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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s High streets: An oral history…’**Respondent: David DoranYear of Birth: 1959Age: Connection to project:Date of Interview: 22/09/2023Interviewer: Dr Sue MorrisonRecording Agreement: Yes/ NoInformation & Consent: Yes/ NoPhotographic Images: Yes/ No (Number of: )Length of Interview:Location of Interview: The Marie Trust, GlasgowRecording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Time(from: mins/secs) | Description | Transcribed Extract(from- to:mins/secs) |
|  | *Where were you born?* |  |
|  | Calder Street, Govanhill, Glasgow, I was a home birth. I have always lived in the same area. Born in Calder Street, living what was classed as a single end and there was six of us, parents and four kids. So we moved round the corner to a larger property, lived there, still there. The only way they’re going to get rid of me is in a wooden box. |  |
|  | *What are your earliest memories of the High streets?* |  |
|  | From what I can remember going probably from about 1963 onwards, I can remember being round about three-ish and my parents used to wheel me in, in the pram and when we got into the high street I was allowed to walk with support but either my Mother or my Father would hold on to my hand and we would start from the Heilan Man’s Umbrella because it used to be a 44 would take us up into Jamaica Street and we would cross over underneath the bridge into Argyle Street and from there we would just walk from one end to the other, more or less from here to Goldbergs. That was our last stop and of course being a three year old walking that length exhausted and absolutely knackered me.  |  |
|  | *What shops did you use to stop at?* |  |
|  | We started at Arnotts, once a year we’d go into Frasers because they were the only one that had the blazer and school cap and from there we’d go into Lewis’s and from there we would carry on to C & A and from there go round into Goldbergs. We used to go there because they had a wee tea room. My Mum was what was classed as a ‘tea jennie’ so that was the last pit stop. |  |
|  | *Do you remember what Goldbergs looked like:* |  |
|  | Visually, yes. I can remember when you went in there was a set of glass doors I can’t remember how many, but you would go in there and there was another set of glass doors taking you into the shop, but in that wee sort of foyer area they used to have stands with the mannequins on it and you’d look and think that looks nice and you’d go inside and they’d have a set of stairs. So you went upstairs and they’d have another set of mannequins on stands. It would be warm inside the shop and with me being tired they would take my jacket off and I would sit down on the stand. I was sort of small so my feet were dangling over the edge. So I had a bad habit of swinging my legs back and forward and I must’ve done it too hard and the mannequin came topping down. So my parents were trying to put it back up and the assistants came and helped to do this. We were a low income family, all the money my parents earned were paying for the house, utility bills and stuff, so Goldbergs was good because you got the likes of your clothes and stuff on ‘chitty’. In other places it would be ‘on tick’, but in there it was done on a card. So you would get the items, they would put it on the card and you would decide how to pay. They used to have a Cashier’s Section on the third or the fourth floor, and my parents would go there once a week and pay so much off that bill.I think everybody, I can’t think of nobody who didn’t do the likes of that. It was a good way of getting the latest fashions, other items, sports goods, shoes, hats and all the likes of that without having to pay for them there and then and they didn’t get wages till the end of the week. So it gave them the opportunity when their wages came in they would pay so much off till it was all paid off until it’s all paid off or if they could afford to, they’d pay it all off. I think at that time it was like a credit card I’m not sure whether interest was charged or if it wasn’t. The amount you paid originally was the amount that you paid off just saw them paying and then that was us, off for a cup of tea and a sandwich. I always got the likes of a juice and they used to have the fancy cakes the likes of that. I can’t remember what it looked like, I’m not sure if it would be called an empire cake, it was one of these sponge cakes with the icing and the icing used to be all different colours. You could get white, pink, red, all these different colours and in between the sponge, it was like a Victoria sponge, it was sponge, cream, sponge and icing all around it. So it was nice to just bite into that and have all the cream going all over your face and all over your hands and on the table. I can remember on Victoria Road there used to be a restaurant there and it was classed as being really fancy and we used to go in there and you got your tea and they’d bring out this tray with the plates on it and all the cakes and I can just remember all these different cakes. You got your empire biscuits, you got your strawberry tarts, you got another one which was sort of cream, I remember I don’t know what it was called, it was sort of iced lemon. I mean you could eat it, it was shaped like that and looked just like a slice of lemon. So there was all these different types of cakes that you used to get in Goldbergs.Once we’d finished there we’d just go back on to Argyle Street and going along a wee bit and I think it was the 67 that you used to get in Glassford Street because we had a choice because all of the buses used to pass our house in Victoria Road anyway, so you either went down to St Enoch’s, not the centre, but more like where the underground is and there used to be a bus stop there where you could get a 5, a 12 or 7 that I think went down Cathcart Road but I know if we timed it right we just went to Glassford Street and by the time we went to the bus stop the bus was not long in coming.  |  |
|  | *Did you ever go into Glasgow to see Santa?* |  |
|  | Yes, all the time each year. We were given a choice. There was a Santa in Arnotts. Again Arnotts, that was a kind of a cheapish shop so they used to go in there because the likes of the parents didn’t have a lot of money and you had to pay to see Santa. So you paid and queued and you’d see Santa and get a present. They used to have a Santa in Lewis’s but again it was a wee bit more up-market so it was a wee bit more expensive and then if you were really flush, you’d go into the Santa in Frasers but compared to the other shops it was really expensive. So what you’d normally do is rather than go in to see the Santa in Frasers, they used to put on fantastic displays for the toys in Frasers and it was all like kind of mechanical and you would have the mannequins moving, you would have the likes of toy trains going around. Some of them would go around and I couldn’t say ‘locomotive’ so I used to call it a puff puff train because you’d see a puff of smoke coming out from the front and some of them would have this puff of smoke coming out from the funnel. It was good to watch. Arnotts didn’t really put on Christmas displays so much for the toys, it was mainly the likes of Frasers and Lewis’s displays tended to be inside so if you didn’t go inside you didn’t really see anything at all. |  |
|  | *Did you notice the Christmas lights?* |  |
|  | Again that was a thing for the family to do. We used to get a bus to Charring Cross and then get on another bus that would take us all along Sauchiehall Street because that’s where the lights started from, from Charring Cross, along Sauchiehall Street, all the way Buchanan Street, along Argyle Street and I can’t remember because a lot of the roads have been changed to one way streets and it’s been such a long time. There used to be a bus that would take you around George Square and they would have all the Christmas decorations all around there, and at the centre of the square they used to have a large Christmas tree and I think it’s Lord Nelson on a large column and they used to have tinsel from the top all the way down to the bottom of that and there was fancy lights on lamp posts and the ribbony ones going across. It was good especially for me as a child because I was never allowed to go upstairs and that was the opportunity to go upstairs and I could go up to the front of the bus and see through the windows and it was good. It’s just a shame they don’t do it now with all the expenses and of course Sauchiehall Street is blocked off, but I mean again for a lot of children that was the highlight of the year going to see Santa and taking the bus along and all the way down to Argyle Street just to see the lights. |  |
|  | *Did you go to George Square for any other events?* |  |
|  | Not really. At that time George Square was totally different to what it is today. It was more a resting place for people during their lunchtime. They had grass sections which they took away, and around that there were wooden benches. People especially at lunchtime would go out there, have their lunches, read books, it was just a quiet place for people to go and sit and maybe reflect on the day. There was no the likes of these Christmas villages or anything the likes of that. That just never happened. It was mostly shops and that was it at Christmas time. You would go through the Argyle Arcade and up at Renfield Street there was another arcade and it would take you on to Cambridge Street and that was good for my parents because my Father’s parents lived on Cambridge Street. So again if we were going to visit them we would go through the arcade and just across the road was my Grandparents. |  |
|  | *Do you remember the shops on Victoria Road and Cathcart Road?* |  |
|  | Well the main ones, at the top you would have Hoey’s and in the lower floor they had a cafeteria. My Mum she practically knew everyone in Victoria Road and if we walked up Victoria Road, it would take you ages to get up one side and by that time she was gasping for a cup of tea and it would be into Hoey’s and the same sort of thing, she would have a cake with her cup of tea and I’d have a juice with a cake. On the other side of the road you had Queens Park Café which in the summertime was always mobbed. People would go in for their teas and coffees, but it became really busy because it was right next to the Queens Park entrance, people coming in for ice cream cones or people coming out of the park would go in for an ice cream cone. Further down the road on the right side there used to be an old fashioned butchers and the awning on the outside it used to have hooks with what maybe the farmers had caught, so you would maybe have hares, rabbits, chickens, all with their skin on them, so you would buy them and if you didn’t want the head, you would take it into the butcher and he would cut off the head but for plucking and de-skinning the animals, that was left for you to do. My Mum when she was a child she was born in the Gorbals but when she was about 7 or 9 years old the whole family the likes of that side would emigrate to New Zealand. This was around the 1920s. So over in New Zealand they had a wee small holding just outside of Auckland with different animals and sheep. It was kind of very secretive, they never said how long they stayed there for but for some reason they all came back again leaving just an Uncle there and he could play the bagpipes. Further down the road there was a Galbraiths and a fruit and vegetable shop and on the other side of the road there was a hat shop and a woman in there actually made the hats. She was a Milliner and her name was Millie, so everybody just referred to her as Millie the Milliner. She was an elderly woman, Jewish, always dressed in black and she had these chairs and they were painted in different colours, one set would be silver and the other set would be gold and she’d just take one of these chairs and sit in the middle looking out for customers to come into the shop. All the windows had the hats displayed and inside there were more hats displayed and in the middle there was space for people to try them on. My Mum worked part time and one of her jobs was cleaning this woman’s house, so she’d go in and clean her house and sometimes when my Mum was taking me up to primary school early in the morning I would go in with her and she’d say you can help out just do what I do, a quick dust like that. She mentioned this to Millie and sometimes when I was going down the road she would either come out the door or she would chap the window and beckon me to come in and she’d give a couple of halfpennies, farthings and pennies and stuff like that. When I got older I used to joke that I was working at 5 and I got paid and I’ve still got that money today. I’ve got this old battered cash box, don’t know what happened to the key, but there’s a section for paper money underneath and on the top there was a section for putting in the different coins. So every time I got them, I just put them in there. Everybody used to save for a rainy day so of course I was saving them and then we went on to decimalisation so I just held on to them and some of the coins went back to that time, some of the coins go back to the 1800s. I’ve got a will. I’ve got a nephew and he’s very very thrifty and knows I’ve got a warped sense of humour so I hope he sees the funny side when I pass, because he’s to get all the coins and he can do what he wants with them.Next door to the hat shop there was another fruit shop and they had a flower shop. I can remember them because most of the kids in the summer time were up in the park and they had rhubarb and a bag of sugar, that was our treat. I think it was about tuppence a bag because at that time Oliver the movie had come out and the song Tuppence a Bag and I don’t remember if the tuppence was just for the sugar because I always used to joke I got that for tuppence a bag.Directly across from that there was this fancy bakery, quite expensive and if you went downstairs the women would be dressed properly as your waitresses, the black dress, the white pinny, the white hat. So you’d go in thee and it would be china cups, I remember this because it was the only tea room where I’d actually been where they had a tablecloth. All the other ones would just put it on to the table. That’s why I always classed it as being fancy and then of course when they put out the likes of the tea, the tea came out in a teapot, it wasn’t a metal teapot, it was an actual teapot and they brought this three tiered metal frame which held two or three plates and you had sandwiches, cakes, all different things. That’s what made it sort of expensive. At that time there were no supermarkets so you went to the different shops, butchers, that sort of thing. It wasn’t so much Victoria Road, it was Wilsons the Butcher at the corner of Allison Street and Victoria Road and my Mum always went in there because they made the good steak pies whereas the other butchers would have the pastry underneath and the crust on top but this butcher they didn’t have the pastry underneath it was just the crust on top. We preferred it that way. It’s not something we had every week but now and again or for a special occasion or something like that. I can remember at the end of the week it was usually roast chicken because Mum could make anything she made chicken noodle soup and everybody loved, there was never anything left. Since she passed away I’ve tried everything to try and make chicken noodle soup to the exact taste as she would make it, but I just can’t do it. Further down from there it was round the corner from where we stayed in Calder Street was Stanley’s the fish and chip shop. That was one of the places that my Mum worked and I can always remember on the Friday night, that was it, it was always fish and chips. At that time they had to do everything, they had to peel the potatoes and it was only later on that they got a machine and it made a lot of noise rattling away, the potatoes would be getting peeled and shaken out into a bucket and from the bucket they had to slice the potatoes into chips and because my Mum didn’t have to peel the potatoes any more, she made up the cardboard cartons. Again sometimes I would just go in or I would just have to sit there because there was nobody in the house, s I would sit at the front but eventually I was allowed to go into the back and help to make up these cardboard cartons for the fish and chips. I’m not sure whether my Mum actually had to pay for the fish and chips on a Friday because people got paid, or if that was just a perk of the job.After Calder Street the only place of any notice was a shop called Babyland and it was like Mothercare, it used to have all the baby stuff but it had a section at the back that had toys, it had baby toys but also a section for older kids. You used to go in there for the likes of Action Man, Barbie and things like that, so I used to go in there and get my Action Man and every now and then when I’d get my pocket money I’d go in there and buy different outfits for Action Man and the shop also had a Parrot called Peter, so we knew it as Peter the Parrot. Every now and then you’d go in and say hello Peter, who’s a pretty boy, Peter, Peter, Peter, and just try and get it to speak back. It was for children, that was the excitement for the weekend, going into this shop and trying to get the parrot to talk. |  |
|  | *When you got older did you go into the High streets yourself?* |  |
|  | Yes. I was different because I would go in on my own. I’d say I was about 9. There wasn’t a lot of people wanting to wrap their kids up in bubble wrap and stuff. As kids we would just go into town. There was none of this having security guards watching over the youngsters. We would just go into shops, wander around. If we had pocket money Woolworths used to be on one of the corners opposite Lewis’s so if we had pocket money we’d go in there and they had pick ‘n’ mix and you’d go in there and fill up the bag thing then take it to the till and they weighed it and you’d find out you picked more than you should’ve.There was Tam Shepard and that was like a magnet for the kids to go in there, you would get the like of your stink bombs, the wee caps you’d throw and they’d bang, the wee jokey things like fangs, false noses, moustaches. Again it was something to go in and do, spend your pocket money on.  |  |
|  | *When you got older again did you go into town to the dancing or anything like that?* |  |
|  | Not until I started working, mostly it was round about when I was 17 or 18. My Father was a Chemist, he worked in Boots the Chemist, so it seemed to be a right of passage that all of us children, the siblings, our first job was working in Boots the Chemist. Boots the Chemist used to be called Boots’s corner because it was right on the corner of Argyle Street, Union Street and Jamaica Street. My Father, he worked in the basement and the chemist shop there was open 24 hours, so the first couple of years I didn’t know who he was because he worked night-shift because he would get more money that way, so he was coming in as I was going to school and then when I came home from school he’s up and getting ready to go back into work again. I’ve got an older brother, he started off in there, stayed for a couple of years and then found another job and my sister she worked in there then found another job and then my other sister she worked in there and moved to another job, then it was my turn. It was the same sort of thing, I only worked in there for about six month till I found another job in a shoe shop in Victoria Road. It’s longer there, it was called Saxone. I was only allowed to work there until I was 18 because my wages would go up and they wouldn’t be able to afford it so I was transferred to one of the branches in the city centre. So one of the Window Dressers in there she worked there with her boyfriend a Sales Assistant, so on the weekend we would all go into the dancing. This was before the likes of raves. Some of the dancing was practically all night at weekends. So on a Friday night you’d go home, get all dolled up, go into the town and go to the dancing and that would be it until the early hours of the morning. Once that had finished we’d go into the Café, have your breakfast, and go to work and when the work had finished you’d go home, get changed and repeat that process all the way through the weekend. Nowadays even just thinking about it tires me.  |  |
|  | *Which was your favourite dance hall?* |  |
|  | Tiffany’s, it wasn’t so much my favourite, it was just the one we always went to. In my parents’ time it was called The Locarno, then it became Tiffany’s. I’m not sure if it was when I was 18 in the Savoy Centre, they had a discoteque called The Savoy on the top floor where the Savoy Shopping Centre is and further down from that, it’s now burned down, next to where The Lord Aspire was, there was another section there and there was a discoteque on the top floor. It had different names at the time, The Garden, The Ivy. Then another one we used to go to and it changed its name, it used to be on Bath Street and it was in the basement, it was called Cleopatra’s but we called it Clatty Pat’s because it’s the only discoteque where I’ve been in where they had the wooden dance floor, but it was surrounded by sawdust. They didn’t have a carpet, well they had a carpet at the entrance but when you went into the actual building it was sawdust. I went in there with the Window Dresser and her boyfriend they were bikers and that’s where they went all the time and I found out why they had sawdust on the floor because the amount of fights that went on in that place was absolutely unbelievable. People talk about Cleapatra’s out in the West end and they talk about that being the original Clatty Pat’s and I say no it’s not, it was in Bath Street. I can remember where it was, there was sort of town houses and they got demolished and they built the NHS Headquarters there for the Glasgow area before they moved from there to further down the road just across the M8 Motorway.  |  |
|  | *What are your favourite memories of Glasgow’s past High streets?* |  |
|  | The shops were always good because you could always go in and just browse and if you found something you liked then of course you would just buy it and then especially for the night life, it was absolutely fantastic. If you didn’t like going clubbing and stuff, you could always go to the pictures but the last bus was always round about ten thirty, eleven o’clock and the pictures didn’t finish until ten or quarter past and if you were up in Sauchiehall Street it would be a mad dash to get down to St Enoch’s Square to get the last bus. At that time I don’t remember their being what they class a midnight service. The buses stopped and if you wanted to get home, you walked because that’s what a lot of us did when you were out clubbing. As I said you’d go clubbing, go to the Café and have your breakfast and then get home, I don’t remember any buses at that sort of time and we just walked it home. |  |
|  | *Do you have any aspirations for the future of Glasgow High streets?* |  |
|  | I would like the shops to be brought back for the independent retailers to come back, but the reason you won’t get these retailers coming back is the rates are far far too high. That was why when Lewis’s became Debenhams, why they closed because their rates were over a million pounds. Not many businesses can afford that, not even the big stores. Frasers nearly went into liquidation, in fact I think they did go into administration and their rates were well over a million pounds. The busy areas were always Sauchiehall Street, Buchanan Street and Argyle Street. The Council want Sauchiehall Street to be all student accommodation. If that becomes student accommodation there will be no businesses going up there because all the students will be interested in are pubs because that’s what happened all around Charring Cross, all the businesses left and they all ended up becoming pubs or wine bars as they want to call them, selling cheap booze for the students.They’re now talking about St Enoch Square, that’s going to be taken away and that’s going to be turned into the likes of a village and surprise surprise, again more student accommodation.If they keep on doing the city centre with nothing but student accommodation, even the people who want to live here, where are they going to live? There’s no affordable housing for anybody. They’re going to go further and further out and the further they go out there’s no incentives for them to back into the city centre. So they need to do some deal to get independents and people to come back in for business. Why don’t they convert some buildings into housing, people are screaming for housing.Then they want to muck up George Square. Originally there was nothing wrong with it, it attracted tourists and people who lived here to come to it. Now it’s become what we’ve nicknamed it as Red Square. Now they want to take it back to what it was originally but take away all the statues and move the statues because they’re tobacco lords and stuff like that, to move them where it would be very very hard to be found or people will just forget all about them. They want to get more like an American-themed type of park. I don’t know if that’s to make it more for the film crews coming in to make it more attractive to them, it’s like their ideas of parks. The worst thing is if they ever decide to take away the cenotaph there will be blood spilt in the streets because they can do this and do that but step one foot into the cenotaph, we’re after you. |  |
|  | Thank you so much David  |  |
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