

J Furwa
Mach Rep

This is Pat Pilling. The date is June the 21st,
1982. I'm talking with Mr. Joe Furwa of 39551
Durand Circle, Sterling Heights. Mr. Furwa is a
machine repairman at Chevy Gear and Axle and a
member of Local 235.

Interview with Joe Furwa, Interview 1
Date of Interview: June 21, 1982, Sterling Heights, Mi.
Release Date:
Interviewer: Pat Pilling
Transcriber: Diane Roth
Begin tape 1, Side 1

PP: Could you begin the tape by telling me where you were born and when you were born.

Furwa: Yes, I was born on March 10th, 1941 in Hamtramck Michigan. You want to know the address?

PP: If you know it.

Furwa: 1922 Norwalk. Right behind Chevrolet ^{Detroit} Gear and Axle.

PP: So, you were born within . . .

Furwa: Striking range. The smell of smoke.

PP: Right within the . . .

Furwa: Pollution area, if you want to call it that.

PP: I wasn't going to say that. I was going to use some modern word like ambience.

Furwa: At that time it was a pollution area, compared to where it is today.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Furwa: I have a brother Stanley, two years my younger. And I have two sisters, Fran and Chris.

PP: Are they living in this area?

Furwa: No, my brother lives in Warren. I have a sister in Detroit, and my sister's still living in Hamtramck, ~~yeah~~.

PP: Is your mother Polish or part Polish?

Furwa: My mother is *full* Polish.

PP: What about your father?

Furwa: My father is actually of the Ukraine. He is of the Eastern *Rite* ~~right~~ . . . the Byzantine *Rite* ~~right~~.

Whereas, my mother is Roman Catholic Polish.

PP: Was she born in this area?

Furwa: My mother was born here, ~~yes~~. My father was born in Pennsylvania.

PP: What about your mother's parents?

Furwa: The *Kushians*? Wonderful people.

PP: Were they born in the United States?

Furwa: They were both born in Poland.

PP: So, that really your mother ~~language~~ *generation* is second ~~generation~~. Do you know how your parents met? Any idea?

Furwa: Yes. My father come to Detroit looking for a job, and he came to Detroit because of the automotive industry. So the story goes, they met one day and eventually got married. There's probably more detail, but not that I'm aware of.

PP: Is your wife Polish or part Polish?

Furwa: She happens to be what the slang is *Polish hub* she's German-Polish.

PP: How many children do you have?

Furwa: I have two. I have a daughter Stacey Ann, she's 10. And Joey, 7.

PP: Have you ever thought about the possibility of one of them working in an auto plant?

Furwa: Definitely did. *Ch. in plant* It's not a bad occupation, don't get me wrong. But I would not see either one of those two in an auto factory. Unless it become a necessity.

PP: Have you had any relatives work in one of the auto plants, such as a father, uncle, ~~or some~~.....

Furwa: My dad retired from Chrysler Lynch Road after thirty years of service.

PP: What kind of work did he do?

Furwa: He was a production worker.

PP: And was he there before the union was in?

Furwa: I'd have to say, probably at the onset of the union. The uncle, if you want to continue *(* that point on that one, is Joseph Selicki, my great uncle, was first president of Local 235. My brother, Stan Furwa, 38, is a supervisor at Chevrolet Detroit Gear and Axle, second shift, Maintenance department. And he started about two years after I did. So he probably has about eighteen years of seniority over there.

PP: How did he start? Do you know?

Furwa: Same way I did, production.

PP: So, actually, when does your seniority start from?

Furwa: 1962.

PP: Do you know the date?

Furwa: September the 14th. It was about that date, I think. It was very close to after graduation. From high school.

PP: So those are the only relatives then that you . . .

Furwa: Not necessarily so. My mother's side of this family all work for L. A. Young Spring and Wire company. The majority of them retired from that place. My dad's relatives are from Pennsylvania, like I stated. And they were with the soft coal region, and they were mostly with the coal mines. One uncle's still down there yet. He works in the steel mills.

PP: Do you identify at all with Poland or things Polish?

Furwa: Just about every day of the week.

PP: But not with the Ukraine side so much?

Furwa: No, because we were brought up in the Roman Catholic tradition. My dad was there and we did attend mass with him periodically, but more with the mother. We have a pussy willow

Furwa: tree in the back yard, which is Ukrainian. ^{Rite} The Catholic you celebrate with the palm. The Ukraine tradition you celebrate with the pussy willow.

PP: When is that?

Furwa: I think it is ("Palm Sunday" from background) Our Palm Sunday would be their equivalent to the pussy willow. Where they distribute pussy willow on Palm Sunday, we distribute palm on Palm Sunday.

PP: Do you know the part of Poland that your mother's parents came from?

Furwa: No, I do not.

PP: So, is there any particular part of Poland that you might identify with?

Furwa: If you had some people from a certain division of Poland that I could identify with, they could probably tell me what part of the country my grandparents on my mother's side were from. Because of certain things that we do, or certain foods that we cook and the way we cook them. I think there's an identity involved in that.

PP: Well, let's go back to where you were raised. Were you raised in Hamtramck?

Palm
I 9

Furwa; Yeah, I spent 18 years of my life, in fact, at 1922 Norwalk. And my grandfather was alone and he became senile. And I moved in with him, which was about, less than 500 feet from the 1922 residence, which is just down Dequindre. Dequindre runs right into Chevrolet Detroit Gear and Axle. Now my grandfather's dead and my mother, which was one of the sisters, who didn't have her own house. She more or less inherited the house, and we moved in there.

PP: Now this is your grandfather Selicki, you're talking about.

Furwa: No, this was grandfather Kushnev. Selicki was a great uncle. Kushnev, he was at 9720 Dequindre.

PP: Selicki was the great uncle on . . .

Furwa: On my grandmother's side.

PP: That was the brother of your mother's mother, in other words. Were you very much aware of your community being Polish when you were growing up?

Furwa: Yes. It was evident on Fridays. We fasted and on Sundays we went to church. (dog barking and door shutting)

PP: You went to a Polish parish, I see. Which one did you go to?

Furwa: Sainte Florence^{can's}. I went there from first grade through the eighth grade. Did not continue at a Catholic school because of financial problems of my mother and my father. So I went to *Mt. Olem* High School.

PP: And that's where you graduated from.

Furwa: I continued my education there. I graduated in '59.

PP: Do you attend a Polish parish now?

Furwa: Saint James — (61) .

PP: Do you belong to any Polish organizations?

Furwa: No, just Knights of *Columbus*, which is a Catholic fraternal organization.

PP: Yes, but is it particularly Polish?

Furwa: No, it is not.

PP: Are there a lot of Polish people in this immediate area where you live?

Furwa: Yes, it's a mixture. If you looked next door, you saw Philipinos. And there are a few Polish people involved in this area.

PP: When you were growing up, did your parents own their own home?

Furwa: No, they did not.

PP: They were renting the house?

Furwa: Yes, from my grandfather.

PP: Did they ever own their own home?

Furwa: No, they did not.

PP: Wasn't that somewhat unusual?

see P. 19
Furwa: No, because we don't either. Unfortunately.

PP: Is this your first home?

Furwa: No, it's not. It's our second. We started out in Detroit.

PP: How many years have you been out here?

Furwa: Five.

PP: Do you own a boat or a cottage?

Furwa: No, I do not.

PP: Do you desire to do so?

Furwa: No, I do not. They are a luxury which I, at the present time or in the future, can not foresee buying.

PP: What kind of car or cars do you have?

Furwa: I drive a '76 Chevy Caprice which we bought brand new. We bought for my wife a '72 Pontiac, which she motivates around in her daily routines. Nothing worth speaking of.

PP: Have you ever had a parent or parent-in-law living with you?

Furwa: No, but when my mother-in-law comes over it's wonderful. She does spend some time. Both my parents are dead, by the way.

PP: And where does your mother-in-law live?

Furwa: She lives in Detroit. But you can call it Redford Township. My father-in-law is also deceased. I never met him.

PP: Do any other members of your family now work at Gear and Axle?

Furwa: My brother.

PP: Let's talk now about your actual work itself. Let's go back to high school. What kind of jobs did you have when you were in high school?

Furwa: Oh, they're so numerous.

PP: Well, just give me an idea. Two or three.

Furwa: I worked in a garage, cleaning up. Then I graduated and went to a butcher market and I cleaned that place up. Then I worked in a bakery, same type of work, cleaning. Each job was probably an increase in wages. I shined shoes, worked in bars.

PP: When did you start working in auto related . . .

Furwa: When I went to Chevrolet. I graduated in '59. Chevrolet was not hiring at the time. I went to work at a Squirt Bottling Factory up in
(88) , near Ferndale, Michigan and I stayed there until the latter part of '62. I already had an application for General Motors, Chevrolet Gear and Axle. Then when they called me, I quit Squirt Bottling and that's

Furwa: when I went to work for General Motors, Gear and Axle.

PP: And when you went in, what jobs did you do?

Furwa: Anything I could get my hands on at the time.

I wasn't very picky. I think I just wanted to get my foot in that front door. And I went to work in Plant 1 and it was dirty, greasy, and everything you can think of. You wouldn't believe that you would have to work like that. But it had to be a start. Because I was aware of the apprentice program they had there, which was probably at that time equivalent to Ford Motor Company's apprentice program. And I probably worked there at least 16 months before I was accepted.

PP: What kind of work did you do?

Furwa: I was a buller. I was anything.

PP: What was a buller

Furwa: Buller? It's about a hundred thousand feet of

98 . It's multi-type 99 mag. machinery that 99 around. It progresses to stations. Some of the part is cut on it.

I was what you call M & A: Machine and Assemble. Whereas, if someone didn't come in that particular day, you'd go cover his job, at that time. Today you don't have those conditions as you

Furwa: did before. Contract has changed.

PP: So, in other words, you did this for 16 months
and then you were able to (103) .
Actually, when did you actually apply for an
apprenticeship?

Furwa: When I got seniority which was 90 days after
the day I started. Once you have seniority
you can get out there and set your goals.

PP: But it took quite a long time to get set.

Furwa: Not a lot of time. (I knew it was going to
be my home because being raised in the backyard
of Chevrolet Detroit Gear and Axle. You look
out your back window and there it is. It's
something you've been around your whole life,
you just know you're going to be there. It's
nothing to be ashamed of. It's a form of living.

PP: Did you apply for machine repairman?)

Furwa: At first shot I did. I did know how to work
machines because of the work I did at Squirt
Bottling. It somehow just grew on me real
fast and in a very short period of time I
found myself performing alot of maintenance
work on their machines. The union was lax at
Squirt Bottling and I had the freedom and I
didn't mind working the overtime over their

Work

Furwa: seven days. I was content. If the money was there, I probably would have stayed at Squirt, or I'd still be there right now.

PP: Were the benefits as good?

Furwa: No, it wasn't.

PP: Was it unionized?

Furwa: It was unionized but it was controlled. You had a union but that was about the extent of it. You didn't have the protection. It was there, you could see it. But it wasn't as strong as it could have been.

PP: How long were you in the apprentice program?

Furwa: Four years. The *machine repair* apprentice program is a four year program. Two years you're spending in your toolroom where you learn a variety of machines that are lathes, and shakers and mills and cleaners. These are machines that remove stock. If it's round stock you can do it on a lathe. If it's square stock you can do it on a shaker. These are different types of machines that you can run. Two years is spent in the apprentice shop learning the machines, and the other two years is spent on the floor. In those two years you divide into four groups, which is machine repair basic.

*Mach
Rep.*

Math Dept.

Furwa: And then your in hydraulic department and then you have a grease and overhaul department. And you have a bull overhaul department. And these four groups are night and day and you spend a certain amount of time in each one of those to finish your program and after four years, you're done.

PP: Do they ever fail people?

Furwa: Oh yes, there's related training involved where you go to Cass Tech. You take math classes, drafting classes, Trig and algebra classes, welding classes, practical math classes. You must maintain a certain mark, grade mark. I don't know where it is right now off the top of my head, but it had to be at least a B-. On C, you were ^{really} on shaky ground. Course, then you had people who were really concerned about what they were going to produce in four years. And if you didn't make the grade, you were just cancelled out.

PP: Do you have any idea what percent actually didn't make it?

Furwa: During the four years that I was working, going through the apprentice program, there might have been one or two that did not make the grade.

Furwa: Not more than that. (But the people that you had at the time were qualified people. To get into the apprentice program at that time, you really had to know something. You had to produce transcripts from your high school. And your work record had a lot to do with it. Your attitude had a lot to do with it. So, it wasn't like it is today, where they have a ratio of union and nonunion members, minority groups to white groups. You have a certain percentage that you've got to bring in whether you like it or not. And that is probably what's going to downgrade the apprentice program within seven to ten years from now. Because you have to let minority groups into it even though they aren't qualified at all and there are probably some that are just cheating their way through it. But they're making you look good. You have to accept it.)

PP: Do you like the type of work you're doing?

Furwa: Oh yes. I don't mind getting up and going to work. ~~It's the object basically~~ because I love my wife and my family. It's something you don't mind getting up and going to work and doing.

W/Employee
Edmc

PP: Have you ever thought, as many people ~~doe~~ ^{doing} nowadays, ~~so~~ of possibly changing a job? This is not that you would do it necessarily, but have you ever thought well, maybe it would have been nice to ~~go~~ ^{have gone} into something else. Or it might be nice providing I can keep up my job and keep the same income. At least maybe ~~a~~ change to something else.

Furwa: I think I may have mentioned my date is 3-10-41, which means I'm 41 years old, and after that many years in the trade, I couldn't think of anything I'd like to do other than instruct other apprentices.

PP: So, in other words, you would like to teach.

Furwa: Yeah, I would like to teach, if possible. When the population of the apprentice program was higher than it is today. Right now it's at an all time low, as far as 235, ~~and~~ ^{and} is concerned. I would be normally assigned an apprentice to work with. And that is very interesting because you taught them properly, compared to before when the machinery was a lot of press work and a lot of bull work, it was called then. So, today there's more advanced technology, ~~more~~ more in-line

Teaching

Teaching
Furwa: transfers. There's a lot more to learn and a lot more to teach. And if you don't teach him properly, well you could be lost at the *wayside*.

PP: What do you mean by in-line transfers? What are they?

Furwa: In-line transfers are machines that are produced in a continuous type transfer machine, that could be ~~of~~ anywhere from 15 to 65 stations. A certain function takes place at a certain station and then is mechanically transferred to another station. And another operation takes place which is to be *101* or *109* or facing or any configuration you can think of. If you were to take this bulb that was made out of steel and you want to put this hole in it or this hole in it or this rim in it or put all these little doodads here on it, it could be done in various stages. And at the end of the machine process, when it comes out it would be a finished product. It doesn't have to be touched by human hands.

PP: Have you ever thought of relocating in another state?

Furwa: The minute I retire. (Laughter) After this weekend's weather, I just told my wife last night, if there's one thing I want to do it's get the hell out of ^{the state of} Michigan. The weather's lousy.

PP: Where do you want to go?

Furwa: Arizona or Florida. If my kids eventually grow up and they're on their own and I realize that they don't need mom and dad, I would like to get out of this state. Because of the weather, primarily.

PP: What do you think you might miss most if you did move out of state?

Furwa: The kids.

PP: If they were here.

Furwa: Yes.

PP: Does your wife work at all?

Furwa: No, she's the biggest volunteer in the world, but she's a domestic engineer.

PP: Well, that's a nice title. ^(Mrs. Furwa) (voice heard in background)

Furwa: She's a (195) director program, she's involved in anything (voice from background - sounds like wife). She's deeply involved within ~~the~~ school.)

PP: In Sterling Heights.

Furwa: No, this is Utica. Once you pass North ~~and~~ ⁹ 17 mile
you become Utica school district.

PP: Tell me, do you know of any Polish auto workers
who have gone to find work in another state?
Do you know of any at all?

Furwa: No. The people I started with are still there.
The seniority ~~right now~~ is holding them in,
right now. Our population of the apprentice
program has decreased. Even the production
people I started with are still there. ~~to this~~
~~day yet~~. They haven't gone anywhere, they're
still with us.

PP: Well, actually then, you have, looks like about
twenty years.

Furwa: Twenty-one.

PP: So, that you're actually nine years from
retirement.

Furwa: Contractually, yes.

PP: This is my next question. Actually, when do
you plan on retiring? Are you going to retire
after thirty years?

Furwa: It would be nice, because if you can add them
up real fast, that would make me fifty years
old. And that would be probably beautiful

Furwa: for me and my wife. But I don't think that will transpire because the fact is Joey's only seven. Nine and seven is sixteen, he'd probably be in eleventh grade, or twelfth grade. He's going into the third grade now. So, it'd be kind of hard for me to retire at fifty, even though I had my thirty years. And there'd still be a mortgage on the house here. So, we couldn't do it.

See p 8.

PP: So, ~~also~~ the fact that you like your work ^{also} makes a difference. ~~I mean, Some people doing~~ things and retire, ~~are found out~~ as soon as their thirty years are over because perhaps they don't care for their work.

Furwa: Oh, don't get me wrong. If it wasn't for the two kids. If I had my thirty years and I could go live in Arizona some place cheaper and the market was proper for the house to sell, ~~Because~~ the valuation has increased tremendously over the last five years, I wouldn't hesitate to move out.

PP: Now, if you did go to Arizona, say you did retire in thirty, thirty-five years, or whatever it happens to be, would you work in Arizona?

Furwa: I'd probably get a part time job just to stay *occupied*.

PP: ~~But, I mean,~~ In the same field?

Furwa: No, not necessarily so because I don't think the market is as available as ^{his} in Michigan.

PP: What do you think you might do?

Furwa: A security guard, ^{even} Something of that nature. You *never* know, they might have a machine shop down there that really needs somebody. (voice in background) I'd be a greens keeper in a golf course (laughter) as long as that golf course is in Arizona.

PP: You play golf, I gather.

Furwa: I don't, but *'d love to play in* the grass.

PP: Have you ever thought of taking any kind of, ~~you know,~~ education courses?

Furwa: Right now, I'm only lacking the twelve *credit* hours for my B.S. with Wayne State. I don't know whether you're aware of that or not. Stanley did complete his paper. I did not complete my paper.

PP: Now tell me about your work at Wayne State.

Are you in the College of *life long learning*.
weekend
Wyckham College? And what are you getting

PP: your degree in?

Furwa: It would be a Bachelor of General Studies.
And I'm lacking twelve credit hours from
graduating. And the twelve credit hours would
be the completion of my paper. At the time
I felt it was very demeaning. I'm sorry to
say that.

PP: What was?

Furwa: Writing the paper. I was really into the two
courses prior to writing the paper. It was
the 232 type courses. Writing I and II
was Sunday work. 233 by
the way. And I guess for some reason I just
didn't have the time or the patience to
continue.

PP: Do you think you might go back?

Furwa: I thought about it so many times it ain't
funny. I'm probably more prepared for it now
than I was a couple years ago.

PP: Why did you think the paper was demeaning?

Furwa: It just didn't make any sense to me at all.
I seen some of the papers that people were
putting out, and I think you can buy it for
1500bucks to 200 dollars. Doesn't make any
sense to me for people to buy it. You can

*Comment
Ed*

Furwa: put them out there and they look good.)

PP: How long a paper do you have to write?

Furwa: I forgot the requirements for the paper, right now, to tell you the honest to God truth.

PP: What was the subject, though?

Furwa: Well, it was a subject of your choice.

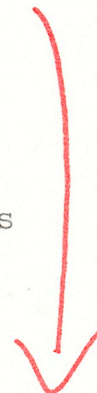
PP: Oh, it could be on anything.

Furwa: Any subject you wanted to choose. It could be on dandelions if you wanted it to. It didn't have to be on work.

PP: It could be on why I want to go and live in Arizona?

Furwa: It could be 6:30 to 3:00: Chevy and Me. That was our starting point at the time I was thinking of writing the paper. 6:30 and 3:00 was the starting and quitting time, and Chevy and Me I thought it was 250 but that didn't work out either. It was really depressing - it wasn't depressing, that's a bad word to use. It was just a struggle because the fact ~~was~~ is that Joey was around and Stacey was around and the school took a lot of time. And at the time that schedule of ours had increased to seven days a week and you find yourself coming home, saying hello and goodbye and running up

*Current
Educ*



Furwa: to 10 Mile and Jefferson, that Catholic school up there, near Wayne State. And we lived on 17 and Ryan Road. And you get home from work in the dead of winter because you carried twelve credit hours a semester, you had to run there and run back home. The *weekend* conferences really killed you because if you didn't attend those, you were going to fail. But that was a four credit course in itself, and you couldn't deny your program. The classes were conducted down at Local 235. So right after work, most of the classes were set up so *we* had to work ~~at~~ 3:30 and classes start around 4:15-4:30. So, then *Gerry* would anticipate me coming home around 6:30-7:00.

End Side 1

Begin Side 2

*Clement
Edin*

PP: Well, why didn't they continue, do you know?

Furwa: The higher you went, that's when it went up.

PP: I see, this was just the beginning classes.

Furwa: About the first two years, I would say, maybe two and a half years, for that matter. The classes were conducted within the nearby area.

PP: Do you think that was better?

Furwa: It was, but then as you spread out you just couldn't do it because some would quit and

Furwa: some would have different classes, and all of a sudden you just branched out and you just couldn't control it in the center anymore. We had to spread out.

PP: But now you're so close to the end, would you think seriously about going back?

Furwa: It would be nice if I was to continue beyond that point. The Bachelor of General Studies degree, I don't see where it benefits me. I was a foreman at one time at Gear and Axle and I was the leading representative at one time for Gear and Axle.

PP: When were you a foreman?

Furwa: Back in Detroit about six or seven years ago.

PP: What happened? You decided to give it up?

Furwa: Well, I don't think you can put it on tape.

PP: We'll skip that part. But now you're not a foreman. You were with the union too?

Union ||| Furwa: I was the district committeeman of skill trades for four years. I was also the district committeeman of skilled trades for two years. Spent six years involved in union activities and I spent about eight months as a supervisor.

PP: All that time when you were doing that, were you also working in the plant? As well as

PP: . being a committee member?

Furwa: Oh yes, you're still part of the trade. If that's what you're referring to. Yes, I did work in the plant. As a district committeeman you stay in plant. The higher you go, you have more freedom. You can go to Local or conduct outside business on company time.

PP: So, in other words, you were really quite active in your Local.

Furwa: I started out with good intentions, I would have to say.

PP: I'm interested always in knowing something about the education courses at the Local. In addition to the ones in connection with Wayne, did you ever take any other courses at the Local? Did you take courses in collective bargaining or grievance procedure, union related courses?

Furwa: No. I had OJT - On-The-Job Training. At the time we had some terrific shop committee persons - Polish people - 304 ,

Eddie Baluska and everything you wanted to know, you learned from them. Those people, you didn't have to attend any classes to learn anything. They were in there as long as the union's been in existence, I would think.

*Polish
Union*

Furwa: They came up through the ranks and they knew it. That's the best teacher right there.)

PP: What about the other types of courses that the union has? It has courses in everything from assertiveness training to stress management to retirement courses. Have you taken any of those?

Furwa: I don't participate in any of the programs ~~that~~ that they have set up. Probably because I feel that the people that are in charge of it the programs are no more qualified to teach and instruct the programs than I am, I think. They have no degrees, they have no common sense. Probably the majority of them are illiterate. It's something that they are getting compensated for and it's probably the biggest reason why they have them.)

*Current
educ. c.
& Union
educ.*

PP: Do you think the union should teach courses in education?

Furwa: They should if they have the qualified people. If somebody has to stand up in front of you and say "dah, dah and dah" a hundred thousand times, it takes about two minutes to tell you that the person isn't qualified to teach at class. Not ~~that~~ I'm spoiled because of

Furwa: the instructors I did have at Wayne State, but you can tell an educated person from an idiot. It's very simple.

PP: How many times have you been laid off?

Furwa: Never. Okay, I take that back. I was laid off for about two months the very first year I started. After that, never. Never drew unemployment, never drew severance and I never took a vacation.

PP: This is what? To thank the skilled trades, I suppose.

Furwa: No, not necessarily now because when I graduated we were given fifty percent of our apprentice program towards our seniority time. Which when I graduated it was two years, okay? Prior to graduation, Uncle Sam sent me a letter says "We Want You". I wasn't married at the time to Geraldine.

PP: So, where did you go?

Furwa: I wrote them back and I stated I would like to fulfill my apprentice program, looking for deferment. ^{And I was granted deferment} Upon graduation, 1964, I was drafted into the Armed Forces, Army straight leg. And I spent one year of tour of duty in Vietnam, 1967-1968. Upon returning back from the two

Furwa: year tour of duty, I found that the seniority that I had, which wasn't much, it was only six years or so, was enough to keep me on the first shift, let alone, worry about a job. Because that's just the way the seniority was because of the amount of retirees going out. And I never worried about getting laid off.

PP: So, you never went on the second shift?

Furwa: Yep, I worked the first shift for twenty-one years. I don't even know the people on the second shift.

PP: If you were laid off, if say they started cutting back and cutting back, which they have in some plants, if not closing them, do you think you'd consider retraining if there were no jobs in your field or would you go to something else?

Furwa: If I was to be cut, definitely. Based on the amount of seniority they have today, if I was to be cut back, Chevrolet Detroit Gear and Axle would no longer be in existence. We're all *optimists*, in my particular trade.

PP: What do you feel about some people taking early retirement? Say a person, I don't necessarily mean in your trade, but say within

Hayoffs

PP: the auto industry, because ^dbeing laid off. Say they get to be about 55 or 60 and they don't have their thirty years in. Maybe they've got twenty-five years in. What do you think about them taking early retirement rather than risking continued lay-offs where they may never get their thirty years? Do you think it's better for them to take what they can get?

Hayden /
Furwa: Yeah, you're ~~talkin~~ talking twenty-five years. If you were saying fifteen years, I would probably entertain you. Fifteen years, I would definitely start looking for another job because of the amount of seniority. ^{or} ~~Fifteen~~ years isn't enough seniority to keep you on the job forty hours a week. There's trouble up ahead on the road and I would probably look for some other greener pasture. Because, normally we're talking anywhere from five to seven years being laid off for an indefinite period of time. But we have never exceeded ten years. Now, you start talking fifteen, there's a definite indicator there that something is going to happen shortly, and I'd

Furwa: get out of there anyhow.

PP: Do you feel that Affirmative Action has had anything to do with job lay-offs or is it based on seniority?

Furwa: In what respect?

PP: I just wondered with the new rules about having more minorities in the trade as apprentices and so on, has that affected some of the younger members or people with lower seniority being laid off. In other words, if there are six people that have to be laid off and half of them are a minority group and they have the same seniority, would it be more likely that the ones that are not minority groups would be laid off?

Furwa: Unless they've changed the contract since 3:30 this afternoon, we don't worry about that because seniority prevails. The Affirmative Action program, something like they have in *probably the* City of Detroit Police Department, whatever groups they have, that's their problems.

PP: In other words, the contract is so strong that it depends on the seniority.

Furwa; Yes, basically it is the contract. It's one word, seniority prevails regardless. There's no way, shape, or form that a eighteen or twenty-one year old black or chicano, any minority group regardless, can come in and say, I can do your job, per se. You're going to be laid off. That would be it. Seniority does prevail, period. But, we still have that background that you just can't instill in these kids today. There's no way they can just ~~perform~~ to the expectations of the corporation. They wouldn't retain it, there's no way in the world. Even though the apprentice program is only a four year program, probably your doctor's degree is probably a six year program, I'm not even sure. All together. There's still room to learn. Every day of the week you learn something new, regardless. And the same thing in our trade. I mean, some people would want to use the word profession, for that matter. You just can't come in and do the job. You have to have the experience to do it.

And if they want to bring these kids in,

Work
a whole

Furwa: they did have programs. They call them E.I.T. Employee ^{IN} Training, where they would work and then qualify over an extended period of time. But it's just a drop in the bucket compared to what they have to know. There's related training they've got to master.

PP: How long does an E.I.T. take to train?

Furwa: It's a six year program compared to our four year program.

PP: And ^{do} they take classes?

Furwa: They do take related training classes. And the difference is it's probably the caliber of the person that's ~~sa~~ what makes an E.I.T. versus an apprentice. And I was strongly against an E.I.T. And I'll go on record. I hate the E.I.T. program because you ~~have a~~ cut back and the E.I.T. goes ~~before the~~ ^{to the} apprentice. You retain apprentice over an E.I.T. regardless of the amount of seniority they have. As ~~the~~ lay-off would go, you'd go to your E.I.T. and you'd go to your apprentice with a ratio, an ^{apprentice to a journey man} ratio but the E.I.T.'s got to come off the top of the stack. So, you could be an E.I.T. for twenty years and have about five years in

EIT
Program

XX

EIT
Proof

Furwa: the program, but your status would still be an E.I.T. with five years, after twenty years, because you're cut back and brought up and cut back and brought up. Just like the minors to the major leagues.

PP: So, are they even below an apprentice with two years?

Furwa: They have no seniority rights at all.

PP: They would have plant seniority, I suppose.

Furwa: Not that, because when there's a cut back, you still remove the E.I.T. regardless. Until he gains status of an S which is called E.I.T.S. Employee-In-Training Seniority.

PP: And he's still within the six years.

Furwa: He's still within the six years but he has gained seniority so that he could be retained over an apprentice. But that takes him so long. And that was the biggest fault. They have had two standards. That's a bad word to use, but they have two standards. The apprentice has a standard and then the E.I.T. has a standard. And if you see what I'm showing you, this is the standard. They should either lower the standard of this guy or they should raise the

Furwa: standard of this guy. This guy should come up all the way because eventually down the road someplace, they're taking ~~the~~ equivalent. So, why should their standards be any different because of their being a minority or not. It makes no difference to me.

PP: So, in other words, the standards should be on the same ^{one} plain. If you knew a few years ago what you know now about our current economic conditions, would you have gone into the same kind of work? Or do you think you might have gone into something else?

Furwa: We stuck it out through thick and thin, my wife and I and the two kids. And there wasn't ~~at~~ times that we were kind of concerned about the following paycheck. But somehow it seems that it does have it's slumps and then it just rebounds again and there's more prosperity than you can shake a stick at. We ~~were sent~~ home most of the winter. I don't know if you're aware of that or not. We worked a forty hour basis. Which is very rare for me.

PP: How many hours do you work now?

Furwa: Seven days a week. Back to back, seven days a week.

*Workplace
overtime*

PP: Even on Sunday?

Furwa: Seven days a week is Sunday!

PP: About how many hours is that?

Furwa: Fifty-six hours a week.

PP: So, you get time and a half.

Furwa: Time and a half and double time for Sunday. It ain't too bad cause we have two weekends back to back, seven days a week. And the outlook right now for the rest of the model year looks like it's going to continue. For the six day, Saturday, or which you would call the 48-hour schedule - 52 hours for the pay, 48 for the work - should continue for the rest of the year. And then, about every third Sunday, I would say, you'd probably be scheduled to work. This is a bad time of year because there's a lot of people going on vacation, so there's a lot of refusals. And if the weather permits, a lot of guys would say the heck with them, I'm going to take off this weekend. So to fulfill your schedule needs, we have to keep on continuing. We have a list we work with in our equalization group. And until they fulfill that list, you just continue on down.

Furwa: And if your name is on the bottom of the list, you can still be working seven days a week.

PP: What is an equalization group?

Furwa: Schedules are divided into equalization groups for the purpose of sharing overtime hours. In machine repair we share overtime hours *within* our equalization group. And if you were to go to the maintenance department, for example, the sheet metal people would share overtime within their equalization group, as compared to the welders, as compared to the electricians, as compared to the pipe fitters (*Danny Hack is a* ~~standing line~~ pipe fitters). And, within our group, we share overtime hours.

PP: So that everybody gets their fair share.

Furwa: Yeah. Like on a Saturday, you are charged twelve hours. And let's say you and I were the only two people in the equalization group, the following week, next to your name you would have twelve hours, and I would have zero. So, they would have to ask me *first*, *If* there was ever overtime scheduled for the following week, they would have to ask me before they asked you. You have the right to turn it down

*overtime
workplace*

Furwa: if you want to. If you are in line to work, you are charged twelve hours. If you're not in line to work, then those hours just carry over till they fall. Then at the end of the year, they take the top man and they give him the zero. And the next man has, say, five hours more, he could have 1005. The next year he would just have five on his overtime. So, it's a continual operation.

PP: How do you feel about the Japanese and ^{the} foreign cars?

*For
import*

Furwa: They've got to live too. It's the American people's fault for buying the foreign cars, I think. We have some pretty cars on the market, and this is pure ⁴¹⁷ to have a Japanese car. I've driven two small cars. The Chevy Citation, I think is a jewel out there today. But as far as the Japs are concerned, they gotta live too.

PP: How do you feel about the people buying them, though?

Furwa: Oh, they should be thrown off the roads, if I could have my way about it. There's nothing I can do about it and I wish they would wake

Furwa: up and buy American products,

PP: And yet, so many of our American products have parts made elsewhere, apparently.

Furwa: GM, as well as Ford, as well as Chrysler, for that matter, have got fingers in every ^{continent} ~~country~~ in the world today. I can't say that they should just bring all their fingers back home and just deal with American people for American products. GM wants to buy some of these small cars from Japan, I guess 1983 models ^{new} and sell them here. I don't know how big that's going to go over.

PP: Somebody told me once that the engine in the Luv truck was made in Japan. I don't know if this is the case now. Would you feel differently about a foreign company if the cars were assembled in the U.S., just like Volkswagen and the assembly plant.

Furwa: Well, you're putting American people to work. You've got to admit that. I don't know how a foreign company would deal with an American putting ^{them} together. If they would honor the union as we honor the union. If they would be as lenient, that's a bad word to use. If they would be as understanding as the

For imports

Furwa: American employers today. Some things transpire in a plant that you accept daily and there's no getting away from that.

PP: Except that I would imagine that those auto workers that are working at Volkswagen must be members of the UAW. And I would think the union would have some say in how the men were treated.

For impact

Furwa: Going back in our conversation, if you recall, when I worked at Squirt Bottling, you had a union there but that's all you had. There's not much you can really do about it. The Teamsters had control over that one.

PP: What do you think about the idea that some people have ^{nowadays} ~~now~~ that young people, people just ^{about to} entering the work force, because of redundancy in jobs and layoffs and whatnot, probably should be trained for two different kinds of jobs, so if they tried out something and they went redudant, at least they would have something left.

Furwa: Not unless you were a graduating class of some inner-city high school today. I'd say the first thing you don't want to do is get

Furwa: into an automotive industry. I would try to get them out of it. And I don't think it would be a place to make an honest living the next fifteen years from now.

PP: But on the other hand, somebody's got to be working in the automotive industry. Otherwise when men retire . . .

Furwa: The people that are being retired aren't being replaced. And you can say, well, how do you still continue. You do continue because of the amount of overtime you're working.

PP: But there's a limit to overtime too. Right now you say you're doing something like 56 hours.

Furwa: I imagine you can work two Saturdays in a row and take off the third.

PP: But not everybody likes to do that.

Furwa: Well, some people can stay in there seven days a week, fifty-two weeks of the year.

PP: But then other people like to have at least one day of ^a the week. And some people like to have two.

Furwa: They get around it. You can't use the word compulsory overtime because that wouldn't be

Overtime
Workplace

Furwa: fair. But they get around it. If a guy *just* doesn't appreciate overtime then he just doesn't work the overtime. The guy that wants to work the overtime, they know who these individuals are and they make it convenient for them to work the overtime. It's kind of hard to explain. You just have to be involved to know how complex it is. But yet, you can just break it down and anybody can do that particular job. There's always somebody available to do it. All you got to do is know who the guy is, keep him in the back of your head and say, "Sam I need a guy for Saturday. You've done the job before." Because they try to make everybody as versatile as they can in the production area. A machine could be operated by any number of people, not just by one person. We don't shut the plant down because you don't come in tomorrow morning. We do continue.

PP: Would you comment now on this fairly new program - Quality of Work Life - so called. Do you think *that* it's getting anywhere? Do you participate first in that program?

Furwa: Quality of Work program - I do participate in it. But, I don't think it's primary reason of function is where it is today; What it was designed for is working today.

PP: How do you mean?

QWL
Furwa: Quality of Work Life, I feel, is set up to alleviate some of the tedious jobs that are in the plant today. With the right people involved, if the problem exists it could probably be ironed out or it could be less tedious or less repetitious for that matter. Quality of Work Life turned into an area where management has found out who does what for whom. That does not make any sense and I hate to beat around the bush. It's a way for them to become aware of what's going on in the plant, where they should have been aware for the last twenty years.

PP: That makes sense.

Furwa: It's a schoolers type B.S. Where one's telling what the other one is doing and it doesn't benefit anyone. What they are doing is they are confirming what they have known for the last ten-fifteen years. But they're finding

Furwa: it from their own people instead of somebody else.

PP: Do you think they have any long-range use?

QWL
Furwa: No, none whatsoever. Cause our particular department, the stuff that they're talking about can be done by our own people without including management. What they should have done is, they have a lot of tedious jobs in there, okay. And the production rate is probably down because of certain little sore spots ~~in there~~. And if they were to say well, if you guys were to do this for us, then they could probably come around counter-clockwise, instead of clockwise. We can do this, ~~we can do this~~^{and}, a certain amount of people are involved, but we don't have to handle the part as much. And not handling the part as much is what saves money. Those points aren't being brought out, I don't feel. What they're doing is they're pitting certain union brothers against certain union brothers. And in doing that, there's a certain amount of animosity built up in there. You just hate to see this happen, but it is. There's no doubt

Furwa: about it. I don't know how long the program's been in, maybe a year. I really don't know exactly the amount of time. But that's the feeling I get from it. In fact, the majority of our people say well, it's a rest time. You go up there for an hour and you can B.S. for an hour and it's fine and dandy. But I think a lot could be accomplished, some quality work^{up} if they wanted to. I mean, they're donating now to the Special Olympics and they're donating fishing rods to these homes for boys and they're probably out there doing something for this group. Quality of Work Life isn't that at all. It's what's in the plant. How do you keep the oil 512 going. How do you make this part come around faster to me? How do you make my job easier so we can produce more without making me as tired as I am at 3:00 in the afternoon? What can we do to get the finish better up on these parts? The Japs have been doing it right along. Why can't we do it? This is what you want to get into. How do I get a better ^{Surface} finish ~~surface~~ on this part? Do I need certain groups

QWL

Workplace

Furwa: in here to talk about it? Let's take a look at this piece. Let's bring in our skilled trades people. Let's bring in these so called qualified engineers from the outside. Let's find out why we can't get a better surface finish. Let's find out why we have to grind it. Why can't we just turn it? It's cheaper to turn a part than it is to grind it because grinders are so expensive today. Those things ^{are} is what should be brought out. Not that, hey, he's sitting on his rectum all day long and he might work two hours out of a day but you've got to keep him there because if that line loads up, somebody's got to take them off. But why does that line load up? Why don't you get them off the line faster?

When you talk about eliminating one person, do you know what you're talking about/eliminating? On an average anywhere from twenty-nine to thirty-four thousand dollars per person. I think that's a good average ball park ^{average} figure. And I'm not really good at that. That 's from a guy who's pretty good about working all the time. That's what you can eliminate. And that should reflect on the price of the

Furwa: automobile down the line.

PP: How do you rate the importance of a man's job to himself or the individual?

Furwa: He should take pride in his workmanship regardless if he sweeps the floor, if he runs the most sophisticated machine in the complex. You could call it esprit de corps as much as you wanted to but that's probably what they're lacking today, is pride in what they do.

Work Satisfaction

PP: Do you think your feeling is partly from your Polish or your Ukrainian background? Do you think that has anything to do with the way you feel?

Furwa: No, you just take pride in what you do^{is} because you like what you do and you don't mind doing it.

PP: What about the younger workers? Do you think they take pride in their work today?

Furwa: No.

PP: Why do you think that?

Furwa: Because they're seeing what the thirty year veteran's doing out there. Sitting down, reading the paper or just yakking jaws and he feels he should be able to do the same

Furwa: thing. He shouldn't be tied down to a machine for eight hours or tied down to a part of the assembly line for eight hours and just do this work repetitiously.

PP: You're talking about production.

Furwa: Production people. *Skilled trades* is probably the same way. They look back and they look at a thirty year veteran who should be taking it a little bit easier than normal, and he feels that he should get the same treatment from the supervisor as a thirty year veteran. Where if everybody has that attitude, you don't get nothing done.

End of Interview