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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**  Respondent: Elizabeth Bell  Year of Birth: 1953  Age:  Connection to project: Respondent  Date of Interview: The 9th of June 2-023  Interviewer: Sher Allan  Recording Agreement: Yes  Information & Consent: Yes  Photographic Images: No  Length of Interview: 1 hour and 12 seconds.  Location of Interview: Geraldine Baird’s home.  Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | | **Glasgow Story Collective** | |
| Time  (from: mins/secs) | Description | | Transcribed Extract  (from- to:  mins/secs) |
| 0.35 | The respondent was born in Kingston in Glasgow where the Kingston Bridge is now. Brought up Dalintober Street. | |  |
|  | Interviewer asks the respondent what her memories of the highstreets in general are. | |  |
| 0.48 | Shops every day. Mostly local. The Cooperative. Two large ones at the top of childhood street. Co-op funeral parlour. Dalintober Street ran on to the main street Morrison Street. | |  |
|  | “So, we’d the 95 Morrison Street [Co-op] which was a large department store. Absolutely beautiful store. You would walk in the commissionaire was there. With all his medals from the war. Cause this is Post-War. All resplendent in his medals and his uniform. With the gold braid and his hat. Beautiful marble staircase. Double wide staircase. Beautiful polished bannister going up the stairs. Then you’d go out to the left and if I remember rightly that was the crystal room. Going backwards was the china. And you’d come round and all those beautiful ornaments…Glass, china, cutlery. All that kind of stuff. Up the stair there would be a room with carpets. People didn’t really have fitted carpets. They’d carpet squares. Or they had surrou..My mum thought she was fancy and had surround carpet and a central carpet. Which I suppose in a way was fitted. The sales man would stand and there would be a boy. And he would peel back layers and layers of carpet. For you to peruse and make your choice. Beautiful. The quality of the stuff was beautiful. Beautiful Axminster. Wool carpets. Every design shape and colour. And the pile…The pile was almost as high as me. It must have been about. Oh, I don’t know. Two foot high the carpets. So there would be a section for that. And there would be toys. So, your bike came out the Co. Everything came out the Co.” | | 1.48-3.38 |
|  | “The next building across from that (Co-op, 95 Morrison Street) on our street. At the top of our street. Was…Was where they made up the pattern books. So, it’s where my mum worked in when she was a girl. And where there was wholesale offices. And that building became known as ‘The Wholesale’. I don’t really know what the difference was because you needed a Co line for everything. You got your divvy and everything. But, in the wholesale there would be big drawers. Big, deep drawers. And with three hats in it. They’d open these drawers. There’d be rolls of brown paper for your purchases to be wrapped in brown…In tissue and brown paper and string. There wasn’t a plastic bag in sight. And polished display cabinets all glass and brass and…It was a beautiful store. You felt as if you were in a luxury store. And buying clothes. And beautiful clothes.” | | 3.39-4.44 |
|  | “The other place we’d go for clothes would be Bridge Street Co [Co-op] which…there’s only a wee bit of the building left now. That’s further up nearer the Gorbals. And then you had all the grocery shops where you went in to the grocery store. The butter was in big loose bulk and it was all patted down. Every…The meats were carved. I don’t…And there was big boxes of biscuits. And you bought your biscuits loose. Big treat was to get the broken biscuits or the crumbs of the boxes and like…And everything was…It wasn’t all pre-packaged. There wasn’t all the packaging there is nowadays. So, that’s how you got your food. You would go to the fishmongers. You would go to…If you needed shoes. Up at Scotland Street was the wholesale for shoes. We’d go into this wholesale. And I’m sure these shoes were distributed to the various drapery stores around the country. But, we just went because we lived next to the Co. We would do that. “ | | 4.45-5.54 |
|  | “And then also on our street [Dalintober Street, Kingston] was dining rooms where all the workers of the Co [Co-op] would go for their meals. And there was also next to that. Used to be called Sher Cash and Carry. That was the fruit and vegetable. So, if anybody died you got their flowers out of there. You always…that was your fruit and vegetables. In the corners of all of our street and the adjacent street were significant Co-operative buildings. So, the Co was everything to us. My parents socialised through the Co. They were in the bowling club with the Co. We went…Christmas parties. We went to…Any other time of the year you had celebration parties. In the summer we went bus runs. Everything was through the Co. The Co or the church…So, it was an area where you either worked in the Co or you worked in the railway. That would have been the two main employers I think at the time. Women would maybe work in Gray Dunn’s biscuit factory or there was other, kind of, engineering…Big engineering works.” | | 5.55-7.05 |
| 7.05 | Interviewer asks the respondent what era she is talking about. | |  |
|  | 1950 1960s until motorway built. Most of area gone. Parents went to Scotland Street School. | |  |
| 8.00 | Her granny knew Lewis’s as the Polly. Walk in to town. Southside mostly shopped in Argyll Street and Buchanan Street. Went on the ferry at Shearer Street. Mum cleaned travel agent that was on route into town. Didn’t go to Frasers much. | |  |
|  | “One big memory of shopping in the highstreet is in the very early ‘60s…The only account of any sort my mum would have…Would have had. Would be a Co (Co-op) mutuality…But, then, you never had credit. You didn’t have store cards or anything like that. But, my mum and my Aunt Sadie went…They always had fun together. And, they went on a shopping spree. An outrageous shopping spree. And they bought fur coats. And there was a shop at the bottom of Buchanan Street called Whitney’s. Whitney’s was a furrier. I know in my life time they became completely non grata. But, you know, they weren’t then. I’m sure this was right…We still stayed in Dalintober Street. So this was right before ’62. And they bought fur coats. And they bought the whole shebang. They bought shoes and handbags and big long umbrellas. Right. And they put it on account. They opened an account in Whitney’s. Which was an… And they giggled and giggled. ‘An account, an account!’ It must have been something like a pound a week an account. So, that was my first introduction to credit. And, so anyway, they had…They were gorgeous in these coats. My mum had a musquash coat. And my Aunt Sadie. My Aunt Sadie was always a bit…She was younger than my mum. She was a bit trickier. And she had a Persian lamb coat. You know, they were gorgeous in them, they were lovely. And they were going like this with the umbrellas. And prancing around the room and kitchen in the coats. And we were all giggling. It’s a lovely memory. It’s a nice memory.” | | 10.24-12.37 |
| 12.38 | Gatherings at her house to pay Co-op mutuality. | |  |
| 13.15 | Christmas not as big a thing as New Year. Co-op Xmas party. Buffet and a shilling away. | |  |
| 14.20 | Interviewer asks the respondent about Xmas presents. | |  |
| 14.26 | Layout of home. TV for Coronation. Description of Xmas. Got lots of presents. Wasn’t aware of misfortune living in Kingston area of Glasgow. Remembers orphaned family. | |  |
|  | “Aww, they were lovely. You would go up the town. You’d see the lights. And then you’d go to the Kelvin Hall. The thing where like…And you’d see the circus. And the thing…You’d go to pantomimes. But the shops were lovely. Full of lights and toys. And always a lot of animation in the windows. Like clockwork toys. Like scenes that were set. And you’d walk all through the town. It was a big pastime when the shops were shut on a Saturday night to go a walk through the town and go window shopping. Look at the shop windows. All year round but particularly at Christmas. You’d look at the shop displays and all that. And, later, when I was working the window dressers were always seen as really glamorous. Right. Aww, you really wanted to be a window dresser. And they’d all the style. They were good. “ | | 17.45-18.40 |
| 18.41 | Interviewer asks the respondent to tell her about the shop she worked in. | |  |
| 18.45 | Friend persuaded her to work in shop. Family circumstances meant she wasn’t that interested at school. Stayed off school to go and ask for jobs in C&A. Went to Goldberg’s but didn’t want to sit the arithmetic test. | |  |
|  | “And we came to Grafton’s. It was Mr Brolly that interviewed us. First question-what school d’you go to girls? You always got asked that. But, our school used to…We just said-‘Strathbungo’ And that always gave you a few seconds. Coz, they just…They heard the St…waiting to say a saint after it. So it always gave you a couple of seconds. We just did it to torment folk. And so and then…there was certain shops that wouldn’t employ a particular religion. So we thought-are we going to get put out here? But then Mr…One of the Morrises came in. It was the Morris Group that owned it…Mr Morris came in and he…He kind of put Mr Brolly off his stride. I always think if he hadn’t come in we wouldn’t of got a start but we got a start. So I think for the grand total of 4 pound 12 and 11 a week we decided we’d leave school. And we started work just after the Christmas holidays. The beginning of January. And we started work there. That would be 19… I think that must have been 1969…” | | 21.40-23.10 |
| 23.21 | Didn’t suit her mum her leaving school. Lost widowed mother’s allowance. | |  |
|  | “I was a junior in sportswear [at Grafton’s]. In casual and sportswear. So, you started as a junior and there was a hierarchy. And Anne started in Mantles [?] which was dresses and it went right up to bridal. But she wasn’t even allowed to sniff at the bridal dresses. So, you’d a hierarchy. You had juniors who dusted and cleaned and put stuff back up. My boss was quite young and modern so she used to let me serve. Anne’s boss didn’t. There was such a hierarchy up there. It was just like ‘Are You Being Served?’ And so, then there was junior sales, then there was sales, then there was first sales. And then there was depute…There was a right hierarchy. You had that in every section. And then as I said, the window dressers floated about. And could take any stock and hang it up. And you looked at them and they had all the hair dos and all the false eyelashes and…” | | 24.16-25.20 |
| 25.20 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there was a dress code. | |  |
| 25.24 | Black and white dress code. Smart. Learned a lot about life in general listening to older women in the store. | |  |
| 26.00 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there were models in the store and if she ever did any modelling. | |  |
|  | “Oh, I never did any modelling. That was never for me. But the…But. The window dressers, by and large, were the models. And they did a wee bit of modelling on the side. And they would take some of the staff group. They would use…They’d put… Grafton’s were…Every season they put on a fashion show. And they turned in some of the floor space. And I think it was upstairs at the mantles. They thingmy…They cleared that and they had a runway. And they’d invite all their customers in and such like. Showing all the latest fashions. But, that was a big night. That went on in the evening after the store had closed. That was a big event in the store for every new season.” | | 26.03-26.45 |
| 26.46 | Talks about the head of window dressing Mr McNulty. | |  |
|  | “Mr Morris, he was going through a divorce. And that was the first you saw people going through a divorces and all that stuff. He was going through a divorce. Had a new girlfriend. And me as the junior was sent to Frasers to buy perfume for this new girlfriend. And I’d to buy Kiku perfume. And I remember it was in yellow packaging. And he gave me ten pounds. Ten pounds was more than two weeks of my wages. To buy perfume. Well, I bought the whole range. He was mad. I spent the whole ten pound. And he was absolutely raging. He expected change back. But I thought-if he gave me ten pound he must mean me to spend ten pound. He’s in the trade. He should know. [Laughs}.” | | 28.06-28.50 |
| 28.55 | Briefly talks about work in an office. | |  |
| 29.15 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she was part of a union and how was a typical day at Graftons. | |  |
| 29.21 | Wasn’t part of a union at fifteen. Dad had been involved in trades unions. President of his union. Mentions May Day parades. Sister remembers Paul Robeson in Queens Park. Only job she was not in a union. | |  |
| 30.32 | Describes daily tasks at Grafton’s as a junior. | |  |
| 32.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent what the best and worst things about working at Grafton’s were. | |  |
| 32.30 | Access to clothes and latest fashions. Discounts. Knowledge from other women. | |  |
| 33.23 | No bad things about Grafton’s but did not like Marks and Spencer. Left Grafton’s. Got job at credit agency but got sacked. Thinks due to age as they would have to pay more. Felt life was not worth living fleetingly. The shame. | |  |
| 34.28 | Worked for two weeks in Marks & Spencer. Did not enjoy it there. | |  |
| 36.10 | Got a job in the Argyll Arcade in Chambers. [?] Expensive clothes and swimwear. | |  |
|  | “Mr Chambers would come in in the morning [At Chamber’s in the Argyll Arcade] and he was a fine looking man. But, he’d come in with his Glasgow Herald. It was the Glasgow Herald then. Folded under his arm. So, he’d come in and you’d say-’Good morning Mr Chambers.’ ’Good morning Mr Chambers.’ As he made his way through the shop. And then he went into his office and then you wouldn’t see him again till he came out. ‘Good evening Mr Chambers…and he went through the shop and out. I didn’t actually know what he did.” | | 39.10-39.42 |
|  | “There was a manageress…There was an assistant manageress [At Chamber’s in the Argyll Arcade.] There were all these senior sales persons and they were all women of a certain age. And they were all beautifully groomed. And there was this one woman whose name I can’t remember. It is over fifty years ago right enough. And she was quite a petite woman. And she would have her hair up. And her and her husband liked to dance. And she liked to go…they went their holidays to Butlin’s. And she would enter the Miss SHE competition every year. Right. Dressed out of this shop. On appro [approval?]. Because none of those clothes would have been her wages. A month’s wages. But, anyway. So, she would have…She would go to Butlin’s [laughs] in Ayr and they would dance. Cause these holiday camps always had dancing. Sequence dancing. Right. Lovely formal dancing. And she would go into the Miss SHE competition and she would get through to the regional finals and all that. Because she’d beautiful clothes. And of course, she knew how to stand with them…But, she was dressed beyond the value of the competition. [laughs].” | | 39.43-41.10 |
| 41.11 | Talks about her fellow juniors at Chambers. Went to see Hair with them at the Metropole. | |  |
| 43.40 | Interviewer ask the respondent which shops she record shops she went to. | |  |
|  | Wasn’t into music. Parents didn’t have one either. Went to a record shop at top of Saltmarket. Golumbs [?]. | |  |
| 45.45 | Interviewer asks the respondent about the May Day Parades. | |  |
|  | “Oh, aye, front row [At the May Day march]. Because of my dad’s union. They would start in George Square and you’d walk to Queen’s Park. So, we were there every day. The Co [Co-op] lorries. There was floats and different themes and outfits and dress up…So, May day was a big big…You’d a new outfit. You were all done up for the first Sunday in May and for May Day. And I can remember after Yuri Gargarin went into Space. The next May Day there was a Soviet delegation walked in the Glasgow May Day. And they led it in the front row. And I walked in the front row with my dad and these big Soviets. Big Russians…But, I remember walking with these big Soviets. And then my dad went to a conf…they stayed for some kind of a conference. And then my mum…We all got presents and I got Russian dolls. Right. And then..My mum got a musical Sputnik that played the Internacionale…” | | 45.55-49.30 |
| 49.55 | Orange walks. Church parades. Huge crowds for church parade. Grandma would leave her door open so people could use her toilet. Collected money for the church. | |  |
| 52.50 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she went to clubs when she met her future husband. | |  |
|  | Sloane’s, Dalriada, London Road. | |  |
| 54.35 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks the highstreets have changed over time and what she thinks the future is likely to be. | |  |
|  | “I think it has changed. I think it’s changed but I’m not too sure if it’s changed for the better. I think in many ways there is less choice. And, I think all these big anonymous owners…You knew the shop owners. You knew Mr Morris and his family. You knew who owned Fraser’s. And you knew the folk that were working in them. And there was camaraderie in those shops and a support. And a great place to learn about women. But, I don’t…I’m not in that world now. So, I don’t know…” | | 57.04-57.45 |
| 58.23 | Interviewer asks the respondent what she thinks about the future of the highstreets. | |  |
|  | Less people shopping for food due to cost of living crisis. | |  |
| 1.00.00 | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for sharing her memories with the project. | |  |
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