

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

**Freeman's Cigar Factory – Cardiff, Curran's - Cardiff**

**Interviewee:** VSE032.2 Violet Ann Davies

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

*00:00 Can you tell me your name and your date of birth please.*

Violet Ann Davies. 27/09/1940.

*Tell me a little bit about where you were born, your father your mother your siblings that sort of thing.*

I was born in Penarth Road. We moved to Jubilee Street when I was 2 months. We were there a month and we were bombed out. We were lucky as there was only 1 family killed then - the Nichols. Then we were shipped to Ely to live with different families and then to this house. My Gran had number 46 Allerton House, then number 44 come available so we came and lived here which apparently my father said was a mess. The walls were black, outdoor toilet, everything. I have lived here ever since and all my family lived round here which was brilliant.

*1:28 What about brothers and sisters then?*

I've got a brother 18 months younger than me; he was born in this house. My brother May 30th 1942 I was born 1940. Just the 2 of us. I lost my mum when I was 19 and my brother was 17. My dad always lived with here with me; I looked after my dad until he died at 75 in 1985.

*2:03 What did your dad do?*

He worked in Currans, he worked in the Guest Keen. Currans were the ammunition factory he did try to join the army in the 1940's but because he worked in Currans the ammunition factory they wouldn't take him. They said no we need you to do your job. He always worked in a factory. My mum before she was taken ill she used to be like a she'd go to people houses cleaning in the Heath and she had lovely people up there. They had to work then if you didn't work you didn't have any money.

*2:53 Where did you go to school then?*

I went to Court School from when I was about 3 because when I was 11 I had to go to Grange Council because I started school early I had to stay in Court Road for an extra year when all my friends went up. I left school when I was 15 Grange Council and went straight into the cigar factory.

*Where was Grange Council then?*

Lower Grange. You know where Rita lives just by there, just along by where Rita lives. It was a nice school but we never learnt much it's not like today all these decimals and things the kids have got to learn. But I found I was good at arithmetic I had top marks at school and it hasn't done me any harm because I love cooking I've always done craft things made flowers, birthday cakes and all the little roses to go on the cakes of I've always done things like that. Sewing and knitting when the kids were little. Even when going out to work I've always done something creative. It annoys me now because I can't do it so much. I still make my Welsh cakes.

*4:30 When did you leave school?*

When I was 15.

*Would you have liked to have stayed on?*

No I never I had any option you just had to. I didn't pass my A Levels to go to college or anything. I went in for them but I think it was a waste of time because all I learnt in school was adding up and taking away a bit of history. I had knitting classes you'd sit there doing a bit of knitting for hours on end but it didn't do me any harm because like I said I've always made things and I love cooking which I got off my mum and my nan. I make all birthday and Christmas cakes and everything stooped a bit now but I love doing it.

*5:28 What did you do when you left school?*

I would have liked to have gone to Marks and Spencer's because it was a good job and I did go for a few interviews then I just landed over the cigar factory in Clive Street. I'm glad really because it was so friendly hundreds of girls working there. It was about a 6 storey building I think, we got a lift because I think we were on the third floor. It was lovely.

*6:08 Did you have to have an interview?*

Yes we had an interview what was her name I can't remember.

*What did they ask you, that kind of thing?*

I think we just had to fill a form in or something and you put the form in and they said you've got the job. But I was 15 and 3 months when I started in the cigar factory and when I got in there we just had to go on the floor first of all sweeping and filling the machines with the tobacco. You done that until you learnt how to use the machines. I think I must have picked it up really quick because I remember working on the machines about 6 months after I started.

*7:03 Were you trained on the machines?*

I think you learnt as you were going around and you are sweeping the floor you weren't trained there wasn't anybody there to train you. Say someone wanted to go to the toilet they'd say go on the machine for a minute so you just picked it up. The more you done it, it was really dangerous when you think about it because a big arm came down it could have taken your fingers off. I think some people must have lost some fingers. There were cutters you had to pull the cigar out quick before the cutters came and cut the end straight. You just picked it up yourself and if Miss Harris I think our one in charge and Elsie was the charge hand and Miss Harris was the forewoman. Ethel Harries if I remember rightly was looking after us. But because ours was a small room we were more together because the other rooms the cigar and stripping rooms were much bigger but it was such a friendly place anyway.

*8:26 Were there many people you knew there when you went to work there people from Grangetown?*

Yes there were girls and they used to bring a bus load from the valley. The valley bus used to come down and take them home. From Caerphilly and all from that area used to come down. No you got to know the girls anyway. I met a lot of girls I haven't see them now but I still remember their names. They used to be on the machines and we all used to sing. I used to be on the machine with one girl Mary Ward is was a bit older than me, about 20 years older than me and if I's seen a picture on the television I'd go in an while we were on the machine making the cigars I'd be telling Mary all about the picture I'd seen. I could remember it from the back and then we'd all have a sing song. It was brilliant really nice and sometimes they'd shut some of the machines down and they'd put a big blanket over them so it you were sweeping the room you'd go behind the machine and you'd be dozing off. It was funny or we'd dipped the cigars in the paste we had and throw them at each other. With the new factory we went into we couldn't do that sown there because it was one big massive room with machines in one and then you had the stripping room.

*10:17 Describe the first factory for me when you walked in on that first day what was it like?*

In Clive Street?

*Yes. What did it sound like, what did it smell like?*

Well you could smell the cigar even coming home you could smell the tobacco it seemed to stick on your clothes. They gave us overalls, they were green overalls when you first went in and I think when you used to want a clean overall you left it there you didn't do your own

washing. I can't remember bringing the overalls home they must have had a place where they washed the overalls.

*11:03 So the factory paid for that?*

I think so I have a feeling that I can't remember bringing overalls home.

*11:11 What kind of building was it in Clive Street?*

It was about a five or six storey building. You had the lift as you went in. I can't remember how they picked which room you went in because there were so many different rooms. There was a canteen there as well which I can't remember using as I only lived round the corner I used to come home for my dinner and to see if my mum was alright as well. It was nice in our room. The bigger room I knew all the girls in there lots of them because a lot of them were from Grange Town and you got to know them. In our room we had the work then we used to mend the machines. If a machine broke down I remember one was called Arthur, Peter Richards that's one who took the photos he wasn't supposed to but he used to hide his camera, good job he did or we wouldn't have them today. They used to come and mend the machines if a machine broke down. I think there was one called Bertie as well.

*12:37 So how many women were there and how many men were there would you say in the first place?*

In my room let's see about 30 of us but in the other rooms I'm thinking twice as many as that because it was double the size the rooms there.

*Do you know how many of you were in the whole factory?*

Oh no I've got no idea.

*So hundreds yes?*

Hundreds of them yes. Because I used to do stripping rooms, there were the cigar rooms then the smaller cigars it was canteen and of course there was the bosses.

*13:33 Were there more women than men?*

Oh yes much more women than men. There were a couple of men in our room, I think we had about 3 or 4 men who took it in turns to mend the machines if they were about. You then just had the men who were bosses there were no men on the machines or anything or charge hands not in our room anyway.

*14:03 What was the relationship like between the women and the men?*

Fabulous no arguments no nothing we just used to sing the old songs and harmonise. This one girl I was on with I will never forget that Audrey Lack her name was. We used to be on the machine, Audrey lives up in Ely now I think and we used to sing; We'll Gather Lilacs in the Spring Again. We used to laugh our heads off because I couldn't sing a note and I don't think she was any better. But then we had other girls in there and we used to harmonise together all

of us lots of them it was smashing. I can remember most of their names. Joan Cox, Gloria Cox, Rose Harding, June Feta. she's June Wagstaff now she had a beautiful voice June Feta lovely she still lives down the bay she does. There was a Lily King I think her name was, Dolly Gouch, Dolly Gilbert and that photo I can't remember the 2 on the end and they were in our class as well I mean room as well.

*15:43 Tell me about wages then when you started.*

The first wage of mine was three pound two and six I'll never forget that.

*Was that when you were sweeping up?*

Yes just three pound two and six that's all I had and I used to give my mother two pound fifty, two pound ten shillings then and I had seven and six because your money went to your parents and we had to save that because dresses were more than your wages five pound or something, things were expensive. So you had to save your money to go and but things in town. But I always used to give my mum, I don't know what the kids do today but my mum had most of my wages, Then when I went on the machine and you had bonus for how many cigars you made I kept that then.

*16:48 Can you remember how much you earned when you went on the machine? Was that a big step up?*

It wasn't all that much. Say we had three pound two and six and I think it might have made it up to five pound I think you know but not hundreds of pounds but it was a good wage for then. I'm talking about 1955 or 1956. To have that was a good wage.

*17:20 Did you feel well off with that?*

Yes it did a bit. Because I mean we didn't have much money anyway and when my mum died when I was 19 all my money went into the house because I looked after my dad and my brother because he was 18 months younger than me. My mum died and my dad used to say here you are here's the wages and he had six pounds a week to look after the house. Which was I never asked for any more just put my money in it so it was hard really then. The money they get now for not even working don't they.

*18:12 What were the conditions like down Clive Street?*

They were very good it was on Christmas they used to say to us we used go across the road in the London Style a pub and they'd say if any of you come back drunk you were sent home straight home. So you'd be sure otherwise you'd miss your bonus because you wouldn't want to be out very long because you want your bonus. They were good conditions they had a nice nurse's room where you could go and talk to the nurse anytime if you had to and I was up there quite a bit at one stage. She was lovely to.

*19:03 So how much of a bonus would you have for Christmas?*

Well we'd always had cigarettes how many is it in a long packet, 200 is it? 200 packet of cigarettes we had, I'm not sure if it was every month you had that but then Christmas no I can't remember a bonus at Christmas it's all I can remember you just had to make more cigars to have your bonus. So you used to work like everything to get I think it was 500 went in a box and the more boxes you made in a day the more bonus you had. I think you had a bonus per box.

*19:54 Were you allowed to smoke...?*

I didn't smoke then until I'd had my daughter and I wasn't working then. No they smoked they must have. They smoked in the rooms I didn't notice, I think they must have. In the canteens or something yes I think they must have smoked in the canteens.

*20:18 When you went on the machine can you describe a working day for me and what you did exactly?*

Well I'd brush in early in the morning you had to sign in, you signed in and signed out. So you'd sign in 5 minutes earlier so you could get the machine going and then you'd sit on the machine and although you could laugh and sing and everything you could still make your cigars. It was clean and tidy it was quite nice in there. It was nice and relaxing really.

*20:56 But what exactly would you do?*

I was first of all on the small ones first, a roller. You had a roller that you put a bit of leaf on the machine and a hand come down and then you'd roll the tobacco that was in a big thing on the top that another girl would come around and fill up the bowls. It would come down and roll the cigarette the cigar and then you'd have to pick it up and put it in this hot barrel thing with all the shape cigars in it. Then it would take it around and put it in another hot barrel and then someone picked the arm up take it and then two cutters would come across to cut it straight. If you thought the leaf wasn't tidy on it you could pull it out quick before it caught your fingers. They wouldn't let you do that now there was no sort of barriers or anything to stop you having your fingers cut off or anything.

*22:16 So the work was quite dangerous?*

It was dangerous I think it was. If I remember a few of the girls did have their fingers cut. In the other machine rooms I can't remember anyone in mine but I'm sure that someone in the other room had it.

*Would they lose fingers?*

Yes they lost their fingers whether they claimed or not I don't know. It was really dodgy.

*22:46 Were you made aware of Health & Safety?*

Not then no there wasn't any thought of Health and Safety. But I was on the one side first and then you go over the other side and then you put the last of the leaf on the cigar to make it tidy. I loved it.

*23:10 How many of those cigars would you make in a day?*

I think it was 3000 or 4000 something like that.

*Would you make?*

Yes. Well it was 2 of us on a machine and we done it between us. You had one on the one side of the machine and the other putting the leaf on as you can see on there there's what was long time since I've been there. What was mine? I can't remember what it was but we were 2 on a machine. 2 girls on a machine that's why we could talk because we were near each other which done the one cigar or cigarette. I think if we said had 3000 or 4000 you had to work together so you had that money you knew the bonus that the two of you were getting. On the other machines they done exactly the same however many they made they have that in bonus.

*24:27 So it was like piecework?*

Yes it was really because it would even the wages I mean 3 pound 2 and 6 but it made it up once you went on the machine which I couldn't get on quicker enough to get a couple of extra bob that it made it up good. It was good money for then for how much money was.

*24:55 While you were at Freeman's, did you do the same job all the time you were there?*

We used be on the mannequins but in our room we had 6 machines which were called King 6's and Indian Sticks which were bigger cigars so when you rolled them up I did used to go on them as well. But I never done stripping because you had to strip the leaves and things I never went on that I was always in this one room on the machines.

*25:38 What did you prefer making the mannequins or the other ones?*

I didn't mind really. It was nice to go on the King 60's because our room was the only one that had the King 60's and the Indian Stick as there were only 6 machines so I used to think I was the cat's whiskers going on a big machine and i could do it. Because you had to be careful on them as well. It was a bit dangerous you could have your fingers off. You're on big cigars now big machines.

*26:17 Were the bonuses about the same or could you earn more?*

I think with them you had silver boxes and they were like that shape and then you filled them up and I think you were paid by a box I think. Because the boxes were the same size as the smaller ones of course you couldn't get as many in there I think it I had a bonus on the big ones I should think.

*27:00 Tell me about the hours then you said you had to clock in. What time did you go to work?*

Half past seven we started in the mornings we had an hour for dinner which i used to come home and then I think we worked till 5, I'm sure it was from 5 then, we get back one and then we'd work five. You'd finished at 12 and you'd try to get back earlier because I said the more

cigars you made the more bonus you had. It was just rushing around to get more money. But it was nice I liked it there.

*27:48 Did you have breaks?*

We must have had a break we must have gone to the canteen I can't remember the canteen now, but we must have had a break. I think the canteen must have been on the top floor in there.

*28:15 I just wanted to ask you about the kind of women who worked there in Freeman's were you all youngsters or was there a mix?*

No we were all young really. I think perhaps Mary Ward might have been about 15 years older than me who I was on the machine with but no not old on our machines we were more or less the same age really.

*28:48 What about married women or women with children were there women with children working there?*

Not at the time because we were only 15 or 16.

*I mean in the factory itself?*

In the factory itself there must have been in the other room's women with children. Since its been built I don't know when it was first built but there was always women in there I'm not sure if my family worked there as well as that was the only place they could go. I know my mum worked in one of the hotels in town like a emptying the commodes and things you know. I think some of them must have gone to the cigar factory because my family have lived in Grange Town since 1900 as far as I know.

*29:52 Were there any unions in the factory and were you a member?*

I can't remember really. I couldn't tell you, I can't remember being in a union. The only union was when I worked in Currents. I can't remember a union then no when I was a home carer that's when I joined Unison, but before that I don't think I was in a union no.

*30:26 You don't remember any disputes or anything?*

No I don't think they had any. I mean they paid good wages and everybody was pleased. It was always nice and clean in there from what I can remember, we had nice clean overalls.

*So you think the conditions were good?*

Yes pretty good when you think back on it we had a nurse's room there. If you had a head ache or you weren't feeling well you could go to the nurse and she'd sort you out. I don't think they have places like that today have they in work? It was really good.

*31:15 So would you say they were good employers?*

Yes definitely as far as I was concerned because I used to go when my mum was very ill and I used to go up the nurses room and then I told the nurse what the matter was with my mum and they said take as much time off as you like and you can come back and I did. I went back and they were brilliant. they were good to me anyway.

*31:51 So they were very supportive?*

Yes very supportive they were and today you've got to send in sick notes and do all that. I remember in the new factory I'd had my daughter and I went back there to work for a couple of months. I was doing like the night shift in the new factory in Penarth Road. I think 8 of us went there to do the first night shift and I was having a miscarriage and I came out of there and I did. They sent for an ambulance and I came home and I never sent a sick note in for about 10 weeks and my friend who worked in there Maureen she said they called me in and said they've got money for you. She brought about 10 wages packets home for me and I hadn't sent in a sick note or anything in and I was surprised because I thought they don't owe me nothing. I had a good couple of pounds in there in all these envelopes; they'd kept them in the safe for me till someone picked them up. I had to give Maureen a letter to say she could get them for me but I didn't go back after. But they always said they was a job if I wanted to go back. Really they were good and I said you are supposed to send a sick note in but I didn't for 10 weeks I think it was.

*33:22 So everybody was paid sick leave then?*

Well I was whether I don't what happened but I was I didn't send a sick note I can remember that and Maureen coming to me and saying I think it was Mr Noble one of the bosses he said we've got money here for Anne get a letter and we'll give you her wages. I think she brought home 10 envelopes for me which was all the wages for the 10 weeks. Then I had to say to them that I wasn't coming back then because I thought they were so good doing that to me. But I think after that they did make sure that people gave sick notes in. Because you were supposed to put a sick note in.

*34:13 Did they pay you full wages?*

Yes full wages I was shocked I was with that.

*34:23 How long were you in the old factory and when did you leave to go to the new factory?*

If I'm not mistaken I started in the old factory in 1955 and I think we might have gone to the new factory in 1960, something like that.

*34:53 So was that after your mum died?*

Yes my mum died when I was 19 so I went to back to work after, well you had to you couldn't. But the new factory wasn't the same as the old one because they were huge rooms and you had all the machines in one room. Then you had the stripping room next to it in another room a big stripping room. So you couldn't sing because the room was too big. People on the machine with you and where the big machines were that's what I was on then

all the time then when I went to the new factory I was on the big machines. But they were in the same room as all these hundreds of machines. But I think today well its gone today I think when they different machines all together they were more sort of looked after and you had safety things on them then when we went to the new factory. It weren't so dangerous then but you couldn't sing because it was huge.

*36:14 What about the noise levels then?*

At that time I didn't take notice of the noise really. Because it couldn't have been that noisy because you could talk to the girl on the one over by there from you. Although there were a lot of machines no. They also played music through a radio thing into the rooms. So they always played music for us in the old one and the new one. So we had always had music you weren't just sat there on the machine doing nothing.

*36:56 So did you used to sing with the radio?*

Yes. Then the radio may go off and we'd all sing together. That's a thing we always had music coming through.

*37:10 What about the heat and lighting on the old factory to begin with?*

There were big windows so it was all heat and it was warm in there and it was light. Because our room wasn't all that big so the one wall down that side was full of windows so it was nice and light in there. I think the other side as well both sides had windows because this side where we had the machines looked on the railway line; you could look out on the railway line. It was quite nice and light I was quite glad I was in the small room because we were more together the girls although I knew all the girls in the big room got together and done things. But we were very close in our room. Brings back memories.

*38:17 So there were no issues with heating?*

No.

*What about the new factory - was it the same?*

Well that was a modern I wasn't down there very long because that was 1960 and I think I had my daughter in 1962. But then they started about 1963 they started a night shift and they asked about 6 or 8 of us, old girls from the old factory and our room to go back on a 6 till 10 in the night and there was only a couple of machines of us on that. I think it was Joan and Gloria Cox, Mary Dibble even Audrey Lack came there, Rose so we all went back about 1963 to do a couple of hours in the night because they had big orders.

*39:24 Did you enjoy working the night shift?*

Yes I did because it was in the new factory and I did but as I said then I had a miscarriage and they had to get an ambulance so I never went back. The boss said to me mind; Mike Genes 'any time you want a job back come back'. I didn't like to because at that time you get a bit embarrassed by things like that, so I didn't go back there. But I think the girls that stayed

there and a lot were there had a good pay out when they did close down so they were good to work for all the time. As far as I could see they were brilliant.

*40:16 First of all what did you do with the wages; I know you gave your wages to mum but what did you do with the other money?*

Well it was only 7 and six at the time. So I can remember me having no shoes at one time because you couldn't afford them at that time. I had to save I'd try and save it or there was a shop down Penarth Road that you could have it on the weekly like you paid for the dress before you had it. Salvages I think it was called in Penarth Road and everyone used to go there. All the girls I think went there to order dresses and you'd pay say five or two and six a week and then you'd get the dresses or I'd save up and go into town and you didn't have all shoes and stuff like they have today. You'd have one pair of shoes and then they'd last you until you saved your wages to buy another pair.

*41:38 What about going out?*

Because my mum was ill I didn't like to go out much. I did have a boyfriend when I was 17 but I didn't tell him what the matter was with my mum. But I can remember him coming down one day and I never had a pair of shoes to wear out, he wanted to go out for a walk. I said no I didn't want to go out now didn't tell him and he thought I had some other fellow and I never seen him again, it might sound stupid but he went off. No we never had the money to but things then and because my mum was ill, my dad said she couldn't look after the house she was so ill she didn't know about paying the rent or the milkman or the coalman. So my dad just said to me here's the money for the house, the house keeping money and you sort it. SO I had to automatically take over so a lot of my money went into the house as well. My brother did work down the coal mine, what's the one you said yes Senghenydd. He worked down there my brother for a while. But he used to give me two pound a week and my dad gave me six pound a week and that was for everything in the house so I used to put two pound fifty in but then after a week the money would be gone so I would put the rest of mine in. I never ever asked my dad for any extra. I just had to carry on I couldn't afford to buy. And going out I did start going out with the girls down here because they used to have outings up Tintern Abbey and different places.

*43:58 Was that girls from the factory?*

No down the street friends down here. I went out now and again but I never enjoyed myself because my mum was ill. Then I got married, my mum died in 1959 and I got married in 1960. I had my daughter then 1962, Julie, so I know I must have been in Curran's in about 1963 or 1964 because that's when I had a miscarriage then I had my Jane in 1966 and then my son in 1969.

*44:48 Can I just ask one more thing about Freeman's although I understand that you didn't go out very often? Did they used to put dos on?*

Yes. They used to have outings, I think I've got a photo upstairs in Torquay on an outing with the new factory because I can remember going down there and I've got photos of us with the

boys that worked there as well, so I know it is from there. But I can't remember much about it because of my mum I didn't get over that for years with my mum. Yes they did used to have outings.

*45:49 Was that for the day then?*

It must have been on the weekend because we didn't close the factory down or anything, it must have been on the weekend and I can't remember who booked it or anything I can just remember going on it.

*46:07 Did you pay for that?*

Yes we had to pay to go I think, yes. You just put your name down and I think you paid.

*46:18 What about other holidays do you remember when they were?*

No I can't remember if the factory closed for a fortnight and you took that time off then. Then they closed for Christmas I can't remember to be honest, but I didn't used to go on holidays anyway at the time.

*46:50 Do you remember having holiday pay, were they paid holidays?*

Yes paid holidays I think, yes.

*47:00 When you were given time off for personal reasons were you paid during that time?*

Yes they were paying my wages all the time. They just said go off and they paid me my wages which I was so pleased because then I said you didn't have pay outs off anybody so if you didn't work you didn't get any money.

*So they were very good then?*

They were very good no I had my pay the month before my mum died I remember that. I must have been off more after my mum died as well. They paid me all I didn't have to put no sick notes in or anything they knew what was happening they were very good. I don't know if they do that today. I'm glad I went to work there and all the girls were good in there as well.

*48:14 Did you keep in touch with... when you left eventually Freeman's, did you keep in touch the girls?*

The girls no not really because I got married then but I know I've seen them about if I go about and I've seen Audrey, she's got a caravan down Sully. Joan and Gloria both died years ago of cancer I think. Grace Johnston she's still alive, Ely way or somewhere. June Feta I see here now and again because she still lives down the docks. Mary of course up here, Mary Ward she moved away. But no I know them and they know me because it was such a small room we knew each other and it was good, perhaps if I was in the big room I wouldn't have known because there were hundreds in the big rooms so we were lucky we were in the small room.

*49:27 You told me about one of the women who took part in the Commonwealth Games.*

Yes Pat Perks.

*Can you tell me what happened there?*

Pat she was a gymnast and I can remember in the cigar factory, the old one they collected all over the factory for her to send her to the games to buy her all her clothes and equipment for the gymnastic team. Her gymnastic teacher his name was Guy something but she did marry in the end his son. So Pat is living up Ely I think I don't see her but I know she's still alive. She married Glyn Guy that's right and he was the gymnastics teacher's son. But they were good with Pat and there must be a photo of Pat somewhere with all her gear on I can't remember where she went though, it must have been about 1958 or something around then.

*At the Empire Games in Cardiff?*

The Empire was it I thought she went away somewhere. I don't know I thought she had to travel way somewhere. I don't know I suppose I could find out.

*51:00 So tell me how that came about then. What team was she with then?*

Well that was her father in law's Mr Guy from down the docks, down the docks she lived Pat, and she was one of my best friends in the cigar factory. But they just heard that she needed money because you had to pay to have all the coats and the trousers and the tops and everything. I remember they went all around so that what a nice factory it was. That they took time out to collect from every room. They collected enough to get her equipment and all her clothes and everything. I know there were photos somewhere of Pat in her equipment that they all bought her.

*52:05 So the management went round to collect?*

The management must have done it I think it must have been the management they must have said that we will collect for you to get all, because money was short then so people couldn't afford it. You had to have the proper coat, the proper skirts and everything to go. I can see her now in her uniform that she had to wear for it, Pat she looked really smart.

*52:39 You don't think it was the games in Cardiff then.*

No I thought she had to go abroad somewhere. I can't remember but I thought it was abroad somewhere. But I've never seen her in Cardiff Yesterday's Books. I used to wonder why it wasn't in one of them. It must be in one of them but I haven't seen it, but she was so pleased Pat.

*53:13 Can I just ask how did you get to work?*

I walked it's only around the corner wasn't it.

*And down to Penarth Road as well?*

Yes well we used to walk Penarth Road down there.

*53:30 When did you start work in Curran's?*

1976 till 1978 over Curran's. 10:00 o'clock because my son was born 1969, I did have my own nursery at one time over the Tan but I was taken ill with Meniere's Disease in the ears, it takes your sense of balance. We only had a year and we had to give it up because she couldn't do it on her own. Then when I got better I went to work down Curran's the saucepans, it was a saucepan factory then. We used to have to have boxes of saucepans and we used to have to pile them all up in these big boxes to go to ten. They put me on returns that if people had one of their saucepans had been broke or something I had to send them a new one off. It was terrible in there, I'd go ten in the morning until two in the afternoon and the one morning I went there at ten o'clock and of course you've got full time staff there from 7:30 and it was snowing the one day and it was freezing cold and the girls were out in the yard on these lorry's filling the lorry's with all these big boxes of saucepans. So I said to my boss, 'I'm not going out there' I said 'you've got men with fork lift trucks there, let them do it'. Especially in the snow. She said 'well they've been out there since 7:30'. I said I don't care I'm not getting paid to break my back. I said I'm just supposed to be doing returns. So she got the social worker which was Beatty Watts and she said no she's right because she shouldn't be out there and I said get the men. They were huge boxes so I didn't go out there and they brought the other girls in as well. I used to stick up for myself then.

*56:06 Was there a Union in Curran's?*

I think because I was only part time I don't think there was a union.

*56:17 How did the work there compare do you think with Freeman's?*

Curran's was because I was only part time while the children were in school 10 till 2, we used to have a laugh and there was a good lot of people there. But I remember one time there were these baths there. They were bog heavy iron baths and I was doing a stock take and I was stood by the baths counting the stock. I had my back towards the forklift truck was behind me full of baths and I just stepped over like that and as I did the baths just fell off the forklift truck exactly where I was standing. How I got away with that I don't even know. Because I didn't even know it must been some permission telling me to move. I never got over that because I could have broken my back because they weren't plastic they were heavy baths. We used to have a laugh there it was nice. As long as it lasted. 2 years I was there. No I don't think you had any union or anything, I can't remember a union. But my dad worked there in the war when he was doing, he used to come home terrible. With this lead pouring hot lead it would go down his shoe because they used to make the bombs or something and it would burn into his foot. I can remember coming home one day when I was in School and he had a big hole in his leg there was no sort of looking after then. Then he would come home with really bad burns where he couldn't get his shoe off quick enough and this boiling hot lead had gone down and burnt a big hole in his foot. How he managed I don't. I think one day it had gone so bad it had gone right through to his bone that he did have to go up the hospital and have it bandaged up. That was when they used to have all that boiling hot lead coming down

they had no protection on their legs or anything then it was really bad I was so upset my dad coming home like that. When I was there they weren't doing that it was just baths and saucepans.

*59:06 Were they good employers?*

It was just a work really. I mean I wasn't there that long to see if they were good I used to have agro with them because I stuck up for myself. If I thought I wasn't supposed to do that work, if they got men with these big fork lift trucks, what are we doing carrying big heavy saucepans? If our back went they wouldn't have paid us compensation or anything. No like I said I was only there for 2 years, we had a laugh we used to enjoy it. We had some funny girls there how they got away with it I don't know. The one she used to be dancing and singing I think she must have been on something. She used to have us laughing and they never got rid of her so I don't if they were desperate for people to work there or what. But I said 2 years and then they were closing down then so they got rid of us a bit at a time.

*1:00:14 Do you remember what your pay was like when you worked there?*

I can't remember they pay in there, I can't remember to be honest no.

*1:00:27 Is there any one event you remember with more than any other in the time you worked in the factories?*

Events. I remember best I can remember us is just singing on the machines in the cigar factory and we were such a happy crowd. We all got on brilliant it was so laid back when you think about it.

*1:01:01 Did you enjoy working in the factory?*

The cigar I did yes.

*Why was that do you think?*

Because the old one was so laid back. When we were in the new one not so much because it was just one big massive room with the cigar machines in it. But in the old one we had just a little room, so we were more together in there.

*1:01:32 Looking back now how do you feel about the time you spent working in factories?*

Cigar was brilliant but I've always enjoyed my jobs, because I was a home carer for about 23 years after. I finished in Currans because they finished us off because they were closing down. So I knew there was a job going as a home carer so I put in for that with the council. So I done that for 23 years and I loved that as well. Going round old people and talking to them doing things then when you were a home carer you could talk to them which is more important and I'd tidy and clean-up for them do their shopping. You'd spend 3 hours in one or 4 hours in one. Now they give you 10 minutes and they expect you to do things for old people. I learnt so much from the old people, their stories they used to like to tell me stories

about when they were kids which I suppose the home carers today see none of that because they got to run in and out all the time haven't they. I did like my jobs all of them.

*1:02:55 Can I just ask you one more thing about Freeman's. Do you remember the Miss Mannequin competition?*

I can't remember very much about that because I think it seemed to be the office girls went in for that. I don't think it was so much the girls on the floor to what I can remember. I don't know if somebody went from as Miss Mannequin from any of the other rooms I know none of them did in my room. None of them was Miss Mannequin from there. I think they were from the offices or something where you used to get your wages. Might have been one or two from the floor done it I don't know. Never thought about it really we used to get on with ourselves. Don't remember anything about Mannequins.

63:58

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD CYFWELIAD