

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI

Polikoffs, Ynyswen, Christie-Tyler, Penybont/Bridgend

Interviewee: VSE043 Anita Rebecca Jeffery
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**Interviewer: Catrin Edwards on behalf of the Women's Archive
of Wales / Archif Menywod Cymru**

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

My name is Anita Rebecca Jeffrey, previously Morris.

Date of birth?

Date of birth. I was born on 5 June 1939.

Great. Thank you. So tell me a little bit then about your background, your parents, your mum, your dad. What they did for a living, and your siblings if you have any.

My mum, she, well she got married at a very early age because she was pregnant with me, at the age of 17 actually. And she previously worked in the arsenal in Bridgend. A very boring job painting the things on bombs, and my father worked in the mines. My siblings, my children?

No.

My sister, my brother?

Yes.

I had a sister four years younger than myself and a brother who was six years younger than myself. My sister's gone now, but my brother's still alive, and we were all brought up in the

Rhondda. It was hard at the time, you know, and my mother was struggling so, keeping the three of us you know, and no home, no permanent home, because we were living with my grandparents or in rooms which was then, you know most people did. It wasn't a flat, it was one room, you know.

So, where were you brought up? Where, which part of the Rhondda?

Ton Pentre and then later in Ystrad, Ystrad Rhondda. That was Sandy Bank, there were prefabs later on, we had a prefab. And we were so fond, we thought it was wonderful. You know, we were so lucky to have this prefab and we had two bedrooms. What do you think of that? Wonderful. And a cooker and a fridge, because they were Americanised, weren't they, the prefabs, so we thought it was absolutely wonderful you know.

02:39

So tell me about your education then. Where you went to school.

Well I went to several schools because as I said, we didn't have a permanent address, I went to Ton Pentre primary, and then I went to Bodringallt which was in Ystrad and then my last school of all was in Trealaw in Tonypandy. And I left there at the age of 15.

Was that a...?

That was a higher education then you know. Like comprehensive really. With no qualifications, I didn't have any. I didn't like school. I hated it.

So were you sorry to leave at 15?

No. Glad. Glad to get out, yes.

Can I just ask why you didn't have a permanent, why did you move around so much?

Well, as it happened we couldn't, we couldn't get anywhere for a start, my father was always in and out of work and he was not a very good provider then, put it that way. He drunk a lot, and he never could keep a job down, so we never had a permanent you know, place to live. Even at one point, we squatted in some shop and the police turfed us out. You know, I can remember that. That was quite painful really. Because I, being the oldest, remembered what it was like, you know. My brother and sister didn't know. But it was quite an ordeal really, and then I think after that they gave us the prefab, you know. So. That was our sort of permanent address then.

(0:04:24)

Hard going then?

Yeah.

Can I ask you then what, you left school at 15. What did you do then?

I went straight into a factory. Polikoffs in Treorchy was a big manufacturer of clothing, for catalogues and clothes abroad. And they used to have big contracts on different armies and RAF things, and I went in there as a trainee, and I was there for quite a while after.

Do you remember how you got the job?

I went to the personnel officer in Polikoffs. Her name was Mrs Farmer, and she give me an interview and she said we'll give you a trial. And it just took from there. And I went onto the shop floor then, onto the factory floor.

How did you know about Polikoffs?

I think it was lots of the girls that I knew, you know, in school and, there was dances you know, we used to go to dances then quite a lot, and oh, they'd say, try Polikoffs, it's great there, you know. So that's what I did.

05:40

So did you know many people when you got there then?

Quite a few. But we weren't all working together, as, you know, it was all over the factory you know really. It wasn't in just us together you know. But, yeah, it was good.

So they trained you, you said. What did you, what were you trained to do and how long did it take?

I think I had about two weeks training which they just give you pieces of material to practice on and you know, see how you go, and after that then I was put onto the machine and it was piece work then from there on. I think we were getting something like threepence three farthings for every so many garments that we sewed. Threepence three farthings. Then that was our extra that was, on top of our basic wage, you know.

Okay. I'll ask about that in a minute. I was just going to say, what did they ask you in the interview? What did you have to do in the interview?

Why I wanted to go and work in the factory, and just personal things really you know, how I was and everything was okay you know. I really wanted to be in work and it just went from there. I think jobs were easier to come by then, you know. And I just walked into it really.

So, after this training you went on the factory floor. Can you, before we go there, can you remember the first day you went to Polikoffs and what it was like, you know? Can you describe the factory to me?

(07:27.3)

First of all it was a bus I had to catch to get there, and the gates were quite big, they were big double gates on the outside, and then I got off the bus and walked through the gates, and I had to find the personnel department and just go through to where the offices were. I was nervous. I was quite nervous and but I knew I had to do it, and I think I felt quite confident that you know I was going to get a job. And when I knocked on her door, when I said you know my name is Anita, Anita Morris then, and I would like to start a job here, and so she just called me in and sat me down and she made me feel quite comfortable, although she was quite an assertive lady. You know, she was quite, I was a bit frightened of her really. I was only 15. But she said yes okay, we'll give you a start, you know, and that was that, and I walked out of there feeling quite confident.

Tell me what the factory floor was like then.

Big. Very big. There was, oh an awful lot of girls there. There was hundreds, hundreds, and it was conveyor belt, a lot of it was conveyor belt, work that you, and rows and rows of machinists, and then you had the cutting department which was all men, there were all men in the cutting department. The pressers and, but we had the main aisle go right through the middle of the factory and that's where the manager used to walk through every morning and everybody was alert when he came in, into the factory, you know. And he had his office right in the middle of the factory floor. So he could keep an eye on us all. But it was, it was quite good. We had a small space to work in, you know, it was just, I would say, you know, I could touch the person next to me really you know. But it was okay.

What about the sounds in there and the...?

Oh it was yes, the machines going all day, yes.

Was it very noisy?

Very, yes. But at that time it didn't seem to bother me, because we had the radio going all day.

As well, yeah?

Yeah, that was on all of the time. So that was background.

Right. So tell me then, so you started work and what did you do?

My first job. My first job was making men's flies for trousers and I thought it was quite funny actually because it was the first time I'd ever handled a men's flies, but that was my very first job.

So can you explain what you had to do?

Well I made the fly and then we had to turn it inside out and then press it, and then it went it onto the button machine then, button hole machine, no zips. It was just button holes, and then we'd pass it on then to the next person and they would go into the trousers then.

(0:10:50.0)

And how long did you stay doing that then?

Oh, must have been about nearly a year I should imagine, yes, yes.

The same job every day?

The same job, I know.

Do you remember, you were talking about piece work now, but do you remember what your basic wage was when you started?

Roughly, I can only roughly remember it, because I hadn't got a payslip, but I think it was something about three pounds, if it was three pounds odd. And then we had this bonus on top, you know. But it was, roughly about there I should imagine. It wasn't a lot I know, then it went up as the time went on of course.

And what year are we talking about here then?

About 1954. Yes, 1954.

So how did that feel? You know, for a, how did that feel in those days, three pounds a week plus bonus? Was that a good wage or was it...?

I think it was pretty average, I mean, for my age, because I mean as you got older you got more money obviously, and then out of that I used to have to pay my way with my lodgings and the rest then was mine. It went a long way in those days.

Did you used to live at home?

Yes.

So, how did you, did you give the money to your mum?

Yes, I lived with my aunt then because my, I was passed onto my aunt and I used to give her lodge money, yes, which was something like about a pound, one pound fifty a week. And the rest then of my money was mine.

So, how did you get to work in the morning?

On the bus.

And what time did you have to leave home, and when did you have to be there and everything?

Well, we started at eight o'clock in the morning so I had to catch the half past seven bus, and if you missed...

From where now, from Ton Pentre?

No, this is from Trealaw now. I was living in Trealaw by this time. And yes, it was half past seven in the morning to get to work by eight o'clock, and you had to clock in then of course. To make sure that you clocked in on time, you know.

And how long was the working day?

Eight hours. With an hour for dinner.

So when did you clock out?

It was six o'clock. Six. Five, six (counts to herself). Six, yes.

Right. It's a long day isn't it?

It is, and we had an hour for dinner. And we used to have 20 minutes in the morning for breakfast or tea break, and 20 minutes in the afternoon.

And was there a canteen there?

Yes, oh a big canteen. Very big.

Did you used to go the canteen for your breaks, or did you stay on the floor?

No I went to the canteen for my breaks, and I think most of us did, really. We were glad to have the break, you know. And we had good food. It was really good food, fair play, it was well organized.

(0:14:07.7)

Did you know lots of the people who were working there already when you went to work there? You mentioned some girls from school.

Yes, a few. Yes. But not all stayed. They went on to do other things from there, you know. But I stayed.

So at the time, what did the factory make mostly, at the time when you were there?

We made suits, men's suits, they made, they did bedding, they had a bedding department as well, which made a quilt, feather quilts and things like that. But I was mostly on the men's side, I was making Burberry's, blazers, men's blazers, as I say, complete suits, and that was my permanent job.

And when you started there, how did you feel about working there? Was it a good feeling to be working there?

Yes, I think so. Yes, it was really.

How did other people view factory work in those days? Those who didn't work in factories. Was it a respected occupation, let's put it like that?

I think, well, there was a bit of a stigma I think because they'd say, oh she works in a factory, you know? And so, but you know I never found it any problem, but I think there was a little bit of stigma, it's like, oh she's a factory worker, you know? And it didn't go down well. But you know there was such a lot of people working in the factories then, I don't see why there was a stigma really attached to it. But I wanted to be, I would have loved to have been a secretary, right, but I never made, never made that.

No, I was just wondering because like you say, there were so many people working in factories, why there was a little, why you know, why there was any stigma anyway.

I think it's a bit of snobbery really. You know. A lot of people who were in higher jobs, thought that because we were a factory we were just, you're just a factory worker you know. But we weren't. I thought it was a job of importance, so, and it was an honest wage. So we worked for it.

So did you enjoy the work? What did you enjoy and what didn't you enjoy?

I never complained. I think I enjoyed it because of course they give you a goal which you did, you knew you had to make that amount of, you had to produce that much then, put it that way, and you know you got on with it and that was it really, we just got on with it. And if you got in front of yourself, which your work progressed, then you could take an earlier break, you could nip upstairs and have a cigarette. Which we often did.

Where did people smoke then in the factory?

It was, they had a whole lot of ladies toilets, and gents, the other side, the whole length of the factory and an upstairs from the factory floor, and that's where everybody used to go. The men and the women, different departments, and we used to go upstairs for a cigarette.

You couldn't smoke on the floor?

Oh no, not then.

What about the canteen? Could you smoke there?

Smoke in the canteen, yes. Yes, no problem, yes.

So you did these flies for a year? What did you do then?

I went onto to do sleeves then. Putting pads in, shoulder pads, and that was a promotion really, because I worked on a bigger machine, it was called a Pfaff machine then, it came from Germany this machine, and I was told it was a very special machine and whatever, and so I was promoted to doing the sleeves, and I stayed on that job then for till I left really. I didn't mind it, it was quite, you know I got quite good at it in the end, and the longer you're at it the better you get isn't it. Yeah, I enjoyed it, it was good, but I used to handle the whole jacket then, the whole thing, you know.

(0:18:45.6)

And were they still men's jackets?

Yes, they were still men's jackets then.

So you said you were promoted. Did this mean more money?

Yes, I had more money then as well.

Do you remember how much you had?

I think my wages went up to six pounds eventually yes, which was quite a lot really, you know, it was good. And I could save a bit then to get married you know, so, yeah it was okay.

And can you describe the Pfaff machine because I've heard about these Pfaff machines.

Well it was quite a tall machine and it had, when the needle came down onto the underneath, it was on like a pillar the underneath was, it wasn't a flat surface at all, it was risen you know. And we had to put the whole sleeve over that and then it would you know, tack it in and then you'd have to sew it in afterwards, but I thought I was quite special because this machine was, it had cost a lot of money, they'd brought it onto the shop floor and I was on my own, I wasn't on the conveyor belt any more, I was, I had a machine on the side you know, and I was handling then the whole of the jacket. I was handling the whole thing, you know, not just the main little product, it was the whole product. And then of course as I said, it was threepence three farthings for every so many that you did. So if I was be in front of myself, I could nip upstairs then you know, I could have a break, you know.

So these Pfaff machines, how many of them were in the factory?

Oh there weren't many. I think I was one of the first to have one, and I think from there perhaps they might have had a few more after that, but of course there were different sorts of machines, there was all sorts of machines, overlocking and they were all industrial, big and fast, fast, very fast machines.

Did that make you feel quite special then?

Yes, very, because I was sitting on my own like a {unclear 20:44.6} and I wasn't on the conveyor belt any more, so it was good.

What about, could you talk when you were on the conveyor belt?

Yes, to the person opposite.

So did you mind sort of not, or could you still talk when you were on the machine?

Well, I could, yes, but it wasn't so convenient, and maybe that was better really, because I was getting on with it better you know.

You said there was music playing. Do you remember, was it the radio or was it records?

No, it was the radio, and I think it was worker's playtime, yes. And people used to send in requests and different things, and we all had our favourites of course, and we'd, what we'd do if

my friend was working down the other end of the factory and a record would come on that we liked or a music, we'd both hold our hands up and wave to each other, you know, which seemed special to us. But, we thought it was wonderful, you know, they're playing our music, you know. It was good.

Did you used to request songs for people? Or just say, I want this to be played.

Well I never did personally, but some people did obviously, yes. I didn't though. If it came on and we liked it then that was it, you know.

(0:22:07.9)

Do you remember what the songs were?

Oh gosh, oh gosh it was, I know Frank Sinatra was one of my favourites, and I think there was Billy Eckstein then and Matt Munroe, wasn't it Matt Munroe around then? No, and Nat King Cole, that's the one. Oh there was lots, and of course Jerry Lee Lewis and it was, oh, god I can't remember all of them because of course rock and roll had started to come in then and it was Bill Haley and the Comets, and yes, and Elvis of course. And that was the age of the rock and roll, you know. So we loved that.

So did you all used to sing as well?

Yes, oh yes, all the time. All the time.

Do you know how many people worked in the factory when you were there?

I would say roughly, oh got to be about, oh, over a thousand, thousand five hundred, maybe more even, easily. Mostly girls, but of course the men had the more manual jobs but all the machines were run, all by girls, all by women. There were no men on the machines then, in those days. It was all women.

So it was mostly women was it?

Yes.

And you said the men did the cutting and the...?

The cutting and the, they were usually in the dispatches and some were on pressers, the big pressers, which pressed the trousers and things, and because they were big heavy pressers. There

were a few women on the pressers as well, but there was mostly men did it, because they were quite manual you know, to handle. But I never seen a man on a sewing machine there, when I worked there. Only the mechanics, they used to come and repair the machines, you know.

What was the relationship between the women and the men?

Good. Very good. Oh, excellent because we had fund, you know, and it was good, clean fun. If they knew you were getting married, which was in my case, the girls on your conveyor belt or on your section would backcomb your hair, put all sugar soap in it which was what they used for doing certain things, and all the chalk that they used for marking out the materials. Scrape it all into your hair and put you in a truck and roll you down into the men's department, and leave you there, so that you couldn't get out. But the men used to help you out and they'd get you back to your machine, you know. But, oh it was good, it was a good relationship with the men and the women I thought, really good. We all got on wonderful. Well, that's where I met my husband.

Was there any harassment? You know, either way?

We used to have little things like happen, we used to get a smell every now and again, and you see, we did have a lot of rats there because there was a bedding department as well, and the rats used to get into the bedding, and if this smell would take us over, we'd say, all out, all out, and we'd all walk out the canteen, because of course we were in the union then. And we'd stay out then until they'd sorted it, you know. And we did also have a plague of black pats, I don't know if you've ever known what they're like, but they're like cockroaches, and they would get in your bag and they'd be in the material, they'd go into the material, because they liked the warm you know, of the material, and oh when you come across them, it was horrible, horrible. I even carried some home with me. We used to have a bucket bag, we used to call them bucket bags then, like a handbag we'd call it now, and I remember going home and some of my lunch was still left in my bag, and when I went into to reach it and take it out, there were these black pats and they all come out of my bag. Oh, I was screaming. And this was at home now, so I'd carried them all the way from the factory, all the way home, on the bus as well. So that was, they couldn't get rid of them, obviously they did try. It was just because they were attracted to the warmth of the material, because we sewed a lot of Harris tweed and all sort of thing, you know. They probably came in with the material I expect.

(0:27:00.4)

Going back to the relationship between the men and the women. Was there any teasing that went on between them?

I can't recall, no. There was one particular chap, and actually he's still alive today, and he was, what do they call it now, gay? But he flaunted it, he loved the fact that he was different. And he was the only one, and he used to come to us girls and say, shall we go down the pub on a Friday? Come on girls, we're all together, we're all girls together – and we took him in as, you know, he

was, actually I invited him to my wedding because he was such a good sport, you know. But he took the teasing and he didn't mind it, and we accepted him for what he was, because in those days it wasn't like now, when it's all out in the open and you know, people are quite open about it. Then it wasn't so much but he didn't hide it and he was quite proud of the fact that he was the way he was, you know.

What did he do in the factory? He wasn't on the machines?

No, no, he was in the despatches, the packing department, and packing things, you know, to go onto the lorries to be despatched out.

How did the men treat him? Did they treat him okay?

Okay I think. They accepted him for what he was, he lived in the valleys and he was one of a big family. All his brothers were different to him, you know, so, I think he was accepted really.

But you didn't get any kind of sexual harassment between the men and the women? Different people being a bit over...?

No, never. Actually never. I never experienced that. No, never. We used to have dances every month or so, and we all got together you know, the men and the women and there was no, I didn't find any, no, none of that at all really.

Or teasing that went too far? That kind of thing.

No. I don't think there was really. No I never experienced it personally anyway.

What kind of women worked in the factory? Were you all young, single or were there married women? You know.

There were a mixture really I think. There was a lot of us younger ones, and then there was a lot of married women also there, who had been there longer obviously, and, yeah, we were a mixed bunch, I would say. Quite a mixed bunch really. There was a bit of jealousy like, if so and so was your friend and you'd say I'm going out with that boy, and oh I wanted to go out with him, and all that nonsense, but that was just, you know, a girlie thing really. No, there was no, I didn't, it was okay. I thought women got on alright together. Even the married women. I had a very good friend who was a lot older than me and I went to be bridesmaid in her wedding so I was only young then, we got on very well, you know.

What about women when they had children. Did they have to leave then when they had children, or did they come back?

Well I think a lot of them left and they came back because grandparents then, of course, took over, because I think they needed the money obviously. But a lot of people didn't come back mind, when they got married and they settled in other places, but no, I think, a lot of them did come back. Well I mean I'm one that went back anyway after I got married, you know.

(0:30:53.3)

But there were no childcare facilities at the factory?

No, none. None whatsoever, no, no none.

So, can I just ask you as well, because you said, you were telling me how much you were paid. Did, what was the, were the men and the women, were the men paid more than the women?

Yes, yeah.

Do you know how much they were paid?

My husband tells me he got six pounds to start, so you see he had a higher wage than I did, and there's only a year between us. He's a year older than I am. But he remembers being six pounds.

And what did he do?

He was in despatch, he was packing. He didn't do anything with the machines or anything, he was in the packing department, but he left then to go to the RAF, National Service.

So really, you were doing a more skilled job?

I think so, yes. We were. But of course women weren't getting equal wages then at all.

No. Was that an issue in the factory?

Not at the time, but as time went on, when I get older, I think it started to become an issue, later on, you know, when women's, when they got married they thought, well, why should my husband have more money than I, you know. This is it.

Yes, especially if you were doing a very skilled job. So, were you given a pay rise every year, did you say then?

I think it was every year but I'm not absolutely sure on that, I can't remember you know, exactly.

Were there any perks of working in the factory?

Perks? Oh, we could go, yes, we had a showroom where, when the samples came back after being out to be shown to different firms, you could buy them, and if you could get hold of a sample, oh, you know it was wonderful. Not so much for the women, but the men because my husband remembers getting a fantastic suit and it was so, it was made to perfection you know, and you could buy it cheap.

Was there a kind of shop there or something?

Well you wouldn't say it was a shop exactly, it was like a bit of, bit of a showroom really, where they showed all these things to the buyers, and then of course when the buyers had decided what they wanted, these things were just left there and you could go in and if you wanted, say, I'll have that, you know? I'd like to have that, and they would give you a price on it. And there was also bedding. You could buy bedding which was the feather quilts then, and they were going quite cheap as well.

We you aware of any pilfering going on as well?

Oh yes, that used to go on all the time. I mean that was comical. I mean, I could, I won't name any names, but there's one gentleman now, he lives in the Rhondda still, and it was so funny, he used to go in with shorts on or a thin pair of trousers and a pullover, and he'd come out fully dressed. He'd have two pairs of trousers on, a jacket, an overcoat and he'd walk out with them. And I remember that plain. Oh yes, it did go on all the time, yes. They used to take stuff. And I know this fella now, he's still living up there now.

(0:34:26.4)

Did they used to check on people?

Oh yes, at random, yes. They'd pick on you at random, yes.

If they found somebody doing...?

Well I think it would be instant dismissal. Yes, it was. Because they didn't give you a second chance for that, you know, that was it. Because of course, they could get somebody else in to do the job.

But he got away with it?

He got away with it personally, he did, and he tells us about it today, you know. Actually he was best man in our wedding, and he was very well dressed.

So, the unions then. There were unions in your factory?

Oh yes, yes.

Were you a member of the union?

Yes.

Do you remember which union it was?

Now then. I can't think of the name. Now I have a union card from when I worked later on in Christie Tylers, but I don't know if it came under the same one. No, I can't think.

Was it the Garment Workers maybe?

It may have been, because later on then I worked for the different one now altogether, different union altogether. I'll have to go and get it.

I'll stop a minute....

So you later went to Christie Tyler and you joined a union there as well. What was it called?

National Union of Furniture Trade Operatives.

Right. But going back to Polikoffs then, were there any disputes and strikes and things when you were at Polikoffs?

Nothing serious no, not big strikes. We just had our little disputes about our working conditions, or if we didn't like anything, you know that we didn't agree to. But no.

Do you remember any example?

Well, if they were trying to put a bigger workload on us, and expect more because sometimes they would have a (unclear 36:38) come and stand by the side of you and watch how many you could do you know, in an hour. And sometimes they expected you to do more than you could turn out. Without a break, you know. So we did have a bit of a dispute on that and we did get our own way actually. We fought it you know, and so we knew how much we could produce and they couldn't expect any more.

Was that a time and motion person?

Time and motions, yes.

Were they in the factory all the time?

Most of the time, but they'd go in different departments, so they'd come and stand by you and just watch you, you know, see how much you could produce. And of course, not everybody could work as fast as the next person, so, we did have a bit of a dispute on that.

So did you feel the union protected maybe the weaker workers if you like?

Yes, I think they did, yes. I think they did.

So you got your own way, so do you remember what happened?

Well we still had to have the time and motion but we did have a say in how many we could produce, of course obviously they expected more, but we stuck at our guns and we said well this is what we can do and we couldn't probably, we couldn't possibly produce any more, you know. But they expected you then to cut down on your breaks you see, so you know we had to be vigilant then, put it that way. If we nipped upstairs and so we'd better get back quick now because they're going to be timing us you know.

You know the time and motions people, were they local people? Were they people...?

I never knew them, no. I think they used to get them in from somewhere else because no-one ever knew who they really were and when they were going to come either. We didn't know.

(0:38:31.3)

So what was the relationship between you and them? Was there a bit of animosity do you think?

Well, you didn't speak to them really. I don't think you bothered. They just stood there with the time watch and a clipboard of course, and you just got on with it and you didn't lift your head, you know you just didn't bother. And then they'd say, we'll be finished now, and they'd walk away.

But you think they were outsiders then?

I think so, yes. I didn't know any of them.

Were you ever a union rep?

I was at one point. Yes. But I mean, because I can talk a lot, and I always stuck up for the women and I felt that, you know, we had the right to be there, you know. And I did speak up a few times actually, but to no avail, I was just for my section, and I would go and speak if somebody had a complaint or anything, I would go and speak for them. But that was about it really, you know, I never got up on a pedestal or anything like that. Or on a stage or anything. It's just I went and had a word with the management, you know.

Did you enjoy doing that? Being able to sort something out for somebody?

Yes I did, because I felt assertive and it give me a boost really. You know, my morale. Yes, I did enjoy it, yeah I did.

Did you find it easier to maybe talk for somebody else than but for yourself?

Yes, and I've always been that way anyway. I can speak up for someone else.

And this was in Polikoffs you were a rep was it?

Yes.

Yes. Did you get on with the supervisors and the managers?

Well, to a point. I mean they weren't part of us like as a group. The supervisors always when they went to the canteen they went and sat on their own, and we girls stuck to our, you know. It was them and us then a bit. You know, because they were, cracking the whip really, you know,

making sure that you did your job and you walked up and down, less talking and all the rest of it. Get on with it.

Again, were they from the workforce or were they from outside?

Yes, no they were from the workforce then, they were promoted you know. And of course, I think what I found is, because they asked me one time if I wanted to be a supervisor, but because you were the chopsy one, right, and you were the one who spoke for the girls, they would promote you to supervisor, so that when you were a supervisor then right, you were on the management side, so you weren't working then for the girls on the line, you had to, and I just turned it down. I said no thank you, I didn't want it. I'd rather stay where I was. But that's what they used to do. They'd promote the girls then onto you know a position of more importance so that they would be on their side.

Divide and rule.

Yes. True.

(0:41:40.2)

Interesting. So did you have to wear a uniform for work?

No, just we used to all wear smocks. It was a smock apron they called it then, right, with pockets for the fags. But no, it was just a smock just to keep the top of you clean really.

Did you provide those or did the company provide?

No, we had to provide our own, and it was trousers, you know, mostly trousers.

Was that an issue?

No, we could suit ourselves really, you know, it was up to us, and no high heeled shoes of course, because if you were on the machine you couldn't wear high heeled shoes.

So did most of you wear trousers did you?

Yes I think so, but they were only just coming into their own then, trousers of course. It was wonderful. But before that it was skirts, you know, but not all of us wore trousers, we suited ourselves really, what we wore you know, so. I remember going to work with rollers in my hair

and it wasn't rollers as we know it now, right, they were cotton spools, the cardboard cotton spools, and we used to put them in with a clip in so we'd have our hair ready now, with a scarf on our head, right, because we were allowed to do that with a scarf over the top, because it wasn't interfering with the work, so we'd be ready for the evening to go out, our hair would be all lovely to go out in the evening to the dance.

So did you all used to do that?

Yes, loads of us, loads, loads.

So did you get the cotton spools from work?

Yes.

And the pins and everything?

Yes, the pins were ours but the cotton spools were theirs, and they were the cardboard ones you know, the longish ones, so oh, that's before rollers were invented look. Because I mean before that it was hairgrips and wavers, when they used to put a pinchy waver in, and but these cotton spools were oh, wonderful we thought, you know, they would give you the natural curl. And there was no hairsprays or anything like that then, it was of course, sugar and water in a bottle. Sugar and water sprayed on your hair.

Wonderful.

Isn't it just.

So what about the conditions then? Was the work dangerous in any way? You've talked a bit about needles through fingers and things. What do you think?

Well it was, yes, it was dangerous I suppose in that respect. I remember one young girl she was on a presser and she pulled the press down, and of course when you put your hand on the presser you smooth the garment out with your hand, and you pulled the top press down, and she hadn't pulled her hand out quick enough, and her fingers were stuck in there, and the tops of her fingers came off, yes. They were stuck in the press, of course, because when it clamps down, it clamps and you can't release it, so yes, the tops of her fingers came off. I've had a needle in my finger a few times, lots of times. You don't feel it actually go in at the time, because you just go and pull it away, and but of course it rips then, it rips your fingernail off. But you'd go up, we had a nurse in the factory, we had a permanent nurse, there was two actually, and she'd dress it for you, and if she thought you needed to go to hospital, it wasn't A&E then, it was, you had to go to the

hospital, she would advise, but usually it got cleaned up and plastered and you went back to work.

Straight away, on the same day?

Yes.

What happened to this girl with her hands?

I don't exactly know, but it was quite horrific at the time, because apparently when they did take the press back up, the bits of fingers were still in there, you know. Yes, I know.

Did she come back to work?

She did come back eventually, yes, but on a different job of course. Different altogether.

(0:45:45.5)

Did she get any compensation?

I don't know, because I don't ever remember anyone having compensation in those days. I never actually heard of anyone having compensation for anything.

So as a union rep you didn't have to do anything?

No, I can't remember it.

Were there rules and regulations? You know, were you aware of rules and regs in the factory that people had to adhere to, you know to?

Well not especially. Of course we weren't allowed to go upstairs and have a cigarette, we weren't, but we did.

You weren't allowed to go to the toilets?

Toilets and have a cigarette, no.

Where were you supposed to smoke then?

Well you could smoke in the canteen when you went to lunch or outside of course, but we used to nip upstairs to these toilets you see, and the personnel officer, which is Mrs Farmer as I said in the beginning, she would come up, she would know, she'd have a purge on, and she'd come up and she'd say, I know you're up here girls, get back to work, now. You know. And we'd all run in the toilets and shut the door. She knew we were in there, but everyone did it. Everyone smoked then you know. But there were no other real, oh, clocking in and clocking out, you had to do that, you couldn't have anyone else do that for you. You had to put a clock card in to go in in the morning, and a clock card to come out, but no other specific rules really, I can't remember, no.

So nobody was ever disciplined for smoking in the toilets?

No, not that I could ever remember, no.

What about health and safety? Were you made aware of health and safety?

No. No, not at all.

It hadn't been invented then.

No. If you weren't well you went up to see the nurse, you know. And that was it.

Yeah. What about heating, lighting, that kind of thing? What was the lighting like?

It was fluorescent. It was all fluorescent.

So that was good?

Well it was good for sewing, but I mean there were windows on the sides of the factory but of course it was so big, you never got to see the windows, you know. It was under fluorescent lighting all of the time, and well then, I was young of course, I didn't find any different, the strain wasn't there, but it's bound to have taken its toll in its time I think. Because you're looking down all of the time, and these lights are bearing down on you. It was very hot, very hot in the factory, especially in the summer, because sometimes they had to put whitewash on the windows to keep the sun from glaring in because we had to have the lights on, you see, all day.

So was it ever too cold?

No. Now I can never remember it being cold, not that cold, no.

So was the heat an issue, was that ever a kind of walking out you know issue?

Not in Polikoffs, no, no. Later on in my other work I found it yes, it was.

Right. What about facilities then? Were there good facilities, you know, you talked about the toilets and the canteen, did you think they were good facilities?

Good. They were really good. Fair play, they were. I mean, in the morning we'd have this break and we could have breakfast if we wanted it, eggs, whatever, and there was always tea, coffee, or some girls took their own in a flask, and lunchtime there was always a cooked meal, and there was two canteens, and the other one was a little bit more upgraded, and you could go in there and the manager of that canteen, he would say, if you'd run out of cigarettes, we would say could we buy two cigarettes until Friday. And he'd let us have them on tick. But he was, it was good, the facilities were good, yeah. All the food, I can't fault it, and they used to put on a little bit of entertainment for us as well sometimes, at lunchtime, we had the Duke of Edinburgh visit there once as well. Oh he was quite a young man, I think not long after perhaps he got married. And that was a big day for us, you know, he came all round the canteen and everything and, no the facilities were quite good I thought, you know as far as that's concerned. Toilets were always clean and spotless, so.

What about the price of the food? Was it reasonable?

Yes, yes.

Was it subsidized do you think?

It may have been subsidized with the firm, but it was quite reasonable, you know, it was okay. Some girls took packed lunches anyway, you know, they didn't want the food, so.

Did everybody eat in the same canteen or was there a kind of?

There was two canteens. One was with the cooked food and the other canteen then was for sort of snacks and soft drinks and that sort of thing, you know.

But there wasn't a kind of, there wasn't a manager place and a worker's place?

Oh, no, they, well the managers, we don't know where they ate because we never saw them, very rarely in the big canteen, but the big canteen was always full, you know, we'd all be in there together and it was a get together time, you know, it was good.

Was it a staggered lunch break?

Yes, you could, I think it was, we had an hour, so you could have a sort of 12 till one or then it was one till two, but if you were going to work on, because they used to have some, you could work on in the evenings sometimes, work on late, the ones who did that went on the later lunch you know.

So you said the Duke of Edinburgh came there. Was that a royal visit? He was by himself was he?

Yes. The Queen wasn't with him, no. No, it was just him. And I don't know how, why or whatever, or why he came there, but it was quite a big day for us, you know, and we were all there in the canteen, he came through and you know, and that was it. Promotion, I think maybe it had something to do with the contract we'd had for the government work, you know the RAF uniforms and the army things, so that could have been something to do with maybe, you know.

(0:52:40.3)

Do you remember when that was?

Gosh, oh, it must have been, I would have been there about two or three years then, perhaps, so late 1950s I would say.

Oh right, so after the...?

I would say the late 1950s, yeah.

And do you remember any other dignitary or famous person coming to see you?

No, only the owner of Polikoffs himself, which was, you know, big Rolls Royce and, yes, Mr Polikoff, yes.

Did he come very often, or was it...?

He used to come occasionally, yes, you know, I would say twice a year maybe, you know.

Where did he live, do you know?

I don't know, I don't have a clue, no.

He used to descend did he? Do you think were any long term effects then of on your health from working in the factory? On your health particularly, you know?

Well my legs, I found, I found now my legs, where I've been on the sewing machine for so many years, my one leg is, I do suffer with it quite a bit, and I've got quite a lot of blue, you know on my legs, from using the knee lift, knee lift on the machine. You know, you are sewing, but your knee lift, lifts the foot of the machine and I do suffer with that leg quite a bit, but that's the only effect really. Of course my eyesight, well, I never had glasses in those days, I had good eyesight, you know then.

Do you think it affected people's eyesight?

Could have, yes, with the strain of the lights and looking down all of the time.

You got married while you were there, you said.

Yes.

And did you stay on there?

I did, yes.

So when did you get married?

I've got it written down here. I got married in 1960 and then I went, I stayed there until 1961 and then I was pregnant then with my first child.

And your husband worked in Polikoffs as well?

Yes, he worked there as well.

How did he feel about you continuing working?

He didn't mind because we worked in separate departments. But we used to get on the same bus every night to go home together.

How many, what did you say, how many days a week did you work?

Five days a week.

Were you ever asked to work on weekends?

Yes, Saturday mornings usually.

Right, so how many hours did you work a week then?

Well, gosh, well if it's eight hours a day, I call it eight hours, not counting the break for dinner. That's 48 is it?

Did you work 48 because you worked Saturday morning as well?

Yes, because we used, that wasn't compulsory mind, Saturday morning. If you wanted to work, you know.

So, that was overtime?

Yes, it was overtime.

Were you paid the same rate or were you paid double time?

No it wasn't double time, everything was time and a half.

Time and a half? Right. Could you work overtime in the evening as well?

Yes, you could if you wanted.

And was that time and a half?

I think that was time and a half as well, yes.

And were you ever asked to work on a Sunday?

No, never. Never on a Sunday. I don't know about the men but I know the women were never asked to work on a Sunday.

So did you used to do quite a bit of overtime?

(0:56:31.9)

Yes, when I could. You know it was extra money obviously you know.

Was that okay?

Yes, it was okay in the beginning, you know, but when I fell pregnant of course, no it wasn't, I didn't go for that option at all.

So did you work up to a certain, how many months did you work up to?

No, I left there when I first knew I was pregnant. That was 1961, and I had a break then from there and we lived in Ystrad then, and I did go to work with my aunt in a shop in Pontypridd for a couple of months.

Okay, before we go there I want to finish with Polikoffs. No, it's okay, it's okay. It's just because I want to ask you about, first of all I want to ask you about holidays, right. Did you have paid annual holidays?

Not in the beginning. But we did after because when I got married, I remember having holiday pay and my husband and I, of course we both worked in Polikoffs then, and we went to Paignton for our honeymoon because we had paid holidays, but we had to take our honeymoon in the holidays.

Which was?

In the end of July, beginning of August.

So when do you think you started having paid holidays then?

Gosh, it had to be 1958, '59 I would say, maybe. I wouldn't like to say, you know, a specific date, but I think it was at the end of the 50s. More like 1960 perhaps, you know.

And did you have bank holidays though?

No, only Easter. I don't think we had any time off for whitsun. Christmas of course. And I think there might have been one bank holidays besides, that was the August bank holiday and that was it really.

But they were paid holidays, they were paid days?

Yes.

And can you remember, did you, before you went on your honeymoon, can you remember going anywhere for holidays before then?

Yes, we used to love to come to Porthcawl. I mean, as a family then, when I was younger. It was the grandparents, the aunties, the uncles, all of us. And Porthcawl was our main place we used to come for holidays. Never went abroad or anything like that. That was, no way, that was not accessible at all. But it was Porthcawl mostly.

Was that then the miner's holiday wasn't it?

Yes, the miner's holiday.

And when you came to Porthcawl, did you used to see people from work in Porthcawl?

Occasionally, not very often. Not everybody could afford it. No, very rare. My husband he said you were lucky, you could go to Porthcawl, I never could afford to go to Porthcawl you see, so.

Right, the social life then. What were the social activities arranged by the workers? Were there social activities?

Yes, we used to have dances organized, fair play it was very good. It was live music, no records, it was proper live music and the dances were wonderful. And it was a very dressy-up occasion. It was the evening dress, all the women went bananas, it was long dresses and the strappy shoes you know, and we used to have that regular, about once a month I would say, or every two months, and it was really good.

(1:00:33.2)

Was that arranged by the workers then?

No, I think it was management, yeah, management.

And was it paid for by the management or did you?

We didn't pay anything, no. We just went to the dance, paid for our cloakroom and with the drinks on offer, there were just soft drinks then, no alcohol at all, none at all.

And where did these dances?

In Polikoffs canteen. In the canteen itself, yeah.

And you used to have live bands you said?

Yeah, live music.

Do you remember who they were?

I haven't got a clue. No. No I don't, but it was good, it was really, really good. And everybody danced then you know, properly.

So what kind of music was it?

Well, a bit of everything really. It was waltzing and tangoing and all that, but it was a bit of rock and roll and you know, that started coming into it and that was wonderful, because we used to all wear the big underskirts, the 60s of course, we're going into the 60s. And it would be all the tulle underskirts and taffeta skirts on top. I was a 22 waist then. And that's where my husband and I got together first, yeah.

In one of these dances?

In one of the dances, yeah.

Great. Can you remember anything else? Were there kind of well, tell me then, about, were there Christmas parties and where did you go for those?

No, we never had a Christmas party. What we did was, they'd have a shop floor thing you know, where everybody would stop work at a certain time and everybody would mingle through everybody else's department, and you just sort of balloons and a bit of trimmings and that was it. And in the canteen then, perhaps you'd have a proper Christmas lunch put on, but you'd have to pay for it of course. It wouldn't be free. But there was no party, you know, organized or anything like that. And later on in years, they did have a social club somewhere in Treorchy which you could visit, and that was a building they had bought besides, you know, and we did visit there once or twice, but no, there was nothing else.

What about beauty competitions?

Well, they used to have a regular thing, and of course they'd just choose you off the dance floor and say, would you go up onto the stage, we'd like you to enter this competition.

And what was the competition?

It was supposed to be Miss Polikoffs.

And did they have this, was this an annual thing, or?

Yes, it was quite, every year or so they used to have this.

Right, and so. Tell me about it.

Well, the first time I entered, I was put into enter, I came second, I was a runner up. And then the second year I entered I came top. There's a photograph look. That's me there look. And this is the lady who won it there, and this is, another one, and that's me there with the Lord Mayor of the Rhondda who was presenting me with a massive box of chocolates. We'd never had such a box of chocolates in our life.

So you won in this year?

(1:04:00.4)

Yes. That's the year.

Do you know what year that was?

Well, I was 18 then.

'57.

'57 then. That's it. Because before that I was 17.

So how many times did you win it?

Oh, only once.

But you were the runner up as well?

Yes, as well, before that, yes.

So, did all the employees come to this?

Yes, it was an annual thing. It was all to do with everyone who worked in the factory. The men and the women. Even if they were married they still, they'd come, you know. And the young ones as well.

That's lovely. So, when was it held, do you remember? Was it in the summer or Christmas time or?

I can't remember if it was, I can't remember to be honest with you. But you can see we're all in strappy things so I should imagine – it wasn't in the winter I don't think.

Right. Lovely.

Because you'd all have to get buses home afterwards so it was probably, it was in the summer when it was the lighter nights, you know.

Yes. So, what about trips? Did they organize trips from the factory?

No, I never went on a trip from the factory, never.

No, right, okay.

No, I can't ever remember there being one. No I can't.

So how long did you work in Polikoffs?

Well, I worked there from as I say, 1954 till 1961, so seven years? Seven is it? Yes, seven.

And then you left because you were pregnant?

Yes.

But you went back to work in a factory when you were older, didn't you?

I went back, I married in 1960 then I, I went back to work, factory work, Christie Tylers, Bridgend, gosh it must have been 1966, 1969. 1969 yes. When my youngest child then was three. He'd just started school.

So did you go back to work full time?

Yes.

And this was Christie Tylers in Bridgend?

Yes.

What did you do in Christie Tylers?

I was a sewing machinist making upholstery, three piece suites.

And how did that compare with Polikoffs?

Oh heavy, much heavier work, much, much heavier. The material and, it was a lot of lifting, you know. But that was piece work as well. And we were told we had to make a target you know. We had to reach a target and it was hard going actually. That was really hard going. And we were there, that was, I think we were starting at nine then, we had shorter hours anyway I know. I think it was nine till four.

So where did you have to travel from to go to Christie Tylers?

Well I was travelling from Porthcawl first to Bridgend, and then they moved the factory up into Talbot Green, Llantrisant way. And of course I was travelling all the way up there as well.

So how did you get there?

Well then, it was a friend of a friend, it was a car. One, I'd have a lift so far and then someone else the rest of the way, because we didn't have a car. And that's how I got there and got home. So, it was quite a lot of travelling and that's why I packed it in in the end because it was interfering with my home, you know, and the children.

It would have been tough if you had to go by bus wouldn't it?

Oh it would have been then because when they moved us up to Talbot Green, it was you know, way out. Not a lot in the car of course, but if you are travelling to get to work and home, it's a lot. It took an hour each time, you know, out of my day, and of course my children were in school and they were getting older and I needed really to be at home I think then, but I worked there for 12 years. I went just to have a job to tide me over in the beginning, because we needed a lot of work done to the house and everything, and we needed the money, so they said they wanted a contract out in three months, and would I come and work for them for three months to get this contract through, and I ended up being there 12 years. Unbelievable isn't it?

(1:08:46.3)

Did you enjoy the work there?

Well it's the same sort of feeling as it was when I worked in the factory before. It was good actually. You know, everybody got on except for people who were greedy. Some people were greedy, and there were certain materials you sewed, right, which was easier than others and everybody wanted to sew that one of course. You got more money for that certain suite than you did for another suite. And so everybody was grabbing, you know.

Why was that? Because it was easier so the piece work was better?

Yes, and it was sort of, there were names of suites, they used to call them like the Balmoral (??) and the, different names on the suites, and if you went for this particular suite, you could sew it quicker and get more done in a day, so of course you'd have more money. But everyone would be grabbing at the work to get it done. We were turning out between seven or eight suites a day. Sewn, the complete suites. I was sewing the complete thing then. Not just one part. It was the whole thing. The cushions, the backs, the arms, everything, it had to be the whole thing, you know. So you were lifting, a lot of lifting. But we, you know, I did it, it was okay you know, the money was good. The money was excellent.

I was going to ask you, how much were you paid now, then, when you went to Christie Tylers?

Well I can remember bringing home a wage packet then and my wages were higher than my husband's, and I was bringing home over a 100 pound then. I mean talking about 120, 140 pound a week.

When you finished?

When I was finishing yes, that's how much it was then. And that was really good money then. You had to work for it mind.

Are we talking about 1980 here are we, something like that?

No, we're talking, let me see now. I went back to work, no, my boy was only, there you are, '69. '69. Call it 1970 then. Up until I finished, that's right, '82. 1982 of course.

Do you remember how much you were paid when you went to work there in kind of '69, '70?

I think the money was good then mind. You know, but of course it went up. But I was sometimes, as I said, bringing more money in than my husband was bringing home, you know? But it was hard graft mind. It was really hard work.

Do you think they were good employers?

(1:11:28.9)

They were to an extent, yes. They were quite good really. There were facilities there, the canteen and all of that, you know. They never give us any uniform or anything to wear, we had to provide our own, the same. But as I say, it was gruelling work really. You know, it was just head down and away to go. As soon as you got in in the morning you put your machine on, and that was it like you know, until you finished at four o'clock.

So you were a member of the union there were you?

Yes.

Do you remember any disputes at Christie Tylers?

Well not big ones, not really big ones. The men had more disputes than the women I think then. No. I never remember walking out or anything like that, no.

Were you a union official there?

No. I didn't have the time.

Too busy working.

And the family of course.

What about Polikoffs? I forgot to ask you this but do you think they were good employers, when you worked there?

I think they were to be honest with you. I think, well the workforce was there for a start, I mean they had all the valleys really, and people used to travel to get there. So I think they were good. They were good to work for really. I can't really say there was anything I could pick out and say only for the sake of the rats and the black pats, and that's about it really. They were good. Yeah.

You know you made a lot of friends in Polikoffs, well, both places I'm sure. Have you kept in touch with people from work?

Some. Yes. We go and visit a friend up in the Rhondda still. A lot of them have gone, of course, some have died. Younger than myself. But no, but my husband does. My husband has seen a few friends you know, from when he worked there. My husband passed his driving test there, in Polikoffs. That's where he learnt to drive. One of the lorries. And I'll tell you a little tale about that if I can. We got engaged in Polikoffs, my husband and I, and I used to sometimes go out on the loading bay, because that's where his lorry used to come in, to be loaded up, to eat my lunch. And unbeknown to me, I didn't know, when I got back into the factory, my engagement ring had come off and I'd lost it, and I didn't know where it was. And I was really frightened to tell Peter that I had lost it. Anyway, two days later, the lorry driver came back to the factory, one of these lorry drivers, and he says, has anybody lost an engagement ring? And of course I said, yes, I have. He said, I've just been all the way up to Birmingham, he said, and asked all the girls up there and they said it wasn't theirs, and he'd come all the way back down to Treorchy in the Rhondda, and it was my engagement ring, and it was in the turn-up of his trousers. But I don't know how it got in there. I don't know. I don't know how it got in there. But we used to sit out there you see, and perhaps he was passing and it came off my finger, but I had it back after all that journey look. You wouldn't believe it would you?

No, that's amazing.

Yes, but see people were honest then as well. There was no, you know, he knew it was one of the girl's off one of the loading bays somewhere and he brought it all the way back look.

Amazing. What was the feeling do you think with all the women in the factory? Was there a good camaraderie?

I think so, yes. Definite. Definitely.

And was it something you missed when you...?

I did. I did miss it. I think you know, you've a sense of belonging really. And you know, in those days it was like the dances, you know, are you going with so and so tonight, and, yeah we all got on great. There was only the odd one, wouldn't get on with, but that happens anywhere. But, no we all got on really good, good together.

75:59

What about Christie Tyler? Did you still socialize?

Yes, I did. Yes. I did there. We didn't have dances or anything like that then, and we didn't have any outings or anything, but we all knew each other. I meet some of those ladies now actually. I met one in town here the other day. And, Shirley her name is, and she said how is it going Anita, you know and I said oh, it's good to see you, you know, I hadn't seen her for ages. But we used to work, she used to work right behind me. We were on a conveyor belt that way then. Instead of facing each other, she was behind me, so we couldn't talk obviously, you know, but yeah it was good.

So are you in touch, I mean, you say you bumped into her, but are you in touch with?

Not on the phone or anything, but we see each other occasionally you know. Everybody's busy getting on with their life.

How do you feel now, you know, looking back at your, the time you spent working in these factories? What do you feel about it?

I'm glad I done it, I really am. At the time I thought it was an important job. I mean, now, at my age now, I feel like, well I haven't really achieved anything big in my life, you know, but well I suppose I did contribute. I've contributed to, well to the country really. I was a manufacturer. I think at that time, you know, manufacturing was important I think in this country. Because it was produced here. So I do look upon it like that. But I wish I'd been something bigger, obviously. I think we all wish for that, don't we, you know. Something in a higher position I think. But no, I was quite happy then and I look back and I think they were good times. We had fun. We had great fun actually, you know. We used to get up to some antics mind. I mean I could tell you lots of things, not feasible for this, but we used to do silly things, you know. But it was good, good fun and good, clean fun. There was no dirtiness about it or nothing like that. It

was good. Good, clean fun. Yeah, it was good. Well in Polikoffs especially, because we were on the conveyor belt, and if the girls would say, oh let's do something devilish, right. When we go back in now from the canteen, we all put our foot down on the treadle now, right, of the machine, fast down to the floor, and then switch on at the mains, which was at the end of the conveyor belt. So switch on. So we all had our feet down now, on the pedal, so when you switched the mains one, every machine blew. Every single machine blew right. Not one of them would work and then we'd switch it back on quickly and shout, everybody's hand would go up then and say, mechanic, mechanic, mechanic, mechanic. We all want a mechanic. So we'd bring all the mechanics out, what's the problem, what's the problem? All the machines have blown. But we'd have done it on purpose. We'd have done it on purpose so that we could have an extra break. Oh it was a terrible thing. But that was just, you know, it was one of those things that we did. And they got onto us in the end mind, they knew. They knew we were doing it, so we couldn't get away with it any longer then you know. So.

Was that in Polikoffs?

In Polikoffs, yes.

Were you disciplined for that?

Not really, no. They just come over and give us a telling off. Don't do that again girls. You're costing the firm a lot of money and, blah, blah, you know, but that was it, you know, we got away with it really. But they knew, they couldn't sack us all, because they would have had well, 20-odd girls on one conveyor, they couldn't sack us all at one time, so we knew we could get away with it, you know. It was good. There you go. When I worked in Polikoffs and we were doing the RAF uniforms. Of course it was heavy material and all that, and of course, no-one had a phone at home in those days, no mobiles or nothing like that. All us girls used to write our name and address and put it in a pocket in the jacket of the RAF uniform, so when they got sent to wherever they got sent, we would hope the person wearing that uniform would write to us. But I never had a letter. So no-one ever replied to my letter. We all did it, because that was a contact then, we thought, oh, where will this end up, this jacket now, you know. But I never got an answer to one of mine anyway.

Do you know of any of them that did?

No I can't remember. No. Unless they searched them all before they went out of the factory floor, which is possible. There you go.

81:12

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD Y CYFWELIAD