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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**Respondent: Margaret MacKenzieYear of Birth: 1923Age: 99Connection to project: RespondentDate of Interview: 21st of June 2023Interviewer: Rachel KellyRecording Agreement: YesInformation & Consent: YesPhotographic Images: Yes (Number of: 10 )Length of Interview: 1 hour, 52 minutes and 54 seconds.Location of Interview: Margaret’s home in GlasgowRecording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Time(from: mins/secs) | Description | Transcribed Extract(from- to:mins/secs) |
| 1.01 | Interviewer asks the respondent during which decade she first remembers going to the shops in Glasgow city centre. |  |
|  | “Well, there was something that came in to my mind the other day. And I probably could have been about ten at that time. And there used to be a zoo in Oswald Street. It was a…It was really…When I look back think now it was more a glorified shop. And the strange thing is I…I don’t remember any other animals except I can still see myself facing this big, big cage. And to me it was a gorilla that was in it. And there was a man with a rolled up newspaper. I think he was just one of the public that had gone in. And he kept moving it backwards and forwards across the railings. And this was infuriating this gorilla shall we call it. And he was holding on to the…and shaking it. And I’m an animal lover. So, even at that age I can remember being furious with this man. I was scared of the gorilla. I was terrified it would get out.” | 1.13-2.39 |
| 3.52 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there are any shops that she particularly remembers going into as a child. |  |
| 4.39 | Remembers the following on Sauchiehall Street. Watt Brothers, Copland & Lye, Pettigrew & Stephens and Treron’s and Daly’s which she says was the posh shop. Remembers shop with beautiful tiled entrance can’t remember name. Damart. Cinemas . Woolworths and Marks and Spencer’s whom she heard were always in competition. Lumley’s Sport Shop. Empire cinema. The Lyric. Burrell’s Sweet Shop.  |  |
|  | “When you went into town when you were growing up of course you never went in unless you were dressed. You always had your hat and your gloves and your suit on. You’d never of…Course at that stage women didn’t wear trousers.” | 7.29-7.43 |
| 7.52 | Mentions What Every Woman Wants. Big crowds. |  |
| 8.33 | Woolworths considered more upmarket that Marks & Spencers at the time. |  |
| 9.55 | Bothwell Street had motor showrooms. More commercial. Mentions Thomson’s Coffee Shop on Renfield Street. |  |
|  | “Shopping in those days was a real pleasure. Because I think people were more considerate. And when you got to the counter to pay for your goods there could be a chair at the counter so you could sit. And they went through it all. And of course your goods were in a parcel. None of this stick them in bag or saying-have you got your own bag with you? That type of thing. It was all gracious living. And what always intrigued me was the little…It was like a wee drum. The money went in there and then they pulled it and it disappeared.” | 10.47-11.30 |
| 11.50 | Mentions Muirhead and Turnbull. |  |
|  | “And of course during the war it…lots of things changed. The town became very active at night. Of course there were all nationalities coming in and bright lights and stuff like that. Because eventually we weren’t really at risk from the bombers later on. So, we had our lights on. And Saturdays…It was like some of these American films. All the different, sort of, regiments moving around. And all the girls dressed up and all the lights on and everything like that. It was quite amazing.” | 12.33-13.17 |
| 13.36 | Mentions Fraser’s on Argyle Street and MacDonald’s. |  |
|  | “There was a Fraser’s shop at the bottom of Argyll Street and Buchanan Street. And it was quite famous for gloves. They had beautiful kid gloves. And they had them laid out. So, if you wanted good gloves you went to Fraser’s.”  | 13.53-14.09 |
| 14.12 | Fraser’s too over MacDonald’s. Arnott’s. Boots was a big shop that sold everything including pots and pans. Shop under the station bridge that repaired umbrellas and Scottish souvenir shop. Curley’s Grocers. |  |
| 16.12 | Interviewer asks the respondent about going to the Empire. |  |
|  | “Dad and I were great pals. We had the same sense of humour. My mother was quieter. And dad and I used to gang up. As it were. [laughs] But, he used to take me to The Empire on a Friday night. It was a…just a variety show. And across the road Birrell’s…He’s take me for sweeties. Sixpence a quarter of sweeties. And then to the theatre. And there was always something in the theatre. But not the way it is now. You know, five course lunch. It was just maybe a wee carton or something like that. So, we used to go there, I think it was about nearly every month, to a variety show. And it must have been alright. Because my age group was permitted and I would be…Well, I would be under fourteen probably at the time….But I can remember the Empire. And they were good. Because it was exciting, you know, to see all these things.” | 16.24-17.57 |
|  | “And then later on, of course, there was always pantomimes and things like that. Every Christmas we went to the one…The Princess which was where…Down the Gorbals way. The Princess. And I can remember…All the comedians had their own, sort of, theatre, as it were, for pantomimes. And George West…I can remember my aunt saying…She was a great fan of George West. He was the one that was always in the pantomime at The Gorbals. And then there was The Alhambra and, of course, The Theatre Royal. And there was another one. The Kings. There was that as well. So, there was all these great…Oh, Glasgow was buzzing. I mean it was a great place.”  | 17.58-19.11 |
|  | “And then the big St Andrew’s Halls. Because I remember…There was a wonderful singer Grace Moore. She had a beautiful voice. And in those days there wasn’t the same microphones and stuff like that. And I remember being taken to St Andrew’s Halls to hear Grace Moore. And I can still visualise her. She was wearing the most beautiful aquamarine dress. And she was just standing there. And what a voice. And, of course, the acoustics were perfect there.” | 19.10-20.18 |
|  | “My mother’s father. He was a Highlander. And my gran she was English. So, I’ve got a wee bit of both in me. And although my gran was English. She and the offspring all supported The Highlander’s Institute. And every year towards the end of the year. There was a big…what they called the Skye Association Concert. And that was held at St Andrew’s Halls. And I was taken…This was a treat. I was taken and there was singers and I think by the time it came to the second half the singers were all sozzled. They were singing, you know, as we used to say, heederum hoderum on their heels. And I just watched, you know, and ate out of a poke of sweeties. But, later on they always had The Great Ball. And my uncles and their girlfriends or wives at that time. Whatever it was. They were always at it. And all the men were in their kilts. And the ladies in evening wear with the appropriate sash. And they formed what they called The Grand March. And they would start of in small…And eventually they were right across the base of where all the seating had been. Right across and then they all marched down. And I can remember that spectacle. I was allowed to stay up to go to this concert. And that happened every year for a long time. I must have rebelled at some point and said-‘I’m not going anymore. I’m going out somewhere else [laughs]. ” | 20.20-22.45 |
| 22.51 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her memories of rationing are. |  |
| 23.10 | Was 16 when the war started. Went to commercial college on Queens Drive. Got a job before the war started. Was a reserved occupation-war work. Tried to volunteer as all friends away in the forces. Was drafted into The Auxiliary Fire Service. Local and never any incidents. Husband in the Royal Artillery. Was at Cassino.  |  |
| 25.50 | Says that shopping during the war was calm. Sometimes you got a bit extra. People swapped recipes in the queue. |  |
| 29.40 | They were a family of church goers. Recounts her memory of war being declared in 1939. Was taking short hand notes in church. Remembers the feeling as the famous words came over the radio. Talks about the night of the bombing of Clydebank. She could hear the planes going over. Talks about the warden. Remembers factory was bombed and a bomb on Langside Road. Lost about 10 of her group in combat. Talks about the work in the ship factory that she worked for. |  |
| 37.10 | Interviewer asks the respondent what the town was like at Christmas time. |  |
|  | “Oh, they were wonderful. The town…They don’t know what it was like. They were absolutely wonderful. Lewis’s which used to be called The Polytechnic. It was never such a big store. And the whole of the top was Christmas toys. And Frasers or MacDonald’s. They had a wonderful display as well. And also Wylie and Lochhead’s. People went into to town at night just to walk and look at the windows. And there was no iron bars or iron grids etc. And moving dolls and moving things and railways running and children standing just…It was great. People went in just simply to go look at the shops. And they knew the ones that every year there was a special thing. And all the lights. It was beautiful. It really was.” | 37.16-38.31 |
| 38.54 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers the interiors of any of the stores. |  |
| 39.03 | Remembers the staircases of Fraser’s or MacDonald’s. Remembers a rocking horse. |  |
|  | “I can remember the staircases of Fraser’s or MacDonald’s. When you went in it was up the staircase and then you would go…And it was, kind of, ye olde world. In fact, Jenner’s in Edinburgh retained a lot of their thing much longer than some of our people. Although Fraser’s did for a long time. Because I remember on Christmas on the landing when you went up in Fraser’s. On that landing they had a big rocking horse. And my husband and I. John and I…David, he was about six or seven at the time. And my husband said-‘Oh David, he would just love that. I think we’ll get that for him.’ And it sat… And I think everybody in the district came up to get onto this horse. They were all playing cowboys and Indians.” | 39.02- |
| 40.32 | New Year. Talks about saying Happy New year to strangers in the street and not getting home till breakfast after doing first footing. |  |
| 41.36 | Talks about Sunday School days out. |  |
|  | “In those days there were even a lot of little local shops. I mean you would have a jeweller’s. We had a furrier’s. A chemist. Licensed grocers; which was frowned upon. And cleaners. The Castlebank Laundry. That was a great thing. I can remember there was a corset shop. My mother and aunt used to go to it. Hat shops. Beautiful hats in the window. And that was just local that wasn’t even town… Victoria Road was a great shopping area. A great place. They had everything too.” | 42.34-43.26 |
| 43.40 | Talks about The Church of Scotland Church on Dixon Road where herself and her husband were the first babies to be baptised. They only found this out after they met. |  |
| 47.44 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she went out to the theatre and the cinema in the 1950s. |  |
| 47.50 | Was married then. Later on would go to The Citizens. Went out whilst on holiday in other places.  |  |
| 51.23 | Remembers a fire in a dress shop opposite Woolworths on Argyle Street. She thinks some people were trapped. Mentions fire in church at Eglington Toll.  |  |
|  | “Eglington Toll. There used to be a big church there at the junction. And it went on fire. Burned to the ground. I remember seeing that. And then it became…They built a bungalow there and it was the show house for building the houses in Giffnock. Because friends of ours bought a house in Giffnock. Ailsa Drive. And it had been built…This show house, you know, they’d seen that and then went out to Giffnock. And then it became a funeral parlour after the showhouse. The way it looked you know. And the next thing it became a petrol station.” | 52.32-53.46 |
| 53.51 | Talks about different churches in Govanhill. |  |
| 54.52 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any shops on Victoria Road. |  |
| 54.56 | Mentions Pearson’s stores had three shops at one time. Mentions Mitchells. Butchers, jewellers, shoe shops, cafes. No pubs in one part of Govanhill due to rules of Dixon’s company.  |  |
| 56.10 | Interviewer asks the respondent what customer service was like in shops at that time. |  |
| 56.11 | Says that the standard was high. Lots of them were family shop. Remembers Mr Penny’s hardware shop in Govanhill. Thinks the attitude to customer service is very different now.  |  |
| 1.02.25 | Mentions Queens Park in the 1950s. Also giving up work when she got married but taking it up again. |  |
| 1.03.53 | Remembers the back courts singers some affected by WWI. |  |
| 1.06.15 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any processions or parades or carnivals in the highstreets. |  |
|  | “Empire Exhibition. I’d a season ticket for it. Which I forgot on the last night. And I’d to pay to get in and it was lashing [laughs} I always remember that. My girlfriend and I practically lived in it. It was wonderful. Wonderful buildings built. Better buildings than they build now. Yet they took them down. All except The Palace of Art. And it was a wonderful place. All the countries. I remember seeing the giraffe necked women. They had some of the…way up like that. Brass, you know. And they had The Clachan which was a cottage. I’ve got a wee brooch of The Clachan. I’ve still got my season ticket. And there were such wonderful things. And beautiful white buildings. And they had the restaurant. And I didn’t go up the thingy [laughs] and of course they took it down. The tower that they had. That was Bellahouston. But oh it was a great place and it had a great fun…great fun fair, you know. But, I practically…Going straight from school sometimes to it. And, in fact, I’ve got a snap of myself and one of my friends. We’re walking along. And beside us is a billboard like this, you know. They used to have the big billboards sitting in the side. And it said something about-War is Close or so…You know it was some horrific headline. Which, it was true. I remember that. But, oh it was wonderful. It was a shame it all had to be taken away. It’s a pity it couldn’t have been left.” | 1.06.34-108.51 |
| 1.09.31 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any music played in stores. |  |
| 1.09.39 | Says that Fraser’s had a pianist on one of the floors. There was a restaurant that had music during a meal. Mentions Charlie Coons the singer. Mentions Biggars. Bailey and Ferguson’s music shop on Queen Street. |  |
| 1.11.38 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any models in the stores. |  |
| 1.11.49 | Remembers the odd one in Frasers or MacDonald’s. |  |
| 1.13.01 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any hairdressers within the big stores. |  |
| 1.13.06 | Went to Teddy’s or Tedesco’s on Butterbiggins Road. He could cut hair very well. You came out looking as if you’d had a shampoo and set and only had a cut. |  |
| 1.15.35 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks the highstreets have changed over time. |  |
| 1.15.39 | Think they very much have. Can’t go out shopping now. One to one shopping more personal although people at supermarket friendly. Lack of attention from staff years ago in Arnott’s. Bad treatment in TJ Hughes. |  |
| 127.55 | Interviewer asks the respondent about the celebrations for the end of the war in Glasgow. |  |
| 1.28.04 | Says everyone was just so happy and hoped their loved ones would come home. There wasn’t lots of drinking. |  |
| 1.29.11 | Talks about the boys coming home and being very eager to get started with things. Tennis club, youth clubs, bible classes. Talks about those who never came back. Talks about her husband’s war. |  |
| 1.31.40 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers POWs on the streets of Glasgow during the War. |  |
| 1.31.55 | Talks about meeting Italian POWs at Tighnabruaich. Also met some South African officers on an island. Talks about the unfairness of war. Remembers watching the Coronation on TV.  |  |
| 1.43.35 | Talks about getting off tramcars before they stopped. Talks about train to and from Hillington during the war. PLUTO. Pipeline Under The Ocean.  |  |
| 1.48.40 | Talks about the Glasgow Public Parks Tennis League. |  |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for her contribution to the project. |  |
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