

LLEISIAU O LAW R Y FFATRI / VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

Mettoys, Fforestfach, Unit Superheaters, The Strand, Swansea

Interviewee: VSW035 Grace Mary Beaman

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Interviewer: Jaci Gruffudd on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

Grace was born in 1948 to William Osmond and Grace John and is one of 5 children. She attended St David's Catholic school and left at 15.

She was offered a place at College but father did not think the expense of a uniform etc was worth it as she is a girl. He would have paid out for a boy. Always regretted not pushing herself but did get a degree in 2000 by studying part time.

Married at 20 has 4 children and 9 grand children. Both her sons have degrees, one daughter a plumber and the other runs a shop in the market.

First job in Waynes Grocers in Uplands then worked in Unifloc doing office work

Worked in Mettoys for 3 yrs –her mother in law got her the job. Worked on assembly line – good money and a lot of camaraderie and women helped each other. Women were faster and more dexterous.

Factory very noisy music playing all the time and security on the door - bags were searched.

Union officials usually moved onto higher jobs management used that as a way of getting them away from Union. Remembered the Aberfan disaster whole factory went quiet –her brother came to factory to tell her he was going to help dig. – still feels the sorrow today.

Had 2 wks holiday went camping with mother and sister in law- .has first holiday abroad in 1985.

Father bought her a car when 17 yrs old cost £20 she paid him back £1 a week so shared petrol with another girl. Made good friends in Mettoys still in touch today.

People appreciated the amount of jobs created by Mettoys and proud to produce a quality product for Fisher Price and Corgi.

Most of the foremen were men. Women would often fix the machine themselves if it broke down though they were not supposed to do so.

Then worked in Unitsuperheaters driving a gantry (an overhead crane). Really enjoyed this work left when pregnant.

Workforce all men except for 13 women who drove the gantries. Unusual for women to do this –they had done it in the war and carried on. Pipes weighed 10 ton and 1 gantry could lift 5 tons so worked in tandem.

Father was a Union man but told to join a Union by local official “ **If you don’t join you’ll be out of here before your feet can touch the ground good girl – no question about it I’ll go and get the manager and march you off now.** “

Had another job in a factory making kitchens but only for 1 day. On first day told to sit there and wait then told “ **sorry you have to leave Union decided no more women to be employed on that site they would have put the factory out on strike.**”

Worked until 7 months pregnant no health and safety climbed 20 ft ladders while pregnant. No maternity pay from company. One area of Unitsuperheaters had Gamma rays so women not allowed to work there as may affect their fertility.

Left factory work because she wanted to better herself.

When in Mettoys went to Social club in the Hafod owned by the company. Started a Darts League used to play on a Friday night.

Gave my mother 10/- a week when started work and used the rest to buy a Provident cheque – a form of saving.

After having children when back to work on a weekend shift only.

Used wages to buy a Post office in Landore –mother and 2 sisters helped in the PO.

Like being own boss and having a responsible job.