

Working in Goldberg's and Arnott Simpson's in the 1960s

By Sam Kennedy

I am a Teuchter from the Highlands but spent the most wonderful eight years of my life in Glasgow in the 1960s. Apart from floating for two years, I did two years with Arnott Simpsons and then four years at Goldberg's.

Arnott Simpsons

In the early 1960s I worked in Arnott Simpsons in Argyle Street. I loved the job and was doing a good job as a supervisor in the Men's Clothing Department. I remember the following from that time:



Firstly, where you get shops – you get shoplifters!

My department used to be visited by two young men wearing long overcoats and I knew what they were up to. With shoplifters, their eyes and ears go everywhere – looking out and listening in every direction to make sure their purpose has not been discovered. I simply went up to them, told them I knew what they were up to, and that they should leave immediately. They did.

One Sunday evening a few years later, I went to have a drink in The Bath Hotel, and lo and behold I came across them there. We got chatting (they were quite pleasant) and I told them that I was responsible for the stock levels and profitability of my department. They then told me that they had found out when my lunch break was and only visited my department then!

On the odd occasion I had the opportunity of doing overtime over the weekends. Now this overtime was nothing to do with my day job but was involved in security work. During the nights, we had two security people on duty during the non-trading hours, which over the weekends was approximately from 6pm to 6am. Thus, my opportunity to make some extra cash came by doing some overtime on a Saturday Night.



The one Saturday night came, and I was employed for that evening. It started off normally in that we (myself and my mate) would spend the initial hours checking the doors, and making sure that nobody had been inadvertently locked in, before going to the restaurant kitchen and making some food for ourselves. Now we could relax...

After feeding ourselves we went our separate ways, in that I re-checked the ground floor and my mate started checking from the 3rd floor down. Being evening, only the pilot lights on each floor were switched on, which meant the store was on the 'dim' side.

I can recall that I was busy checking the doors when a 'ping' went off, meaning that a lift door had opened on the ground floor. I turned around and saw the silhouette of what I thought was a man 'carrying a body' of another person from the lift and proceeding to the rear exit. Now, I am not the panicking type but I must confess I felt a 'wee bit pressured'.

To avoid being seen, I crawled on all fours to the nearest phone and phoned the polis. They were helpful and reassuring and I arranged to open the back door for them, so I proceeded there carefully. They arrived and were very reassuring. They were about to search the premises when 'my mate' came into sight, whistling and without a care in the world.

It turned out that my mate had let the display manager into the store (without letting me know) and he had gone to his department to get a full-size



mannequin to take to a party! This is what I saw when the lift door had gone 'ping'.

First thing on the Monday I was summoned to the Store Manager's office to explain. Asked 'if with hindsight I would take the same course of action', I answered, "Yes!"

Goldbergs

Another story I recall was at Goldberg's, where there were two people called Goldberg who were brothers and directors.

Each director had a team of workers reporting to them who were responsible for the stores upkeep and maintenance. On the 5th floor was the furniture department, which was tastefully furnished as the different rooms a house, kitchens, lounges, bedrooms, etc. This one day the team of workers reported to each Goldberg and were given their instructions. One squad was instructed to go to the furniture store, on the 5th floor, and to paint and wallpaper specific walls. The other squad reporting to the other brother was instructed to pull the walls down!

During my time at Goldbergs, I was in charge over the pre-Christmas period of the toy department. At other times of the year, I was in charge of the china and glass departments. Of course, there were times when I was involved in the toy buying, and the china and glass buying.

Being in charge of the toy department I would not have missed for the world. I recall we had 71 staff and we operated in two sections. One section took the customers round the department to select and buy, and the other section were involved in charging purchases to accounts and wrapping. We had lots of seats available for our customers to sit on. Some customers took their goods with them, but the bulk was delivered to their houses.



Apart from merchandising the shelves and running the department, I spent a bit of time outside the building. I would drive a truck to the Triang Depot to collect goods. On the odd emergency, I delivered goods to the customers and often went with a team of our lads to Crownpoint Road, where we had storage facilities. This would be in addition to the two large storage huts we had on the roof of the store. The movement of goods were critical.

Never a dull moment!