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| **Project: Glasgow’s Highstreets**Respondent: Judith Ann JohnstonYear of birth: 1953Age: 70Connection to the project: Local knowledgeDate of Interview: 15/08/2023Interviewer: Billy FerrieRecording Agreement: YesInformation & Consent: YesPhotographic Images: YesLength of Interview: 01:34:34Location of Interview: Respondent’s HomeRecording Equipment: Zoom 4N- built-in-mics | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Summary Time(from-to: mins/secs | Description | Transcribed Extract(from-to: mins/secs) |
| 01.21-04.10 | Respondent talks about her early memories of Dumbarton (her local town) and Glasgow Highstreets in general. She then describes the regular visits to Glasgow with her mum, brother and two aunts. She recalls the main shopping streets, feelings of excitement and the family `in-joke’ about the weather that seemed typical on their visits. |  |
|  | “Well, it must have been from mid to late 50s, probably late 50s into the 1960s. I lived in Dumbarton, although was born in Glasgow. We were actually from Dumbarton, so I was immediately returned to Dumbarton very shortly after birth. So I remember the High Street and Dumbarton very vividly and but then also from a young age going up to Glasgow.” | 1:31-1.52 |
|  | “The shops in Glasgow Sauchiehall St and Buchanan St, probably not so much Argyle Street, but definitely I do remember going around these streets as a young child, so that's my first memory.” | 1.53-2.05 |
|  | “We loved going to Glasgow. I mean, we went to Glasgow quite often. My great aunt said my grandmother had quite a number of sisters, but the two oldest sisters were unmarried, and they worked hard. They had their hard lives where they made their lives as good as they could, and they loved going to Glasgow. So, I often went with them, and it was always really exciting. We'd go with my mum, my grandma and her two sisters, my great aunts and we'd often go on. It often seemed to be a day when it was slightly overcast, maybe raining a little bit and my brother and I would say it's a “Glasgow day”. | 2.58-3.33 |
|  | “And we still say that we still sometimes say it's a really `Glasgow day’ today you know which both he and I, we understand what we mean by that, you know, and it was the excitement, the excitement …” | 3.34-4.09 |
| 04.28-09.02 | Respondent elaborates more on the shops and stores she remembers by name, the smells and also the shopping warehouses. She describes her experience of going to the in-store `dining rooms’ and enjoying a special beverage there.  |  |
|  | “Well, I can remember it well. It was `Copelands’ which these. These were lovely shops with `Copelands’, `Daly’s. I remember. And they were. They were gorgeous when you went in and you got that perfume on the ground floor. It was lovely. At least that's how I remember it. `Copelands’, `Daly’s’, `Trerons’, I remember. “ | 4.45-05.59 |
|  | “The others you know, further down `Frasers’, of course. And then we went into `Arnotts’, and `Lewis’s’ is down there, although not so much. But I do remember these stores. And there was also warehouses. My great aunt used to have `lines’ for warehouses. `Campbell, Stuart & MacDonald’ and other. … I can't remember the names of the other ones.” | 05.40-05.59 |
|  | “I do remember the tea rooms. I mean, we would go for afternoon tea. I was thinking about this, but we didn't go for coffee. Probably didn't drink coffee so much, so it wasn't a thing for us then, but we would go for afternoon tea or lunch. Or maybe we even said dinner at the time, you know, into Glasgow.” | 07.45-8.04 |
|  | “There were I, I suppose that was the kind of place we would also going to eat in the big stores they had dining rooms, or I don't … I don't think they would even say cafeterias in those days. I'm not sure what they called them, but that was where you would go there for lunch sometimes within the store, you know, and we would have. I loved it when we had a very traditional food which I absolutely loved and I can remember, I always remember getting. I would get orange juice and it would be in a really warm tumbler and the juice, of course, was cold, but the glass would be really warm. So I don't know if they had primitive dishwashers or some person whose job it was to wash all these dishes. Probably the latter.” | 08.29-09.01 |
| 41.02-44.20 | Respondent recounts memories of the sounds in the stores, people `modelling’ clothes and what the changing rooms were like. |  |
|  | “You know, everybody would be sitting talking at table. So that was it. So it probably seemed quite noisy, you know, with just the sheer volume of people's conversation.” | 41.03-41.16 |
|  | “I don't really remember music. I do remember being taken though to a fashion show within a store with my mum and my aunt. I had actually been off school unwell and I must have been better, but not back at school and I remember going with them and sitting, having it might just have been a cup of tea. Don't know if it was lunch, but certainly having some kind of. Food and a fashion show going on. There were people parading up and down and somebody saying “ Now….” telling us about what the whatever the outfits were, and this was in amongst the tables where everyone was eating or having their afternoon tea. And I think that might have been Frasers, but I'm not sure. Certainly, one of the big stories I remember experiencing these fashion shows while you were eating well, I think I was only one, but I can remember that quite vividly.”  | 41.17-42.08 |
|  | “It's very much an individual cubicle, you know, you would sometimes you'd have to queue up, but you would. You would go in and it was very much an individual little room that you'd be in yourself. You would have privacy there would be a mirror and the assistants would walk up and down, but they would. “Are you getting on all right? How are you getting on in there?”, you know and so yes, it was very much. There was never any question of, I remember subsequently there would be communal rooms, but that certainly none of that when I was a child I remember. So there'd be the individual rooms if you were trying on any garment really, you know, you could go in there and they would, the assistants would come and help you as well. I remember that, you know, as far as shoes were concerned though you know, you would be sitting out and they would, as I've said before, they would measure your feet and they would bring a variety of things and you know, and they would walk up and down and they were very particular about measuring your feet and everything in those days you know. And but yes, I do remember that these changing rooms where there were people helping you.” | 43.21-44.19 |
| 47.30-49.30 | Respondent recalls the in-store ‘hairdressers’, even though she didn’t use them, memories of the different type of shop workers and what the `customer service’ was like. She describes the `gift wrapping’ and `home delivery’ services as well as the `cash delivery’ system used for sending payments. |  |
|  | “I never actually went to any of them. I remember that they had them, even C&A, in Sauchiehall St, I remember there was a hairdresser there, but I was never actually in any of those hairdressers, but they certainly were there.” | 47.31-47.44 |
|  | “I do. Remember the staff. You remember the way they were dressed? You were never in any doubt who in fact was an assistant, you know, in more recent years, you could find yourself saying, excuse me, do you work here? You, you know? But no. In those days, people tended to wear black. You knew, you know, and the men would be wearing suits, you know? And but it's the ladies that remember more because that was the kind of department I was going into. But they would be wearing black in the restaurants, and they would be wearing white aprons and a little hat, a little white hat, a white pinny and a hat, dressed in black. Oh yes, I remember that. And they were very, I even remember, you know the language they would say, you know, can I help you? And they would also say “This comes in at..”, I remember them, the prices of, of people saying “What does that come in at?” and they would also say, “Well, this comes in at ..” whatever it was 69 and 11 or whatever it was. And they were really quite distinctive, you know, and that to me, they even, you know, they would speak maybe in a in sort of … I don't mean in a Glasgow accent they would speak just, I don't know differently you know in in a way that seemed different. I suppose they were that they probably were told they had to speak in a certain way in the shop I would imagine to customers you know, I suppose it was very much part of their job they had to do that. So yes, the staff were quite distinctive. Really, in their dress and in their approach. And they were, they would be very helpful. They would tell you about maybe some kind of sale. They would say that there was a sale coming up you know and em, And no, that I can't really say much more than that, but there would be a kind of a kind of Glasgow lady to me that that was working in these shops, you know and that's all I can say really. They were quite distinctive, distinctive in dress and approach, yeah.” | 48.10-49.28 |
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|  | Respondent remembers the stores during the Christmas time, especially her experience of meeting Santa. |  |
| 53.12-54.05 | “I don't think that happened every year, but I do remember going to see Santa and it might have been Lewis's, but I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure, but I do remember being taken with my brother and I've been taken, and I didn't like it very much. I don't really know why, but I didn't. I found it kind of embarrassing. I think I don't know. I really don't know why I don't remember being in any way afraid of the Santa or anything like that, but I just didn't like it. I don't really know why, but yes, we were taken to see Santa. I remember being I think it was. I don't know. You know, everybody with my aunts and my mum and every were kind of attentively listening and I was quite a shy child. I think really, you know, and I don't know why I didn't like it, but I just didn't terribly like it. But yes, we I do remember going to see Santa. That's one thing I remember at Christmas time.”  | 53.15-54.04 |
| 54.20-59.55 | Respondent recalls her memories of a summer job working as a junior sales assistant in the Muirheads store in Sauchiehall Street. She describes the limited training she received, the little she remembers of the pay and conditions, the store’s not so glitzy environment and her awareness of union representation at Muirheads. |  |
|  | “I was in Muirheads in Sauchiehall St for one summer, 1969. The summer. Yeah. So the summer job of 1969, Just for that one summer, yeah.” | 54.21-54.32 |
|  | “I remember we had one day. I remember with the people in. I think they must have been, I suppose what you would call personnel, maybe now or human resources you would call it. Maybe they were personnel then, not much training. I do remember them telling us we weren't to say, can I help you? That was now out of date. This was not. We weren't to say that to people. For some, that we weren't to say that, but not very much training. Really, you know, not much. And that's all I can really remember. I remember they were very nice. The people were doing the training. I liked them. But I can't really remember much of the training other than that, really, that that's about it, you know?” | 54.40-55.06 |
|  | “I really cannot remember what I was paid. I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember that I really can't, but I, you know you received this weekly pay packet and I can remember very little about that. … So I would say probably not particularly good conditions for the staff really, to be perfectly honest, you know it was. I never thought to even think anything about it. It was a summer job when I was there and I knew I wasn't going to be there for very long. So, it was all right, but maybe not that great for people that were working. That store was probably kind of on its last legs even then it wasn't one of the … it was a House of Fraser store and I can't even remember when it closed. Maybe it wasn't, but it wasn't one of the really, it wasn't like Frasers or like, it wasn't glitzy as the others. It was much more, maybe not down market, but it definitely wasn't as. I'm just going to use that word in glitzy in some of these other stores. You know, it definitely wasn't. So I don't know, it was just more I, I don't know it wasn't as fancy really. Yeah, I suppose that's the word I would use.” | 55.31-58.43 |
|  | “They must have had a trade union. Now I knew very little about trade unions in those days, but I do remember being one day the head of department was not about. She must have gone for her tea, I presume, or her lunch. And I was in the store, the on the in the there were actually two sides to this department. So I was at the side that I was on, all of it was clothing like boys, clothing and so on one side, I was with this very nice lady. I remembered her and she was very kind to me. And very, very patient and nice. And I remember I was with her when a man that hadn't seen before, who obviously worked in the store, came in and he was speaking to Mrs Holt and he was, I think he must have been collecting union dues. I now realise, and I remember him saying “And would this young lady, be interested?” Now. Mrs Holt said I’ll warn you, Judith’s just here for the for the summer, you know? So she probably won't be. I didn't know what it was they were talking about. But I remember him talking it. They must have been talking about. But I don't know. He was speaking quiet not a secret, but they were having a kind of quiet conversation, you know? And there was. It was a very quiet time in the store. There was nobody much about. Maybe that was just as it happened. So I was aware that there must have been a Union, but that's really all I knew about it.” | 59.03-59.54 |
| 1.01.00-1.02.30 | Respondent describes her own role and position within the department hierarchy and her perception of work colleagues and the prevailing work culture at the time. |  |
|  | “There was a head of department, there was a sort of her assistant head and then I was there as very much a kind of temporary junior and there could have been others. There was, I don't think there was anybody else. I can't really remember. Was anybody else. There were people on the other side of the shop floor who were. There was a lady there I remember who was the head and like a young man who was like her assistant. I remember them and that's all I can really remember. The I must have been filling in for some. Well, I was there for quite a while over the summer, so I don't know who I was filling in for, but there was a lot of us. There was loads of temporary staff as it seems to me. There really, really were. So I didn't feel part of a team to be perfectly honest.Nobody ever put it that way or said, you know, we're a team or anything like that. I was aware of a team of people who were the people were on the window display because they looked different, you know. They were everybody. All girls went around and nobody wore trousers to work in those days. It's incredible. But it wouldn't be unheard of if I turned up in trousers there, it would have been probably frowned on it. Wouldn't have been, it just wasn't heard of. However, the women that were or the young women that were part of the window dressing team, they were wearing trousers, as part of their work. And I remember that because it was so different. So they were very clearly team. I was sort of attracted to them I think, you know. I thought I probably thought would have liked to have been doing what they were doing, you know? So I do remember them very much as a team, but I didn't feel part of a team really to be honest.” | 1.01.02-1.02.29 |
| 1.02.40-1.05.30 | Respondent remembers some of the tasks and activities she was permitted to do and those she wasn’t. |  |
|  | “I was just allowed to sell things, you know, to speak to people and ask them what they were looking for. Help them with what they were looking for. The stuff tended to be … I remember I had to get things laid out. The I did learn things, you know, every temporary job I had you learned things. So, I did learn how to, the way they wanted me to fold up jumpers and T-shirts and things, so I did that and I still do it that way you know they’d showed me … I would ask people what they want, show them what we had … carry out the transaction and people made the decision that was like I could go. We had to wrap things up in a very particular way … I was allowed to serve and to wrap things up as best I could and … but I wasn't allowed to put to finish off the transaction, I wasn't allowed to. I might have been. No, I wasn't allowed to put the stuff into the cannister thing and send it off up the tube. I didn't do that bit, I had to go and get one of the others in the shop to do that for me. … we had sales periodically where everything was put away in a cupboard a ghastly cupboard, which, like a basement almost. So you went down there, got these huge boxes of jumpers and stuff and they were put out tables. They weren't sold. They were put away again and brought back out. And I remember doing that. Yes. carting big boxes about that, displaying things and oh dear, which I don't know if they ever sold.” | 1.02.43-1.05.26 |
| 1.18.18-1.20.30 | Respondent talks about her favourite and not so favourite things about working at `Muirhead’s’, and her reflections on working there. |  |
|  | “Well, it is really hard to answer that because I honestly, I didn't really like it, you know and I think I'd committed to doing this job. So I did it and I lasted out and I did it. But to say what my favourite thing was, I don't know with the benefit of hindsight, I can say how good it was for me and what an effect it had on me and why it was good in lots of ways … I can see why it was good for me and what an effect it had on me. And why it was good in lots of ways … and I'm also retrospectively. I'm actually quite proud in a way that I went and got that job because I don't think about it now. I think it was, however, and I didn't love it. No, I didn't love it.”  | 1.18.20-1.18.46 |
|  | “I've got good memories, though, of going out at lunchtime and walking about in Sauchiehall St going into the other shops and that I like that, that was good.And it was warm weather. And I remember that nice atmosphere of summer in the city. So I enjoyed that. You know, the actual job itself. I'm not proud of this, but I just have to be completely honest and say I really did not enjoy it. Probably the best memory I have of it though, is being with other young people in that cafeteria and having our breaks and talking to people, finding out what they were doing and what they were going to do when they moved on. So that was probably my best memory from it.” | 1.18.47-1.19.36 |
|  | “I suppose I was in a bit of a state of anxiety a lot of the time, you know, I was worried that I was what I was doing. And you know, so there was there that kind of aspect of I think maybe retrospectively I was maybe just a wee bit unfortunate in the department that I was placed in, that was nobody's fault … If I've been placed in a different department working with different people. It would have been different, you know, but that's just the benefit of hindsight. And it would never have occurred to me at the time to ask to be moved. I mean, I would never have dreamt of that. You know, it just wouldn't have occurred to me. So it it's very hard to answer some of these questions because as I say, I didn't love the job. But I know that I got a lot from it.” | 1.19.47-1.20.29 |
| 1.23.05-1.34.00 | Respondent considers the future of Glasgow’s Highstreets, the changes she has noticed, the causes, her current view, and ideas she would like to see happen.  |  |
|  | “It’s changed out of all recognition {Dumbarton}. Well, not out of all recognition, but it has changed hugely. It's still recognisable, but it has changed hugely. Similarly in Glasgow I used to love going as an adult living in Glasgow from oh. From the time that I first came to live permanently in Glasgow sometime late 70s. I used to love going into the city centre loved it and it has changed so much. I don't love it now. I still get occasionally just a wee buzz from it, but nothing like I used to get, you know, and it's sad that is sad. I mean, obviously I am not the only person to be saying that, but there's huge change and it, but it's not going to be like it was before. I mean, we're not going to go back to that whatever happens, it's not going to be like that. But yes, it's changed hugely, you know. So much changed.” | 1.23.07-1.23.49 |
|  | “I would like to see a proliferation of things in high streets, you know, different things. I would still like to see shops, you know, I really would like maybe smaller shops, independent shops or even shops like the pop-up shops that are only there for a short time, or artisan shops or I would still like to see small shops. We're not going to go back to the past, that I completely can't do that, but I would still like to see shops. I'd like to see other things in towns and cities as well, and I think towns and cities are wonderful. Towns are wonderful places, because of community, because of people getting together and being together and meeting and also you know, you'd be out at the shops and you'd meet people quite by chance and you would communicate. And that happened in the city centre as well. So I would like that to be so how do we get that what we do there, what do we put there for that to be? So we have to have things that people wantto go to, so and as I've just said, I still think there's a place for shops for small shops, but maybe activities, you know, things for people to do in in the city centre. And things that are learning places that they could go to learn. And again in the cities and places that they could live, you know that they could live actually in the city centre and meeting places. So we do live in a different world. So again, restaurants, places that people could go to eat and meet others”.  | 1.27.29-1.28.44 |
|  | “I know the whole service industry is going through a terrible phase at the moment and I know that restaurants are closing in the city centre, so I'm raving on a little bit, but that is the kind of thing that takes people into the city. So, maybe a continuation of that more activity, art. Again, the arts are going through a terrible time at the moment, but we have to look ahead so that activity, selling things, arts, people living there, sports facilities, things that we take you in. Things that because I've got grandchildren now, things that my grandchildren would like to do that I would say. All right, let's go and we can do that and we, we do that, the cinema, take them to the cinema. There maybe more of that. So that that's all I can really think of. The world has changed. We can't go back. So we've gotta think of what was good about that and try and keep that, build on that and accept what we've lost and think of what we can build on and what we want to keep and.” | 1.28.45-1.30.00 |
|  | “You know, we've got a fabulous river running through our city and it's wonderful. It's a fabulous river. We should maybe just try and use it a bit more for all sorts of reasons. We could commute on the river. I used to work in Clydebank. I could have commuted to Clydebank on the river and that sounds facetious, but we really could do that, you know. We use the river more I would say. And it's a big attraction to people from elsewhere and it's lovely. The rive is beautiful. So you use the river more, try and encourage. I don't know what my time of life if I want. I do live in the city. But I don't know if I now would want to right in the city. But there's nothing wrong with living right in the city, so that might be more. We've got parks. Keep them going, you know, so that people can go to the park and can enjoy that. And again, it's a bit hackneyed too, but we've got to keep our city clean. We've got to keep our pride in our city. We've got to ensure that people can dispose of litter and we've got to employ people to keep the place clean because it's so important, you know, for every reason. We want it to look as good as possible. I would continue as much as possible to have Street Theatre and people singing. You know, I was in the city last week and there was somebody singing and she was singing beautifully. And I love that. To me, that's great. Keep that buzz going. You know, because that attracts people, I would never want to diminish that. And that is still going. And again things like the cycling bring things like that into our city because that is good for us and it's good for other people, brings in revenue and it can enjoy it. You know so all of that would to me would be definitely worth while doing. I hope that's enough. I could probably go on and on, you can think of things but you know that's just some things you know.” | 1.30.05-1.30.44 |
| 1.34.02 | Interview ends with thanks. |  |
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