

T: You also mentioned a lot of the trying to cut down the grievances. Do you think the closing of the steel mills in the 1980s affected the way GM has been during the 1990s?

P: No. No. Okay. What's affected the way GM has been is Ronald Reagan as their traffic controllers. That's affected every union, big time.

T: I know quite a few people who describe General Motors, the union, being probably one of the strongest unions, especially out of Lordstown. Would you agree with that?

P: Not anymore. Definitely not anymore, no. There's too much buddy buddy with the management, when they go on vacations together, and I know that for a fact that they go on vacations because I know the people involved. Put it this way. Union reps get a lot of overtime. Twelve hours a day if they want it. The way they've got the plant broke down is that the union reps got two guys from his district working final process. Well, the committeeman gets to come in. The committeeman don't do nothing. He'll sit in the cafeteria all weekend but because he's got people there. Just like we're working a ten hour day and they're working final twelve hours. The committeeman's automatic. It's an automatic deal so if they write too many grievances well then they just eliminate their overtime. That's taking money out of their pocket, so consequently they don't write grievances and you can tell when a war is gonna brew because they start writing every little nit picking thing up you can think of just build up a bank of grievances, so you can tell that routine. Like I said, you could see they just nit picked the hell out of everything

just to build up the grievance. Then you don't hear anymore out of it. Then you can also see where management is looking for a fight because they'll start nit picking everything. You could see it. You should never be taken by surprise out there because you could see it building up. Either one side is starting it or the other side is starting it. You see things going on. The bad part about being a foreman out there or one of the bad parts out there is I'm on day turn I got seniority to be on day turn I can't go in there today and have them turn me around at the gate and tell me to come back in tonight and I'm night turn. For foremen that used to happen all the time. They'd come in and boom, say you're on night turn and there was nothing they could do about it. I always thought that was a great part.

T: Do you have any regrets about working out at GM?

P: No, not really. I did a lot, seen a lot, played head games here and there, but looking at what's going on in the valley it was probably the best place for me. Although, I could have been there a year and a half sooner than what I did, but when I got out of the Navy I was told not to go to Lordstown; they'll eat you up. I bumped around on a couple jobs and I ended up going out to Lordstown. Funny enough, I ended up staying. The first year I kind of threw my tool down a couple of times and said the hell with this I'm outta here, but then I'd turn and I'd say I have a wife and kids to supports and I'd turn around and go back on the line. I really don't have any regrets. I can't think of anywhere else in the valley I would have gone. I think it kind of suited my personality. [Laughs]

T: I don't know what that says about you. [Laughs]

P: I don't know if it suited my personality or that's how my personality developed from being out there, but we were a pretty good mix. I couldn't see myself in the store selling any product or stuff like that. I didn't have to deal with the public, which was nice.

T: What was your favorite job?

P: There are good parts to every job but when you went in there you kind of looked at these guys on the tow motors. Well, they got it made. Just drive around here, drive around there, pick this up here and then drop it off there. I kind of always had my eyes set on that. Well, sure enough, I got it. Then, I retired. I could be sitting on that tow motor right now. I've had some real nasty jobs, some really ass breaking jobs and I hung in. Now I get the job that I always wanted and I quit. Does that make sense? As far as work goes, I didn't break a sweat. Brand new tow motor with air conditioning, power steering, dual horns, headlights, oh yeah, not a problem and then pressure started building up and blood pressure and all that routine so I said I didn't need this. As far as my job went, physically it was the best job. Inspection wasn't a bad job, but they would keep changing their specifications. This is supposed to be this way. Well, if it didn't work out that way we'll change the specs. That'll work. There was so much contradiction in there it was ridiculous. It was just why do I have this... I got a little rubber stamp made in Japan as my inspection stamp. If you have to many defects, well, Joe don't write no more or if the bolt is supposed to go threw and there's supposed to be four threads showing and there's only one, well, one's good. Okay. It made it interesting. Like I said, they tried to nail

you for that one piece that was missing. They made a big production out of it. A bunch of damn dummies, you know. He must have scratched the paint putting it on. Somebody had popped it off and wanted to burn me. It didn't work. Obviously, all of their grievances (inaudible). It happens there. It kind of blew up in their face. Shortly after that, they eliminated that test, so when they eliminated it they didn't need me. They had a temporary guy doing it. I'm blind. I can't see somebody up there doing the same job I was doing. You got an alternate committeeman that doesn't have a job other than being alternate committeeman. He couldn't get a job because he had no seniority in that classification. Oh well. It was a good experience. They helped me with the National Guard. I got out of there a lot because I was supposed to work overtime. I didn't have to, but then I was with the National Guard, so I really wasn't getting a weekend off. If I wasn't there, they didn't pay. That worked out as well. They never gave me a hassle over that.

T: Did you like the schedule? Did you like pretty much everything that you did?

P: Yeah, at the time it was going on probably I didn't like it. These ten hour days got to drag on then you drop down to an eight hour day. My god an eight hour day felt like you were getting out of there at lunchtime. It was weird because we worked ten hours, six days for so long an eight hour day you just finish your lunch and you're going home. It was weird. It was also in the winter that we had that six or seven year period where we only worked ten hours a day, four days a week and had Friday, Saturday, and Sunday off. That was great. You didn't really realize how great it was until they stopped it. We were working forty hours, ten hours a day and getting paid for forty-four and we didn't want to do that because we just wanted to get paid forty hours. That's serious. That's how we felt as a local. This is what we wanted to negotiate, but the international union wouldn't let us do that. They insisted that we get paid time and a half for the last two hours, so we were getting paid forty-four hours. Then when they eliminated it, they eliminated it for the cost. We said, well no, let's go forty hours flat and the international wouldn't allow us to do it again. Then he came up with the logic, well, I'm going in on an eight hour day, five days, so that's a forty hour week. That's taking me five days to get that when it was only taking me four, so actually going on Friday I was losing money. I was losing four hours pay, so that took a lot of that fun out of it. I'm going in an extra day and I'm losing money. I didn't feel good about that at all. It's interesting to note that the union never lost a nickel in dues, because our dues were based on every month, two hours pay. They still got their money. I lost four hours, but they still got their money and I'm going in an extra day to lose four hours. I'd had to put up with that longer. That's another reason why I retired. It's going backwards quick. Ask me some more questions. Bring me back some cherished memories.

T: [Laughs] Sorry.

P: The place is on fire.

T: Well, do you have anything else you want to say because actually we could wrap it up also? Is there anything else that you want...

P: Like I told you, my memory's not that great until somebody trips something.

T: You mentioned earlier the influx of women in the plant with having a foreman. How do you feel about women in the plant?

P: I was there when they brought them in. What difference that made. It was all men. Picture the language. They were only there a couple of days when I accidentally slammed the door on a van and caught my buddy's fingers in the door. It was very colorful what came out and there are these girls. We're all red. They all walked over to the coffee machine. It was embarrassing to start with, but that cooled down too. Hey, damn it, you're in a shop. This is what happens. Guys had a hard time doing their own job. He's over there helping the girl do her job and where you came in to the paint department, you started painting. You're covered in paint. At that time, when we began doing this we didn't have the clothing we have now to protect our clothing. It was a dirty, filthy thing. Well, they never made any of the girls go in there and nobody said anything in the beginning until like a year later saying, "What the hell is going on here?" These guys all got to get screwed up. How come none of the girls? Well, because they're of child-bearing age. Well, so am I. I'm still capable of producing children, same as she is. How come she don't have to go in there? They played silly ass games. There are so many women that stood around and just talked to the guy that was over there talking to them and the guys doing their job. Buddy, you got a hard enough time doing your own job. Why the hell are you doing hers too? You know, sucking up to the females. Some of them are good workers just like the guys. Some of them were good and some of them weren't. Some use every excuse in the world and some of them didn't. I was always amazed. We have a Woman's Committee out there in the union. Well, I thought as a union we were all together. Why would you have a Woman's Committee? You don't have a man's committee.

T: Do they have a committee for minorities?

P: Oh, yeah. They got a Black caucus out there. You don't a White caucus. Now, I'm sorry. What seems to be the problem here? You know what I mean. Oh well. I was never known to be politically correct.

T: If you were in management, what would you do differently if anything?

P: Actually, I wouldn't change a whole lot of things they did. A lot of it made sense. Some of it was just stupid and chicken shit, but you also had to understand that they did it because they were told to do it. Like I said, the people on the fifth floor don't always know what's going on, on the first floor. They just come up with ideas. They don't know what's going on now. They don't know how it came about, but I could look at both sides of that because of my position in the military. I was management there and you could see how things work out and you're better off with a team concept as long as the team stays together. A lot of the cut backs they had on jobs, you could see where these guys aren't doing anything and they could use more work. Logically, you could see it.

You don't like to see it depending on your seniority date. It's just like a recession in a depression. If your neighbor loses a job, it's a recession, but if you lose your job it's a depression, so it depends on how crucial you are to that cut off point how it affects you. You just resent the fact that they're cutting back jobs but if you want to be honest with yourself, you see why they would. At the same time they cut back jobs, you never see anybody go out the door. They just move them to another area, so sometimes you got to say, "What the hells going on?" The guy is still there. He might be in a different department but you never seen anybody go bye bye. They just shift things around.

T: What changes would you make in the union if you could?

P: [Laughs] I would like to see them enforce the constitution of the union. The way things are written like the committeeman doing his job. Now, we have committeemen that have been out there for eighteen years. They don't have a clue what it's like to hold a job on the line. There should be term limits. They're cutting deals, and this, that and the other thing where if they would go by the constitution of the union, do their jobs the way they're supposed to be done and all the favors that are granted, special privileges and so forth that causes a lot of hate and discontent amongst the troops because they're not dumb. They know what's going on but at the same time, well, what can I do about. There's nothing. All you can do is buddy up to the guy and maybe some of that gravy will come your way and you see a lot of that. That's what Al Alli had going on, you know, his appointments here and appointments there. It always struck me funny that when a job opening comes up in the plant, management was required by contract to post that opening and anybody could sign up for it if you qualified. The main qualification was seniority. Then you'd get that job, whereas Al Alli and shop chairmen and a couple of the other officers, they had the ability to appoint an assistant or appoint this guy on the benefits committee to benefits rep or this guy to do on this hazard material. He can actually appoint you to these jobs. You don't have to have any qualifications whatsoever. Well, we don't even know the job exists put it that way. If we as a union feel that strongly that management has to post an opening and we're allowed to bid on it, then when there is an opening coming up in the local, what isn't the union required to post? We were getting a lot young cute girlfriends that were walking around with clipboards, because they were appointed where you you've got the guy out there busting his ass for twenty-five years still busting his ass, but those in power can appoint. You don't even know the job exists, and they say you can always apply for it. How the hell do you apply for it? You can't apply for something you don't know exists, and it happens all the time out there. I asked the union. What do you do? You complain to them, and you're out of order. Your grievance goes no further and stuff like that. It's like talking to a brick wall. There are a lot of double standards in the union, but they demand that management do this but yet they won't do it themselves and nobody complains, especially with Al Alli. He had such a following, you know, because had has buddy-buddy system.

T: How do you feel about GM plants in Mexico?

P: Keep them in Mexico along with their product. You got nobody to blame on that but the Americans; the EPA number one and OSHCA number two. Anytime you have our



government giving seminars to mainly small business on how to set up and operate a business off shore and this is our tax money paying for these seminars to show these people how to do it offshore, then you have to shoot the son of a bitch that came up with that idea. Those who make those laws are in no way affected by them. You know what I mean, but the EPA buried this country and there's nobody in charge, just like the INS. Who's in charge? This thing they had about the passport the other day. Did anybody lose their job? No. They just got reassigned. It's damn near impossible to fire a federal employee. The best thing you can do is, you know the old saying, screw up, move up. Well, that's how they got to where they're at and you can't transfer a guy from one department to another department without giving him a promotion. It don't take a hell of a lot time. That guy is sitting up there. He's the top dog now. He just kept screwing up and they just kept transferring him and after all these years all the screw ups. He should be on top. I'm running out of answers.

T: I'm running out of questions. If you don't have anything else to say, we can wrap it up. I thank you for your time.

P: Now just take my cheerful personality.

T: It is.

P: Just for the record, yeah, there are times I said that I could be out at the plant today working and that's another thing that when we retire, we retire. Management retires and they go back out there as a contractor and they can work three to six months, stuff like that. Us hourly guys can't do that. Well, I wouldn't mind going out there working two days a week, maybe three days a week. That would (inaudible) on me. Maybe if I was retired in Florida it would be different than being retired in Ohio.

T: Maybe you should consider that move.

P: I did.

T: Like I said, thank you for your time. Thank you for the interview.