

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI

Attwood and Sawyer

Interviewee: VSE005 Ann Owen
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Interviewer: Catrin Edwards on behalf of the Women's Archive of
Wales / Archif Menywod Cymru

Could you tell me your name and date of birth please.

Miss Ann Owen, 2nd May 1946.

Great. Could you tell us a little about your background? Where you were born, your father, your mother, what they did and any siblings you have and their occupations.

I lived in, behind Vinton Terrace. There was an old Jubilee club and the house was next door and I lived in the bottom of the garden in a, called a cabin, but it was actually a garage, until I was two. Then I moved when I was two years old and I had a brother, and I have a sister. My brother was born here and my sister is 6 years older than I am. I had a father who was working for W E Burgess, contracting electrical work, and he took on the business when the gentleman retired. My mother had to look after three of us and she did, like, cleaning or anything that was needed so that she could get extra money. Like at Christmas time she'd go to the farm and pluck the turkeys and we'd have a turkey from there.

Did your mother work at all?

She did the odd jobs for anybody, for cleaning. She'd alter trousers for people, she actually didn't have a proper job until we grew up, but she was always cleaning or,

there's a place called Shortlands and she used to look after the house there and go over at 7 o'clock to do high tea. She did work in the Golden Nugget when we were older as a, behind the counter, giving money and change, and she also worked in the little school we have in Meadow Lane where my daughter was going when she was 10 months old, she would take her to school because she couldn't leave her at home as I was not able to stay at home, I had to work. Basically my mother could do whatever she had to do.

You said you were born in Jubilee Terrace. Is that in Porthcawl?

Yes, there's the Jubilee Club which was a working men's club and my grandmother had a house at the side and at the back was, you could see the club, and at the back was this garage and my mother had my sister, then she had me, so we had to find a place to live.

But that was in Porthcawl, yes?

Yes. It's right behind New Road and Poplar Road. It think it's called Poplar Road, because we've got three poplars. It's near Vinton Terrace.

03:32

Right. That's great. So, can you tell me something about your education, about primary and secondary school. Where did you go to primary school first?

I was in plaster going to New Road school in New Road. I was there till I was old enough to go up to the comp in Porthcawl and I stayed there until I was fifteen.

You said in plaster?

I had both legs in plaster because when I was born I had a deformity of one of my feet. And they had to straighten my legs as well. But I had to go to school with a plaster on. And I had my father's shoes on, and then when I was able to, I had to wear the shoes on the wrong feet for at least 5 years, but I'd go as far as the lane and take them off and put them on the right way because the kids would tease you.

Did it improve?

Oh yes, but I ended up with rheumatoid. I think I had it as a baby. They didn't diagnose it see, they took too long to give me a blood test and that didn't happen until 1997.

Oh, long time, yes. Ok, so, how old were you when you left school?

I was fifteen.

And did you want leave when you were fifteen?

The choice was not available for anything. My education wasn't that good. I had to, I wanted to go to Woolworths to work, so my birthday was May 2nd and I got my aunty and my family, because they were working there, to see if they could help me work on the sweet counter, because that was all I wanted to do, was work on the sweet counter. So they took me in as a Saturday girl, until, it was, July 15th, when I was able to have a full time job there.

So how did you feel about leaving school, was it okay?

Yes, I felt great, yes. I wanted to work. Earn some money.

05:54

So you worked in Woolworths for a while, and then tell me about going, you know, where you went to work then.

I had a baby and I didn't want to go back to Woolworths. I found it difficult with the dole, in those days it was the dole in Bridgend, and they, I was a fortnight without no money, and they wouldn't help me, that's what they said, and I went to Attwood and Sawyers because I knew my friends were over there, they tried to get me to work there for some years. I asked Mr Doug Attwood and he interviewed me and he said, there isn't any jobs and we don't like taking on people who have young children, and what would you do with your daughter, and I said my mum would take her and look after her. I came home and I was devastated. I had a letter and I also had a giro from the dole office which was £6, and the letter asked me for an interview. I rang him up and asked him and he said, would you come in on Monday. I've already had an interview, and he said, no, would you come in at 9 o'clock. I went over at 9 o'clock and he said there's a job as a solderer, would you be interested? I said, I've no idea but I'm willing to have a go and he said, right, he took me through, and my mother was here at 11 o'clock when the social service or whatever they were, come to see if they could help me. She said, I think you've found that you're too late as she hasn't arrived home and I think she's got the job. And I came home dinnertime and I said Mum, I had no money to ring you to tell you that I had the job.

How did you feel about that?

Wonderful. It was a struggle to do the job but I did it.

So did they train you then to...

Yes, you had to do a whole year, and if you weren't any good, you were out. In those days, you were given a bit more chance, but as the years passed on you didn't get that much chance, you only had 6 weeks and you were out.

Tell me then, the company was called....

Attwood & Sawyers.

And what did they do? What did they make?

Oh, they made jewellery. They did do 3 types, one was silver, one was costume, and you would call the other one a throwaway jeweller. But we kept the throwaway jeweller, they called it.

So, you got trained to solder. Can you explain to us, to me now, what the job entailed?

Keylinks, cutting, measuring, and then I had an iron that I had to pick up little bits of solder with some plucks to make all the details that I had to join together.

09:16

Right. What does keylinks mean?

Oh, they're metal, brass and they have two prongs with a little curl in it and you had to link them together.

What was that for?

To link all the metal pieces together, and we had tongue and boxes which were joined at the back of the necklace to stop the necklace falling off your neck.

Right, and what did you used to have to cut then?

Chains, all different sizes of chains and all different lengths. They all varied.

Right. So, what did you have to solder together?

All little bits of metal. I would do a bird, and it would have two wings, a tail and a head and I had to make the body. I had to form a body to make the bird.

And did you follow a.....

No, I was shown when I first went there. You, if I was teaching you I would teach you all the bits and bobs before you went onto production.

So when you did the production, were they different designs and things?

There was hundreds of different things. Some were beautiful. I bought some of them. As I said, I'd done the Welsh feathers and the Lady Diana ring and they were beautiful things.

So tell me about the Welsh feathers then.

They were the three feathers. They would come in two pieces. I would solder a little blob with a crown, I believe we got feathers and a crown that were joined together, and then I would put a hook and a hinge for a pin to go on so it would be a brooch, and then it would go to other sections then to be cleaned up or plated whatever. Stones.

And so, can you explain the plated to me? What do you mean?

There's a room that has lots of chemicals and they would do brass, copper, silver and gold, and there was, I think it was either 22% pure gold and you had a jig with all that I would produce or we would produce, put on wire so they were all hanging up and then they'd go into this room and they would go into each tank each time, and then when they came out it was all plated either silver or gold.

Gold plated and silver plated?

And that room wasn't there when I was there because we used to send it out, so they had enough money to bring the plating into the factory.

12:35

And you said you made these Lady Diana earrings. What were those then?

I can't remember the name of those, but she had them before she was engaged. No, sorry, just after she was engaged she was wearing them. But we also did Elizabeth Taylor with the **Bellina (0:12:57)** necklace and earrings, and we also had one that we saw on the Pink Panther which was called an **Amori (13:06)** necklace. I remember those.

And were those originals?

Oh yes.

So the Elizabeth Taylor and the Pink Panther were originals that you made in the factory?

Yes, because all the artistes were either up in London or whatever and they were buying our produce. They were buying them.

But the Lady Di earrings?

I think they were copied. I wouldn't like to say they were ours but I was told they were ours. But the Lady Diana ring I believe that was a copy we did. We had permission to do that, like the Welsh feathers, we had that permission, yes.

So, how many, was this factory, was it mainly women or was it women and men and what was the kind of different jobs they did?

Well there was all women in the offices except for the sales rep and the boss. Two bosses, they were men. In the next section was the designer which was two women and two men. In the mouldings department was mostly men, not many women were doing that job. Then there was casting, they were all women and there was about 8 to 10 of them. There was a cleaning section that you'd clean like a potato with this surgical knife kind of thing and you had to be very careful. There was a couple for setting out how many items on each tray because each card had to have a tray of the item.

What do you mean by a card?

We had cards from the people who ordered stuff. We'd have an order and then they'd make the cards for what they want and then the woman or women would put each amount of articles on each tray with the card. Then they would come to soldering where we would put them all together. Then we had a polishing section. There was actually 25 of us on soldering at one time. When I started it was only 7. Then the polishers was 16 polishers. They would polish all the metal to make it shiny and get all the marks that we were making. They had to make sure there was no holes and that it was perfect. Then they put it into a section where there were inspectors and wirers were the ones who put them on jigs for the plating room to put them in the plating room which were men, two men. There was a room where I had to go into which had a big huge machine called a degreaser and so did the polishers go in there, and they were all women, and I would have to use a special chemical to get all the flux off, make sure they were dry to go into each department. Then there was a burnishing room, there was only two men, but sometimes women went in there. There was another room where there was full of young 16 year olds doing all the stone pasting, and upstairs was women for packing and the canteen were two women.

16:58

So how many women worked there do you think?

Well, there was over 300 when we did the big Saudi order. That was massive. It was so big that I had to bring some of the stuff home without them knowing because we couldn't cope with the order. There was, when that went bust, Saudi, because we had some kind of war going on or something, oil, I don't remember what it was, there was some involvement in Saudi.

When was that? What year was it?

It must have been the 70s, I don't know if it was in the 80s, I don't really remember. I do know that one of our sales reps was in prison over there because he was caught, it wasn't his fault, but he was supposed to be out there working and he was taken in, but they got him out. It wasn't a massive problem but they did arrest him.

So you had a lot of people working there when you had this big order from the Saudis, the Saudis. But then tell me what happened afterwards when that went.

A lot of redundancies but most of them were not there long enough to get any redundancy at all because we employed them like 2 years before and they'd missed it out. We went right down. I was in a section where there was 25 of us and we went back down to 7 or 8 of us, and that's how bad it was.

And you were telling me now as well that in the 70s, there were power cuts in the 70s, the miners' strike I believe, it's that the period you are talking about. So tell me what happened in the factory then.

The factory was in chaos because we had to have the power and the only way that the Attwoods could help get the work out, and it was desperate to get it out otherwise we didn't get no wages, was to work when the power was on, which was a couple of hours in the day, and then if it was on at night we had to go back in at night.

Would that be in the middle of the night sometimes?

Whenever the power was back on.

They used to ring you up?

No, we knew because at home the power would be on and he would say, when it's on will you come back?

19:44

Of course, yes. Right, so did your job change at all during the time you were there?

Yes, I was there first day and my production was good. After that the supervisor started being moved around, and the one I had was always ill or family problems and they would ask me to run the section and look after the girls. And I was doing that quite a lot. I then had a chance to be an assistant helper supervisor and how I had that was through my perseverance then, because somebody came in the factory and they had a job that I was doing for the last maybe 10 or 12 years and not got paid for it, and they didn't think that was fair. I was with the union. I had to get out because they didn't help me in the situations that did arise, and I went straight to the production manager, I believe they call them, and I told him this is not fair, I didn't get the money all these years and he got it for me. But as soon as they got rid of him my money was dropped. They stopped it.

You said you were with the union?

Yes.

Which union was that?

Would it be GM, general... it's the same as the miners I think it is. General, municipal?

Oh, GMB?

I think that's what it was, it was one of those.

Yes, general, municipal, boilermakers union.

Yes.

GMB. So you said you were with the union but they didn't help you did they?

No. And I still had to do my 100% production because you were assessed on how much, you had to keep your level at a certain level and I also had to train hundreds of solderers but I know I trained 25 to stay there. I had to train them, because I was the one that could teach them. Others didn't stay or they weren't able to teach but I loved that bit, the teaching.

So when you were with the union, was there any disputes and things?

Oh there was a few. I have 12 ½% lead in me and the others only had 10 but there was issues on wages now and again but that was really the only issue. There was one who was a bit of a I would call a bully, who was well with the union and she did a lot of fighting but not always for the right purposes, for other people just for her benefit sometimes. I felt that way.

23:03

You said you had 12 ½%?

Percent lead in me.

What do you mean by that?

Well, apparently you can have 25% and you were in trouble with this lead. You see I worked with lead, I worked with flux which damaged some of my hand by having little white blisters on them, and I showed the nurse at the time and she said, oh, there's nothing wrong with you, and I had to go my doctors because it was very painful and it was flux that was not diluted. It was strong flux. It didn't damage my hand it was just very painful, and I was working with it, it seemed to be more than the others.

So did you, was there lead in the solder then?

We were working with lead and we were working with asbestos, blue asbestos, on my desk on the jig that I had to use. The desk was, they made everything in that factory, desks, whatever and they put asbestos on the desks, and I had a dryer which was supposed to dry the jewellery with these luminous, light, what do you call them? Those long tubes.

Yes, strip lighting.

Yes, and they made the unit out of asbestos so it was very dangerous what we were using, and suddenly they ripped it all out without telling us.

So you weren't aware at the time then?

Oh no, no. None of us knew what we were working with. We know that it was something on the desk, but I wasn't aware that it was dangerous.

What about the lead, were you aware of?

No, no. Because it was the metal we had to use.

So you didn't take any of this to the union?

No.

What about the conditions in the factory apart from that? Like heat and cold and stuff?

We had an extractor fan, massive, that took all the air out and at the time of the winter, they would reverse it, so I didn't understand why they could take out all the dust and stuff, and then reverse the machine. That didn't sound right to me, and also we had big, huge windows. It was like a glasshouse on one side of the factory because you could see the allotments over the fence.

25:56

So what effect did that have?

I really don't know. I know some of them had problems with their chest which I did, because I was in the room where the degreaser was and it went on fire several times. What happens is I could see some smoke, and it was going on fire inside. The microchips or whatever they are, inside. And I rush out and tell them and they close it down and there was one time when they didn't put enough stuff into the machine, that it was all fumes, and of course I went ill through it, and I didn't want to go back in there, and they were pushing me back in there to keep working in there. My chest was really bad after that.

What did this machine do?

It was a degreaser machine.

What does that mean?

When you've polished the work you had to put it into the basket into the liquid and the liquid was sort of, like smoke, it would take all the polishing off, excess polishing and whatever. And the same with the flux and the soldering we were doing.

What exactly is flux?

Flux is to make a metal run. You've got solder and you've got flux. Flux is water-based. It wasn't, like my father had was, what do you call it? Waxy. No, they only had liquid and you dipped your brush in the flux, put it on the metal and then you dipped your iron into the flux to pick up a bit of solder to solder the work.

And that used to splatter on your hands?

Oh yes, especially when you were doing hooking hinges. Hooking hinges are on the back of a brooch and you would be welding, you had a welding machine.

So what do you think was in the air when they had these fans? What was in the air do you think?

There was always dust. Why would they extract it out?

What was in the dust do you think?

I wouldn't know, I would not know. Because the polishing machine was right by it.

So health and safety wasn't...?

No, they did try, you know, what they, in those days that health and safety wasn't as good as it is today. It did come better but it took a while. And of course the plating room was full of fumes and those boys didn't wear anything other than white overalls. Nothing on their faces.

29:01

Did you ever wear a mask?

No.

Did you have anything on your hands?

No.

What did you wear, did you have to wear a uniform or an overall?

We had overalls. The first lot were very stiff, blue, darkish blue, and then we had nylon thin ones but yes we had overalls, with A&S on it.

And the company provided those did they?

Yes they did.

And was that to protect your clothes?

Yes because when you had a soldering iron and it fell, it would fall on your clothes or on your cardigan or whatever. You had to let it go otherwise you'd burn yourself.

So quite dangerous work?

Yes, because the soldering iron was either like pushed into a socket so that you could have a break from the iron, and then you pulled it out, and if you didn't pull it out right, you'd lose your grip and it would fall out on your hand.

Do you think you suffered any health, long term health consequences from your job in that factory?

It didn't help. I could not prove anything because you had, I had trouble when I had rheumatoid, I had trouble with them when I fell ill. They didn't believe that I was ill.

Who, the bosses now?

Mostly the, yes, one of the bosses, yes, but mostly the people like, oh, go back to him for what they had to do. The boys, there was two boys going back and fore to him.

Kind of managers?

Yes. One was a manager, yes.

So you fell ill and they didn't, what were you ill with, do you know?

Rheumatoid arthritis.

And they didn't believe you?

No.

Did you go and see the doctor?

I was in hospital. The first time, I kept going to the doctors for about 10 years and he said, oh, it's anxiety, stress because he knew I had a lot of issues going on, because I had a daughter. And it got worse. I couldn't move my shoulder, I could barely use my fingers, and when I was working, I was bringing the stuff home so they didn't know I was that bad. And I also had to use my wrists more than my fingers to do some of the work because I couldn't do it, and the boss, the day that I couldn't work again, came up to me and he said, you look as though you're in trouble Ann, because I was leaning over so much on the bench, and I looked up at him, and I said, I've been like this for a long time, you've just noticed now? And that was the last time I worked for them. But no, it wasn't, I went back to the doctor, he took a blood test. He said, I don't know what it is

Ann, I don't know if it's rheumatoid or MS, because you're dropping everything, and then he said I need another blood test. And then he confirmed it was rheumatoid arthritis. I hadn't a clue what that meant at all, and all I could think of was that was the end of my career. And he got me into see Dr Khan or Mr Khan in Bridgend General in Quarella Rd, which was freezing cold, and I was all tucked up in all my woollies and things, and he looked at me, he put me on a bed, he played with my feet, pushed the bones in and he said, rheumatoid, right. I showed him all the equipment I was using because I still had to work, and he said, I want you in hospital on Tuesday, and they gave me, (pulsin) (33:22) it's called, and I had three of them, and if they weren't put in at the time when they were in the ward, they would have to get rid of it, and it took an hour and a half to put three bags of pulsin in in three days. I felt wonderful, went back to work for two, three weeks before Christmas and December 5th I was back in again and had some more pulsin and I never worked since.

What's pulsin, it's a drug is it?

It's some sort of stuff in a white, it's a clear bag, looked like water, but it had to go into the bone.

34:03

Oh dear. Why do you think they didn't believe you when you told them...?

They can't see nothing, they can't see anything.

But how long had you worked there, when you became ill?

I believe it was 10 years, because my friend said, I said my shoulder's gone and I can't lift it, it was agony, she said I'll get your coat on now and it kept doing that, it was my shoulder, but my feet had gone anyway, but I wasn't sure, the bones were sticking, it was like walking on eggshells and it was really painful.

Do you think it was made worse by the work?

Yes because we had a lot of work to do especially with that Saudi Arabia order, we had to get it out.

And do you think the company was worried that you'd ask them for compensation or something?

That didn't occur to them, I don't think it occurred to me, but they were trying to push me out because I'd been there too long. They did that with most of the supervisors, they would ask them would they like to leave and some of them would say yes, because there must have been some issues going on all the time, about finances, because when the others took over, one was the production manager, one was a secretary and one was a sales rep, when they took over, the finances after Saudi seemed to deteriorate more, but I wasn't aware that you were being, I would say bullied to leaving.

If, when somebody said, yes ok, I'll leave, were they paid a sum of money to leave?

Some money, not as good as it should have been. They didn't give them all, they were trying to get away with what they could give, but in my eyes that's what I felt. Because they didn't want to pay me any redundancy money when I was ill, when they were trying to get rid of some of us, because I'd been there too long, they couldn't afford to do that.

So did you get any money from them?

I did, but not from them. It's a, something to do with London. I have documentation on it, but I can't remember, and I had nothing from them, no. And they still owe thousands. One is China and it's one and a half million I believe they still owe them. And they left that estate and sold it because they had a big huge land they could sell but they didn't use the factory, they wanted, what they wanted to do was have the factory and the land which was an allotments to sell for housing, but there was a clause and they, if they had sold it, they wouldn't have lost the company. They then had to leave, under a black flag, red flag, whatever you want to call it, because they had to get out of there and they had to go to another place where they tried to get me to work, and I was asked why I wasn't working and they wanted to see me, it was up, Heol y Cyw, I think it was called, it was a building, red brick building, I went in in a taxi which cost me a lot of money, which I didn't have enough from the factory because they hadn't given me all my wages or my redundancy, whatever, because I was still sick The manager took me round and I said well I can't work on any of them, all this equipment, took me to the door, said thank you for coming, and he said I'll give them until March because they won't be here anymore, they'll be going bust. And I thought, why have they asked me to come all this way, no common sense, I couldn't understand why I had to do that. They could see I was ill.

38:41

So, when did you first go to work with them? What year was it?

In August 10th 1969.

And how long did you work with them for?

Twenty seven years.

And when did you finally retire?

That was 27 years on December 5th in 1997.

And how old were you then?

I was 51.

And you didn't go to work anywhere after that?

I couldn't work. I couldn't write. I couldn't walk properly.

Right, could you describe you know, what were your first impressions when you walked into that factory? What it looked like, the sight, the smells, you know the whole kind of thing?

Well I walked in as though, I was on top of the world, and I could see glass and women, and some of them were saying hi to me, and Mr Doug Attwood, who actually took me through, that's the boss, to the section and he introduced me to the supervisor, and she then introduced me to all the girls, and sat me down and I was working, trying to do what she was telling me to do, because she was showing me and left me to carry on, and then when the bell went I thought ohh, break time, and I went to the toilet, went upstairs with all the girls and had a chat. It was really, really wonderful.

Did you know any of the women there?

Oh yes, yes, a load of them, a load of them, because they all lived round here. They'd known me ever since school or I've met them in town. I knew most of them.

Did you used to socialise with them?

Yes, but not a lot because I had my daughter, and I also didn't have enough money come in from the factory, that I took on little jobs. In those days you were able to get away with some of the jobs. Because I use to work for Fulgoni's ice cream, rugby club, I loved the rugby club, but that was my second job that was, and my social life was working.

When you were at work, were you allowed to talk and play music and things like that?

We were allowed to HAVE music when Attwoods were there because I used to take my own records in, the 45s. I would be singing away and still working because it made us happy. We worked better with music. You cut it off, we didn't. It slowed production up.

Do you remember what songs they were?

They were the 60s and the 70s songs. Actually I've still got them, but I can't remember them.

I was going to ask if you had any favourites.

Yes, like, oh what's his name? Coloured. That's the wrong word to say I think.

Black man was he?

Yes. (Sings) *Everything's a winner baby, that's the truth*, that one. I can't remember his name.

I don't remember that.

Oh, fun that was. Loads. I took once in a rugby club, sorry, rugby song, big album, and you had to think of the words when they said the song, you put your own, you know, the words were cut out, and of course the boss came through with some visitors and he was by my bench catching hold of the phone and he said, put the record off now. And I felt so embarrassed because it was my record.

Was it rude?

Yes, you see they say the words and the rude word wouldn't be there, you had to

Imagine them?

Yes. It was funny. And I got told off for doing some work. I did a load of Concorde necklaces and out of all those trays, one of them went wrong, and you cannot tell me that was my work that went wrong, because when you do the work all of you, it gets mixed up, so how could that have been my job when all the others were alright. He wasn't too bad but he told me off. I even had some tiaras in those days, that we had to form and the

two women, first aid, and she was in a room where she, she was in a store room and they got hold of me and they said, oh put the tiara on Ann, stand up and put the tiara on. Oh yes, I did, didn't I. I was having fun. I was happy. Up came Doug and he said I want to see your work tomorrow, and we had to do a sheet, and he said, I want to see how much work you did tomorrow. But I think he was put up to do it, to come and frighten me, because they were laughing in the corner. And next day he came along and he could see my production was, he didn't tell me off, he gave me a warning.

44:42

Explain to me what a Concorde necklace is?

Well in the Concorde days everything was Concorde paper. You could get Concorde paper, sorry, Concorde curtains called Concorde.

What?

Because of the Concorde aeroplane.

Oh I see, right.

And they took the name and made it into a necklace.

Can you describe it to me?

It was sort of a little square dropper and then there was two pieces that go into the chain like a V, and then there was a Concorde chain, a specially made Concorde chain it was called, and then we put a tongue and a box and extension chain on it, and that's it.

And where was that sold do you think?

All over the world, all over. I have a list of people that used to buy it, especially Virgin Airways, BAE is it, British Airways, Canada. The airlines took on all of the, you see we had, sorry, what do you call it, duty free? We used to do masses for duty free and suddenly the airlines came in, but it was like a catalogue that if we produced a load of say Welsh feathers, they would take them and distribute them, and then if they never sold they came back, and the room was full of what came back, because we were mass producing for the airlines and that didn't help when they came back.

Who was the tiara for then?

The tiara was for any artiste, if there was a bride, wherever. I can't remember who used to, I got a feeling they went to London and they would sell them in the shops because there was a Dixons, I believe it was called, Dixons, there was two named barrel in London and they took quite a lot of the work because the artiste would go and have them for the films or theatres.

You mentioned some of them. Can you describe, now you mentioned something...?

The pink panther.

The pink panther. Can you describe that piece of jewellery for me?

I would call them baguettes. There's different sizes, there were oblong, like your finger, oblong like that, square, not square, oblong, and they would be all the way down the necklace until they got to a centrepiece which was shaped like a bow. Would it be a bow? It was a piece in the middle and that would have baguettes in it as well.

And what were the baguettes made out of?

They were from Swarovski in Austria. Austria? Swarovski produced all these little stones, all different sizes, so minute, so tiny.

And what were the stones, do you know?

They were crystal stones, that's what they said, crystal. But they were all different colours. Whatever they wanted, they would give Attwood & Sawyer.

Right. And that was for the pink panther?

Pink panther, the amori.

The amori. And what was the other one you mentioned?

Elizabeth Taylor. She wore the bellina.

Right. Could you describe the bellina to me?

It had a centrepiece, and on it, it had three little droppers but in the middle it had an extra dropper with a dropper on, and then it had kind of flowers on the side with another dropper on the side, and then you had a chain with all the stones already in it and you had to count those stones, and put it onto the necklace centre, and then you had the tongue box, the extension, but she also wore the earrings because you could have a flower earring with a dropper or the centre of the bellina she was wearing. And it's in one of the films I know that she was in, she wore it.

Did she commission that specially, or was that a line you did?

It was a line we did.

Right.

And I believe on Coronation Street, Bette Lynch was wearing the tigers, leopards, no the leopards. They had two heads and she was wearing them behind the bar in Coronation Street. So if you see two leopard heads, that's what we produced, on a chain.

Right. And when was that?

When she was on Coronation Street.

Before you left?

Oh yes. I believe that's right. Before I left. I know she was wearing it.

Right, ok. So I was going to ask you, can you, do you remember how much you were paid when you started there?

Yes I can. It was £6.00 a week and I had to work a whole year before I had ten, because when I left my old job I was getting £9.00 a week, that's when I left, but this one was £6.00.

Was that because you were training do you think?

Probably, because they said it would take 12 months. I didn't quite know if that was right.

So, once you'd trained then...that's what it was...

Yes, I had to wait a year though.

Yes, and then you got?

Ten pounds.

51:10

Ten pounds. And did you have pay rises quite regularly when you were there?

It was difficult because the bosses found it difficult to make more money, and he would stand in the canteen and he says, right, we can give you a bit of a wage but it won't be much, and I would hear him jingling his keys in his pocket, because he was absolutely petrified and nervous to tell us that there was not much money because the Attwoods could not actually give us a lot of money, they couldn't.

How much do you think you were earning when you finally left?

£152.00 and that was because the other bosses took over and they upped our wages quite a bit, quite a bit.

Right. Tell me about the other bosses taking over.

The secretary and the sales rep and a manager, factory manager, were asked when the Attwoods retired, if they'd like to take on the business, and they did. One was in shares more than the others, and the secretary was looking after her section which was a load of secretaries, and the sales rep man was taken on more the boss than the others but the manager for the floor was still looking after us on the floor. He wasn't getting on with them at all, but it was a dog-eat-dog by the look of it.

So, what did you, do you remember what year it was that they took over?

In the 80s I believe. Yes, I'd be 34 and I was there in '69. 34.....that would be '83.

1980?

Yes, about the 80s, and I couldn't wait to get out of there because this manager that was, who was a boss, was giving me a bit of trouble before the Attwoods actually left, and I tried to go to Sony's in those days in, when I was 34, I tried to get out then. But I stuck it out.

Right so you said that the Attwoods, were they good bosses?

I found them very good. I know I had a few issues with the tiara and that, but no, they were really kind.

Although they didn't pay you ...?

No, they didn't have the money. They say they didn't.

There we are, who knows? So you were very fond... I mean you thought they treated you well?

I thought they were wonderful.

Could I just ask you then, did you get a pension or anything like that?

I had a private pension and I had to wait for the old age pension when I was 60 but I had nothing before it. I had problems with the disability living allowance and the social worker had to help me out because it wasn't coming forward, so it was difficult until they gave me disability living allowance.

So there was no pension from the factory?

No.

Do you know how much the other workers were paid? Were you all paid the same do you think?

All the girls were, yes. But all the men, no. They had a lot more than the women and any of us really could have done their jobs because we were doing some of their work.

Did you have to share your wages with your family?

I did, yes. I was, we had acquired this house so that the mortgage was quite high, and my father had died before he could start paying for it. This was in 83-ish. He'd gone ill before and he couldn't get any money off the state because he was self-employed and why did he have £200 in the bank? And he said, well I have to pay my material and I have to pay the rent, because we hadn't quite acquired the house, but when he died I had to take the mortgage on by myself, because my brother hadn't got a job, because he was working with my father and he didn't know what he was going to do, and my mother didn't have a job so I had to take on.

56:14

And were you paying from, you know, from...were you paying from when you started working in the factory, were you giving your mother...

Oh yes. Even from the day that I was 15, a Saturday girl, even when I was 11 years old babysitting, I was contributing my money to her.

What did you do, presumably you kept some money to yourself, so what did you spend your money on?

Either making my clothes, on material so I didn't have to buy clothes, on my daughter, basically my money went on my daughter, but I did have a sister who had lost her husband and she had two young children, and I was contributing helping her so every penny was dished out.

Right. Did you spend some on records you said?

Oh yes. I loved my records. I loved tapes but I used to copy off the tapes, off the television, whatever, I copied them so I didn't have to spend any extra money.

So did you have any help with your, I know your mum helped you look after your daughter. Did you have any other financial help?

No, all I had was the money coming from the factory. You had, in those days, you had to produce 12 documents so that you could have a little bit extra and you had the family allowance, but every 12 weeks you had to declare what you were working, how much, and then they would assess you, and give you a bit extra.

So you didn't have any help from the father?

No, no.

Right ok. Did you have any perks from working in the factory?

Yes.

Right, tell me.

Well, they'd give you staff sales which were sometimes what they couldn't send out, but we knew how to fix them and we'd put them right. What other perks? Oh, I loved Christmases with them, I enjoyed them. I could, I can't think of anything else.

Well, tell me about, did you have a Christmas party or something like that?

Oh, every year, unless there was a problem with the finance like the power cuts and that. If they couldn't do it, they used to say, especially Doug and Horace, we couldn't do a party this year, we're sorry. But it was very rarely. We'd go to the Porthcawl Hotel, was the first time I went with them. The Esplanade Hotel. I'm not sure about the Seabank, and we went to the Manor Suite and we also went to the Stoney Club. Oh, wonderful days. We didn't pay for them. We had whatever they put on. Sometimes it was a good meal or just chicken and chips in a basket.

I was going to ask you what kind of thing was it. Just describe a party to me then, you know, one of the...

Well in the Esp we had a meal, a turkey dinner, soup first, turkey after and afters and each girl either may have had a box of chocolates, sorry each of us would have a box of chocolates, because I remember that, or we'd have a raffle ticket and we'd have whatever jewellery he wanted to give us, and they weren't seconds, they were the best.

Lovely. Do you remember what things you were given?

No, not offhand.

Was there like a dance or something afterwards?

Oh yes, discos, oh, wonderful times, discos. I remember the Knight's Arms, because we must have gone to the Knight's Arms up there and we had wonderful times, but one time when I was in the Stoney Club, the designer caught hold of me and I was on the floor

trying to tell him, no, I don't want to go, and he dragged me up the steps to get on the stage, and I didn't want to dance with him. Did not want to. It was great. Because I used to work in the Stoney and I loved the Stoney because they had discos going on up there.

60:52

What's the Stoney?

The Stoney was a club where you had artistes like Rolf Harris, Rolf Harris, and Gary Glitter falling down the steps in his high shoes. What's his name? Slade. Tony Christie (*sings – this is the way to Amarillo*) and Gene Pitney and Tommy Cooper. He was off stage and he had to have a drink before he come on stage, and I don't know how he got through his little gate, he had a little gate going in and out of this little gate, and Norman Wisdom. Oooh, Norman Wisdom. And I used to see them at the back of the stage and have autographs. I've got a couple of photographs, and as I said, Gene Pitney, Rolf Harris, Tony Christie and one other – Des O'Connor. Des O'Connor. He changed his jumper to match mine because I was all in black and I had a yellowy-orangey cardigan on because I was always cold, and he changed his top to take the photograph.

So this was one of your second jobs was it?

Yes.

Yes, so you saw these people when you worked there? What did you do there?

I was a waitress but I also used to, I was taught in the Royal Oak which was not far from there, how to work behind the bar, so when they found out I could do both jobs. But the night that Bob Monkhouse was there, he had a piano and all the lights went out. We blew the fuse in the kitchen doing Christmas puddings, and it was a big machine and he was still playing in the dark and I was behind the bar. I loved that. And I was also in the rugby club. I loved that place. I met Gareth Edwards, Rupert Moon and the Welsh referees, two of them, from North, I can't remember his name, oh, one of the way back ones, when Gareth Edwards was around. I sat on Gareth Edwards' lap and I also sat on Rupert Moon in the Manor Suite, but I also met one in the Stoney and he was on Upstairs and Downstairs. He was one of the butlers.

Right.

He was in the club.

Ah, right. So you enjoyed that?

I did.

Right. So tell me then. Holidays. What holidays did you have every year?

I had two weeks a year, but I didn't go anywhere unless I didn't have any work, because I would work anywhere on my holidays, it didn't matter where. But I did go to London with my daughter for days, and also I went to Blackpool with her twice, to Blackpool.

What about the holidays, did they, did you all take time off the same time like the miners' holiday or did they shut the factory down?

They used to shut the factory down. In August I believe it was.

Right, but you used to stay at home? In a way, why go anywhere if you live in Porthcawl isn't it?

Yes, it's wonderful, yes. It's like going to Blackpool. That was like home from home. Only there's more there entertainments there.

More lights.

Yes.

Did you have to clock in when you worked?

Yes, I had to clock in and I had to be there before the clock went at eight o'clock, and then I wasn't allowed to clock it out until the clock said four or five because we did have different hours earlier, later on in the factory.

Right. So how many hours did you work at the beginning and how did they change?

I believe it was maybe 39 or was it more, because it was like eight til five and on a Friday it was like eight til 12 o'clock. The hours were cut down like an hour every day until it was eight til four.

So did you have a lunch hour?

Yes, it was half an hour.

And that didn't change did it?

No.

And did you have a canteen in the...

Yes, but I never used it. I always used to go up to the shops to get my mother's food or whatever was needed in the lunch hour, or I'd come home and cut the hedge or cut the grass.

Never stopped then, did you?

No.

Did you have breaks as well?

Yes, it was only 10 minutes break.

And did you go to the canteen for your break?

Yes, in those days when I was with the Attwoods, they used to bring in pasties from Elizabeth's shop in New Road, and we'd have a pasty and a cup of tea and when that shop went, we used to have food there which was like a Kitkat or a biscuit and a cup of tea. Maybe toast.

66:44

Was that enough, do you think there was enough breaks? Were you, was it exhausting, the day?

You had no choice. That was it. There was a time that the women in the canteen used to come down with cups of teas in the break time, I remember that. They'd bring the cups and tea and we had tea at the desk when the Attwoods were there, but that was stopped.

Why was it stopped? When was it stopped? When the others took over?

Yes. I believe. But the one lady had to retire so they didn't bother then.

Right. Were you allowed days off for personal reasons, you know, like funerals or things like that? Could you have a day off for that?

Yes, we did, they did allow it, but they had to make sure that it was for a reason, like if I had to go to hospital or I had to take my daughter somewhere, like the dentist, they did give it to us.

And were you paid for that day?

I cannot remember that at all. I think I was deducted, but I can't really remember.

68:22

Right. So, we're coming to the end now. Did you enjoy working in the factory?

I did really enjoy... wherever I did go, I did enjoy those times.

Were you ever bored?

Oh, if it was a new job and I didn't like it, I'd find a way of getting round it to make it happier. I'd found a way of dealing with it.

What do you mean, a new job in the factory now or...?

Yes, because they would put me on the polishing machine and I broke a rib, and I was struggling to use the machine, but I had to leave and go to the doctors without them knowing. They did not know I left, and I got a note and it told them in the note that I needed to be taken off the machine for a while, but as soon as two, three days they put me back on it, but that was, not a happy job that wasn't, but I tried, mind over matter.

Yes. So did they change your jobs often?

They did when they took over, and they tried to, this one man tried to do it in front of Doug Attwood which he wasn't happy about. He made me go to a section and Doug would come out and he would say, why are you here Ann? And I'd tell him, **Mr ????,(1:09:39)** get your chair, go back and stay there. I want you there at the sovereign. And then **Mr ???** would say, why is she back here, and there would be a difference because they weren't getting on.

Did you prefer soldering to other things?

Oh yes, yes.

That was your favourite?

Yes, because I could get my, you know an artist drawing and painting, I could do that sort of thing, you know, I put my mind to how it should look.

It was creative?

Oh yes, yes.

And you were, yes, in a way helping to create that piece of jewellery.

Object. Because there was some you had to make yourself, which, like the bird. You had to make the breast and you had to do it at the right weight because of the weight of the bird. If you give it too big of a breast, and they'd come back and they'd say, this is no good, it's not the right weight, but you had to make sure there was no lines or any holes in it, because when the polishers got hold of it, it would show up.

So do you think it was a very skilled job?

I do, yes. I loved it. I loved that.

So looking back, how do you feel about the time you worked in the factory?

I wish I could have been the supervisor, and I loved teaching girls, and I had a supervisor who had no patience, and she'd throw the work at you, and the tray, and say, do it again. Because she did that to me on the first day I was there and I did go into the toilet crying, but I needed the job badly and she'd follow me in and she would have a chat, and she'd understand she had gone too far, but I knew that those girls, when they came, would feel the same way as I did, so I used to try and find a way of helping them. I had more time to help them.

You'd be sympathetic then?

Yes, yes. Whether they took any notice sometimes, because some of them didn't want the job, they just wanted the money.

Would you say you enjoyed those years at the factory?

Oh yes, and I did the same in the rugby club as well, because I was a barmaid and I took over on the days that I was in charge. I was in charge! And I used to employ girls to come and help me, and I had some wonderful girls and that job I would have loved to have taken on, as a stewardess, but they didn't want that. They had some man that came from Australia who was a rugby player, give him £15,000 to run the club and he absconded and I thought, well what did you do that for when I was offering for £12,000 a year. Was that too much I asked for?*Thank you very much.*

That's my pleasure. Thank you.

73:06

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD Y CYFWELIAD