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| **Project: Glasgow’s Highstreets**Respondent: Jan WagnerYear of birth: 1945Age: 78Connection to the project: Local knowledgeDate of Interview: 28/8/2023Interviewer: Billy FerrieRecording Agreement: YesInformation & Consent: YesPhotographic Images: YesLength of Interview: 01:38:48Location of Interview: Respondent’s HomeRecording Equipment: Zoom 4N- built-in-mics | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Summary Time(from: mins/secs | Description | Transcribed Extract(from- to: mins/secs) |
| 02.17 | Respondent talks about her early memories of Glasgow Highstreets. She recalls, her grandfather’s office and grandmothers’ shop in Sauchiehall Street and goes on to describe the various types of shop and stores either side of and adjacent to Sauchiehall Street. She also mentions fabric shops where you could buy `materials’ and accessories to make your own clothes and home fittings |  |
| 02:17  | “I was quite young, very possibly because my grandfather's office was in Union Street and my grandmother's shop was in Sauchiehall Street. So I was taken into my grandfather's office quite a lot. And so I was. It was halfway up Union Street, above Thompsons the butchers, the office and my grandmother’s shop was Roselle’s, the French corsetiers, which was along the end of Sauchiehall street. So I was very much aware of lots of shops and lots of interesting things in windows, and sometimes my grandfather during the summer holidays when I was a wee girl, I would, he would take me with him when he was going to buyers. So take into Treron's, McDonald's, Copland and Lye and Rowans.” | 02:17-02.47 |
| 05:04  | “The one thing that that you never see very rarely see now in Glasgow was `material’ stores. There used to be lovely shops that just dealt with materials, but the departmental stores also have big material department. Copeland and Lye had the most fabulous material section, the silks from all over the world and beautiful.It's just. There was a great availability of stuff and I think after the war, it must have been more of a visual impact for older people than it was for me because of the shortages that had been during the war.” | 05:05-05:43 |
|  | Respondent explains that she didn’t habitually visit specific stores, it would depend on what she wanted. Although, Marks and Spencer’s was an exception when it came to a specific types of clothing. |  |
| 12:16 | “I did Marks and Spencer’s quite a lot, cause again Marks and Spencer's underwear was very, very inexpensive and really nice and good quality. You could always get a polo-neck there. You mean that was just something? I know it sounds silly, but if you look for a polo-neck nowadays, nobody makes them anymore. Maybe they just don't think there's a market in old lady’s polo-necks.” | 12:45-12:49 |
|  | Apart from an `Orange Walk’, the respondent doesn’t recall many processions or parades in the High Streets. However, she does remember a few characters who frequented the streets  |  |
| 13:01 | “No, I don't remember carnivals, I remember an Orange Walk. I tell you what I do remember. You had some Glasgow characters. We had one guy that used to play the fiddle. I don't know if It was Argyle Street or Union Street and he would every now and again just slowly put his fiddle down and have an epileptic fit. And then there was one lady that walked around [with] a pram and she was in full regalia of a wedding.I don't know who she went. She I think she had Tourette's. She would there was, she shouted things out and then there was a little, a little, I don't know who she was, but I remember at St Vincent St, she was walking in front of me and I wouldn't go anywhere near cause she was absolutely hoachin. You could see stuff moving. She got the, she would, she would go up behind a well dressed man sassy around and go to the front and then stop dead in her tracks and turn around and accuse them of pinching her bottom. Glasgow had a lot of, I think, mental, quite mentally ill people now looking back, we just viewed them as characters. You know, we weren't threatened by them.” | 13:02-14:11 |
|  | Respondent recall’s the exteriors of certain buildings, as well as the demolition of many of the city’s tenement buildings at a time when Glasgow was undergoing massive re-development. |  |
| 18:02 | “The great columns, Egyptian columns. Greek Thomson. … Well, the Egyptian columns were in Union Street. I'm trying to think when you went down Argyle St, I remember being pointed out there was a lintel, was two obviously atlases holding up the lintel.I'm trying to think the architect that, British Home stores and Marks and Spencer’s were certainly newish buildings, but all the rest were just I think would be purpose built, but they’d be Victorian. Nothing really stands out like the People's Palace kind of building. You mean nothing, nothing really, they were just old Victorian buildings. You mean I never, as I say, apart from let’s say, the Egyptian columns which actually if you looked out the front showroom of my grandfather's office, you could, you could look right down Union Street and see them.But Glasgow, I think, you've got to look for it. It's not like Edinburgh where it's in your face. But Glasgow's full of interesting bits and pieces as you got. If you got somebody who knows the city and when I was a child somebody would say well, that'sso and so. And some of the houses that they knocked down coming out from going South on the Kilmarnock Rd as you come out of Glasgow and knocked a whole lot of beautiful tenements down and had actually steps up from the carriages and they knocked a whole lot of them down too. There was a great desire to knock Glasgow down and renew it and fortunately somebody at some point said leave the red sandstones, for God's sake leave our tenements.But because Glasgow's history is that as it developed and the merchants got richer, they moved away from the stinky part of the centre. So therefore the buildings as they went out were grand as well.” | 18:03-19:48 |
|  | Respondent describes in general some of the interior fixtures, furniture and fittings of the buildings she frequented, including her grandfather’s showroom and office. |  |
| 20:00 | “… the cornices beautiful, ornate cornices and roses, sometimes very old light fittings. I don't know whether the wiring behind them was good, but there was things like very high, very tall skirting boards with nice edges on them.Interesting solid doors, new sometimes of glass in them.They just were, you know. I can't pick out one particular place, but they all had character and now realise of that era that they were built in.I was aware of it, but I didn't say `ooh ah’ kind of thing. I think it's because well, when you walked up the steps into my grandfather's office and thing that every now and again they would come and the steps had been grooved down with the number of feet that have gone up them and every now and again they would come and they would redo the stone, put piece in the stone.My grandfather's office was, it had a glass. Obviously. It's been put in at one point. It was a glass partition to where the office was and then there was the main showroom.And that had two chandeliers. You'd obviously bought them in a sale. You mean you weren't that kind of family, but I think he picked them up at a not a car boot, but someone, somebody selling their house.And the table was in the middle was all inlaid.But that wouldn't have been family or furniture. It would have been bought in some auction, because I remember I had when I moved into a flat, my grandfather gave me a square carpet that had come from some the refurbishing of one of the Cunard ships in Greenock or Gourock that had been an off cut. The edges had been bound and taped, you know.But nice wood flooring, Parquet flooring in a lot of places. Very practical.” | 20:01-21:49 |
|  | Respondent shares her memories of tea rooms and restaurants in the High Street stores and recalls a pre-theatre `high tea’ prior to seeing shows at the Kings Theatre. |  |
| 21:50 | “But I tell you one of my memories. You know the skit `2 soups’? Where … well, that's Pettigrew and Stevens waitresses. I might tell you, they were dressed exactly like that. And because you're small, their feet, they had, like, these black shoes with a band over. And they had bunions alike, which I had never seen. But they were lovely ladies.There's little things like that. Spotlessly clean, very efficient. I'm sure you mean you look at people and you think, God, they're all they probably were about 40. But little things like that. And afternoon tea in places they did. They did a high tea cause my grandma Gillis used to take me to the theatre. `Francie and Josie’ … couldn't stand them. But she obviously did and she took all the grandchildren to the King's to see pantomimes. And we discovered none of us liked it. But she did, you know. And lots of plays to go and see. “ | 21:51-22:53 |
|  | Respondent elaborates more on one reason she visited fabric or `material’ shops and departments within stores that were popular at that time. |  |
| 23:19 | “I used to use folk patterns because I very quickly discovered that the apart from being beautifully tailored, everything fitted together, things like McCall’s and Simplicity didn't always fit exactly, so I bought fabric from any of the stores that were selling fabric. Depending on what I wanted, what I was looking for. Lewis’s has had a very good fabric department as well. It was quite nice for cottons etcetera, but that seemed to, as time went on, the shops cut down on these departments and well, the last time I was in , John Lewis's, I think it was, I think there was some craft fabric and some needles and things …” | 23:20-24.08 |
|  | Respondent recalls people modelling clothes in the stores, including her mother, aunt and herself.  |  |
| 35:54 | Well, I used to have fashion shows, use to go to watch fashion shows because I'm trying to sell this year’s merchandise and my grandfather and my mother-in-law, well she modelled for Olive Moore before she got married. And my Aunt Barbara modelled, she modelled for an agent went round the country and Barbara modelled. She was a size 8 or something. And I used to when I got about 15 or 16, I would model for my grandfather. My mother got paid for it, I never did. But that was OK at the end of the season I got a new coat, a suit or something, you know, out of it.And it's always very glamorous. You mean it? It's such a … my aunt Barbara had beautiful nails. She took a lot of care over her appearance. My mother was standard size 14, very dark haired, very glamorous, quite different body shape from me and knew how to stalk her stuff. I was always almost slightly shy, tired kind of thing.But no, you'd go to fashion shows. I've been I've been to quite a few. I've also been to quite a few in halls where people were selling stuff. Was it? No. Wasn't Pippa Dee. That's later. But there was stuff sold in the home as well as the beginnings of that kind of thing. But then again, everyone was interested in fashion. You mean it was.You don't want to have the latest stuff, but you don't want to be left behind kind of thing. And you didn't buy a lot. You bought carefully. And you bought good. So it would last and that's why I like making stuff because you could put the money into the fabric. | 35:55-37:43 |
|  | Respondent talks about hairdressers generally, as well as her own personal experience. |  |
| 39:01 | “I didn't go to any of them. Few of my friends did. I have very fine hair. I used to be a redhead. I was a dark titian red and I’ve got very, very fine hair. And hairdressers really don't like my hair. It's very unforgiving shall we say. But, no, I went to the localhairdresser because apart from anything else I knew them, I trusted them.Friends got highlights, put in, got their hair, permed, dyed, whatever. And I can remember very early … PD Annie my mother went to and I was in with her one day and she said. Can you cut my daughter's hair? And he looked at It and he said no.And said I wouldn't know what to do with it. And I said, I think always remember that and thinking well, if that's a professional hairdresser, I'll stick to somebody that just washes and cuts it. I could do it myself. The cut itself I needed but the actual dressing it and putting up or whatever or French combing it even, which possibly didn't do any good. But, I feel a lot of people did. I think I can remember working with a girl who went once a week. And I don't know how she slept, but it was French collars and French rollers, and it was sort of high on top. And she came in every day exactly the same.But no, it wasn’t something I made a great deal of use of.” | 39:02-40:37 |
|  | Respondent remembers the different categories and levels of shop workers and important role of `buyers’ within stores and how the sales process worked. |  |
| 46:24 | “Sales-assistant, you got from a sales-assistant and you got a senior sales-assistant and then you got, under-buyer and a buyer, you mean you got all kinds of levels of, well, you couldn't have all chiefs and no Indians kind of thing, but you have to have somebody.in charge. But all the buyers were responsible to whoever owned the store, or the group that owned the store. You're only as good as your sales.And you didn't eat the cat. The staff got commission on what the sold. But you only got commission if you reached your targets because you were on generally on quite a low salary. Well, it wasn't low, but you know, I mean, it wasn't as much as you people imagined it would be. It was an incentive for you to get the right things in and encourage your staff. | 46:25-47:13 |
|  | Respondent remembers the Lewis’s store during the Christmas time, Santa’s `Grotty Grotto’, the quality of toys on display and the inevitable post-Christmas returns.  |  |
| 50:51 | “I remember it came later than it does now. And that's one thing it was more of a season rather than starting before Halloween kind of thing. And lots and lots of tinsel and Lewis’s has had a complete floor. They took over and made a grotto, the `grotty grotto’, who used to call it and each trainee had a section that they were in charge of, whether it be mechanical toys or soft toys and miniature prams or whatever.And it was a very it was a very happy time because people, people would come in and they were buying for their children they had saved up, you mean it was it was something that I don't know. I think again it was coming out of the 50s where people couldn't, well, stuff wasn't available and they were buying. There was a lot of horrible stuff. There was a lot of very … what I call cheap stuff started to come in. You'd gone from handmade stuff and nice teddies and wooden to plastic. Except for one manufacturer, I can't remember. It was an educational one that made very good toys.And they were always nicely made, but the follow. But the fact January 1st, two or three weeks and January was all being brought back, anything broken, or it was being tried to return it, or they were wanting their money back, cause they’d spent too much.But it was used to it.” | 50:52-52:16 |
| ??.?? | Respondent describes the conditions for shop workers generally at the time in the major stores, the prominence of Mark’s & Spencer’s as a good employer relative to others and how the role of unions were generally perceived. |  |
| 58:13 | “Marks and Spencer’s was the gold standard. Not for training because they took most of the people that trained in Lewis's were grabbed by Marks and Spencer’s, because they valued Lewis’s training. I don't know if the Fraser Group did any training. I wouldn't think they would invest in anything. Sounds very sour grapey, but they were not. They were not the gold standard at all. Boots I understand it, we're very good. You know, I'm not talking about the pharmacy side. I'm talking about the sales-assistants. I think theywere quite good to work for too. But a lot of I don't know. Did the Co-op ever sell clothes? They were a good employer. I always remember people who said oh, if you get the job in the Co-op, you've got pension and all this kind of thing. You mean it was a good. They were good people to work for. I don't know. I'm trying. I'm trying to. I know if I'd stayed home. I don't know if when I got my qualification, whether if I had had happened, I hadn't happened, whether I would have stayed with this or not.I think I’d probably would have tried Marks and Spencer’s. ….  | 58.14-58: |
| 59:34 | “No, I was not to begin with. Trainees didn't … you, the shop floor. I don't think it was encouraged. I think it was some, especially the Fraser Group. They were didn't. They were not keen on unions at all, obviously because if you bring a Union in, you have to start upping your standards and doing the right thing and not getting away with some of the stuff that they got away with.” | 59:35-59:57 |
|  | Respondent reflects on her time in the retail trade compared to her other career in the Civil Service recognising her need to develop her career beyond the defined role of a `buyer’ in the retail trade. |  |
| 1:19:04 | “I actually felt I was very privileged to have an experience in the retail trade that was as good as it was. And having watched my grandfather, I knew I knew a little bit about how the business worked. And I would have loved to have had the physical strength and it is, you know, it's there's a lot of stress in it when you're not so much when you're just working because you got somebody else who's making the decisions to buy in what to get for the next season, what's hot and what's not hot kind of thing. But that bored me a bit compared to. You mean, not saying it bored me, but I knew I wanted to do more than just that. I was prepared to do it and do it well, but I wanted to see what the next bit, the interesting bit was. Getting to see how people designed and how things were made and what was going to be fashionable the next year. I mean I found that interesting.” | 1:19:05-1:20:03 |
|  | Respondent considers the future of Glasgow’s Highstreet’s, and some of the ideas she would like to see happen and the re-kindling of the entrepreneurial attitude often associated with Glasgow and its citizens. |  |
| 1:31:42 | “I would think, have more outdoor eating, dining, more continental kind of bistros. Be more helpful to do more with business rates. The problem is business rates and bighuge departmental stores, they’re cash cows. But they can't rely on them anymore, so they've got to start to think about what will bring money and what brings money in his people. People come in. What does he like to spend on … do we have? The Japanese have these games places where you can go and play games. You know kids like. I don't know if you do, but I've got a few friends whose husbands and some of my friends that do these, you know, they're online doing these games. It never clicked with me at all. These things like that that people come in and have a bit of fun and enjoy themselves. You know, we've got fabulous art galleries. We've got most amazing open spaces, but the city itself needs to shake itself up a bit and get away from this feeling thatwe’re the second city. We're not. We never were the second city. Glasgow was always the first city because it made the money. This lot here have got 19 levels of working class. They all look down at one another, whether it's the school you went to, the car you drive or whatever. It's a bit of that in Glasgow, but there's always been room for people who worked hard. I think more outdoor theatre I think would be great fun, but that's weather dependent unfortunately, but more … get involved in more festivals. The Glasgow Garden festival that regenerated … oh I can remember that was the most amazing day out. I just thought it was fabulous. Because I like some time. The last time I drove in there was like, I can't remember what it was like. There was a lot of public art on the M8 as you came in off the M8, things like that. But don't destroy the architecture that is there. See the departmental stores. What would you do with all that space along these spaces? You could have them pop up more markets. Have a market in George Square. “ | 1:31:41-1:34:07 |
| 01:38 | Interview ends with thanks. |  |
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