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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**Respondent: Lorraine McCrearyYear of Birth: 1955Age: Connection to project: RespondentDate of Interview: The 6th of September 2023Interviewer: Rachel KellyRecording Agreement: YesInformation & Consent: YesPhotographic Images: Yes (Number of: 3 )Length of Interview: 1 hour 23 minutes and 43 seconds.Location of Interview: Lorraine’s home in Bothwell.Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Time(from: mins/secs) | Description | Transcribed Extract(from- to:mins/secs) |
| 1.06 | Interviewer asks the respondent during which era she first remembers Glasgow’s high streets.  |  |
|  | “Actually before I went to primary school, which would be the fifties. Because we were very sheltered in the fire station. Ingram Street runs right through the heart of the city to George Square almost. And my playground apart from being in the fire station. Essentially was the Ramshorn Church, I think it was called. Where in the Autumn that was the only place there were trees. You know we were city kids. And so we would go down there and build big piles of leaves. And the Fruit Market and the Cheese Market were down off Ingram Street. And the Cheese Market in particular I remember vividly. Because I had to hold my breath and run past it. Cause I hated the smell. I really remember that vividly. The Fruit Market was…I mean there were horses and carts and obviously traffic etc. But, the Fruit Market spread itself up and down Ingram Street and along Candleriggs. And round about where…It was based there for a long time in Candleriggs. But it was a huge big area. And there would be piles of…Sacks of… I remember peas all piled up in the street maybe going into the Fruit Market. And us as kids would go and take pods of peas and crack them open and eat peas. And nobody bothered. It was absolutely acceptable.” | 1.10-2.44 |
| 2.45 | Remembers being sent down for Embassy Regal cigarettes at a sweetie shop at the corner of Ingram Street and Albion Street. Met up with friends that live in Australia now and reminisced about this and the walls they clambered on. |  |
|  | “I’ve got friends that are in Australia that we..we sort of met up with recently. And we went down to a wee place behind the fire station [on Ingram Street] where we could see our old house and the old wall that we used to climb on. But this wee sweetie shop came up. And our memories of that are almost…It’s almost like Victorian is the thought. And obviously it was the fifties. It wasn’t. But the stairs going up…the name of the shop was Jeanie Bruce’s. And the stairs going up to it were so worn. They were almost paper thin. They were wood. And if you had roller skates on you had to be really careful. Because everybody had roller skates and stuff. And you would go into Jeanie Bruce’s… And I can see it in my mind’s eye right now. And it was always really dark and I could always smell soap powder in it. And she’d have piles on the shelves of like Daz and Omo and Oxodol…But, I would walk straight to the back of the shop where she kept all her comics.” | 3.10-4.17 |
| 4.58 | Says Ingram Street itself has change immensely. Worked in John Glen’s on corner of Glassford Street as her first Saturday job. Worked in gents department in the 1970s. Had a person operated lift with double gates. |  |
| 6.07 | Remembers someone stealing a hoover from John Glen’s and running out and being hit by a bus. They were then arrested.  |  |
| 6.36 | Talks about her route to primary school. Went to St Mungo’s. Mentions Castle Street, Stanhope Street and Stirling Road. Collins’s Bookstore. Martyr’s Building. Parliamentary Road. Talks about the Monkland’s canal being drained for the building of the M8. Mentions that she doesn’t think much of the LEZ scheme. |  |
| 9.53 | Talks more about St Mungo’s Primary. Head was Sister Annunziata. Was sent to a school called Freeland’s briefly but despite having looked at old maps is not sure where this was. Was near Weaver’s Street. Was a big forge nearby as they peeked in and saw fires. Thinks there may have been an asylum nearby.  |  |
| 12.17 | Went to ‘Our Lady and St Francis’ or Charlotte Street school. Talks a little about the school. Talks about a lady who went there who is on the school FB page who is in the late stages of writing a book with a couple of chapters on the school. Eunice Ivy. Life as a nun and a policewoman. |  |
|  | “My favourite shoe shop was in a place…I don’t think it exists now. Called Schipka Pass. And Schipka Pass led from London Road into Gallowgate. And, again, it makes me think of what it would be like in Victorian times…But, there was a shoe shop there called Gordon’s. And when platforms came out. I was going to say for the first time. But I do believe platforms were out during my mum’s time during the war for a while. But when platforms came out in the seventies. Shot straight down there. Cause they had all the best. And my first pair of platform shoes, I still remember, were white and yellow, believe it or not. So, I think I looked like Minnie Mouse.” | 14.46-15.36 |
| 15.44 | Mentions: Schuh, Virgo which was very modern and had a stucco pillar in the shape of an egg timer. Chelsea Girl. Bus Stop. Biba in Frasers.  |  |
| 17.32 | Didn’t use key for the fire station. Felt very cossetted and protected. |  |
|  | “But we wandered about that town. Not at night. I wasn’t allowed out of the fire station at night. But the children in the fire station would play rounders. So, that’s like a kind of common version of cricket I suppose. But it was with tennis rackets and tennis balls. But if you can imagine a square court yard surrounded by what were called the washhouses on the right hand side. Our houses which are still there. The verandas. So, there was another building that was there and it’s gone now. So, if you go into a wee pub called…Babbity Bowster’s. It’s right at the back of what remains of the fire station. And the wall that can be seen at the back is the wall that I was told not to climb on. Because it wasn’t too high on the fire station side but it’s about sixteen feet on the other side. And we were on that wall all the time.” | 19.01-21.52 |
| 21.53 | Talks about one of the girl’s mums who taught them skipping styles and threw tablet and jam sandwiches out the window. Sometimes the sandwich would have a penny in for sweeties. |  |
| 24.42 | Talks about College Street and the original fire station. Talks about going to friends single end with outdoor toilet.  |  |
|  | “So, I’m not religious at all but my dad was quite religious so he would take me to mass on a Sunday. And we didn’t go to St Mungo’s where I went to school. We would go down to Saint Alphonsus which was near…across the road from my secondary school actually. And we’d have a wee wander round The Barras and I would tuck…I hated it. I loved being with him but I hated The Barras. And I would tuck my hair in because I was… I had really long hair. I was afraid of getting nits. How ridiculous is that? Because in those days it was mobbed. You would be brushing beside people. And, you know, outside the atmosphere was great. But, my dad would be looking for fishing tackle. Cause he was a fisherman as well. That was his hobby. And we’d have to go inside. And I’d tuck my hair in and just try not to bump into people and keep away from people and… And he’d say things like-‘Are you wanting?’ What was it? Whelks. You know the seafood whelks. And I’m going ‘Oh no! Absolutely disgusted to this day. How does anybody eat them? My husband loves them. And I think there’s still a wee place down there that you can go and get them on maybe London Road. And he would take the wee door off the whelk. You’d be given a bag of warm whelks and a pin. And he’d take the wee door off and he’d stick the wee door on his face. And he’d be walking along the road. Just to make me laugh. He’d be going. ‘Try one. Try one.’ I’d be going ‘Oh no! It’s horrible.’ So, I’m saying they’re horrible. But I never ever would try one.” | 29.36-31.11 |
|  | “But, we’d go to mass on a Sunday and wander through The Barras. We’d get that over and done with. And he’d take me to Peter’s Café on London Road. Next to Lizar’s which was a…an…Somewhere that sells glasses. An ophthalmologist or whatever. I don’t know if the was Black and Lizar’s. I just remember the name Lizars. It might have been Black and Lizar’s. But that was a black marble fronted shop. And then you had Peter’s Café where you’d go in and I’d have what he called a MacCallum. And I believe, from memory, that was ice cream with raspberry served to you on a saucer. You’d be surrounded by the smell of vinegar because people would go into Peter’s Café to buy hot peas and vinegar. Which used to amaze me because I’d think-Why would you into a café for a plate of peas? You know. I just didn’t get it.” | 31.59-32.55 |
|  | “I worked…Before I went to university. I went to university when I was about…when my daughter was three and my son was seven. But before that I had part time jobs and one of the best was working in Lewis’s. Fabulous big building. Still see some of the girls to this day. But I was there demonstrating microwave ovens in the basement…Because the staff were always milling around. We were next to…There was a china department, there was a hardware department. There was a fitness department and there was a fireplace department all in the basement. And they were more or less run by men. Mostly men. And then we had the wee…our wee bit that sold microwave ovens. So, they would smell what I was cooking when I was doing demonstrations. So, I’d maybe do scrambled egg or I’d go up to the delicatessen bit and get some nice spicy stuff so people could smell it. In the delicatessen you could buy things like sweet breads. Which, again, I purposefully bought this time because I was fed up with these people coming round and constantly cadging food that I’d been making and saying ‘Go and make this and go and make that.’ So, I bought sweet breads and I didn’t tell them what they were. And I cooked them. Not very well in a microwave oven. They went really tough. But, I’d lots of spices and loads and loads of garlic…When I finished cooking and I opened the oven. Apparently…The oven was right next to the moving staircase…the escalator…on the way down. And my ovens faced it. So the smell wafted upstairs. And I don’t know if it was a member of the public, or whatever. But, somebody called the fire brigade believing they smelled gas. So, the fire brigade came out. The store was evacuated. The whole store.” | 36.43-39.18 |
| 39.44 | Recounts story of drying a colleagues jeans in a microwave in Lewis’s. |  |
| 4.13 | Describes going to Lewis’s café with her dad. |  |
| 42.49 | Talks about Argyle Street not being what it used to be.  |  |
| 43.34 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she had any training for working in John Glen’s. |  |
|  | “No training [at John Glen’s]. One of the other fireman’s wives, Mrs Proudfoot worked in the gents department. And another lady called Jessie Caldow. And Jessie was a laugh a minute. I loved Jessie. Jessie had had tuberculosis when it was rife in the fifties and lost a lung. And she smoked like a lum as well. But, any training, if you call it that, was Jessie and Mrs Proudfoot. And everything was in drawers. So, because I was the junior I got the job on a Saturday of clearing out all these drawers and folding everything up and making everything tidy again. There was walls of shirts. And the gents tailoring department was round the corner. And we had a floor walker a bit like Captain Peacock. Who was Mr Gray. It real was like Are You Being Served when I think about it.” | 44.25-45.21 |
| 45.22 | Mentions a fellow worker called Fraser. Talks about the receipt system in John Glen’s. |  |
| 46.10 | Talks about working at Glasgow Corporation and then Strathclyde Regional council at Cadogan Street. Enjoyed it. Gave her promotion to a man as he had nowhere to go in his department. |  |
| 47.41 | Talks about working in DER television rental in Duke Street. |  |
|  | “Lewis’s always had a parade going from the train station; so, it was Queen Street Train Station., all the way down to Lewis’s. A Christmas parade and I was a Womble one year.” | 49.01-49.12 |
| 51.01 | Describes the one day she worked in Woolworth’s butcher’s department. Also a babywear shop on the High Street that she only lasted a few weeks in.  |  |
| 53.57 | Describes getting her first guitar in a shop she thinks was called Columba’s at the bottom of High Street. |  |
| 54.32 | Her mum worked in a sport’s store called Robert’s near the Tron Theatre. Mention’s Fisher’s opposite Peter’s Café. Glickman’s. |  |
| 57.29 | Takes us on a trip along the high street in the sixties. |  |
| 101.43 | Talks about how they used to cause queues in the chip shop getting chips for all the firemen. |  |
| 102.50 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any parades or carnivals going along the streets. |  |
|  | “I remember…My bedroom window and our living room window, which is still there, looked out onto High Street. I remember when the circus came to The West End to…Kelvin Hall. They came down in a parade. They came down there. I remember…that was the days when they had animals in the circus. Elephants and lions in cages. And I think… I could be exaggerating and it could be a memory that’s not a real memory. But, in my head I’m sure I remember a horse drawn huge cage with some lions in it going down High Street.” | 102.57-103.36 |
|  | “And you used to have a student’s day or a student’s week. And I don’t know if it was fresher’s week but they would do thinks like come down the High Street. There would be maybe beds on wheels. And other students dressed up in nightcaps and stuff and they would get pushed down.”  | 103.57-104.11 |
| 104.23 | Talks about working in the Southern General and the parade they had of consultants on the exercise area once a year. |  |
|  | “I remember. Was 1962, ’61 something like that. When the last tram car came down. And it came down High Street. And I think I’d probably be hanging out the window. Or…But, I mean, I do remember there was crowds everywhere up and down High Street. And I think it went along Argyle Street as well. All these cars that were doing their last journey. I remember tramcars. I remember trolley buses.” | 1.05.11-105.39 |
|  | “There was a waste ground at the side of the fire station [on Ingram Street]. Where coal was stored. Because we got all our hot water from a big boiler room. We had a boiler man. Jimmy the boiler man. And he kept these fires going. So, there was coal delivered into this waste ground. And we called it the wastey. So, usually after the fireman had…The firemen used to change shifts a six o clock at night. So, the night shift would come on a six. And they were never bothered what we did. So we could climb over the wastey gate. We all could manage it. This was a really high gate. We all managed it. And we’d play on these piles of coal. But we would dig…Because it was really just waste ground. There was nothing there. But we dug a hole and discovered rails. So, whether they belonged to the goods station. Some kind of extension from there. Or, whether…I don’t know. But I always remember that. We couldn’t figure out. Why was there rails going underneath the fire station?”  | 105.54-106.56 |
| 106.57 | Talks about having coal battles with the neighbouring kids. |  |
| 107.35 | Interviewer asks the respondent is she remembers Christmas on the high street. |  |
| 107.44 | Got taken to see Santa at Lewis’s and Bow’s on High Street and other places. |  |
| 109.37 | Interviewer asks the respondent to describe Bow’s on High Street. |  |
|  | “Entrance to Bow’s was a kind of arcade entrance. So, you walked in and the windows were recessed so they had all sorts of furniture etc. It did have furniture. I don’t remember it selling anything else. But they did have…They had a Santa. One year, it might even of been the last year that I saw him. I got a thing called pencils that paint. So, I dipped these pencils into water. And they would paint the colouring in book. I remember wandering around Bow’s and they had a bed department. So, I remember that. And I think it was… I don’t know if it was there in Victorian times but I think it had been there a long standing time. It was quite a big shop for that part of the town.” | 1.09.43-1.10.38 |
| 1.10.47 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she went out clubbing when she was younger. |  |
| 1.10.53 | Went to Joanna’s. Went to The Majestic and had coffee. The White Elephant regularly fell down stairs in platform shoes. Tiffany’s. Mum met dad during the war at the Locarno. ABC on St Vincent Street. Beer Keller on St Vincent Street. The Albert above Joanna’s.  |  |
| 1.14.56 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she felt safe at night on the highstreets.  |  |
| 1.15.07 | Says you had to be on your guard. Felt more unsafe with her boyfriend with her as it was the time of gangs. |  |
| 1.18.00 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks that the highstreets have changed over time. |  |
|  | Talks about the St Enoch Centre and The Buchanan Galleries. States that her late dad would not recognise the city centre now. |  |
| 1.19.47 | Interviewer asks the respondent f she had the chance what advice would she give to Glasgow’s current planners and businesses.  |  |
|  | “First of all clean it up. It’s absolutely a disgrace. Millar Street off Argyle Street I walked up two weeks ago. Nice day. The smell of human urine in that street is disgusting. Litter…Young folk. Whether they’re on drugs or whatever it is. Crouched, sitting on the ground begging. All sorts of people begging dotted all over the place. Some of whom are probably poor souls but there seems to be an epidemic of it. There’s an awful lot of young people… Maybe they’re into drugs or whatever. But they need to clean the city up before they think of anything else.” | 1.19.54-120.47 |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for her contribution to the project. |  |
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