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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**  Respondent: Marian Cairns  Year of Birth: 1954  Age:  Connection to project: Respondent  Date of Interview: The 4th of May 2023 Interviewer: Rachel Kelly  Recording Agreement: Yes  Information & Consent: Yes  Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 1 )  Length of Interview: 1 hour, 17 minutes and 52 seconds  Location of Interview: Marian’s home East Kilbride  Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | | **Glasgow Story Collective** | |
| Time  (from: mins/secs) | Description | | Transcribed Extract  (from- to:  mins/secs) |
| 0.44 | Interviewer asks the respondent during which era she first remembers Glasgow’s Highstreets. | |  |
| 0.50 | 1960s. Duke Street in the East End. City Centre shopping. | |  |
| 1.14 | Interviewer asks the respondent to describe the businesses on Duke Street. | |  |
| 1.18 | Every kind of shop. Butchers with meat on hooks outside. Bakers. Pubs. Small dress shops and clothes shops. Shoe shops. Grocer shops. Got shopping for her mum on a Saturday afternoon. | |  |
| 2.30 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there were any shops that she frequented in the centre of Glasgow. | |  |
| 2.37 | Lewis’s, Woolworths, C&A. Went to Charlotte Street school. Were not supposed to go past Glasgow Cross to shops but did. Trerons. Frasers-too scared to go in it was such an emporium. Remember when walking with friends along Highstreets. Stirling Stevens. | |  |
| 3.56 | Everybody went to Goldberg’s. Her mum had an account there. Went for Xmas decorations. Went to fashion shows there too. | |  |
| 4.08 | Aunt Helen had always worked in department stores. Worked in Magaret Forrester’s in Parkhead and the Scottish Wool Shop. Went to work in Stirling and Stevens in the middle of Argyle Street and got the respondent a Saturday job there. | |  |
|  | “Oh Goldberg’s was just…It was just luxury when you went in. It was just…Everything was shiny. And as soon as you walked in to the foyer. You were just hit with this kind of opulence. And the displays were out of this world. Particularly the Christmas one. Cause they had all these animatronics moving and doing things. And, everything was beautifully presented. Not just the window displays. But, the displays as you moved around the store. And all the count…Everything was clean, and sharp and organised. And the staff were all really smart. In those days whatever department store you worked…you wore black. And it was always…Everybody was very well presented. Not a hair out of place, you know. And it was always like-‘Can I help you?’ And they had doormen…It was a sense of being made to feel special.” | | 4.29-5.36 |
| 5.37 | Describes layout of shop and place to sit. | |  |
| 6.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent about the fashion shows. | |  |
| 6.28 | Went when young. Felt special and got done up. Probably tickets from an aunt. Never going to buy anything. Describes outfit. Yellow trouser suit, flowery shirt and Twiggy haircut. | |  |
| 7.29 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers the highstreets being lit up at Christmas. | |  |
| 7.33 | Big thing to see the lights. Magical. Went with her four brothers in trench coats. Father took a photo. Doesn’t remember music in shops at Christmas. Doesn’t remember the window displays much. People more restrained. | |  |
| 9.49 | People didn’t wander about shops the way we do now. People went in with a purpose. Assistant brought things. Freedom from being able to gaze at window display. Later on more things on rails and you could browse. | |  |
| 10.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any smaller shops around in the City Centre. | |  |
| 10.33 | Henry Healy’s-print of butter. Baker shops. Dairies. Murphy’s Café. She shops-Stead and Simpson, Dolcis. | |  |
| 11.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent for any memories she has of cinemas or theatres. | |  |
| 11.30 | Got taken to the cinema in town at Christmas. Apart from that went to Cinema in Cumbernauld Road in Riddrie. Went to The Vogue and the ABC Minors. | |  |
| 12.19 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any stalls on the street. | |  |
| 12.23 | Mentions a fruit stall that has been there for ever. Markets at Sloanes. | |  |
| 13.31 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she remembers any parades, carnivals or processions on the streets of Glasgow. | |  |
| 13.35 | Walked and danced behind Orange walk as child. Didn’t realise what it was. | |  |
| 14.40 | Interviewer asks the respondent about the shop she worked in. | |  |
|  | “I worked in Stirling and Stevens; which wasn’t a well -known shop. Most people probably haven’t heard of it. And as I say, it’s now where…I’m sure it’s River Island and the Argyle something. You go up the stairs at River Island and there’s a kind of market up there. The Argyle Market. That whole block was Stirling and Stevens. And it ran along the same lines as Goldberg’s upstairs. So, the upstairs part… People had an account and they sat and they got called over. By the time I was working there. And my aunt was working there. She got me the Saturday job. She was working in the children’s department. So, I was working in the children’s department beside my Aunt Helen. And a lot of stuff was still in shelves, and under the counter. And there was a lot of stuff laid out on the counter. Not an awful lot of stuff hanging about. You know, hanging on rails. But then there was more stuff on rails. So, that was my Saturday job…” | | 14.44-15.45 |
| 16.01 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she got any training when she started at Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
|  | “I was working under my Aunt Helen. She was my trainer [at Stirling and Steven’s department store]. And there would be no nonsense. It would be-‘Stand up straight.’ ‘Don’t fold your arms.’ ‘Make sure…’ There was always something to be done. ‘Polish that counter.’ ‘Straighten that.’ ‘Fold that.’ ‘Move that.’ ‘Don’t stand and do nothing.’ Cause she was the manageress. And it was like-‘This is what you do.’ Woe betide you if you didn’t. You know. So that was it, yeah. So my Aunt Helen, she was, she was my trainer, yeah.” | | 16.06-16.36 |
| 16.37 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she got on well with her Aunt Helen. | |  |
| 16.42 | Respondent replies that she did but that she knew she would be exacting at work. | |  |
| 17.36 | Interviewer asks the respondent how she referred to the managers. | |  |
| 17.40 | By surnames. But as a Saturday girl the respondent was Marian. Floor manager, under manager. Everybody had a title. | |  |
|  | “The hierarchy of who everybody was (at Stirling and Stevens department store) was very much-Miss this, Mrs this, Mr this, Mr that. And it was all like- he does this and he does this. It was the floor manager and the under manager. Oh, I couldn’t keep up with it all. But everybody had a title. And everybody was very well aware of their status. There was a pecking order. And Woe betide you if you didn’t observe the pecking order.” | | 18.02-18.27 |
| 18.28 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there were any perks that the other staff got that the Saturday workers didn’t. | |  |
| 18.35 | Not really. She was just glad to get the wages. | |  |
| 18.40 | Interviewer asks how the other staff were towards the Saturday staff. | |  |
| 18.45 | Very much you got told what to do. You’re a Saturday girl. You do this you do that. Don’t ask questions. Just what you expected. Did Thursday late night. | |  |
| 19.19 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she was aware of any trade unions when she was there. | |  |
| 19.21 | No such thing. Was aware of trade unions due to her mum and dad being active trade unionists. | |  |
| 19.40 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her particular responsibilities at Stirling and Stevens were. | |  |
|  | “Do what you’re told [laughs]. Just do…Turn up on time. Clock in. Make sure you’re on the floor, behind the counter before the store opens. There was a bell that went and that was the doors opening. And then people would come in. And you stood there, stood to attention, smartly dressed. And you didn’t wait for the customers to approach. You made sure that you always said-‘Can I help you?’ or ‘Oh, it’s a lovely day today.’ ‘You having a nice time shopping?’ ‘Is this a special occasion?’ You always…You were taught to sell in a very courteous way…” | | 19.43-20.18 |
| 21.00 | Interviewer asks the respondent how she thinks someone would react if they received that sort of service today. | |  |
| 21.07 | Replies she would be delighted. She has worked in a shop and knows what good service is. | |  |
|  | “I know that it’s terrible that the highstreets declined. But the quality of service declined until it was non-existent. All that walking about a shop trying to find somebody to serve you. I just turned and walked back out again. So, I regret the decline of the highstreet. But, at the same time for a long, long time I was getting really fed up. And thinking-I’m not getting any service here…” | | 21.45-22.07 |
| 22.12 | Interviewer asks the respondent what they sold in Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
| 22.17 | Started off along the lines of Goldbergs. Childrens, ladieswear, menswear. Opened posh men’s boutique. Homewares. When basement became the Argyle Bargain Basement, in the early 1970s, you knew the whole place in decline. She never worked upstairs which was a completely different atmosphere. | |  |
| 23.45 | Talks about when decimalisation came in. She was ok as at school. Public more confused than the staff. People got there. | |  |
| 24.15 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there were any particular characters that worked at Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
|  | “I can’t remember his name. I’ve been trying to remember. Let’s call him Mr Stevens. Just because it was called Stir…But, he was very imposing. Very tall. All the men, you know, the big managers, were always beautifully dressed. Silk ties and all that. And it was like-‘Here’s Steven’s coming.’ The word went out. ‘He’s on the floor, he’s on the floor.’ And he would, kind of, look around and see how things were going. And it was almost as if he felt he had to correct somebody. Somebody had to get told…politely. But-‘Move this.’ ‘Why is that here?’ ‘What’s that?’ ‘What’s that?’ You know. It was like keeping people on their toes. He was quite a…He was quite a presence.” | | 24.24-25.09 |
| 25.20 | Talks about a young Canadian who came to work in the shop and who didn’t care for rules. | |  |
| 26.03 | Interviewer asks the respondent if they had a canteen for the staff at Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
| 26.05 | Remembers going upstairs for lunch breaks but can’t remember tea breaks. Met in Murphy’s for a roll and sausage in the morning. | |  |
| 26.30 | Talks about when a larger lady fell out of one of the changing rooms and had to be helped up. | |  |
| 27.54 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she is still in contact with any of her former colleges from Stirling and Steven. | |  |
| 27.59 | She didn’t. Aunt Helen left for another Job. Respondent left and went to college. All the Saturday girls were leaving to go their separate ways. | |  |
|  | “I remember my gran stayed in Liberton Street in Riddrie. And my Aunt Helen always got the wee green bus. And I think Margaret Forrester’s was in Parkhead. I think. Cause I was really young then. And then I know she worked in the Scotch wool shop. Because all my aunties knitted. My granny’s house in Liberton Street…There was my granny my Aunt Helen and my Aunt Margaret. And they all sat and knitted the whole time. Everything we had…We were totally hand knitted. My school uniform was, hand knitted jumper, hand knitted skirt. I was totally hand…The only thing was my blazer. And I just remember them all sitting there watching The Fugitive on a black and white TV. And having wee cups of tea and knitting all the time. So, I think it was really an advantage that my Aunt Helen worked in the Scottish Wool Shop [Laughs}. There you are. And then she worked at Stirling and Steven’s in the city centre.” | | 28.44-29.38 |
| 29.40 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her favourite thing was about working at Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
| 29.43 | Money. First time she had earned her own money. Then bought her things other than school uniform. Opened an account in a wee shop in Dennistoun. You felt grown up. An entrance into an adult world. | |  |
| 30.55 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her least favourite thing about working a Sterling Stevens was. | |  |
| 31.03 | Working in the stockroom. Dusty and no air. | |  |
|  | "I remember 'Mr Stevenson', I think, had said-'Girls there is a range of hot pants and I want you to model them." And we're like-'what?' And he said-'Yes, yes.' And so this is when it got the bargain basement, right. And my Aunt Helen (also her manager) was dubious about this whole thing. That me and my pals would all be walking about the shop in hot pants. With a price label hanging from them (laughs). So, me, by that point, being a bit more bolshy about things, you know. I said-'Oh, right, that's ok, but, em, what we getting for it?' And he said-'You'll do your job and that's it.' I said-'Well. you're not...You can't sell them. We've been walking about wearing them the whole time.' So, I negotiated and we got to keep them. So, I got a pair of black satin hot pants, a denim pair of hot pants and a brown denim pair of hot pants with a bib. So, each of us over the weeks that we had to walk about the shop modelling these hot pants, got three pairs of hot pants (laughs). You wouldn't get away with it now. But, that's what we did. Yeah, uh huh.” | | 31.58-33.08 |
| 33.09 | Interviewer asks the respondent what her thoughts are when she looks back on her time a Stirling and Stevens. | |  |
| 33.15 | A different era. A first step into an adult world. Had standards there. She didn’t feel it was a lowly job. Job had status. Different when bargain basement came in. Chained to the cash register. Learnt about customer service and how to count well. | |  |
| 35.31 | Interviewer asks the respondent how the job at Stirling and Stevens compares to other jobs that she has had. | |  |
| 35.36 | Job set her in good stead for other jobs. Explains. Learned a good work ethic. | |  |
| 38.15 | Interviewer asks the respondent what pubs she went to. | |  |
| 38.24 | The Griffin. Remembers she worked whilst at college at the ABC in Sauchiehall Street. Worked as usherette, on sweetie counter and selling tickets. | |  |
| 39.10 | Interviewer asks the respondent about working in the ABC Cinema on Sauchiehall Street. | |  |
|  | “Oh god, I loved it. I absolutely loved it [The ABC Cinema on Sauchiehall Street.]. So, as I say, I started off as an usherette. And you’d your torch. And you took people their seat. And then at the inter…Well, and then you had your tray with the ice cream on it and the wee light and all the rest of it. And all the ice cream. The confectionery, the ice cream…And the film that was on…I saw a good few really good films. Cause we could sit down in the well. Away…Once everybody was seated you could sit down in the well and watch the films. And one of the films that was on for the longest was ‘Jesus Christ Superstar.’ So, me and the other usherettes knew all the dance routines and all the songs. So, when everybody was watching the film we were downstairs, where nobody could see us, doing all the songs and doing all the actions…” | | 39.14-39.58 |
| 40.37 | Talks about bomb scare procedure at the ABC cinema. | |  |
| 41.43 | Interviewer asks the respondent what bits of the cinema were built at the time. | |  |
| 41.46 | Talks about cinema closing for a while whilst new bit built. Mentions the bar and the restaurant in cinema 2. | |  |
| 44.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent what the atmosphere was like in the highstreets at night. | |  |
| 44.30 | Everyone knew you were going to the dancing. Describes what she wore. Went to the Electric Gardens and Tiffany’s. Joanna’s. Maestros. Nicos in late 1970s. | |  |
| 47.14 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she felt safe or unsafe on the highstreets of Glasgow at night. | |  |
| 47.20 | Is a Glaswegian. Goes out in Glasgow. Does not feel unsafe. Went to school in the Merchant City. Glasgow where she feels most at home. Late night buses, George Square. Chips at Blue Lagoon years ago. | |  |
| 49.08 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she went to restaurants in the 1970s. | |  |
| 49.10 | Dino’s on Sauchiehall Street. Then curries later on and Chinese food. | |  |
| 49.55 | Interviewer asks the respondent about going into Lewis’s. | |  |
| 50.06 | Went to Lewis’s and Arnotts but remembers C & A better. Was on tight budget. 1980s.Fraser’s a treat just to go and have a look about. | |  |
|  | “I remember the first time I walked in. I thought I was in paradise. I just remember that big staircase. It was just beautiful. And I remember when I was at uni, I decided I would get a Fraser’s card and I would put five pounds away a month, or something like that. So, that went into the Fraser’s card. So then when I sat an exam…After the exams and after we’d been to the pub I would go to Fraser’s. And I’d have credit on this card by that time and I’d buy myself something in Fraser’s. That was my treat.” | | 50.40-51.13 |
|  | “When I was at Charlotte Street School you used to go to the Radio One Club at lunch time. In the Electric Gardens. So we used to dog the last period of school. And then get on the bus at Glasgow Cross and get the bus up to Sauchiehall Street. And at the back of the bus we used to change into all the disco gear. And have a bag for your school uniform…And then we used to leave the Radio One Club early. Jump on the bus. Once you got on the bus, try and get your mascara off, change…At the back of the bus…change back into your school uniform. And then run from the bus to make the second period of school, and hope that somebody had marked you in on the censor card. And I remember the day we got caught as well. And it was a convent school. And the teacher said-‘you girls, where have you been?’ And we went-‘We’ve been at The Electric Gardens.’ And she said…This, I, you can’t make this up. She talked to the rest of the class and she went-‘Oh you’ve been with boys, you’ve been with boys. And we went-‘Yes.’ And then she said to the class. ’And what do you do if a boy approaches you girls? What do you do?’ And we’re all like… You know, hormone driven fifteen girls. Convent girls, you know. And then she said-‘You say. Stop. I am a temple of the holy spirit.’ And she was facing the class so they couldn’t laugh. But, we were all behind her kill…It was like The Derry girls. You know. Just laughing our heads off and getting lines or something…” | | 51.25-53.17 |
| 53.57 | Interviewer asks if anyone, other than the nuns, objected to her going out when she got a bit older. | |  |
| 54.10 | Replies parents were very liberal. Best parents in the world. Had five kids and fostered kids. Aunts more strait-laced. | |  |
| 55.32 | Interviewer asks the respondent if there are any other shops that she went into that she would like to talk about. | |  |
|  | “I think, you know, we’ve forgotten about the big thing that was What Every Woman Wants. When What Every Woman Wants opened that was right at the far end of Argyle Street. Right through the Hielanman’s Umbrella and just further out. And the word went round at school that this shop had opened and we could afford stuff in it. And it was like-Oh wow. We were all along there. And, I mean, that was just incredible. Because you could buy clothes that were previously way beyond your reach. You used to go to Chelsea Girl and Mona Lewis [?]. Well, where I was at school, up on London Road you went up the Gallowgate. And there was loads of shops up the Gallowgate and London Road. So, at school if you were where you should have been. You know. If you didn’t go past Glasgow Cross. And there was loads of wee individual shops selling clothes and things like that there…And you’d save up money to go to Chelsea Girl. And you often had a wee ménage or a wee account that you had…But, then you heard about What Every Woman Wants and you could pay cash. And you could come out with a dress. You could come out with a dress and cardigan and a pair of jeans. And then they moved into the old Goldberg’s and that was just fantastic. And then you learn…I learned things from my aunts, you know. ‘If you get different buttons on that it will look better. Put a little bit of braid on that and it will look better. So, the sewing machine always came out…” | | 55.36-57.13 |
| 57.14 | Talks more about doing up items from What Every Woman Wants. | |  |
| 57.55 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she did sewing at school | |  |
| 57.56 | She did. Used to make a lot of her own clothes and homeware things. Remnant Kings big loss. | |  |
| 59.59 | Talks about how there were such a variety of shops in the past. Different styles in different shops. Marks & Spencer’s boring to her then. | |  |
| 1.00.46 | Lots of shops had tearooms. This would be a gauge of shops. | |  |
| 1.00.39 | Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks the highstreets have changed over time. | |  |
| 1.1.31 | Out of all recognition. Lucky to have East Kilbride shopping centre close. Said when out of town shopping centres open-How many shops do people need? What is going to happen to the buildings if they are not used? Shops in city centre getting fewer. Tragic. Thinks of jobs Service wasn’t there. Staff had tablets in some shops which was good. | |  |
|  | “And I think the social aspect. That whole idea of being together in a space and meeting people. And you always talked to people. You always compared purchase and…And, you know, people got dressed up to go out shopping…So, there’s that sense of occasion that’s been lost. And whole groups of people going out shopping together and meeting up in different shops, different tearooms…And getting good service. You know. A bit of pleasantry about the sales person having found you the right thing. And saying-Thanks, I didn’t know that or…And, actually, somebody saying-You know, ‘Try that in this colour because I think that would suit you better.’ Or, ’Have you ever thought of…’ And being treated…You know, being treated as somebody that matters to the sales person. That goes a long, long way. And that just disappeared. I think that’s sad. I think that’s really sad. You’ll get in bridal shops now and things but that was the, kind of, standard; which is a shame.” | | 1.04.40-1.06.35 |
| 1.06.36 | Interviewer asks the respondent when she thinks this change happened. | |  |
| 1.06.39 | Early ‘80s, mid ‘80s. | |  |
| 1.07.07 | Interviewer asks the respondent what she thinks caused the changes. | |  |
| 1.07.11 | Thinks the retail sector didn’t see things coming. Online shopping. Technology could have been brought into shops. | |  |
|  | “I like going abroad quite a lot and I could see what was happening in other European cities. And thinking-Why aren’t we doing this? You know, they would incorporate really nice markets into retail spaces. They would have…They had fashion shows going on in retail spaces. They had different events on in retail spaces. I was…And I don’t know the number of times I said-Why aren’t we doing this?” | | 1.07.55-1.08.11 |
| 1.09.35 | Interviewer asks the respondent what changes she would like to see happening in the Highstreets. | |  |
| 1.09.40 | Homes for homeless. Small businesses put off by high rents. Knock down old shopping centres and have more green spaces. More creative spaces. | |  |
| 1.12.50 | Interviewer asks the respondent what she imagines the future of Glasgow’s Highstreets to be. | |  |
| 1.12.52 | Thinks the traditional high street still has a lot to offer. People like being outside. Elements of shelter. Malls are an eyesore once there is no shops. Can do something different with a shop on the high streets. | |  |
| 1.14.25 | Interviewer asks the respondent about people busking to cinema and theatre crowds. | |  |
| 1.14.35 | Buskers that would sing to the queues and went to the Scotia Bar. | |  |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for her contribution to the project. | |  |
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