

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/ LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

Swiss Embroidery, Corona – Porth, Creeds - Trefforest

Interviewee: VSE003 Maureen Jones

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Interviewer: Catrin Edwards for Woman's Archive of Wales/ ar
ran Archif Menywod Cymru

CE: Good morning.

MJ: Good morning Catrin.

CE: Could you tell me your date of birth please?

MJ: Maureen Jones, and I was born in May 16, 1940.

CE: So I'll ask you first about your background where were you born your father and mother and their occupations, and siblings your brothers and sisters.

00:40 MJ: I was born in Islington London during the war. I was baptised in the hospital and then we came back to my grandmother who lived in Penygraig and when I was just a few months old, with my brother and sister - I had an older brother and he's four years older than I am and my sister is two years older than I. And then we had a house down in Porth, and we also had some evacuees which came to living in the front room for a short while. I was very young so don't really remember how long for and all that. And then my parents divorced and my mother remarried and I had two more sisters. And then we all grew up together and we were quite happy there and I lived in Porth practically all my life until I had a short spell away and I was quite happy.

CE: I'll just ask you about education now then – primary and secondary?

02:02 MJ: I went to Porth infants and Porth juniors which was lovely and it's still going today and then when I was eleven I moved up to Cymmer secondary school and completed my education there. And then when I left school I had a job - my first job was in Swiss embroidery in Ynyshir. I didn't like it because I don't like sewing anyway. We all had to sit around in a circle filling in what the machine had left out and I hated it and someone said to me "you mustn't speak otherwise you'll get the sack!" so you couldn't stop me talking the rest of the week, and I thought I can't do any more time here, so at the

end of the first week I asked for my cards. That wasn't very good - my father did say "I do admire your pluck Maureen" but my mother wasn't very happy cos of course she wanted the money coming in. So then...

CE: Can I ask you how old you were?

03:21

MJ: 15. I left school officially on Friday I didn't go for two weeks before that but officially I left on Friday and I started work Swiss Embroidery on the Monday and that was my first week when I was 15 and then I had about a week and a half out of work and then my father asked the boss because we lived in the street where Welsh Hills Works Corona pop factory is and my father asked the boss could he get a job for me and I was fortunate enough to start then.

CE: Could I just ask you then, your father worked...

MJ: Stepfather..

CE: ..your stepfather worked for Corona?

04:07

MJ: No - my stepfather worked in the colliery but we used to see the bosses coming up and down the street all the people saw... when he was passing cos sometime my father worked... he was on shiftwork early mornings - well he was home by 3:30 and he went nights but not that often so he did see the manager and asked him, so that's how I got the job there.

CE: and you lived in the same street?

MJ: I lived in the same street and I used to get up at ten to eight in the mornings, clock in at 5 to 8 and start work at eight o'clock and it was really very good but on my first day I was so tired, I told you about this that I just went on the couch and I was just so tired cos I think we worked until 5 o'clock, we had to wear overalls, thick overalls and clogs because of all the glass, the broken glass on the floors and things... but it was a very happy environment... there was so much involved in that... do you want me to tell you about the actual process?

CE: Yes sure - I just wanted to ask you about the overalls and clogs - did the factory...?

5:44

MJ: They supplied them. We had 2 overalls and one pair of clogs until they wore out.

CE: Were they wooden clogs?

MJ: Yes yes yes because it was full protection really from all the glass you see. If we went out in our lunchtime - we used to go up to Hannah Street which is our main shopping street - they could hear us coming a mile away and my mother because I live right in the street she always knew because I used to go home for dinner we called it then - it's lunch now. I think we had either a half an hour or three quarters of an hour and then we used to go up to Hannah street and we'd call into Woolworth and get some pick and mix sweets and what have you and that was brilliant - it really nice but everybody knew we were from Corona because of the clogs you know, so that was really good but... you want the process now?

CE: Yes.

6:48

MJ: Well it started off first of all it was in the syrup room upstairs and the syrup used to come down on to the machine that put carbonated water in after the syrup went in. You had about 2 to 3 inches of syrup and then it was filled with carbonated water but the process was lady upstairs used to put the empty bottles down in the crate on the shoot and then we had a trough which.... you had to smell all the bottles before you put them in the trough which washed all these bottles with caustic soda...

CE: Why did you have to smell them?

MJ: Because people used to put paraffin and things like that and that shouldn't go through... and so we have to smell out there before you put them in. They'd come out of the other end, you'd put them on this little short conveyor, they'd go round and the one on the machine used to fill it and sometimes sometimes the bottles used to explode... but there were never any safety glasses in those days - there were no safety glasses so you have to be really careful. And then that you swing them - put the swing tops on, then you'd have to site them - lift two bottles up at a time upside down to make sure there were no floaters in it, and then they'd be labelled.

CE: What are floaters then?

08:21

MJ: Little bits of paper or anything that had got in it you know, something gets in... and then they'd be labelled, put their boxes and they'd be stacked. So that was the process of the pop. But then down in the squash room...

CE: Before we leave the pop can I just ask you where does the syrup come from then?

MJ: From upstairs in the syrup room and they used make it out of the sugar which we used to have in these hundred weight bags and we had to unload all this sugar and Alf used to have... what do you call it... on the other hoist so the one who delivered the sugar used to put it on a hoist and Alf would swing it in and us girls used to have a wheel barrow - wheel it to where the sugar was stacked and then two of us had to lift the sugar and stack it and... bearing in mind we were only 15 to 20-year-olds! We did have about two or three people that were older but not that not much older. I would say to us they seemed old, but they were going on about 40. And we have to stack all this sugar as I say and that was very very hard work - very hard. And then we had the squash room and the syrup came down from the syrup room, and then it would come into these... but the bottles didn't explode with that because there was no carbonated water and first of all we had to... I think there were six in a row of these to fill it and then you have to cork it and label it, wash the bottles and label it all by hand, stuck them in wooden crates of 12 bottles each and then we had to stack these wooden crates six high. We could manage about four by ourselves but then two of us had to stack them six high and that was quite hard work. And at the end of the day you'd have a hose pipe and you'd clean it all and get all the glass from the drains... the cuts we had was unbelievable but... I remember going to the doctors once I had glass under my nail and that was really painful. I was as white as a sheet going back to the factory.

CE: Did you have protective gloves or anything?

11:16

MJ: Nothing like that. The only one I remember having a protective glove was the one... we used to call it a Muck box, and where all the broken glass was, and every so often a lorry used to come and collect this broken glass and take it away somewhere and I think that was the only one... I think he was the only one with protective gloves. So... and then we had to load the lorry because they didn't have a depot with us so they had to take it to various places to the depots so us girls had to load.. it wasn't the pop... I don't think... I can't remember if we had to load the pop.. I don't think so.. it was mainly squash. So we used to have a chain - we'd put one crate on the floor and then we put one on the floor and we'd have a chain - there'd be about six of us.. seven.. to load the lorry, so that he could take it to a depot. And we used to have a good sing-song when we were doing that. It was really good all the songs from that era.

CE: Do you remember some of them?

MJ: Yes. Some enchanted evening, and we had Diana, I'm so young and you're so old that's really good.. we all.. we couldn't sing to save our lives but we had a good old try. That was really good that was worth yesterday, but ys we used to have beautiful sing songs down there, very very good. And then on our break times, we used to sit on these sugar sacks, so... there was an entrance to Thomas and Evans... Thomas and Evans Bakery... and we used to go through this little passageway and get some cakes - 1d each - 6 for 6d and sometimes they weren't broken and sometimes they were really good ones and we'd have our break sitting on there. When he had our break time in the morning

we'd take our own sandwich or whatever and there was a tea lady there - she used to make all our teas for us in the canteen and that was good, they used to have their dinner there as well and really they were very happy days.

It was one of the nicest best enjoyable jobs I had

CE: But it was really hard work?

MJ: It was very very hard considering we were so young. I can't see them doing that today.

CE: Hard physical work then?

MJ: It was physical - yes it was - the stacking and things like that. In the summer when the pop was very... people drinking more pop, the lorries would come and load up with the squash and the pop, to take out to the shops and to go round the houses, and coming back on the night they used to work very long hours - the lorry drivers... because in the street where earlier the lorry drivers used to be queueing to go back into the factory yard to be checked, counted all that kind of thing and Alf used to do that as well ... Alf was the same one that did the sugar - stacking the sugar, so I don't know what time they got home - round about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning and sometimes we worked on a Sunday because the demand for the pop was so great, so we go in on a Sunday and I never minded that.. never minded I don't think any of us minded.

CE: I wanted to ask you a few things - you talking about the hours - what where the hours you worked?

15:35

MJ: Eight o'clock and I believe it was five o'clock we finished - 8 until five and I think that it was either half an hour or three quarters we had... I'm thinking it was three quarters because otherwise we wouldn't have time to go up to Hannah street - you could never be back by one o'clock would you? I don't think so.

CE: That's a long day isn't it?

MJ: It is a long day.

CE: And then you said you worked on Sundays so was that overtime then?

MJ: That was overtime yes that was overtime.

CE: How did your families feel about you working on Sundays?

MJ: Oh they didn't mind. I mean it was bit extra in my pocket - you know I always gave my mother the same amount all the time it was always £2.

CE: And there was no kind of chapel issue there?

MJ: No - because by that time I'd finished going to chapel - I think I finished when I was about 14 going to chapel - the Baptist in Hannah Street so no there was no issue and we didn't work a full day - I don't think we worked a full day there. But we didn't mind it at all - the Corona pop was so popular, it was in great demand - you know that yourself you know, and the empty bottles came in very handy, very handy sometimes - you get the money back - in fact once I was so broke and my father wanted to teach me a lesson. He wouldn't lend me the money and he wouldn't lend my mother the money. My friend were sitting there - we were waiting to go to pictures and how humiliating is that - I had to resort to taking these pop bottles up to the top shop - that was awful that was really humiliating - I can laugh about it now but I didn't at the time.

CE: Was that your step dad?

MJ: Yes - but we always called him... because he was the only father I knew you see. As I said - I never remember my father coming down when we were evacuated back to Wales to Penygraig... never... I don't remember him at all. So he's the only dad I knew and he was a good father I mean I think it is very good father to take three of us on anyway and then we had my two sisters. So that was good - yes.

CE: Can I just ask you - so you were 15 when he went to the pop factory?

MJ: Yes I was 15.

CE: It was 1955?

MJ: 1955 and I finished in 1959.

CE: Can you describe the place to me - what it looked like, what it felt like, what it smelt like when you walked in?

MJ: Yes - it was a cold place because it had all these cobbled... little square cobbled stones, so you had to go up the steps for a start to go into the factory. The manager's office was on the right just at the top of the stairs - you'd go into the factory and you had the bottling all right in front of you and the trough was a little bit further up to your right.... in fact there were two troughs because when demand was so really we had to use the two bottling plants and the troughs to put the bottles in to wash the bottles.

CE: Can you explain what a trough is?

MJ: Yes - it's where you wash the bottles. You put the bottles in - I think it was six in a row - the upside down in there and then it would go through this wash and you'd have something coming out the other end and putting them on so it would go 'round to the bottling you see. The syrup would come in it would go 'round... syrup would be coming

through and then it would go on to the bottling and there were two of them there and then immediately to your left you had the stairs up to where the locker room and the canteen was, an where the lady used to put the empties down on the shoot to the trough so that the person could smell it, and further along there then was the.... soda siphons... only a little room... soda soda siphon... just one person working there and then you have to go up the stairs again and that's where the syrup room was where they made all the syrup obviously and they had the stock room where they kept the labels and all different things like that.

CE: Can I ask you about the syrup - were they flavoured, did they make the flavours in the factory?

20:42

MJ: Yes - they made the flavours all the different flavours you had... well there were so many different flavours pop you had lemonade, orangeade, you had Dandelion and Burdock, ginger beer, Limeade, and with the squash you had the orange, the lemon barley, blackcurrant, you had raspberry cordial and all these different flavours were made up in the squashroom and that that's where it all... and it all came down....

CE: And then they put the flavours in the syrup?

21:26

That's right yes it was all done upstairs that the flavours were done and we just bottled it downstairs. It was very interesting and then further up again from squash there were other stairs and it's still there now - we used to go up my friend and I on our break and you could over cos it was so high and they also had a crown on top of it but when Avanti took over they took the crown off - so that finished that. But in the winter.. (phone rings). Yes they had a crown right on top of it and I have a photograph I can show you afterwards so that you can understand then what I mean rather than me... cos I'm not very good at explaining..

CE: So what was the crown made out of do you think?

22:25

MJ: Well I would think it was iron or steel or something like that.

CE: How big do you think it was?

MJ: Oh I couldn't say.. it wasn't that big but it was.. it was always there for as long as I can remember you see but I don't know why they took it down.

CE: But it was on the bottles wasn't it the crown... on the label?

MJ: Yes, yes I don't know whether it was from Corona or what because it was called a different thing... Welsh Hills Pop I think it was called before and then they shortened the name to Corona. They had... what was it? they all put names into.. and it was brought out.. but actually it was the boss'... Corona, he chose that.

CE: Was it Corona when you went there?

23:18

MJ: Oh yes, yes I mean I'm going back many years before..

CE: Do you think it was something to do with the coronation?

MJ: It might well be. In the winter it was very, very cold and because the pop wasn't so much in demand, we had to have all these new bottles and swing them - put these swing tops on. I hated that, I really didn't like that because clogs were cold anyway and I used to freeze up there - your hands handling these cold bottles... but it had to be done you know, they used to come in these huge boxes.. it would all be up there.. but they were a nice crowd and we all got on very well... some of them got married from there... and I think, I was thinking over it, and I think they must have been at least 30, 30 people there.. at least.. I can't remember exactly. But then I left then in 1959 and I went away to live.

CE: Were you mainly women in the...?

24:35

MJ: We were all women except the men on the lorries of course, there was somebody there to do the machines should they break down and he had somebody under him learning... he was learning it as well. There were two men - one that used to... if the siphons broke or something he would mend the siphons and there was Alf who was in charge of all the deliveries, our sugar deliveries and our crisp deliveries... they used to have Smiths Crisps then with the little blue bag, and they used to be delivered to the shops as well or to the people in the houses I would think, but the I don't think they would want a tin of crisps would they you know.. and that was about it really the men.. that's the only men... and we had Mister Williams who's our formen and Mister Brown was the boss - so that's all.

CE: How did you feel about leaving school – were you happy to leave school?

25:48

I was happy to leave school because... I was very clever in the juniors – I was always top or second but for some reason I just went haywire when I went up to the school. I did pull myself together – I mean I went haywire for a while but I did pull myself together but I was pleased to leave... I really was pleased to leave.. and we were a poor family I have to

be honest we were quite poor... and it was just nice to have some money in my pocket.. I mean money had a lot to do with things in those days didn't it? I mean even today... I mean money is a big thing for people today isn't it? But yes it is quite good.

CE: Did you have yo have an interview for the job?

26:35

MJ: No – I just went and they said start at 8 o'clock on the Thursday morning... well I went about 10 minutes before.. and they said “Right..” Mister Williams showed me upstairs “right, get some overalls and ask someone to...” - no interviews in those days, no CV's in those days it was just straight in never had... never had an interview for Swiss Embroidery.. never, nothing.. you just started and that was it.. it was quite easy to get into work in those days you see because the industry was thriving then... but not now.

CE: And did you girls or young women, did you all do the same work?

27:30

MJ: We swapped around on the pop, but it was mainly the same girls that were in the squash room – mainly. If they wanted somebody on the pop if they were short you know, that was all right, so.. yeah we all mixed-and-matched and if somebody went on a break you know you'd have to fill in and things like that. We used to have our breaks in the toilet believe it or not... very cold... very uncomfortable.. overlooking the river because we're right by the river you see the building is right by the river so it's very very cold... and then we'd go for our dinner into the canteen – that was it.

CE: So what was the canteen like then?

28:18

MJ: The canteen? – basic, very basic - I mean Winnie made the teas for us all so we'd go up and we'd have our break there..

CE: Did they make food there – I know you bought some pies and stuff like that, but did they make food in the..?

MJ: No – not that I can recall no they just took sandwiches and things like that.

CE: So it was more of a place to sit and have a cup of tea?

MJ: Just sit and have a cup of tea with just some tables – about 6 on a table something like that.... but it was just a small square really, round about that big. No it wasn't very big at all.

CE: What were your wages like when you started?

29:09

MJ: My first wage was £2-18 - 6 and I thought it was wonderful. I gave my mother two pounds for my board and I had 18/6 to.. for all my entertainment, my social life and my clothes... I used to go to the cheapest shops for my clothes believe it or not.. but from time to time my mother did used to have.... it was a premium cheque - a £10 premium cheque... and all you had to pay in those days was 10 shillings interest. So from time to time she had that and you could buy a very nice coat for £10 then... that type of thing... we took it in turns... she didn't do it very often but occasionally she did because money was tight and my mother never went out to work... they didn't go out to work in those days only when we got older... left school really... when we were all old enough to look after ourselves... my mother went out to work then.

CE: Did she go out to work when she was a younger woman?

30:23

MJ: Before she got married she was in service up in London and I believe that's why... cos my brother and sister were born up in London. (phone rings)

CE: Did you have a pay rise at all when you were there?

MJ: Yes we did have a pay rise but I honestly can't remember how much it was. I don't think it was much... it didn't go up by very much... it was a lot to us I suppose but I honestly can't remember.

CE: Do you remember how much you earned when you left because that was 4 years wasn't it?

MJ: Oh when I left yes... it must have been about £4 or £5 easily. I think it was anyway.

CE: How did it feel to you... for the first time you had your own money?

31:25

MJ: It was lovely - it really was nice I've got to say. I mean my father, every Friday he'd give us pocket money – sixpence... old money – sixpence... but we thought that was brilliant anyway that was really really good and I mean we looked forward to that on a Friday. But the wages weren't that brilliant for my father - I mean they never discussed money with us but I know they... we weren't very well off – put it that way. Cos i had lots of... when I was younger before I went out to work we had lots of hand-me-downs and things like that.

CE: You said you spent your money on clothes when you could afford it and going out – so can I ask you about the social life then..

32:17

MJ: Well it was pictures mainly – we used to go to pictures, sometimes we went down to the YMCA which was belonging to Corona for some reason, cos I do remember it being opened while I was there and we had to go and make down some of us girls from the factory, had to go down and make sandwiches so... for the opening. So... I think I ate more than I buttered.. but I do remember that and the YMCA was.. it was very very good place to go because they had a lot of things going on in there - they had a television room, they even had a chapel there, they had the television room, they had billiards or snooker as they call it today, they had table tennis, we used to go to netball there, they had showers there, so we used to use that quite a lot. We made use of that, but the main thing – we used to go to pictures and dancing – we used to go dancing every week and that was lovely - I thoroughly enjoyed that... we all did. And there was a live band in those days it wasn't just you know...

CE: So where did you go dancing?

33:40

MJ: To the Rink - to the Rink mainly – that's in Porth. Sometimes we'd go to up to the library in Llwynypia and we used to go to Judges' Hall in Tonypany - they were the three main ones but the Rink was the favourite - that was the best - we always thought it was the best anyway – it was lovely.

CE: And you said there was a live band – do you remember who they were?

MJ: No I don't.. and there was an MC as well and he would say... and it was excellent that was.. I really enjoyed.. there was no drink - there was no drinking.. we used to have soft drinks... but there were no drink -alcohol at all, so you didn't have the problems that you get these days.

CE: What were the soft drinks do you remember?

MJ: Yes it was.. it was.. Tango - they were little bottles – Tango which we used to make in the pop factory - they were just a little bottles they were and that was the lovely cos it was very syrpy, very sweet and very bad for your teeth but it was lovely, really nice. So it's mainly little drinks like that are or you could have grapefruit or stuff like that you know. I don't ever remember there being crisps cos you really eat crisps when you're dancing can you? So that was fine... but the MC and the band were very good.. they weren't young men in the band - they were.. I mean when you're young you think people over 30 are ancient don't you?

CE: What kind of music was it?

MJ: Oh - modern ballroom dancing - it was modern uou know.. lovely.. the waltzes, quick step and that type of thing.

CE: Any kind of big band stuff?

MJ: Yes yes it was all a lovely music - everything that you could dance to every tune that you could dance to fitted in with the steps - it was really very good. And they used to have it lovely on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve. It was really nice I have to say.

CE: Where did you used to go shopping for clothes?

MJ: Very rare we went to Cardiff - very very rare. But it was in Hannah Street because in Hannah Street we had lots of lovely clothes shops then in those days - really nice. They had Nanette's, there was Iris', there was one up the top where they had cheap clothes that were very nice and I used to get a lot from there because they were cheap and 18/6d didn't go far in those days - not to have decent clothes anyway. But they had Monds - that was nice that was a Jewish company in Monds and it was a very big store. And they always had... the owner was a lovely man but his wife, she always stood by the entrance to the door making sure you didn't... you know.. security I would say, she used to be standing by the door making sure... watching everything you went out with.. but that was a very nice store - and there was Pontypridd as well which is 3 miles down from Porth and they had some lovely shops there - really really nice shops. They had Richards and they had Kendalls - they had so many different, so many different shops you could pick and choose... and Marks & Spencer of course - they were there.

CE: Did you have any perks for working in the factory - were you given discount pop or stuff like that?

37:54

MJ: You could drink what you wanted there more or less. What you used to do, you'd have a bottle perhaps and you'd started it and then you say well "that's mine" but mainly you could drink what you wanted.

CE: But not to take it home?

MJ: Oh no - nobody ever did - I suppose they had to much of it so they never wanted to so there were no perks whatsoever. We did have a nice.. Bindles in Barry.. the dance once a year.

CE: Was this now - was it arranged by...?

MJ: The pop factory - yes.

CE: Could you tell me about that then?

MJ: Oh it was lovely – we used to have a but to take us to Bindles in Barry and it was an annual thing – I can't remember if it was a meal or not – I don't think it was a meal.. it was just dancing and that was a lovely and we all looked forward to that. But I think as I told you on the telephone, it would always seem to be that they would bottle blackcurrant squash on the day of Bindles dance and you'd get it all under your nails and what have you and what we used to do, we'd go up to the trough and we'd wash our hands in caustic soda to get it off. Oh! - you wouldn't be in there long... cos.. caustic soda... but.. and they'd always seem to do that, every year, blackcurrant squash... I don't think he did it on purpose, it's just that they always used to run out on that day... but that was very enjoyable and anybody could come really.. you could invite somebody if you wanted to... it wasn't just for Corona... anybody could go.

CE: So did they pay for you then?

39:44

MJ: Oh yes. That was all free and the bus was free – picked us up and brought us home, which was very nice – we did enjoy it.

CE: What time of year?

MJ: I believe it was in the summer.

CE: Oh summer?

MJ: I believe it was if I remember rightly. And the bus went from the street where the factory was you know, so I was all right you see - out of the door and into the bus and back. It really very good, it served me very well I've got to say.

CE: I suppose Barry was more lively in the summer?

40:21

MJ: Yes I don't remember going there in the winter I have to say I can't remember rightly if I'm honest with you Catrin.

CE: ..and that was on Barry Island wasn't it?

MJ: That was on Barry Island, yes ye.

CE: Did you have any trade unions in the factory?

MJ: Yes, we had a union in the factory and we... I think it cost us either.. seven pence on nine pence a week something like that to belong because I've always been the union

where ever I've been and yes... he used to collect... Stan.. he used to collect the money every Friday so we were all right.

CE: Do you remember which union it was?

MJ: No I don't. I think when you're 15 you don't take much notice of things like that.

CE: But you joined it. Did you have to join the union?

MJ: No – it was up to you really but iI always joined it.

CE: So why do you think you always joined?

MJ: I think they told you what it was about but they didn't pressure you to join so we just paid up and that was it.

CE: Where there any disputes or strikes - do you remember anything like that?

MJ: Nothing like that.. nothing.. no dispute... anything at all.. nothing.

CE: Do you think that the workers were fairly treated on the whole?

MJ: Yes oh yes they were. I mean our forman was... he was a good forman but he was a fair foreman. He didn't pick ond anybody in particular, I dont think so anyway - not to my knowledge. It was a fair factory, very fair.

CE: And you felt the bosses were fair as well?

MJ: Oh yes, yes they were fair.

CE: Did you see them at all or often?

MJ: Yes, well the boss Mister Brown was in the office all the time and the foreman was on the shop floor all the time.

CE: So Mr Brown was the big boss of the factory?

MJ: Yes -I believe so that's the only boss I know really. They also – I don't know whether you knew this - but Thomas and Evans - they owned the bakery which was next door.. they also owned the tea factory which was opposite and they also had a garage in the yard as well to do the cars and lorries whatever went wrong - they had a garage... it was a very very big concern... and they had an office, the engineer's office which was just opposite our house. Cos I do remember when the lady that normally cleaned there - she was on holiday - and I went in there a couple of times to do the cleaning as well, so... that was what to do with the office work you know the paperwork for the factory.

CE: I was asking about Mr Brown.. he wasn't an owner was he?

MJ: He wasn't an owner no, he was just a boss.

CE: Did you see the owners at all then?

MJ: No – not to my knowledge.

CE: Do you think the work was dangerous in any way?

44:10

MJ: With the bottles exploding, yes - because they were filled with this carbonated water, when they filled the pop bottles up, and when they did explode you had to be very careful. But nowadays you have the safety glasses.. well we never had safety glasses in those days, so I can't think why they never did... but I think these things... there's so much on health and safety whereas then it wasn't - there wasn't health and safety in those days. So... I mean you had to be careful, your picking the glass up and what have you, because we had to wash it down every... everyday as I say and sweep the glass, broken glass up and things like that.

CE: And you had glass under your nail once?

MJ: I did have glass under my nail...

CE: What were the consequences of that? Was there any kind of compensation?

MJ: No they just gave me time off to go to the doctors – he cut my nail and that was it – I was back in work. There was nothing.. nothing like that no compensation or anything, I mean.. you fall down, you cut yourself.. you didn't pursue any compensation or anything in those days... I mean you wouldn't have thought of it. you wouldn't have. I mean if it had been really bad you would have gone up to the boss and said “Well look, I've done this - what are you going to do about it?” but no - I don't think anybody have that type of injury anyway... no type of injury.... and I don't ever remember anybody complaining about a bad back after handling all those heavy boxes.. wooden crates.. I don't ever remember that at all.

CE: I suppose you were all young and healthy..

46:03

MJ: young and healthy.. robust..!

CE: Can you remember any rules and regulations that you had to stick to?

MJ: No.

CE: You said the factory was very cold – was it heated at all?

MJ: No – not to my knowledge.

CE: It wasn't.. that wasn't an issue then? It wasn't an issue the union picked up on?

MJ: No nothing like that. I don't remember seeing any heaters there whatsoever – they may have had one in the canteen.. they may have. It was just one of those things you accepted. You didn't say “look I want a heater in here or whatever - you just accepted what it was. I don't remember any heating - I honestly don't - not even when we were putting new swings on the bottles. Horrible, horrible...

CE: Do you think you suffered any long-term affects health effects from working there?

MJ: No – none at all.

CE: Did you have an annual holiday or holiday allowance with pay?

47:44

MJ: Yes yes we had two weeks holiday a year - Christmas obviously... we worked on Christmas Eve.. we had to work on Christmas Eve I know that.. we finished a bit earlier, but we had to work on Christmas Eve and I know we had two weeks holiday every year and it was paid for... so that was good.

CE: Was it the miners' holiday... was it at the same time?

MJ: The factory never closed down - you just had... you know different times - everybody had different times so...

CE; Was that something you chose or was it something you were allocated?

MJ: I think I must have chosen it – that's right. And I do remember going in... when my sister was getting married on the Easter.. in the March, and I went in and I asked “Can I have my holidays?” cos I wanted to go up to my sister's wedding, he said “What holidays? You Haven't got any holidays until the annual leave!” - oh right then.. I was very hot headed in those days, so I went back in and I asked for my cards – I gave my notice in! How stupid is that? And I went up to my sister's wedding in St Albans and I didn't come back. I just left a job like that because he wouldn't give me leave!

CE: That's why you left?

MJ: That's why I left! I was hot headed in those days – very hot headed. I went up to my sister's wedding, she got me a job in the Bellito's stocking factory – I don't know whether you've heard of Bellito's stocking factory – it was a big, big firm in St Alban's Hertfordshire, and it was a good, good job, it was a marvellous job, well paid job – can't remember how much but it was well paid and I bought a bike and I used to go to work on the bike rather than catch two buses.

CE: So you left the factory, left home just like that?!

MJ: Just like that! Hotheaded.. never thought it out... never thought it out...

CE: Were you sorry you'd left?

MJ: No I wasn't. I mean, the stocking factory - that was a brilliant job - that was tiring because we worked longer hours there.. we worked until about six o'clock I believe... and I came back.. I came back in the summer holidays... then I went back, then I came home on the Christmas and I thought I was so homesick I thought I'm not going back... and I stayed home, and then got some more jobs.

CE: just to finish with the pop factory... were you bored at all there?

MJ: I was never bored. It was just the fact that he wouldn't let me have sort of a week of my holiday to go up to my sister's wedding cos she'd left when she was 17, and... never thought it through and I thought if you won't give me time off I'm finishing – how silly is that?

CE: So if it hadn't been for that you would have stayed?

MJ: I would have stayed. But I wasn't sorry to leave.. I mean I loved the job, but I couldn't say I cried over it or anything like that. My mother was a bit upset that I was going up there, but my sister had gone up there so I thought I'll go up there. I didn't think things out in those days... I was very... shame really, but there you go you can't turn the clock back can you?

CE: Are you in contact with anybody you worked with? – In the pop factory I mean?

51:58

MJ: Yes I do phone somebody from time to time – yes I do keep in touch. It's nice to keep in touch but... I think everybody was happy there... everybody was happy... a lot of them I don't see... a lot of them I do see and I still speak to when I'm out – that type of thing – very enjoyable, very happy.

CE; So you came back and went to work in Creeds?

52:38

MJ: Yes I worked in Creeds.

CE: Could you tell me a little bit about that then?

MJ: Yes I was in the assembly and I was doing various things in the factory - they had a machine shop and I was in there until I had my first son.

CE: First of all, could you tell me what Creeds used to make?

MJ: Yes they used to make capstans, and in the assembly you made all the different parts of these capstans and it was good there because you were on piecework so the more you did, the more you earned – you had the bonus - and that was quite good, but there was always a terrible smell in that factory, you know, because the machines in the machine shop and all the different things like that.

CE: How old were you when you worked there?

MJ: When I was there.. 21 - and I was there until I was 23.

CE: Can you remember how much money you earned – you said the wages were quite good?

53:53

MJ: It wasn't that much – I think it was about £9 or £10 there – that.. that's all it was there. That used to be a thriving factory Creeds, but they moved it... I think they... oh they closed down.. they closed down, cos my husband was there for 10 years and he had redundancy cos it closed down but he was in the machine shop and I was in the assembly so.. and Treforest was a big industrial estate...

CE: I was going to ask.. that was in Treforest?

MJ: In Treforest Industrial Estate – they had so many factories there and you had to run out every night when you finished to get the bus home and sometimes because the buses and the traffic was so bad, I seen us get home at 7, because we lived with my parents for a while til we had our own home, and you'd finish at 5 get home at 7 cos the traffic was so bad.

CE: Was that public transport?

MJ: On public transport - it was on the buses we went mostly but they had the special buses going to various places that's what it was... I mean you had to pay on the buses normal bus fare. But that's what it was and they were all lined up all going to various places so you'd run out and try and get on whatever before anybody else came on you see? You had to clock in and you had to clock out there... they were all queuing up to

clock out – I can't say I enjoyed that very much.. I can't say I enjoyed it there but if you want the money you have to do these things.

CE: What kind of workforce was there – were you mainly women...?

MJ: No – that was a mixture...

CE: About 50-50 or..?

MJ: Yes – I would say so, I would say so.

CE: With a strict demarcation again probably was it?

MJ: Yes, yes - my husband had a job first and then I went down there and then I had the... it wasn't an interview as such... you know I just said that my husbands working there and I'd like a job and what have you and I got in.. so... naming names... but that was fine that was fine. But I didn't care that much for it because the smell used to turn me sometimes you know.. the oil and what have you...

CE: The smell of oil...

MJ: Horrible... and it used to be so hot in the summer they used to paint the roof with green paint and then in the winter it was cold..

CE: So you were under glass were you?

MJ: Under glass yes – glass roof it was awful, awful. But that's about it really in Creeds you know – you did your various jobs to the best of your ability and that was it.

CE: Did you have an uniform and things there?

57:11

MJ: No – you wore your own uniform... yes we did I beg your pardon – it was blue, - blue nylon overalls... we had thick green cotton ones in the pop factory, but blue nylon ones there – that was it.

CE: Looking back now, how do you feel about the time you spent working – especially in the pop factory?

MJ: I enjoyed my time – I did enjoy my time then. I was never bored just cold in the winter but I was never bored. It was always nice, we all got on well and it was just interesting.. interesting.. I loved it I really did, everybody was nice – smashing it was, couldn't fault it really. Sometimes I think oh yes it would be nice... but the only thing is on the trough – I couldn't keep up with the trough - feeding it - I couldn't keep up with that – not at all - oh it used to go to the other end of empty practically - I just couldn't

because you had to do two at a time, smelling these bottles trying to put them in and the swings would get in the way these little things... I was no good at that part – I really wasn't. I do admit my failures I've got to say - and it was surprising the amount of people that used to put paraffin and things like that in the bottles, so they had to be destroyed then, they'd go in the muck box as we called it you see, so there you are.

CE: Well thank you very much Maureen.

MJ: Well I hope it's been of use to you – I hope I haven't disappointed you.

59:21

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD CYFWELIAD