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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**  Respondent: Sher Allan  Year of Birth: 1958  Age:  Connection to project: Respondent  Date of Interview: 23rd of June 2023 Interviewer: Rachel Kelly  Recording Agreement: Yes  Information & Consent: Yes  Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 9 )  Length of Interview: 1 hour 3 minutes and 11 seconds  Location of Interview: Sher’s home in Glasgow  Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | | **Glasgow Story Collective** | |
| Time  (from: mins/secs) | Description | | Transcribed Extract  (from- to:  mins/secs) |
| 0.36 | Interviewer asks the respondent during which era she first remembers Glasgow’s Highstreets. | |  |
| 0.45 | 1960’s as born in 1958 in Lanark and started school in Maryhill in 1963. Remembers Cathcart and Victoria Road from childhood. | |  |
|  | “It used to be a big treat to go shopping to Victoria Road of a…must of been a Wednesday afternoon. For some reason. Going into Pearson’s. And the mad parrot in the basement who attacked everybody. Who I’ve since been told, by somebody in the pantry’s (The People’s Pantry) , name was Peter. I’d no idea what that wretched parrot was called. But Victoria Road was very glamorous then. Or so it seemed.” | | 1.04-1.26 |
| 2.16 | Would get dressed up on a Saturday afternoon in the 1960s and 1970’s and go into town shopping with her Mum. Her Mum worked in Richard’s as a cleaner. | |  |
| 3.20 | Remembers a coat her mother bought her from Richards which was floor length black velvet with white trim. Wore it when her choir sang at Glasgow Cathedral. | |  |
|  | “And we also used to go shopping to the boutique floor in C&A. Can’t remember what it was called but I loved the clothes in there. That was the height of trend. That was-Oh my goodness, I’ve seen this! Oooh, I want that! And it was affordable. And money was no object. If there was clothes I wanted, mum would spend her last penny on them. I wish she hadn’t but she would. That was her way of expressing love.” | | 4.03-4.25 |
|  | “I’m a life-long hippy. And I attribute it to… Now, this would have been 1970. I was twelve. I was at the Barras with my friends. Maureen and Alison. And the Barras went round a square. But the shops also trailed up streets at the back. And you could go up closes. So, we went up this close to this first floor flat with a shop. I remember this guy Sidney. I remember him to this day. First time smelling patchouli oil. First time ever I’d seen an Afghan coat. First time ever I’d seen mirrored cheesecloth patchwork. Got mum to buy me a dress out of there. It was red. Fitted bodice, full skirt with mirror embroidery round the hem. Like the Rajasthani stuff. Now this would have been when I was about twelve or thirteen. And that introduced me to the world of India and Afghans and Patchouli. And it’s influenced my life ever since.” | | 4.35-5.31 |
| 5.32 | Remembers a shop called Capricorn at The Trongate she thinks. | |  |
|  | Quote about seventies fashion. | | 5.53-6.50 |
| 6.51 | Talks about queues of people in Chelsea Girl with Simon shirts when she worked there. | |  |
|  | "The uniforms we had when I started...It was brown, high waisted trousers, a cream shirt with pink hearts on, cause pink and brown were the Chelsea Girl colours of the time, a long fitted brown cardigan with pink edging and a pink tie belt... And then went to some form of black uniform. Black and green I think it was.  And then after that we didn't have a uniform. But, we were told-'Come dressed as if you're going out for a night out.' So everybody went over the top with the glam. The glitter came out. The ABBA lookalike came out. The silver thigh boots came out. I mean people took all that to extremes.  Me, it was a Maxi skirt. And because I was behind the till and people couldn't see my feet, I wore my fluffy slippers under them. So, there was me coming up from the basement from break, cutting through the floor, holding up my skirt so I wouldn't fall over it with my fluffy slippers on…" | | 7.26-8.20 |
| 8.25 | Fashions of early seventies. Fitted raincoat with the belt tied at the back. Friend with long black shiny hair got it cut into a bob. | |  |
|  | “Going out with Ann one night after Chelsea Girl was my first grown up going out for a meal on my own. Ann and I went out to a Chinese restaurant up above St Enoch’s Square. And I had sweet and sour chicken and fried rice. I know exactly where that restaurant is. It’s above where the pub is on the corner.” | | 9.11-9.30 |
| 9.44 | Busy pavements on Argyle Street before it was pedestrianized and you could barely walk on the pavement. Took 20 minutes from Buchanan Street to Queen’s Street. Remembers the Hare Krishnas going through these crowds. | |  |
| 10.26 | Remembers waiting for the 37 bus with her Mum to get back to Cathcart. Remembers the glamorous girls with their beehives and handbags. Has a visual memory of the content of one of their handbags. | |  |
| 13.56 | Mentions first Saturday Job in John Smith’s bookshop in 1973. Had a Laura Ashley smock. Worked in Art Department and spent most of her time reading the books. | |  |
| 15.20 | Shopped in the ‘hippy’ shops in the West End when she was at college. Lots moved to the city centre. Some to The Virginia Galleries. Worked in a shop called Cosy in King’s Court. This was owned by French people and she managed it for them when they were travelling. Helped them at festivals. Late 1990s till noughties. | |  |
| 17.20 | Mr Ben took over unit where Cosy was. Where Mono is there was a witches shop in the Early two thousands. There was also a goth/fetish shop there then. There was also a high fetish shop. Close to Paddy’s Market. Gives short description. | |  |
| 19.25 | Bus Stop on Union Street. Like a Scottish Biba. Could only afford things in the sale. Shop became River Island. | |  |
| 19.48 | 1978 at the same time as Bus Stop being Bibaesque there was another boutique on Argyle Street that sold Biba makeup. Describes the make-up and bottles. Aqua Manda perfume and Afgan coats. | |  |
| 22.15 | Remembers the old Cathouse on Brown St in early 1990s. | |  |
|  | “I remember it moving to Union Street in ’95. The poster for the move is up on the wall if you want a photograph of it. So, that was the night life. It was a very different Cathouse then. It was Goth, it was rockers. I mean like rock and roll guys. Hair rockers. Looked like out of Bon Jovi. And at the same time me and my girlfriends would be drinking in The Solid’ and there was the guys there. Again with their…With their skin tight leather jeans. They looked like something out of Bon Jovi or they looked like Jim Morrison out The Doors. And you sort of stand there at the bar and go-‘Well he’ll do for tonight. And he can buy me a drink. And I’ll put him on ice for later.’ And it seemed like all the guys were gorgeous. And then suddenly they became ugly a few years later. I don’t know maybe we didn’t drink as much. But, anyway. That was the Cathouse which was wonderful.” | | 22.25-23.15 |
| 24.16 | Interviewer asks the respondent about her training at John Smith’s Book Shop. | |  |
| 24.28 | How to work the till. Stock control. Genres of art book. | |  |
| 25.40 | Interviewer asks the respondent what the pay and conditions were like. | |  |
| 25.45 | Sure they weren’t great but she thought it was great as she could just sit there and read books all day long. Sure the wages seemed like riches to her at 15. Didn’t have to give keep at home. | |  |
| 26.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent if they had a trade union. | |  |
| 26.27 | Not then or in Chelsea Girl. First experience of a trade union was when she joined the Civil Service. CPSA now Public and Commercial Services. | |  |
| 26.59 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there were some things that some workers could do that others could not. | |  |
| 27.05 | She can’t remember anything. Was the security guard/caretakers daughter. | |  |
| 27.22 | Had a canteen in Chelsea Girl that had a ticket system. Not sure if part of pay. | |  |
|  | “I was working on the till down in menswear. Cause I was normally on the tills on the ground floor. Menswear was in the basement. And we had these two guys working there. Very pretty boys. And this goes back to the platforms and the wide trousers. So, I’m on the till. And these two guys come running about squealing like girls. But the girls weren’t squealing.-‘A mouse, a mouse.’ So, they ran up the stairs holding their wide trousers at the bottom so the mouse wouldn’t run up their trouser leg. This mouse was eventually caught by me and Gladys out the shoe department with a shoe box. I think I chased it with the hoover into a shoe box. She caught it in a shoe box. We took it up the stair and chucked it out the front door onto Argyle Street. And good luck to its chances there cause there was still traffic on Argyle Street at that point. But it was just these boys holding the bottom of their trousers and running up.” | | 28.43-29.35 |
| 29.36 | Men’s underwear had rude slogans on. | |  |
| 30.43 | Interviewer asks the respondent how that experience compares to other jobs she has had. | |  |
| 30.49 | It was a lot quieter than Chelsea Girl. Chelsea Girl very busy. Shops seemed permanently packed with people. | |  |
| 31.48 | Interviewer asks what the respondent’s training at Chelsea Girl entailed. | |  |
| 31.52 | How items had to be presented on the rails. Was a constant job to keep the rails tidy. Became a cashier. Still remembers how to cash up the way she was taught. Was a wrapper. Paper bags. Paper tills and Access card machine. Provident checks. | |  |
| 35.56 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any characters from working in Chelsea Girl. | |  |
|  | Mrs ‘Gilly’, a good manager. Office with a window. Mrs G and other older lady the calm amongst all the young women. Gladys on shoes. Gorgeous actor Mark Lewis came in. She helped in wardrobe at The Citizens. | |  |
| 38.56 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her favourite thing was about working in Chelsea Girl. | |  |
| 38.59 | The discount for the clothes as she loved their clothes. Loved the uniform. Youth culture. Liked the classier range best. | |  |
| 41.05 | Interviewer asks the respondent how this job compared to other jobs she has had. | |  |
| 41.09 | It was very different from her 37 years in the civil service. Civil service was good money which she could spend on clothes etc. Loves the buzz of interacting with people. Not so structured as the Civil Service. Regrets not staying in retail and becoming a window dresser and a buyer. | |  |
|  | “I remember the lights going on, on Argyle street. Obviously, going in with mum for the lights going on. And there was millions of them. Or, it seemed as if there was millions of them. Right along Argyle Street. You could stand at the Hielanman’s Umbrella and look at the light all the way along to the cross. And there was Santas on sleighs, there was reindeers. I remember the lights being very…Maybe it’s just from a child’s eye view…They seemed bigger and gaudier and not as…Obviously it wasn’t LED it was bulbs. It was coloured bulbs. And them hanging down really quite low. And it just being magical. And although there was the traffic on Argyle Street. There was still the lights right across it. How the heck they managed to put them up. They must of done it at night when the traffic wasn’t running. I don’t know. But, there was a big thing about the lights going on. And the lights round George Square.” | | 44.03-45.48 |
| 45.24 | Santa’s Grotto in Lewis’s. sixties lights. Lewis’s had Chanel and Estee Lauder. Was dazzled by them. | |  |
| 48.11 | Arnott’s a stuffier version of Lewis’s. Describes burgundy outfit she bought in Arnott’s in 1978 for work. | |  |
| 49.20 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers there being any processions, parades or carnivals on the street. | |  |
|  | “Early eighties. Because I remember wearing a pink cropped jacket with very wide shoulders. I’d a pastel rainbow scarf wrapped round my neck; god knows what was on my bottom half. But, I remember being in the demonstration from George Square to the City Halls on Candleriggs. The chant was ‘Maggie, Maggie, Maggie. Out, Out, Out.’ Being…Sitting in the front row of the City Halls because I was a union rep by this point. And being filmed. And my mum saying-‘Oh, look there’s you on the news!’ Cause they’d filmed this rally. So, that would have been about ‘82/’84. Something like that. So, that was a big union…All the unions this was. Demonstrating against Maggie and the cuts she was bringing in. So, that would have been early eighties.” | | 49.42-50.30 |
| 50.49 | Interviewer asks the respondent whether she thinks the high streets have changed over time. | |  |
| 51.03 | Pedestrian walkways a good thing. Easier to get about. No fumes. Created more of a pleasurable experience. Outside cafes good. Internet shopping helped people to find more things as shops became generic. Maybe | |  |
|  | “And then the pandemic drove people to online shopping. So, where the highstreets will go from that I don’t know. I mean obviously with the likes of Top Shop closing. Highstreets have lost a big bit of their identity there. Whether it will open up the spaces for more independent retailers…But whether that’s going to happen with rates being as they are. I don’t know. It would be nice to see. Maybe the highstreets need to redefine themselves as a social…As a social space rather than a retail space. But, then you need to think about then what people want to get together to do. The gig culture changed again because of the pandemic. Maybe there needs to be more gallery space. More social enterprise space. I don’t know. But there needs to be a way for humanity to move forward. And learn to interact again post-pandemic.” | | 53.07-54.03 |
| 54.05 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers going out to the Theatre or cinema. | |  |
|  | “Going to the ABC 2 when it opened. Now, this would have been late sixties. Whenever the ABC 2 reopened. Dad was still a caretaker at Dixon’s Blazes at the time. They got tickets. It was the electrical showroom he was in. And I think they might of supplied the lighting. Anyway, we had a block of complimentary tickets and mum and I went to the opening of it. The film was Paint your Wagon. And I remember the dress I wore. It was an empire line, knee length green silk satin with a vertical print in it. And I was wearing brown lace up shoes cause I’d twisted my ankle. And I couldn’t wear the shoes I’d wanted to wear. So, that was the opening of the ABC 2 on Sauchiehall Street. And the film was Paint your Wagon.” | | 54.12-55.02 |
| 55.04 | Describes going to the Odeon. And going to see A Star is Born with her boyfriend of the time. Aladdin in The Alhambra. All the Citizens plays. Has books of photos from 1974 and 1975. Was first actress on stage at The Mitchell Theatre after it reopened. Danced at The Panoptican. | |  |
| 1.00.54 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any restaurants. | |  |
| 1.00.59 | Chinese Restaurant on St Enoch’s Square. Codoma [?] Teahouse on Buchanan Street. Woolworth’s canteen. Jameel [?] tearoom. | |  |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for sharing her memories with the project. | |  |
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