

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI

Berlei Bras, Merthyr; Lines/Triang, Merthyr; Thorns/GKN, Merthyr; NATO Clothing Factory, Rumney; Sobell's, Aberdare; TBS South Wales Ltd, Merthyr

Interviewee: VSE015 Luana Dee

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

LD says she was born in Weston Super Mare. Her father was a musician and a professional gambler, so she says sometimes they had money and sometimes they didn't. She says her parents travelled a lot together both before she was born and after she was born. But her father had a habit of disappearing and did so when she was being born. About 9 months after she was born her mother went to America and Canada with her father and they worked their way around the country. They weren't married to each other but to other people. Her mother was married to a Catholic who refused a divorce and her father was married and had three other children. She says that her mother had two other children with her father. She goes on talk about this and her family life. So she has two brothers one 2 years younger and one 4 years younger. She talks about her brothers.

03:16

LD says that her mother eventually told her father to 'clear off' and they went to live in Merthyr Tydfil, first of all in a slum clearance area and then eventually on the Gurnos estate. She talks about their housing, rent and tenancy problems. She was brought up on the Gurnos estate from the age of 10.

04:42

LD says that she didn't get on with her mother because she'd been left when she was young. She says that as she became a teenager it got worse and she left home and got married when she was 19.

05:10

LD says both parents were from Merthyr originally. She talks about her father travelling with his music.

05:34

LD says she went to school called Norman Terrace - the infants school. She says it was lovely school which focused on play and the teachers were lovely. She enjoyed school and she loved Norman Terrace and she had lots of friends.

07:06

LD says that after the infants school she went to the Gurnos Primary School on the estate. She should have sat her 11+ but she became ill with rheumatic fever. She was in hospital for over a year and then was at home until she was nearly 15. She then went to the Secondary Modern - Georgetown Secondary School. She says it was quite a rough school with lots of children from problem families. She thinks that their family was also seen as a problem family. She says she was badly bullied there.

09:03

LD says she was 15 when she left school with no qualifications. She says that they'd had some careers advice. She remembers saying she wanted to be an actress. But she was dissuaded and decided with some advice that she'd go to Merthyr Technical College and do secretarial studies. She did a course in shorthand and typing along with 'O' level English and Maths and business studies. LD says she struggled with the course but they were 'doing interviews' for Berlei Bras in the college. She went for an interview and they offered her the job. So when she finished her course she went to Berlei Bras in Dowlais. She started work as a sewing machinist. They were trained at the factory, but LD's mother had always been a machinist, so she had an idea what to do and she quite liked sewing.

11:51

LD says she started in August or early September 1967. She says that the factory was a purpose built large shed - just one big space which was divided into the factory floor with just rows and rows of sewing machines and offices for the managers and supervisors. LD says it was very light - there was a lot of light coming in through the windows as well as the artificial light for sewing. They had a small canteen where they went for tea breaks and lunch breaks. They could take their own snacks.

13:14

LD says it was very noisy there because of the sewing machines but they always had music playing there as well but she can't remember what the music was. She thinks that

it was probably pop music or maybe the radio. LD says she remembers the supervisor who was a very large woman with a deep voice. She talked to them like children. LD says she supposes they were young and inexperienced. She says there were a lot of young women there and because it was the sixties they had tattoos and piercings although she didn't have any of those. She says that she got on with the girls very well. There were a mixture of shy and more assertive girls. They could wear their own clothes but also had to wear an overall. She thinks it was pink and it was supplied by the factory. She says that the sewing machines were German Pfaff Sewing Machines and they were brilliant. They were industrial sewing machines. She remembers that the sewing machines were very accurate.

"So... you could do short fast bursts of sewing, and it would just stop when you took your foot off the treadle whereas with the more domestic ones (machines), they were looser really and sometimes you stitched too much. So they were designed for getting the job done really."

16:00

LD says they were trained for a couple of weeks and then they built up the speed then. They were gradually given different parts of the bra to make. You were shown what kind of bras they were making and LD says they were the type of bras that her mother would have bought from a catalogue. She says that she found it exciting making something that lots of people were buying. The bras were sold in shops as well. Because they were training there were rejects - i.e. they weren't good enough to be sold in shops and catalogues so they'd all go into a box and sell them off at the end of the month at a discount price.

17:15

LD says they made other things there as well - nightdresses and other kind of lingerie. She didn't make those - they were 'high end'. They would have a 'fashion parade' where they'd ask the employees to model the garments. She can't quite remember but thinks that reporters were brought in so it would be in the newspaper. LD says that she did some of the modelling. "I loved doing all of that - yeah - although I wasn't very skinny, so they didn't give me any of the flimsy lingerie, because I was quite full busted, so I didn't do any of the bare midriff stuff. It would be more of the nightdresses and the bras, and petticoats - that sort of thing - yeah. It was a fashion show but I don't think it would have been in the evening - it might have been on a Saturday afternoon, but I don't think it would have been we were in the middle of doing because it was piece work so you know it was important during working hours that you had a target of things to do and you had to get that done you know."

19:17

LD says that they were paid for each bra they produced - piecework. She says that was a bonus because the basic pay wasn't very much. She says that she was paid a basic rate of £6.50 a week, but then they could earn more by producing more but they had to be

accurate as well.

19:38

"It was quite tricky. My job was to do from the bra where it does up at the back, round the sides all the way up to the top of the cup down to the middle and turn that, then up to the top - put the strap in as well - and then down the other side and to the back and then that was passed on to somebody else who did what was called bar tacking, where they had hooks and eyes and then that needed to be secured very tightly."

20:30

When asked whether the wages felt good at the time LD says she didn't have a clue. She was living with her mother and her mother had very little money and £6.50 seemed a lot to her. Initially she gave her mother all her money who fed and clothed her, and then she gave her some pocket money. LD got dissatisfied with that arrangement and eventually they agreed that LD should keep her money and contribute towards her food and keep. She says that helped her realise more about the cost of living and that her mother was struggling but it didn't stop her going out and spending all her wages on going out on Saturday nights and other things.

21:30

LD says she can't remember in detail how much she was paid for piecework on top of her basic wage but they would have been given a small amount of money for each bra so they had a target of so many bras to produce in a day. If they met that target then they'd have an additional amount on top of their wages. The quicker they went the more mistakes would be made and the supervisor would throw the seconds into a bin. At the end of the day they might have a binfull back to correct and do repairs and while they were doing that they weren't producing more bras and they wouldn't get any bonus.

22:53

LD thinks that she was quite fast. She says her eyesight was quite good and she liked sewing and liked to see the finished products. She says she was consistently earning bonuses so after a while they put her to work on the black bras. They had a special strong light on the machine by the needle, so that it was easier to see the black material and black cotton. But it wasn't easy to sew black on black so there were a lot of mistakes. She talks about complaining about the situation.

24:14

LD: "I couldn't get as many done so what I was suggesting to them was.. that they had a lower quantity that you do to get bonus on the black bras than on the white bras because they were harder to sew."

CE: "Did they take your suggestion?"

LD: "No they didn't What they did was.... I went in one day and they just said 'You're not going to be sitting there anymore. You're going to be over the other side of the factory.' So they just moved me to a new section. I was still doing the same work. They said they were taking all the black bras over there. But I think they were just splitting me up from the girls I was working with really and putting me with a different group of girls you know, dividing you up so that you didn't... you couldn't stir up any trouble really."

25:16

LD says the factory was unionised and they were members of the women garment workers' union. She thinks it probably would have been part of one of the big unions at the time although she thinks the garment workers would have had their own union. She says she joined the union straight away.

26:01

LD says they were mostly women workers at the factory . There were some male workers there working as mechanics. She talks of some of the problems with the machines and getting their fingers jammed in the machines. She says quite often people got needles in their fingers and got quite nasty injuries. She explains how this happened. She says that this was 'a hazard of working fast' although there were guards on the machines.

27:55

LD says that they were made aware of health and safety. She thinks they had quite a good safety record. "it was a new factory they always had a mechanic on hand and sometimes the mechanic would say well don't panic you know... they'd be able to release your fingers and stuff, without getting needles in your nails. It was up to you to look out for your own health and safety as well, but the machines were so brilliant and you had a guard.... they were all new machines and they all worked really well."

29:00

LD says Berlei Bras were quite big at that time and she remembers the news that they were opening a factory in Merthyr, and that was quite exciting. She said that she was there from the beginning.

LD doesn't remember if there were any union walkouts while she was there, but she thinks there were a lot of threats of walkouts. There were a lot of disputes there while she was there and she caused some of them.

30:00

“When they moved me on to the black bras and I went into a different section, I met some really lovely young women who were quite bolshie as well, so I was mistake really to moving me over there (she laughs) because they were more outspoken than probably me you know, and more free spirited as well I think. So, they didn’t really care. They weren’t necessarily very political but they didn’t have any hang ups about saying what they thought.”

She talks about the black bra dispute and other disputes involving pay. LD says she was once called into the office and told if she didn't stop stirring up trouble she'd be sacked. She says that she'd always had a sense of fairness and she didn't think the way they were behaving was fair. After that some of her colleagues wouldn't sit with her and would avoid talking to her, then they told her that they'd been told not to talk to her about the work issues. She said it was very isolating. She felt at the time that although the union was good many of the union reps were supervisors and part of management.

32:36

LD says that she became a union rep late on but not in Berlei Bras. She says that after Berlei she worked in non-union places as well where she was involved in more disputes because there was no union.

33:11

When asked whether she thought that workers were fairly or unfairly treated, LD said that she though the wages were low and based on bonuses and the supervisors were quite hard-nosed. She says that they had to ask to go to the toilet. They would be released to go and then they were timed. They had toilet doors with a bit off the top and bit off the bottom so the supervisors would look underneath to see your feet and they'd be knocking the door and saying 'Have you finished?' to get you back to work. She says that was quite unpleasant.

34:43

LD doesn't remember if there was a rule not to speak to each other while they working, but mostly when they were sewing their heads were down and they had to focus. They were in an assembly line. She says that most of the talk on the line was about the work because they were working hard. They had a tea break in which to socialise.

35:44

LD says that she thinks people sang to the songs on the radio and that she did as well. However she says that the main object was work and they'd be watching you all the time and if they thought that anything was interrupting the work they'd be told to get on with their work. They had offices at a higher level with glass windows and people would be watching you all the time. She didn't find it intimidating. It was her first job and she

thought that's how it was.

37:16

LD says she started work at 8am then there'd be a bell at 10am for a 10 min tea break. They'd all go to the canteen. You could buy a drink or bring your own. People who smoked would have a cigarette in the canteen she thinks. They couldn't smoke on the factory floor because of risk of fire. They'd have a 10 min break in the afternoon as well. They would have to go to the toilet in that time as well. She thinks the lunch-break was an hour because they got fed up of being in the canteen and they used to walk down to Dowlais. Sometimes they would go to a cafe, and then they could talk freely about things to do with work. She felt that when they were in the canteen, they couldn't. She talks about the workers speaking more freely to each other in the cafe. She thinks they finished at about 4.30. She thinks it was before 5. They had to clock in and clock out and if they clocked in late they lost wages and they were pulled up as well.

40:25

LD says that she used to walk to work in the morning, but sometimes she caught the bus. The bus was a public transport bus she thinks. It was quite a long walk and she would walk when it snowed as well.

41:21

LD says she loved the work to begin with, because she felt grown up. She didn't know what to do, she didn't get on with her mother and she was earning money. She says she didn't have the confidence to apply for an office job. But after a while she got very bored with it because it was monotonous. She wanted to do something else but she wasn't sure what. In the end she was sacked. She says they couldn't sack her for speaking out because of the union, but they said she wasn't producing quality work. LD says she was upset about being treated like that. She went home and told her mother she'd lost her job and her mother was angry with her for speaking out.

"She said 'oh - why did you have to say things like that? What's going to happen now?' And I said oh I'll just get another job next week. There's plenty of jobs going at Thorns as they were called - the lightbulb factory - and Triang Toys. And I think that's what I did. The following Monday I just walked straight into another job because that's how it was in those days. It was unskilled work as well but there was plenty of it. The following Monday.... I just went straight to the factory and they said yes we've got vacancies here, and they interviewed me and then I started there you know, I think the following day."

44:04

LD says that she feels she was unjustly treated. She stayed in Berlei Bras for nearly 2 years from 67 - 69, before she was 'given her cards'. She says that she realised that it was really important to be in the union in her next job as well. She says it was her first

experience of work so she was a bit naïve.

44:58

LD says that she went out with most of the girls that were her age on a Friday and Saturday night. They went to pubs and dancing. She says that there was quite a social life in the factory as well. They had Christmas dinners and when people got married they would have a hen party. She mentions the fashion parades again. They would choose what they were going to wear and the supervisor would help. She remembers one of the events was at the end of the factory day - a Thursday or Friday evening. Instead of going home from work they would stay on and people would arrive for the fashion parade. She says the events would happen on the factory floor, in the aisles between the machines. They would walk around the aisles. She says the audience would be made up from invited relatives and friends and other people from the factory, the managers and regional managers, the supervisors and mechanics and maybe somebody from the local newspaper. She thinks that Berlei had their own regional internal newsletter as well. When asked whether there was choreography and music she says yes there was. "... and you had somebody describing the garments you know and they'd say your name 'This is Luana and she's wearing blah, blah, blah' you know, and then you'd have to turn around and show it off and they did a bit of hair and make up for you as well." LD says that it was well received by the audience especially the men. She says the married women participated in the fashion shows as well, still young women but older than her. She says she enjoyed the events and she says that somebody always won as well. People would say which item of clothes was the best and the winner would get a box of chocolates. She says that she never won but one of her friends won a few times.

49:48

When asked whether there was a Miss Berlei Bra competition she says that she thinks that what it was.

50:23

LD says that the factory was made up of women mainly, all women on the sewing machines. She says it was a big factory but it was all open-plan so you could see from one end to the other. She describes the factory. She says the offices were separated by self-assembly screens with glass in them. The toilets were all cubicles along the side. Some offices were at a higher level and they looked down on the factory floor. There was also a canteen and store rooms. She can't remember if there was a cutting area or whether the patterns had been brought in from somewhere else. She goes on to say that the men worked on the cutting tables and some of the women supervisors, usually older women. She talks about Miss Berlei Bra again. She says that one of the supervisors was very glamorous and she won Miss Berlei Bra a few times. She doesn't remember her name. She talks a bit more about the supervisor.

53:50

She thinks that a couple of hundred at least worked in the factory. She thinks that it was 90% women. She then says that there were (male) mechanics there and the mechanic supervisor was male, and there were men and younger men apprentices on the cutting tables.

54:27

LD thinks the relationship between the women and the men was quite good. There was a lot of sexual innuendo but she doesn't think she was 'touched up' there though she was in other jobs. She says in those days it was acceptable for men to touch and grab and to tell 'dirty jokes'. "You couldn't complain about that sort of thing. It was all before the equality laws and stuff." When asked whether the women also harassed the men she says she thinks it was two ways. Sexual things wouldn't be said around the older supervisors because they were older women and they didn't like 'that sort of fraternising' because they wanted the women to get on with work.

56:12

LD says they used to go to a place in Rhymni on a bus for the Christmas dinner dance. They also went to Sgubor Wen in Aberdare. They were dance halls where you could have chicken in the basket and you could book them for an event. They would put on entertainment as well and comedy nights. She talks about the clubs including the Double Diamond.

58:40

LD isn't sure whether it was arranged by the factory or not, but it was 'encouraged' by the factory and they probably put a certain amount of money into it. They had to pay for it themselves and put a deposit on the meal and transport, but she thinks the factory contributed. When people got married they had a hen night and if someone died there'd be a collection.

59:30

When asked about day trips LD says she couldn't remember going on any from Berlei Bras. She says that they got paid holidays during the miner's fortnight and bank holidays when the factory was closed. LD doesn't think there was any shift work. They started at 8 am and finished at the end of the day. She thinks there was some Saturday work, but they had to be offered it and some might be asked to come in to do specific things like stock taking.

1:01:18

LD doesn't think she went away on holiday abroad at that stage but went on day trips. She went to Barry or Porthcawl with her friends... "going around the fairground looking

at boys.... or girls whatever your bent was." She talks about her gay cousin.

1:03:31

When asked where she went after leaving Berlei Bras she says she got a job fairly quickly in Triang Toys, in the upholstery department. She says that looking back she feels it was the beginning of the end for Triang Toys. She said she was sewing heavy duty upholstery. She said it wasn't so much for toys although there were some people sewing for the toys. She says it seemed to be for folding chairs, like loungers and cushions and covers. The assembly lines were still making toys but she didn't work there. The upholstery room was separate and it was all women working there. They had very old sewing machines, which she complained about. There were mainly older women there, who mothered the younger women. She says they were really nice. There were a lot of boys working on the assembly line who were quite fanciable. So there was a lot of getting together with the young men during the lunch breaks and they used to go to Cyfarthfa Park. "On a Friday - it's incredible to think that we were able to do that, but on a Friday we'd get our pay, and we'd go up to Cyfarthfa Park and we wouldn't come back to work. We'd just stay there all afternoon just chilling out really. And we'd go back to work on Monday and nobody would ever say anything about it.... It was very laid back really."

07:08

When asked if she was re-trained to do the upholstery LD said that she were shown what to do because she was considered an experienced machinist but she had to be shown what to do. She says that was piece work as well, but it was very different to Berlei. There was a lot of fun there - most of the older women had a great sense of humour. She says that they could talk throughout the day. She worked with one woman who'd been there for 25 years and she had a very cynical sense of humour and she was very funny.

08:27

LD says that they had a canteen there and it was a very old factory. It was a very big canteen and there were lots of men working there. She thinks a couple of hundred people worked there. It was very old building in Georgetown below Cyfarthfa Park. There were parts of the building that were off limits. Lots of people had worked there for a very long time.

1:09:32

LD says it was all women in the upholstery department and that was quite a big department. But she would say that there were more men working there than women. The work was divided. The sewing jobs and lighter work was given to the women. The assembly line and riveting work, and machine work was given to men and boys on the whole. The work was heavier and it was a dirty old factory. She remembers a number of men had openly brought in pornographic magazines, showing women in awful positions.

She says it was quite shocking because she hadn't seen anything like that before. The men would show them the pictures and make comments. She says she could have reported it to the managers, and the managers would say 'Put them away.' But the magazines weren't banned and LD says 'It was quite derogatory stuff really. It was a bit of an eye opener.'

1:11:23

LD says the pay was quite low and it was piece work. She thinks it was a bit bless that what she earned in Berlei Bras. She says she was struggling financially. She says they bussed in a lot of women from Brithdir and Fochriw. She got quite friendly with some of those women.

1:12:05

When asked if she knew anybody in Triang when she went to work there, she says that she knew a lot of boys from being out on Saturday nights and some of the girls. She doesn't recall anyone from Berlei being there but thinks there would have been girls who were in school with her. She thinks that not a lot of young women would have gone to work in Triang because it was coming to the end of its life. There wasn't much of a future there. She says that sewing was a bit of a career in those days and young women would be looking to move on and be a supervisor or manage one of the lines. There wasn't a great deal of opportunity in Triang because they were talking about people losing their jobs. She doesn't think they were taking many on and it wouldn't have attracted young girls.

1:13:27

LD says she was a member of the union at Triang. She thinks she was a union rep there, a sort of line rep, so she was the rep for a particular group of girls and women, so she would speak for that particular section. There was always talk of disputes and strikes and in those days it was a real threat, if people were unhappy. Management always knew that people would walk out, so they tried to resolve disputes. She remembers one section of the workforce going on work to rule and she thinks they striked for a day. In those days they didn't have to be balloted and a union leader could say that they were going on strike and anyone who wouldn't would be a blackleg. She says that their life would be a misery afterwards. She says there were always issues around pay and conditions but she doesn't think they went on strike in upholstery.

1:16:00

When asked what the conditions were like LD says again that it was a very old factory and the machines were always breaking down because they were old too. It was always cold in the upholstery department and women used to wear a lot of Cardigans. She remembers them saying to her when she was complaining that she was cold that she should wear more. On the other hand they would take Friday afternoon off, and she

remembers the supervisor coming up to the park once or twice and saying "Get back to work! You should have been back hours ago!" She says they had to clock in and clock out. She thinks they started at 8am and finished at 4.30pm and it was probably an 8 hour day. She thinks that lunch was probably 30 mins and they went to the canteen for their tea breaks, so they had to be about 15 mins so they could get there and back, get you cup of tea or coffee and for people who smoked to have a cigarette. Again they had Christmas parties and nights out when people got married or engaged. She became friend with some women from Fochriw and they wanted her to go over to see them so she had to get a bus. One of the women said to her "A friend of mine has seen you on the bus and he'd like you to go out with him." She eventually ended up marrying him. He worked in a factory in Rhymni and when they got married LD went to work in the Factory in Rhymni.

1:19:03

LD says that because the pay was so low, she left upholstery. She thinks she just left one afternoon and said she wasn't coming back. She got a job in Thorns which was in Swansea Road, Merthyr. Thorns was GKN and that was making filaments for lightbulbs. When asked if the pay was better LD said it was much better. She thinks she had over £8 or £10 per week. She says she left school in '65, left college in '67 left Berlei Bras in '69 so she would have gone to work there c. 1970 - 71. She says she was in Triang Toys for a good year. She says it was different - she wasn't sewing anymore. She remembers being interviewed by a manager who quite liked her, not in a sexual way but she had the impression that he saw that she was hardworking and honest. She says that she wasn't very well educated but she thinks that he thought she was intelligent. She says she wasn't treated in the way that factory girls are sometimes treated. She thinks he saw more in her. She says she had to train but she was put into a little elite group of people. She remembers being on the assembly line in GKN. She says it was a big factory very noisy and quite dark as well, quite a depressing place to work. The factory wasn't new but it wasn't 'ancient' either. They were developing it and the Japanese were taking it over. There was something wrong with the economy and they were losing money. They were trying to revamp things and the Japanese were buying it up. She says she was training, and then she was on the factory floor for a couple of weeks but she thinks the manager had other ideas for her that she wasn't aware of. She doesn't know whether she wasn't fast enough on the floor or whether he thought she'd be able to do this particular work quite well because she pays attention to detail. She remembers she was in a nice space which was a large room and his office was nearby and she was with a group of girls and women who were a bit older.

1:24:09

LD says she was working with tungsten halogen. She sat on a high stool and there was a piece of equipment in front of her which was eye level. They were making the filaments which went inside the lightbulb. She says that they had a piece of wire which they had to wind it round a piece of equipment and then they had to operate a knob on the side. It was quite detailed and there was quite a technique to it and they had to mould the

filament into a certain shape and if it didn't it was rejected. They had to do a lot of them and do them quite fast. Initially she says that she wasn't doing enough and she was told to speed up. She got very bored with the job very quickly. She thinks the manager recognised this and knew that she would either leave or he would have to tell her to leave. But he wasn't unpleasant and she had a lot of fun there. She got married when she was working there so the girls on the factory floor collected for her and had a hen night. She got on really well with the girls. The Japanese came to visit and the manager introduced her to the Japanese. They put their hands together and bent over and shook hands. They were very polite and she remembers thinking that it was really unusual. They were coming to buy the factory and eventually they did take it over as part of a bigger company. She can't remember its name. It was known as Thorns but GKN was Guest Keen and Nettlefolds, which was part of the original steelworks. She says that she was there when the Japanese took over. They brought in a different way of working.

1:27:37

When asked how things changed when the Japanese took over LD says she remembers that she had to wear a white coat. They all had to wear the same. It was much more mechanical. It wasn't so lax with their laughing and joking. The work was organised in a way that they came in in the morning and had to complete a certain amount by a certain time. She thinks it was a bit like Berlei. She thinks there were fewer breaks and a more serious atmosphere with the Japanese managers standing around, watching the work. She thinks there was a lot of recording and time and motion studies. She says that they were always doing time and motion at Berlei bras as well. She says some people lost their jobs - people either took early retirement or they were made redundant and the management structure changed. She says again that they were always doing time and motion and she thinks that's how she came 'unstuck'. They re-assessed what she was doing and how she should do it and she obviously wasn't meeting the targets. She found it quite stressful and pressured. They were firm about how they communicated with her about the job and she was also terribly bored so she thought she wasn't going to be able to continue doing it. She decided to get married.

1:30:18

When asked about the position of the union after the Japanese arrived LD says that she had a feeling that the factory wasn't unionised and she can't remember whether it was unionised before they arrived. She thinks that it might have been because most factories were and says that definitely changed when the Japanese arrived. The unions as they remembered them didn't exist anymore and that caused a lot of problems. She thinks there were strikes in Thorns, but she can't remember if she was part of that. She doesn't remember picketing outside Thorns. She knows after she left there were lots of strikes. She was there for less than a year because she was unhappy with the job although she liked the people there.

1:32:11

LD says that when she got married, she was supposed to be living with her mother, but her mother had a nervous breakdown. She talks about her mother's nervous breakdown. At the last minute her parents in law agreed that they could live there temporarily. She found that she wouldn't be living in Merthyr and had to move to Fochriw. So she went to get a job in the factory where her husband was working. He was a tailor and she got a job on a sewing machine. She can't remember the factory's name but it made industrial clothing for NATO. They'd make all the overalls and camouflage and some of the fireproof clothing for soldiers etc. She says that was quite heavy duty sewing. The factory was in Rumney. It was quite a big factory on a scale with Berlei Bras. She remembers all the music being played on the radio there. She got married in 1971. She says it was piece work there and some of the supervisors were difficult to work with. She thinks the wages were on a par with the time. She thinks they were better than what she'd had previously. The cost of living was going up and they'd have a raise to keep up with the cost of living. They had more money coming in because they were married and living with her parents in law. After a couple of months they got a flat in Pontlottyn.

1:35:52

LD says the conditions were quite good but the supervisors were quite stern. But similar to Berlei they had a canteen although it was an older factory than Berlei and many people had worked there for a long time. But there was a 'laid backness' and humanity about working there although if they messed around or didn't meet their targets, the supervisors were quite heavy although they weren't nasty. As far as she remembers there was a union and she was part of the union and you could have a say about things that affected you without the threat of being sacked. She says her husband was a very popular well liked person so they liked her as well. LD says it was an open plan place, but because of the heavy duty fabric and material there was a lot of dust. She says she was given a lot of training and showed her all the processes because she was on the line. They tried to create a community on the line so they all supported each other to get the work done. She thinks that was good because you understood that you had a responsibility to the next person and the last person had a responsibility to you. "If there wasn't any work for you then because you'd trained in all other aspects of the job you know, they'd say 'Come over here and you can do a bit of cutting.' you know and they'd make sure you got it right and it was all marked up so you'd do a bit of cutting and then they'd say 'Oh - do you want to go over there and do a bit of checking?' So you got to do... you got the whole process of the garment from beginning to end."

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When asked if she enjoyed that, LD says that she did. "It was more varied and it also gave you a sense of what you were doing, and how other people fitted in to it and it was quite a friendly crowd of people there." She says that she didn't go out with the girls so much because she was married but they would go out as a couple with some of the people from the factory. And again you'd have the weddings and the Christmas parties.

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When asked which job she enjoyed most, LD says she thinks probably Triang Toys. She felt really connected with Triang Toys. She talks about going to the Museum of Childhood in East London where they had Triang Toys on display. Although it had had its heyday when she went to work there, she enjoyed working with the women there as they looked out for her and she had good times there. But the pay was poor and there was no future. She doesn't think she has a favourite place but they were all interesting experiences. Berlei sticks in her mind because it was a new factory and she was at the forefront of making the bras and it was the beginning of her union days and sticking up for herself.

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When asked whether she was in contact with any former workmates LD says that she isn't, but when she visits Merthyr and she left a very long time ago, she sometimes sees people around and she knows that she was either in school with them or she worked with them. She says that if she was on Facebook she probably would be able to get in touch with people and it might be an interesting project to do.

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LD thinks she enjoyed the time working in factories but it made her realise that it wasn't for her for the rest of her life or being married for that matter. She thinks that when she separated from her husband she applied for a job in an office and went to work in another factory, which was TBS South Wales Ltd. and they made filing cabinets. She says it was lovely because she connected with the people in the factory because she'd done that and been there, but because there was a snobbery about being in the office and people on the factory floor were uneducated, and people in the office were educated, she never felt like that because she'd worked on assembly lines. She was sent to college day release so that she could update her qualifications and then she became secretary to the accountant, and she never went back to the factory floor after that. "I didn't dislike working in factories but I knew that probably.... (she laughs) ...at some point I thought 'Am I going to be doing this for the rest of my life? No - I don't think so....' and I started thinking I wanted to do something else you know.'

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When asked about working in Sobells Aberdare, she says that she only worked there for a short while and she can't remember how she got to work there but there was a bus going from Merthyr. She thinks it probably only lasted a couple of weeks or a month, because she thinks there was a trial period. She remembers it was a very large place and it seemed much more industrial than where she worked before and it was incredibly noisy. She says that she wasn't sewing there but it was assembly line work. She says the work was something to do with televisions, but it was very big and very noisy and very alien and she couldn't see herself fitting in there. She says that when she went there a few people asked her if she was a student, because she didn't look like someone who would work in a

factory. "I always remember the noise and I didn't really like it there and I think probably by the end of the month it was a mutual agreement that I wouldn't be kept on... I do remember being exhausted by the end of every day." She says she can't remember any more about it just that it was very large, very noisy, very industrial and alienating.

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END OF INTERVIEW / DIWEDD Y CYFWELIAD