

**VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI**

**Kayser Bondor, Pentrebach, Merthyr, AB Metals, Abercynon; Birmingham Small Arms, Dowlais; Teddington Aircraft, Merthyr; Hoover, Pentrebach, Merthyr**

**Interviewee:** VSE028 Marion Blanche Jones  
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**Interviewer:** Catrin Edwards on behalf of the Women's Archive of Wales / Archif Menywod Cymru

MJ says she was born in Plymouth Street. The street has now been demolished. She went to Twyn-yr-Odyn Junior School and went from there to Queen's Road secondary modern girls' school. She went from there to Kayser Bondor. She thinks she must have been 16 when she left school.

01:17

MJ started in Kayser Bondor after she left school, and stayed there for 7 years. She wasn't very happy there so she left and went down to AB Metals in Abercynon.

01:54

MJ says she thinks her father was from Tredegar Valley since her grandfather came from there. Her mother was born in Aberdare. She had two older brothers and an older sister. Her older brother and sister have died now but her younger brother is still alive. He worked in Hoover as well. She says they had a marvellous childhood. Her mother's name was Mary Jones and her father's name was David James Jones.

Her father started in the colliery and her worked there until the war.. Then he went to work in the factories and worked in Lines Bros in Merthyr. He worked in a factory in

Birmingham during the war, but returned because of ill health. He ended up working in Mardy Hospital as a boilerman and handyman.

MJ says her mother worked in service when she was single, but gave up work when she got married.

03:48

When asked if she would have liked to stay on at school, MJ says no. All her friends had left and were working and she wanted to earn some money. She picked to go to Kayser Bondor. When asked if she had an interview she says yes, but has a vague memory of it. Miss Roney (?) was working there at the time and she can't remember whether she was interviewed by her. She says that she remembers her other interviews, but she doesn't remember the KB interview - it was so long ago - and so much has happened in her life since then.

04:42

When asked about her first day at KB, MJ says all she could see was the training centre. She thinks her earnings were about £1.25 a week when she was training. She says once they were qualified they 'went on piece work.' She says that in the training centre they were just getting used to the machines and sewing bits and pieces together. She says that she doesn't know how long that lasted, but she thinks it was a couple of weeks. She says that she went on to the bottoms of the slips. She says that there was no lace, but it was just a double stitched hemming. She says that she loved doing that. But she lost her job when that finished and they started using lace. She says that then she was pushed 'from pillar to post' and that's why she left Kayser Bondor, because she didn't have a permanent job. She says that she was put on odd jobs which she didn't like. So she finished and went to AB Metals.

06:03

When asked about her friends and camaraderie in KB, MJ says it was 'lovely'. She says that her friend Rene (Irene Hughes) started in KB before her and had left school before her as well. She says that's why she went to KB. Her friend Rene had started work there and she was earning money and MJ wasn't. She says she wanted to earn money and her mother needed money to help in the house.

06:40

When asked where the factory was and how she got to work, MJ says the factory was in Pentrebach, and that they used to walk to work because she was only living up the road. They used to walk there and back. Sometimes they'd catch the bus but not very often. She says that they walked everywhere in those days. There wasn't a lot of transport

about. Nobody had cars then. She says that she had a bike when she was older, but that was all.

07:11

When asked how she spent her first earnings, she says that she used to give it all to her mother for 'her keep'. She'd have a few shillings in her pocket for pocket money. But she says that was just for entertainment because her mother brought all her clothes and whatever she needed. She says that £1 would go a long way in those days. She says that they went to the pictures, and that they'd walk to Dowlais to go to the pictures. She says that it was a 'good walk.' When they were a bit older, they'd go to the miner's hall to go dancing. She says that her father didn't approve because he thought she was too young to go dancing, but her mother persuaded her father to let her go.

08:12

When asked what her father thought about her working in the factory, MJ says that he didn't mind. 'It was all factory work in those days.' She says that she had a good education in Queen's Road but there was no certificate at the end of it, because there were grammar schools in those days. If they (grammar school pupils) passed their exams they had more of a chance of working in an office than they did. She says it was a job (in the factory), and there was plenty of work around in those days - they had a choice.

08:44

When asked if KB was unionised, MJ says it was of a sort she thinks. She thinks there was a union there but not a strong union. It was called the garment workers or something. She says that she was a member but had nothing to do with the union in those days. It wasn't a strong union because they weren't a bad firm to work for. They never had any problems there.

09:22

When asked what the conditions were like in KB, MJ says that they were good. They had a canteen and it was very clean. The floor were swept regularly and they were painted.. She says it was spotless. The lighting and heating was good. She says that they'd see lovely lingerie being made. It was entirely different to all the other factories she worked in. They weren't so clean. She says again that the conditions in KB were good.

10:15

MJ says that they used to have dinners and parties Christmas time. They went to the city hall in Cardiff a few times. She says that they used to have 'good dos'. They would have

a dinner and dance at the City Hall. She says that they went to somewhere in Brecon as well, but she couldn't think of the name of the place.

11:06

MJ says that they'd all have nice dresses - evening dresses - and they'd all get dresses up. She says that she didn't make her own clothes. She could sew. She made a couple of tops when her sister in law was expecting her first baby. She says that people would wear loose tops in those days and she made quite a few of those. She says that she still does a bit of sewing now and again when she can thread the needle and she has an electric machine upstairs. She used to buy clothes in Pages in Merthyr and Westons - she says that Merthyr had a good shopping centre in those days - another shop at the top of the town. There were plenty of shops to choose from.

12:36

When asked if she knew where the Kayser Bondor lingerie was sold, she said they were sold everywhere. She says there was only KB in those days. She says they were sold in all underwear shops, Marks and Spencer especially. She says again that it was all KB in those days. They used to make nightdresses, slips, panties. She thinks that Rene showed me all the things that KB used to make. MJ says that she wasn't on a line in KB but then she says they were in a group - all the hemmers together, Rene was on the strapping - they'd be together, but you earned your own money. She says that when she was on hemming it was fantastic, but she couldn't make her time up on the other jobs, because she just didn't have a permanent job.

13:51

MJ says they couldn't really talk when they were working because they had to watch what they were doing, otherwise you'd have a needle through your finger. That used to happen very often. They had music on all day and they used to sing, and if someone's favourite song was played they'd stand up and wave to one another. When asked if she remembers some of the songs, she says that she can't remember. Then she says there'd be crooners like Perry Como.

15:18

MJ says that they would have to clock in at the beginning of the day and out (at the end). She says that they had to clock in and out dinner time as well. She thinks that they started at 8 am and that they finished around 5 or 5.30. She says that they'd have an hour for dinner, and a tea break in the morning for about 10 mins and can't remember if they had one in the afternoon. She didn't really feel it was a long day, because she says that

they were young in those days and it was better than being in school and they were getting paid for it. She says that she used to love going into work. She says that Miss Roney used to stride around and make sure everything was in order. She says that she was very strict. She was in charge and she was the floor manageress. She says that they knew she was coming cos they could smell her perfume. She says that she was very strict, smart, small and slim. She wasn't a local woman but MJ doesn't know where she was from, but she thinks she was English because of her accent.

17:02

When asked if she thought they were fair employers MJ says she thinks they were and she was quite happy there. She says it was hard work to earn their money because they were on piece work but she thinks they were fair. When asked how many women and men were there, she says it was mainly women. The men were the mechanics but the majority of workers were women. All the supervisors were women and some of them were terrible she says. She says that the last supervisor she had used to give her all the bitty jobs and it was hard for her to earn her money. She was a local woman who used to be a machinist. But some of them were ok - MJ's cousin was a supervisor and she was ok. She says that some of them who'd been promoted forgot themselves.

18:35

When asked if she was in touch with old colleagues from KB she says she's in touch with Rene (Irene Hughes VSE024) and Mair (Mair Richards VSE025) but no one else. She stayed for 7 years and then went on to AB metals. She says that jobs were plentiful in those days. She finished on a Friday and started in AB Metals on a Monday. When asked how she got that job she says that her eldest brother was friendly with a Les Thomas who was a boss at AB Metals. "He said 'Tell Marion to come down - there's a job waiting for her..' and I went down and walked into a job straight away." She had an interview. They worked 2 shifts there and she was on the early shift which started at 7.30. She was in a new unit making TV tuners. The rest of the factory started at 8 am. She says that she had to catch a bus at 6.30 am and they went round picking people up all the way down to Abercynon. It was a special bus. She says that she loved it there and was there about 2 years and then she was made redundant. When asked if they had to pay for the bus she says no. It was a free bus. When asked if she had to clock in she says yes. She says that they had the same breaks (as KB) - a break in the morning, and hour for dinner and a break in the afternoon. She says that they took their own lunches to AB metals and there was a corner on the section where they could eat their meal. There was a canteen but they never used it because it was a fair walk away. Where she worked was a new unit that had been built.

21:18

When asked how many of them worked there, she says "it was one line... and it was sort of one line going that way and one line this way - I should imagine there was about 25 say each side. And they'd have these little television tuners and they'd be on a conveyor belt.... and we'd all have a little op to do, until it got to the end and that would be the final op of the television tuner. It was soldering it was... soldering jobs."

21:50

When asked if she was trained for the work MJ said yes, but she can't remember how long the training was. When asked if TVs were quite new then, she says yes and she doesn't think they were very successful in the beginning. "I was there for a bout 2 years I think and it just went you know and they closed it down and we were all made redundant. It was a new thing and I don't think it was very successful." She says only the TV unit was closed down and AB Metals went on. She says she could have had a job in another part pf the factory but she didn't want it, because of the travelling and in winter they were travelling 'in all weathers.' She says she was given redundancy pay but it wasn't a lot she doesn't think. She says it wasn't much money in those days but it was more than what she earned in Kayser Bondor. She thinks she was earning about £5 p/w and that was a big jump to what she was earning in KB. She used to come home with just £2 some weeks from KB after working very hard.

23:24 "We'd have a docket on a Thursday night and I'd come to my mother and say "Oh mam.. that's all I've earned again..' and I'd.. crying my eyes out you know because I couldn't earn my money. And she said 'Oh.. I'm not having this. 'Finish there now..' she said 'when Friday comes now, finish.' So I finished there then because.. oh - it was hopeless."

23:44

When asked if they were all women at the new unit in AB Metals, MJ says yes. They had a foreman, and she thinks there were men helping out but on the line itself it was mostly women. They didn't have a uniform but had to buy their own overalls 'down there'. She says that they didn't have a uniform in KB either but used to use their own aprons. She says that the work wasn't dangerous in any way. They only had little soldering irons. She says again that she loved it in AB metals. "It was a different atmosphere and we'd be singing all day down there. It was different work altogether but I was quite happy down there. I would have stayed there I think, you know, if the unit had gone on." When asked what she loved about it she said "the atmosphere and not so much responsibility as KB." She says that in KB they did their job and then it had to be passed by examiners. If there was one loose stitch, they'd have it all back to check. "In AB Metals it was more or less carefree. You had to do your job because they were tested... but there wasn't so much agro and animosity and arguing you know if you.. someone

telling you off if you had a lot of repairs... but I loved it there it was more carefree, you know. It was." When asked if she preferred the work as well she says yes, she did. "You'd have your mistakes you know, but down in AB Metals you wouldn't get caught up about it, they'd accept that it was a mistake and that was it. In Kayser Bondor they were so particular. It was different work altogether."

26:14

When asked if they were made aware of Health and Safety, MJ says they were probably, but not like today. She says that if you had a burn, you had a burn. She says "there wasn't so much H&S in them days." When asked whether AB metals was unionised she says yes - AUEW (?). We were all members of the union. She says that she's still a member now of the Unite union and she still receives correspondence from them and she insured the house with them this year. She says they do house insurance etc. She's still a member but doesn't pay because she's retired. She still has her card. She says her father was a big union and Labour man, and was a staunch believer in unions.

27:31

When asked whether they had paid holidays in both KB and AB metals, she says yes they had a fortnight paid holidays and they also had bank holidays. When asked where or if she went away for holidays, she says 'Not very often.' She says that they'd have occasional days. She says that she and Rene and another friend Leah, went abroad and they went to San Sebastian in Spain once and then to Austria another time. She says in those days they didn't go by plane but went by coach. She says "you had to save like mad - my mother used to do all the saving out of my wages to go." Apart from that it was just odd days here and there.

28:51

When asked what she used to do with her money in AB metals, she says that she again would give it all to her mother, until she died. She died whilst MJ was working in AB Metals. That was in 1960. Up until the week that she died she used to give her all her wages, although her mother used to give her the money to pay the bills and do the shopping, she would still give her her wage packet. She remembers that the girls from AB Metals 'came up' the week that she died, and brought her her wage packet. When they gave her the wage packet, MJ cried because that was the first wage packet that her mother hadn't had.

29:53

MJ says that she stayed in AB metals for 2 or 3 years - not long. She doesn't remember what the year was when she left. When asked if AB Metals were good employers, she

says again that she was quite happy there. They were in a brand new purpose built place and everything was new. She wasn't aware of the conditions in the rest of the factory - "we didn't have much to do with those." That's why she didn't fancy staying there when her unit was closed down although she was offered a job. She says it was an older place and where they were 'everything was fresh and new.'

31:17

When asked if she used to go out with women from AB she says yes although they were from another valley. That's where she met her friend Barbara. Barbara had a car and they used to go and pick different people up and go for a night out. They'd go the pub although they didn't drink a lot in those days. They used to go to a dance in Abercynon. Sometimes they'd catch a train down and meet the girls down there or Barbara would take her car. She says that they'd go out often for a meal and a drink. Barbara lived in Aberfan and used the car to go to work, but MJ used to catch the bus because it was more convenient. She says they used to have some nice times in the car. Sometimes they'd just go 'for a run' or they'd go to ne of the girls' houses in Abercynon and stay there.

33:24

When asked if she kept in touch with women from Abercynon she says no.

"Once we'd finished.. well it was awkward then. Barbara finished... both of us finished together.. we went then up to Dowlais to the BSA we called it, it was Birmingham Small Arms. We used to make parts for guns. We stayed there then and Barbara had an interview in Hoovers, a job in Hoovers and she left. I stayed in the BSA - that closed down - I wasn't there long.. about a 12month I think - that closed down and I didn't have a job again, so I went then to Teddington's Aircraft Controls In Cefn Coed, making parts for aeroplanes. I was doing small coils it was, like a piece of hair, it was all little coils about that and we used to clean these coils under a microscope, all day looking through a microscope. And Barbara got me an interview then. That was when I went into Hoover's... when did go into there?.. 1963 I went into Hoovers. She had me an interview then and I had a job in Hoover's."

35:02

Barbara had asked her if she fancied a job in Hoover's and she'd said she wouldn't mind. She'd heard a lot about Hoover's and they were starting to employ a lot of women. Barbara said that she had an interview for her. She went for the interview with a Mr Arthur Williams who was a senior foreman. He told her that she'd been recommended by a Barbara Vaughan to give her an interview. He asked her where she worked and she told him that she worked in Teddington Aircraft controls. He asked her if she would like a job in Hoovers and she said yes very much.. that the money was good. She thinks it

was about £10 a week then which was a lot of money and it was near enough for her to walk to work. "'Well ' he said 'if you turn out to be half as good a worker as Barbara I'll be very very impressed.' I said 'I'll do my best.' 'Right,' he said 'Start Monday.'" She started in Hoover in 1963.

36:28

When asked how the pay compared to other places, MJ says that she imagines she was having about £6 in Teddingtons. There was no piece work, and it was just a basic wage. In Hoovers, she started on £10 and they'd have a weekly bonus. They'd have a monthly bonus and they'd have a Christmas bonus, which she thinks were exceptionally good wages. She stayed there until she retired.

37:08

We discuss what that would be in today's money. When asked if she felt well off she says "Yes, yes. Millionaire!" She had her wages to herself. She had to keep herself but she was living with her sister because her father was still alive. She used to give her sister some money for her keep. She says it was marvellous money.

38:25

When asked what she did with her money, she says that she used to save a bit, enjoy herself and buy all her clothes. She says the money 'just went on enjoyment really.' She says that she was helping to look after her father who was still alive. Her father died in 1965, five years after her mother.

39:12

When asked whether she had any training at Hoover's, MJ says that she started on supply and she has a photograph of where she started on the supply cords. She was put with an experienced worker. She was working with a woman who'd been doing the job for years and she was showing MJ what to do. There were 2 of them on the line and they were doing electric supply cords, stripping them and soldering them. She says that she enjoyed that job. "I loved Hoover's until the business with the equality when we were doing.. had to end up then doing the heavy jobs you know, on the line and whatever."

40:10

MJ says that she joined the union straight away when she went to Hoovers. They were looking for a shop steward when she was on the disposal bags. That was new Hoovers had just started making disposal bags for the Hoover cleaners. Their section was the first to do that and they were looking for a shop steward. She volunteered to be shop steward for a couple of years.

40:53

"It was alright in the beginning when we had our segregated jobs you know - women and men separate. But once the Equality (Act) came in you could feel the bitterness coming in with the men you know. They didn't want us to have equal pay.. not by no means."

41:13

When asked what happened at Hoovers when the Equal Pay Act came in in 1970, MJ says 41:23 "It came by law and we still weren't on equal pay. And the women said 'Well you know they've had it in Fords, what's wrong with Hoovers?' They were a big firm because they were spread out then, they had a different.. they had quite a few factories.. they were in Perivale, Cumber Slang, they had a few factories in Merthyr. 'What's wrong with us not having equal pay?' So we started the ball rolling, we got in touch with Ann Clwyd, and she helped us a lot mind advising us which way to go you know. We approached management and they said 'Well we've got no qualms about the equality you know. It's been brought in and we're in agreement to you know, to go along with the equality. But of course the convenor stepped in then and said the women weren't doing the work the same as the men." The convenor was in charge of the union and all the shop stewards were under him.

42:39 "It was all mixed then - men and women shop stewards, but the men were still dominant over the women. There was more men than women sort of thing, and they wanted to keep the women like in their own environment. But we thought that you know there were others having it, why shouldn't we have it. Well it started this animosity you know and the men decided to go on strike, although it was against the law, they were on strike for two days - they lost two day's pay over it. But they had to give in in the end but it.. you know.. Then it started a bit of animosity between us about.. you know you're having equal pay so you should do equal jobs, so they started swapping and changing and getting in on the women you know. But it wasn't a very pleasant time at all... not at all."

43:38

When asked what it meant for them MJ says that paywise there was quite a bit of money involved.

43:56 "There was quite a big difference between the women and the men. We were doing what they called the sub-assembly - small jobs that were going in to a washing machine that the men were building on the lines. They'd go into the machines which were smaller - there was no lifting or anything - big jobs.. it was smaller jobs more or

less... they said that they didn't think that the women deserved having equality when their jobs was different you know to the men's. There was a vast difference in the jobs and a vast difference in the pay. Once equal pay came in, they expected women then to work on lines which I ended up on the tumble dryer line, horrible jobs, but the men used to come around and say 'Well you're having the same money, you're expected to do the same job.' So they'd throw anything at us." The women ended up on big presses and other big machinery.

45:06

MJ says the men were on strike for two days but it was never the same afterwards. It took years to cool down, til the men accepted it. Some of the men ended up with easy jobs and it was mostly shop stewards that were looking after one another. When asked if the men ever accepted it, she says the new men did but the older men didn't. She says that the bad feeling went on for "quite a few years. It was still there really when I left." Also there had been different company takeovers and Hoover wasn't the same company. It wasn't such a good company and the Hoover name was there in name only. She says the working conditions were never as good as different firms took over.

46:25

When asked what she did as shop steward during the dispute, she says that they couldn't do a lot. "They were all on the gates and we women just stuck together, carried on, went in and done our own work you know, but there was no production, we're just doing our own jobs, and keeping going as best we could." The men would usually bring work for them to do and fill up their stillages but there was no-one to do that, so they just carried on with what they could. When asked if they were still paid MJ says yes, because they didn't stop working. She says that when the BBC came up, she spoke to them and said "We're not fighting the firm, we're fighting the union, Hoover's union, and the shop stewards and the men of the Hoover's union. The firm agreed to give us the pay straight away. We didn't have no problem with them. They were such a good firm you know."

47:52

When asked how she felt the men were behaving she says "Well I was disgusted, really disgusted because it had become law you know they didn't have a leg to stand on really." The union told the convenor that the men had to go back to work, and they decided they were fighting a losing battle. They had to accept that equality would come in. "It was no easy task for the women, because the men didn't like it one bit."

48:44

When asked if the women were of one mind she says yes. Because they'd won in Fords after a fight. Thankfully the Ford women held out and won she says and they had to fight the company. Hoovers on the other hand were supportive and there was no argument with the company. She says they got equal pay but the men never accepted it deep down. They were aware of the Dagenham strike when it happened and Ann Clwyd was very helpful, gave them a lot of advice and told them they were entitled to equal pay.

50:22

When asked if she remembers her first day at work at Hoovers she says yes she thinks she can. The man who interviewed her was the senior foreman of the section, then the under foreman Colin from Aberfan introduced himself. He introduced her to her mentor who showed MJ how to do the job. She was put on the electrical supply cords for the washing machines. She always called her Mrs Collins. Mrs (Katie) C showed her what to do and she was very helpful. She says she wasn't very good on the first day but soon became quicker. They all had 'numbers' to reach.

52:09

MJ says that she didn't start in the main factory, but in the old KB factory across the road. When KB moved to Dowlais. Hoover had taken the building over. She says that she'd worked in the building before when it was at KB. 'Ironic isn't it?' She says that Hoover took over a building in Dowlais and that part of the factory moved to Dowlais. Because she was junior they moved her to disposable bags which stayed in the KB building. She stayed there until the Equality act came in and then she was moved to work on the tumble drier line.

53:52

She says that she enjoyed making the disposable bags. They made them until they transferred them to Bolton. Then they went to work in the main factory on the lines doing different jobs. When asked how many of the worked in Hoover altogether she says she thinks it was about 7000 between all the factories. They had 2 in Dowlais, they had the KB factory, the old Triangle houses were pulled down and they built the Hoover dispatch there. Different car component factories have taken that over. They had the main factory, which was three factories all together - the dyecast, the hoovermatic line, the automatic line, and MP8 was a different building on its own, that was where the dispatch and the automatic lines - the automatic machines, the front loaders and the tumble drier line were. She says they started off with a single spin drier and then went on to the twin machine, the hoovermatic, they then had the front loader - the keymatic - and then the tumble driers and the front loaders. The cleaners were made in Cambuslang and the main office was in Perivale. The main HQ is in Pentrebach now, because they build a new factory in Abercanaid. She says that the staff shop still sells things cut price to ex

employees and those who've retired and her friend Rene had a new machine a few weeks ago. However she says they're Candy washing machines now and they're not so good. She says that she reluctantly bought a new washing machine and tumble drier in 2005 and she bought a Hotpoint which was Hoover's main competitor. She says that they were dead against Hotpoint! She says "It's very good mind. I've got to say. Good machine!" and laughs.

58:17

When asked how many of the 7000 employees were women she says about a quarter. She says they were all women in Dowlais and the bagging section in KB were mostly women and the Hoovermatic line were women. But gradually when the women finished not a lot of new women started. A lot of the women's jobs went over to the men. When asked if she thought that was on purpose she says she doesn't know but it makes you think. But she says by then it wasn't Hoovers but had been taken over about 4 times. She says that "When Hoovers were there they were a fantastic firm, the best firm I even worked for." But they handed over to other firms. She says that they were recognised for 5 year's service, 10 year's service, a 15 years' service, 20 and 25. They were recognised for their birthdays through the years. They were given little necklaces - a ruby for 5 years, a diamond for 10, a ruby and diamond for 15, 2 diamonds for 20 and 2 diamonds and a ruby for 25. She says they were genuine stones.

61:02

When asked about the conditions she says they were excellent. Lovely canteen, with home-made food. There was a break in the morning when the trolley would come round with drinks and sandwiches, or whatever they wanted. There was the canteen for lunch and then the trolley would come round again in the afternoon. She says that if they were ill they'd be paid in full for a few weeks. It would drop gradually over quite a few weeks. When asked if that was unusual then she says that it was. But she says that was abused by the men. They eventually cut down on the sick pay. But at the beginning it was fantastic.

62:41

When asked about holidays she says that they had bank holidays, you had a week of premium days. They linked the premium days up with the birthdays worked at the firm and eventually you'd have a week's premium holidays on full pay to take whenever you wanted. They also had summer holidays and sometimes at Christmas they'd have a week off. She says that her friend had a static caravan in Fontygari and they used to spend most of their holidays down there. Then one year they went to the Isle of Wight, they went to Great Yarmouth, and they went to Corfu and they were there when the war broke out between the Turks and the Greeks. She talks about being stranded in Corfu. 65:10 She says that they spent every weekend down in Fontygari and all their holidays more or

less and they could take their pets with them. She says that they knew more people in Fontygari than in Merthyr. She says that they managed to get back to work in time after their Corfu experience. She says that she was panicking but Barbara took things in her stride.

66:10

When asked about perks, she says that she's still using the Hoover hairdryer that she bought while she was working in Hoover and she has two cleaners upstairs that she still uses. She says that they'd have a good staff discount. She can't remember exactly how much.

67:04

When asked if they had to wear a uniform for work, MJ says that Hoover supplied all those, but they had to launder them themselves. In the beginning they were very thick, but gradually they made them thinner. They were blue in the main with cream cuffs and collar. They were hardwearing and used to last. When they were thinner they didn't last so long. They had a laundry there that did the repairs if you had a rip in your overalls. They would launder the men's and she thinks that they used to have theirs laundered in the beginning. The men would wear light brown uniforms, depending on what section they worked in. Maintenance would have different overalls - the tool room would have white overalls and the maintenance would have green and the foremen then had white with a green pocket. When asked if they liked having a uniform she says yes. It saved your clothes a lot and they'd have their overalls on all the time.

69:23

When asked if the work was dangerous in any way, she says that some of it could be but it depended on how you worked. Health and safety had started to come in while she was in Hoovers and they were very health and safety conscious. They made them aware of health and safety. If there was a serious accident there would be an enquiry. They had their own health and safety unit there. When asked if she remembers any accidents and compensation awards she says no - not where she was.

70:12

When asked whether the work had any long term implications on her health she says no. The she says "I don't know as the years go on." She says that standing on concrete didn't help at all. She says that didn't help a lot. She doesn't haven't trouble with her feet but she has arthritis and trouble with her neck. She thinks the wear and tear on her neck has a lot to do with bending all day. When asked whether being on the line was tough she says it was tough in the beginning. (\*This is when she was on the tumble dryers.) She struggled to begin with because she wasn't used to the jobs. But she says she coped all right, she fought it and she didn't let it get the better of her. "I tried to keep up as best I could, and as I say in the end you know I was waiting for the men they were no longer

waiting for me. Cos if there was a gap in the line they'd shout 'Marion come on pass them up!' you know, well in the end I was waiting for them. I found my own way of doing it and I coped very well." She says that Hoover were no longer in charge by the time she was on the line - it was a different company.

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75:03

MJ says that they played music on top of the noise as well. She says you couldn't hear a lot of it sometimes but it was on. If you were in a quiet part of the factory you could enjoy it, but in other parts you couldn't bear it. They didn't sing out loud but sing to themselves. They were spread out more than they were in KB. She says it was a different environment. They weren't working with so many men in KB.

75:43

She says that the camaraderie between the women wasn't bad. She says that some of them kept to themselves and thought they were a 'bit above.' She says that they all stuck together if something cropped up.

76:10

When asked if she could remember any important visitors coming to Hoover when she was there, she says that the Queen paid a visit. She talks about the visit which happened in March 1973. She says that Prince Charles visited as well, but that was a while after the queen. She talks about Prince Charles' visit.

78:40

When asked how she thinks Hoover changed over the years she says that it deteriorated. She lists what was good about Hoover and how it changed. She says that they took a lot of privileges away like the premium days.

79:21

She says that the section dos were stopped. With Hoover they all used to have their own section Christmas 'dos'. They cut down on all the bonuses - the pay wasn't so good, the pay rises weren't there and every company that took over it just deteriorated. They were working harder for less money and less holidays. She says that she celebrated her 25 years in 1988 and it was after that. Every couple of years after that someone else would take it over.

80:43

She had her 25 years, she was given the day off and had a carriage clock presented to her and her necklace. They spent their day off with the manager of Hoovers at that time. They had a meal and they were presented with her prize. She says she finished 4 years after that. She says that she spent 29 years there. She left because of ill health and it was getting harder. There was a redundancy offer coming up so she took the redundancy. She was 57. She says that she's never worked anywhere since then.

82:24

When asked if she enjoyed working in the factories she says yes that it was the only life she knew. She says that she didn't have the brains or the push to go for anything different. She says that she didn't find it boring or monotonous but sometimes she got fed up, especially towards the end.

83:12

She says that she isn't in contact with anyone from her factory days only Rene from KB. She thinks that the majority of people she worked with in Hoover have all died. She says that she lost contact with everyone when she moved from the bottom of town to Pant and then over to where she lives now.

83:52

She says that she has no regrets looking back on her factory life. Hoover was her main employment which she thought a lot of and when she drives past the factory now, she's heart broken when she sees the state it's in. When asked if it was a good life she says yes, that whole families worked there. Her youngest brother was there, her sister and her brother in law, lots of her cousins worked there and they're all gone now she says. She talks about her brother's work as a painter and decorator. She says that they were a friendly company. You'd always see the bosses, they were never stuck in the office, they'd always walk the shop floor.

86:12

When asked whether the Hoover dispute affected her family she says no that her brother was a maintenance worker and it only affected the male assembly workers. She talks about her brother in law.

87:23

She says that the women who worked there were all ages. The woman she worked with Mrs Collins, she was middle aged when MJ started in her late twenties and she was one of the first women that Hoovers had employed. She talks a little about Mrs Collins. There was a mix of married and single women. Women with children tended to leave and not a lot of the came back.

89:36

When asked if she was proud to have been a part of the Equal Pay struggle she says yes. "That was a big piece of history in my opinion, because a lot of people have gained with that, professional people you know." She talks about a woman she knew who worked in the office in Hoover who went to work in the local Police station and then they came out for equal pay as well, and they had it eventually.

90:43

When asked about the ring she showed me MJ says "My friend Barbara and I worked in Hoovers and every 5 years we used to have a necklace with a ruby in it, and every 5 years after that we'd have a necklace with either diamonds or rubies in it, They're real stones - they're not artificial. So one year after we'd had a few of these necklaces between us, my friend asked me if she could have what necklaces I had and she took her necklaces with her stones - the diamonds and rubies, and she bought a wedding ring and she had a jeweller to put all these stones into this wedding ring and she presented it to me one Christmas as a present and she said 'That's your and my working life put together in one ring.' because it was all the Hoover stones put together in one ring. And I've still got the ring."

CE: "And do you wear it?"

MJ: "Yes I wear it all the time."

She says that Barbara died in 1989. She gave it to her a couple of years before she died.

92:53

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD CYFWELIAD