

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI

Louis Edwards – Maesteg, Christie Tyler’s – Glyncoirwg , Trefforest & Bridgend

Interviewee: VSE055 Caroline Isina Aylward

Date: 6/5/14

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

0:00 Can you tell me name and date of birth?

Caroline Isina Aylward. 29 of the 12 1937

0:35 Can you tell me a little bit about your background. Father, mother what they did whether you had brothers and sisters?

I was the first one to be born and went to live with my Grandmother in Cymmer and my mother and father lived in another street not far from where I was living. My father worked in the colliery, the colliery was opposite where the houses were on the way to Glyncoirwg. We were 6 children and of course I was the oldest and the youngest is 17. Now the sister that was next to me there was only 13 months between us, she came and worked in New Edwards as well. My youngest sister worked there.

1:37 Did your mother work?

No she had little ones

She worked in the home and not outside?

Yes I remember her at some point a lot of them went to Jersey tomato picking and they must have been there about a month I would have thought. She did have the extra money then. My sister then was old enough because I wasn’t there I was with my grandparents living. My father was there of course but he had to work although it was only across the river then, where he worked. It worked out alright and if anything went wrong we just went down the road.

2:34 Tell me about your education where you went to primary School, where you went to Secondary School, that sort of thing?

I went to Cymmer Afan Junior School and of course there was infant's school up by the side of it. Then from the primary school we had to do a year at Glyncorwg School because the comprehensive then had come around but it was the top school then from 11 or 12 upwards. I left school at 15 and then of course I wanted to stay on I wanted to be an artist but Grandmother couldn't afford me to do it because it was money again. I wanted to stay on and further that.

So you would have liked to stay?

Yes I would have liked to have been an artist because I was quite good at it in school and I would have enjoyed it. But you had to do the next best thing.

3:47 So you would have liked to go to college?

Yes go on from there. Of course this girl came and said they were looking for machinists in Louis Edwards. So I thought there weren't a lot of jobs going about then really. So I went there when I was 15.

Do you remember did you have to have an interview for the job?

Yes I went down there to see this manager and he was very nice and i thought I bet I won't have it. I said to him that I liked sewing which I did so he said can you start in the morning so that was what I done. I was there from 15 and I got married when I was 22 and then I had my first son then 2 years later. So I finished work then.

4:59 Taking you back to the beginning at Louis Edwards did you have to have any training?

Yes, they trained you there they'd start you off no needles just got you used to the feel of the machine. The treadle it wasn't a treadle as such just press like that.

Was it an electric machine?

Yes

How long did the training last?

I would say 6 weeks. Then of course you would have needles in them because you would be used to the machine then so you'd have needles in and little things, paper to do straight lines. Then you would start off with pieces of materials and like join them together or just to see what sort of sewing you would be doing. Then if you were good enough then they may start you earlier, it depends on how you were. I was always alright I started then at that time we were making evening gowns. Just before I started they were doing, the army that were in Egypt their uniforms they were making those with all the pockets.

Khaki Desert Wear?

Yes that's right. Well of course it wasn't there then when I started we all had evening gowns to do and of course a lot of things were for Marks and Spencer's and they were very keen. You were always told off if you weren't doing things right which is natural. They have to get the best out of you.

7:14 After the training what was your first kind of proper job, do you remember what you did first of all?

The thing is then we went onto dresses. You'd have someone making and putting sleeves in I always more or less put collars on. There was another girl doing zips, always zips. Someone making collars, someone making collars and some was putting a cuff on. Everyone had their own job and you stayed at the job until the style finished.

8:01 Were you on a line doing this?

Yes there was a line about 12-15 in a line and there was a conveyor belt and of course up at the top of the conveyor belt was a table where the feeders were and they'd have the bulk of the dresses separate the sleeves, the collars, the skirts, all at the top of the table and they'd have like a tin and they'd put different things in each tin so that you knew where you were picking parts from. Then they would put it on the conveyor and you'd have to be quick picking it out of the tin and sewing it and putting it back before it went on to far otherwise they'd have to stop it and push all the tins back. It was quite interesting.

9:14 Did you know anyone who worked in the factory when you first started?

Yes a girl living in the street down from where I lived came up and asked me was I interested because she knew I had left school. She had come to ask me. I didn't know anyone else, except perhaps a couple of the girls that were from Cymmer.

9:44 Do you remember that first day walking in can you describe the factory to me?

It was a factory and it was big and of course they have 6 or 8 lines and you'd have to walk in through the door and it's like you couldn't believe it, heart in your mouth sort of thing. Shelia the girl stood by me and she said 'You'll be alright!'. There were supervisors on each line, but of course they were taking you all the way down to the other end of the factory where you started to use the machine.

10:32 Do you remember the sounds, the smell what was it like?

There were different parts. On one part you'd have all the cutting room and then you'd have all the machines. Then over the other side you had the store room where you got cotton, zips, where they were keeping everything like that. After the machinists you'd have machines then for doing button holes and hems. After that then you'd have the pressers they called them, where they pressed all the clothes. Then it would all be put on a rail and at the end of every line you'd have women looking checking all the work to see that there was nothing wrong. If it was wrong it would have to go back to the girls and they'd have to alter it before it went down to be pressed and then put on coat hangers, before they delivered them out.

11:56 Were you on an ordinary machine to begin with?

Yes but they were you can't say heavy duty because they were heavy duty for think material. They weren't like your hand machine they were all electrical.

Industrial?

Yes. Nothing else down the bottom. They all went over to the stock room. There would be rails and rails of dresses ready to go out for the orders.

12:43 Can you tell me how many people worked there do you think?

I would say all over 80 to 100 I would have thought?

Were you mainly women?

The men were in the cutting room but you'd also have some women there to do the end part, putting them together to take into the sewing shop. All the women were pressers you'd have pressers on the line as well in between the sewing machines for pressing the collars before you sewed them on. Different things that needed to be pressed first.

13:38 Were you mainly women on the line?

Yes all women the men then were in the stock room. You'd have the mechanics, 2 mechanics there anything go wrong with your machine and they'd come straight away to see to them. Then you'd have a janitor sweeping around getting rid of all the mess in the middle of the floor. Right down the bottom would be the canteen. Got to have a canteen.

14:17 So you think you were mainly women working there?

Yes

How did you feel about working in the factory once you had started?

It's the first time so it was getting to know a lot of girls you would know them on the line and some were nice some were not, chopsy and that. Overall it was. Then you had one over the supervisor and she was the floor manageress, she was the one you had to watch, you couldn't turn around, you had to keep sewing. If she saw you talking. If you wanted the toilet you had to wait then if there wasn't anyone on the line out there you could go. But no more than one at time going to the toilet.

15:26 They used to keep an eye on you, tie you if you went to the toilet?

Yes they'd know if you were a bit long, perhaps some might smoke, they'd be out there fetching you back in.

You weren't allowed to smoke on the floor?

No only in the toilet.

15:46 What about the canteen were you allowed to smoke there?

Yes I think they did. The men wouldn't have been happy if not.

You weren't allowed to talk then?

No you had to keep on slogging away. If you didn't see anyone perhaps you'd turn around and say something to the girl behind unless she was talking about the work, something wrong with the work. You'd say 'look this isn't right' and leave her alter it before it went down the line. There was an office then that was built up a bit so that they could see over the factory. They'd have their eyes everywhere.

16:42 How did other local people view people who worked in the factories was it ok or not ok?

Well because we were now the first factory going in from our street and then next door to us was Revlon and then next door then was Mechanical factory, just 3 there. I think they were

used to; some were coming in on buses and cars. From the valleys where i was from you'd catch the bus to Maesteg then we'd have to walk all the way down to the factory because there was never any buses around. That was a good 10 15 minutes and I'd leave the house at 7 walk all the way to Cymmer.

17:41 How long would that take?

Well that would take 10 minutes as well, know when you went to Glyncorwg you passed where I lived the houses on the side, just a street right and then you had to walk all the way down the hill, a little bit of flat and walked all the way up the hill over the other hill and you'd come up where the railway station was. Up over the bridge and then the bus would come by the clock there.

18:18 Explain to me exactly where you lived?

Hail Y Glyn. But it was all Cymmer then. Glyncorwg was up out of the way but that was part of Cymmer.

Quite a long way then?

Yes there was say 50 houses there and then you go up just perhaps double the road up to Gibbs houses where the colliery was there and there was another a little street say 20 house, that was the other street, Gibbs house they called it.

18:59 So you had to catch the bus from Cymmer to Maesteg and then how far was the factory?

That was a good 1 minute walk. I'd leave the house at 7, the bus would come then. I'm saying we started at 8 o'clock but I'm not sure if it was 7:30, but I know it was one big rush. Rushing down to Cymmer, over to Maesteg which would be about 10 - 15 minutes perhaps and then you'd have the 10 - 15 minute walk down to the factory. We did a lot of walking.

19:47 That was public transport was it?

Yes

No factory buses?

No. They did some from Kiara, they did have a bus from Kiara down to the factory, but that was on that road we were on the other road.

20:07 What every time you got there 7:30 or 8 did you have to clock in?

Yes you had to clock in.

Do you remember when your breaks were during the day?

I think you'd have 2 breaks one would be 10 to quarter past and the other quarter past to half past. That would be that break. Then dinner time then I don't think it was 12 more like 12:30 till I'm not sure if it was now, but I know it was half an hour at least. Do we have a break after that, you must have had a 10 minute break perhaps, I'm not sure about that.

Don't worry.

2o we all went to the canteen.

For every break?

Yes, you'd have different times for different parts.

Staggered lunch?

Yes.

What did the canteen make?

I don't know if they made dinners, beans on toast, chips, I can't remember about a cooked dinner because we always took sandwiches and just but chips. If you wanted fried egg and chips.

Did you ever eat there?

Yes.

Was it subsidised, was it cheap?

I don't suppose it was very expensive because most people just wanted chips to eat with their sandwiches. But then if you forgot your food you knew you could have beans on toast or something else.

22:13 What about the other facilities, the toilets, did you have rest rooms?

There was a nurse there she had her room and then there was a cloakroom there for you to all hang your coats.

Would you say the facilities were good?

Yes there were always clean and tidy. It's the people using them if they didn't care but they were clean and looked after.

22:49 When did you go home at night, in the afternoon do you remember?

I used to finish at 6 o'clock so it must have been 8 till 6. I would catch bus a home and then we'd walk home down the hills and all up the rest of it.

What time did you get home?

If I finished at 6 by the time I walked up it would be quarter past 6, not much before 7.

23:31 So it was a long day then?

Yes and then years after then I went back then, was it half past 4 you finished, couple of years after, but it was a long day. I would go from the house at 7 and I wouldn't be home till 7

Nearly 12 hours?

Yes without all the exercise walking.

24:03 Were you all young women or girls working there, or were there married women?

There were some because I don't know how long the factory had been open but there were older one's there say 5 or 6 years older than I was. Like I said I don't know how long it had

been open, so they would have started when perhaps when they were young. When you leave school you couldn't really find jobs only in factories.

24:43 Do you remember what year it was when you went to work there?

Was it 52?

I would have been 37, 47, 52 yes.

What about if people got married could they stay on?

Yes

25:18 What about women with children what would happen if you were expecting?

I suppose as long they had someone looking after the children they could still stay there.

How long did women going on working till they had children?

I was 22 getting married. I was 24 then so.

How long did you work for when you were pregnant?

Well till about 3 months before.

Was that the norm?

Yes.

26:05 Did they have any kind of child care facilities?

No

Did you leave then?

I left then because you were glad to leave it was really hard work you didn't stop and if you wanted to make bonus you wanted to keep on going.

26:32 Can you remember how much were paid a week when you started there?

It wasn't £2.00. I'm saying £1.90 but how much was it then?

£1 19 shillings or 18 shillings?

It wasn't £2.

17 / 6? So that was the basic pay?

Yes

Could you make a bonus?

Yes

27:03 Do you remember how much you used to make in bonus?

Well it wasn't a great deal perhaps only a couple of shillings, but it was great just to have that bit extra. Of course the older ones were faster, the faster you went the more you was earning. It takes a couple of years to get into that.

27:32 Did your basic wage go up every year, can you remember?

Yes but not by much, I wouldn't like to say, but a £1 then was a lot of money. I used to hand over my pay to my grandmother and she'd give me 10 shillings pocket money, which 5 shillings went on bus fare to get over to Maesteg. So I used to have 5 shillings to do whatever I wanted to do. Go to the pictures or if you wanted to buy clothes. I think I used to have my Aunties friend used to have a catalogue so I'd things from the catalogue and pay her every week as you didn't have much left.

28:30 So what did you spend most of your money on, was it clothes?

No if you wanted to go to the pictures you would have to pay, I can't remember I think it was 1 / 6 then.

7 and a half pence.

Yes and when I was younger we used to go up to Glyncorwg becasue there was a picture house there, one in Cymmer and my Grnadmother would give me 6 pence, a penny up and a penny down and 3 pence and a penny for sweets.

29:16 So a penny up on the bus?

Yes

When you were young before you went to work?

Yes say 10 - 12, somewhere around there.

29:29 What about other things, did you used to go dancing?

Yes we used to go dancing. So of course there would be money for the bus and money to go in, I can't remember how much we used to pay to go in the dance hall. 2 shillings perhaps.

Where did you go dancing?

Maesteg and there used to be one in Kiara.

29:56 Where was the dance hall in Maesteg?

In the town hall.

Was it live music?

Yes you had a band then playing and of course there was no drink. Of course the boys then would go around the pubs I expect to have a drink but they had to be over 18. There were all soft drinks in the Town Hall.

30:28 Were they local bands?

No it was same one that was there. The regular one.

What kind of music was it?

All types you'd have rock and roll, I'm not sure if that was out then, the waltz, the tango that type of thing.

Dance Bands?

Yes

31:02 Then rock and roll came a little later?

Yes

Did you used to buy records as well?

I never bought any but I had 2 Aunties and Uncles living with my Grnadmother, so they used to but all the records. I don't think I ever bought a record.

31:33 Were there any perks from working in the factory?

Yes you could buy, they would have a sale and they'd have all these dresses, perhaps they would not be perfect, a little flaw here and there and you could buy those then.

31:58 Did they make clothes that young people wanted to wear?

Yes they used to and then do you remember the duster coats?

No

They were like a summer coat, thin.

Were they A Shaped?

Yes and loose lined

I know what you mean. You used to buy some clothes in the sale?

Yes they'd be quite reasonable so you could buy 2.

32:33 Were you allowed to make you own clothes on the machines?

No

You weren't allowed to do it or you didn't want to do it?

No you were not supposed to. Perhaps I don't know if you were to ask and they would say yes but in your break.

But it wasn't something you felt like doing?

No

Too much work.

Yes. Someone might want to so it for something special.

33:09 Were there any unions in the factory?

Yes there was a union.

Do you remember which one it was?

Garment Workers. It would be always be on a Friday and you would come out to where you clock out and it used to be full. There was one man and everyone is trying to pay in, that used to be a nightmare.

33:43 So they used to take money from you on Friday, Union money?

Yes

33:59 Was everyone in the factory a member of the union?

Well I would have thought so I don't know about the men, they might have been, then again the chap was from the cutting room was in the union, so I would have thought they all were. I only knew what I was paying.

How much did you pay to the union?

I don't remember.

34:33 Were there any disputes and problems or strikes while you were there?

Sometimes the girls perhaps would say they're not cutting them right. Then there would be a bit of trouble that way. But I don't think there was too much trouble there.

No walk outs then?

I don't know if they ever did. If it was it would be over the pay as you weren't getting much money.

But you don't remember anything?

No

35:14 Do you think you were treated fairly?

Well we used to say it was like Chinese labour there and that when I got married and had a baby, I was glad to leave because you were working really hard, you earned it.

It seemed to be very long hours?

Yes

35:40 How did you get on with the supervisors and management?

Some of them were nice and understanding others were strict; get and do this, show their back to you, not nice. I think it's easier to be nice people and then they won't retaliate. Like quarrelling with them. Some of them were nice

36:11 Were the supervisors did they come from within the workforce, people who had been promoted or did they being people from outside?

Yes from within the workforce, they all would have worked there. They used to have a man timing you. When you had a new style he'd go all the way down the band someone was like I say making sleeves, collars and he'd be there timing them, seeing how long they took. That's when they would get a price for the job.

Time and motion then?

Yes and of course he was Scottish, but I don't know how they had him. You couldn't understand him very well.

37:06 Was it the same man every time?

Yes

So he was in the factory?

Yes. In the other factory they did have outsiders, the furniture factory, but not from the clothes factory.

They were from the factory?

Yes

37:31 Were you ever a union rep?

No

How did you feel about the management and the supervisors?

Like I said some of them were alright. Ardie she was the manageress she was the one you had to watch because she was quite strict. What she says went you could argue with her bit you don't win.

Strict but fair or strict but unfair?

I think she was quite fair it all depends who was the one say like the machinist that was complaining. Some girls were fitter then another and didn't care they would speak their mind. But I don't think they used to win. You were wasting your time what they said went.

38:37 Did you have to wear uniform for work?

We all had to wear overalls.

Were they provided by the factory?

I can't remember if we had to pay for them I'm not sure. It was a while that they did have them because I remember once walking past old machines that weren't used and I caught my skirt and that's when they must have started having uniform for people. I would have thought you would have to buy them I don't think you would have had them free; they would have taken them out of your pay.

39:29 Do you remember what colour they were?

I think it was like blue check, little square. They were thickish, it would have to be thick.

What is it called not nylon?

Cotton

39:50 Did they protect your clothes then?

Yes

What happened when you caught your skirt did they repair it?

No it was my fault walking close to the machines or something.

40:05 Was the work dangerous in any way?

Yes you would have a needle in your finger. I had a couple. They'd take you up Maesteg hospital then.

So you had to go to hospital it wasn't dealt with on the factory?

If it was a little nick but if it's through the finger they would have to go up there to make sure there was nothing left in. Sometimes you're talking and she'd say you should have been looking at what you were doing.

40:47 Were there guards on the machines?

No

Do you remember any serious injuries while you were there?

Only needles, gone in a funny shape. I don't remember anything else if anyone in the cutting room because they had big machines, because you'd be cutting that much of material they'd lay it all out and of course that's how thick they were.

About 20 inches?

Yes I would say that to cut all those dresses out.

But you don't remember any serious injuries

No, I don't maybe the cutting room whether they would have had anything.

42:00 Can you remember any kind of rules & regulations there were in the factory?

Well you couldn't smoke in the factory, in the toilet or in the canteen. You couldn't go and have a cigarette.

What about health & safety were you made aware of it?

Which way.

Did they used to tell you about health & safety?

What you could and couldn't do, yes. They would tell us.

42:47 How was the factory heated?

They had blowers.

Was it warm enough or cold enough?

Well you would have that sometimes if you weren't sitting in the line of where the blowers were you would be feeling the cold or too much heat. They did have big blowers in the air.

Was it an issue for the workers, the heat and the cold?

When you were working you were going as fast as you can you didn't always feel the cold because you were too busy moving.

43:45 What about the lighting, was that good?

Yes plenty of light and if it wasn't they'd put a light on your machine. If it was delicate work you'd have to have a light then so you could see what you were doing.

44:03 Did they play music when you were working?

Yes the music would be on same ones but it was music.

Was it a record player then?

I think they would have the radio on because you wouldn't always have music so they'd put a record on. But it was more or less the radio.

44:39 Did that go all day?

Yes

Were people allowed to sing?

Yes they would sing.

They didn't mind that?

No the thing is if that was making them happy then they were happy

44:57 Did it make you faster do you think?

Well unless you wanted to stop but you still had to sew, get on with your work.

What about the relationship between the women and men in the factory, was it a good relationship?

Yes because you weren't next door it was over a bit and |I think everybody knew everyone, once you were there a couple of years, you get to know people. If you had a complaint about something from the cutting room the feeder would come and take it and take it back and get a new one, perhaps it was only half a collar, sometimes when material overlapped you always got bits then.

46:07 Was there any kind of teasing going between the men and the women?

Yes they were alright and you would have a laugh with them they weren't not nice.

46:21 Was there any harassment either way?

No I think everyone got on just some of the women didn't like each other. Then you had to tread carefully.

46:39 You got married when you were there, how did your husband feel about you working on.

Well I don't think we ever worked on

No I mean how did he feel about you continuing to work?

He didn't mind as you were earning money for yourself to get on in life.

He was quite happy for you to carry on working?

Yes

47:10 Do you remember how many days of the week you worked?

Well we'd work 5 days, did we finish early on a Friday? Perhaps an hour earlier. Sometimes then they ask you to work a Saturday and then you'd work a Saturday morning.

Was that for a special order?

Yes to finish off. It would have to be like that, because I don't think they wanted you there unless it was important to work Saturday.

Were you asked or told to work on a Saturday?

No they did ask you but you'd have to have a good reason not to work.

48:05 Did you ever work overtime in the evening?

No I don't remember that because by the time you finished, I don't think so, unless half an hour but I don't remember working in the evening.

If you weren't working on a Saturday, was there any shift work?

No

If you weren't working on a Saturday would the factory be closed?

Yes unless like they wanted the cutting room to work sometimes you'd be catching up with them and be waiting. So they'd have to work on a Saturday or work on, I should imagine.

49:00 To provide you with stuff to go on with?

Yes

49:10 What about holidays, did you have an annual holiday with pay?

Yes, but I think you had to be there a year. Then you would be able to claim your holidays.

How much did you have, do you remember?

I would be just your weekly wage.

Yes but how much holiday would you have?

On Easter you'd have 2 days, on a Whitsun 1 day, then 2 weeks, then Christmas enough to cover Christmas day, you might finish early Christmas eve and Boxing Day you would have off. Perhaps you'd work you'd have New Year's day off. I'm getting a bit confused because with the furniture factory you'd have good holidays, but that was years later.

50:30 What about this fortnight could you pick it?

No when the factory closed then you'd have it.

Was it the same time as the miners? Last week of July, first week of August?

Yes

50:46 Where did you go on your holidays, do you remember?

When I wasn't married I used to go up to London to my Aunt's or perhaps I remember going on holiday with one of the girls, we went to Lincolnshire, up with her family.

Mainly family holidays then?

Yes

Members of the family?

Yes my parents never went on holiday then because they never had money to go. I was lucky because my Aunt she used to come down to my Grandmothers and then I'd go up to visit her with one of my Auntie's. So I was lucky in that sense, because other children never went until they were all old enough and then my mother worked up the school, cleaning the school. So that's when they got on their feet a bit, they bought a car, a caravan and went away on holiday, that's what their holidays were then. I don't think many went on holidays.

52:19 Did you start going on holiday when you got married?

Yes we would go to perhaps family never went abroad.

What about Porthcawl and places like that?

I remember going when we were first married to Porthcawl. A friend we used to know in Cymmer she said you, the table by here and seats here it was a small caravan. Before you could go to bed you'd have to move the table so you could put the seats over and that was where we slept. Then before you could have your breaks=fast you'd have to put all those back. It used to be a nightmare but it was a break.

53:22 Did you see other people from the factory when you were there?

No perhaps they were going abroad then.

Were you allowed days off for other reasons, like funerals or stuff like that?

Yes I think they would give you a day for a funeral, family parents, Aunts and uncles.

Were those paid days?

No you wouldn't get paid.

53:58 Social Life you talked a bit about that. Were there social activities organised by the workers and the factory?

No

You don't remember anything?

The only time we had anything like that was when the girls wanted to play netball and they'd let you play netball outside after work.

Did you used to do that?

Yes i did that a couple of times.

54:30 What position did you play?

Goal keeper because I was so tall. Can you believe it that I've lost 2 and a half inches? I used to be 5 foot 10 and a half. Couple of years ago when I was down the surgery he said no you're not that now you've lost 2 and a half inches. I said how I can lose that. I suppose your spine shrinks.

55:05 Who did you used to play against?

We'd have 2 teams in the factory. I don't think it lasted long because they became fed up.

You didn't go and play against any other factories?

No

That's a shame. What about a Christmas Party?

You'd have a do in Porthcawl.

Where did you go in Porthcawl?

Down in the Sea Bank.

Is that a hotel?

The managers used to go there. The managers were from away so they weren't always in the factory as such, especially the boss. He'd always come down certain times of the year. That's where they would stay; in the Sea Bank. We'd have a night out in the Sea Bank.

56:06 Was that all paid for by the factory?

Yes

Was that every Christmas?

More or less every Christmas, perhaps some of the girls didn't want to go.

Same place every Christmas?

Yes

What was it a kind of Dinner and Dance?

Yes but a lot of the girls didn't used to dress up. I mean I had borrowed a dress off my Auntie I was lucky to have an evening dress. Then you'd get the others. I consider it wasn't my dress, some would make the effort but others would dress in a skirt and a top or a dress. It used to be a nice night out.

Did you used to have live music there?

Yes. It was something to look forward.

Could you take your boyfriend or husband?

Well I was never courting then. It was just all the girls.

57:20 Did people take members of their family?

If they had a husband but many no they'd leave them at home.

It was a girl's night then?

Yes and the men that were in the factory.

57:33 What was the camaraderie like in the factory was it a good group?

Yes, I think everyone used to complain about the same things or they'd all stick together. The men I think were all together that way. They'd all moan about the same thing.

58:04 Do you keep in touch with the women in the factory?

Yes we used to and then as the years go by it dwindles, as your living in different places.

Do you still see anybody from there?

No. I think it was different from when I was working in the other factory you did because I had family working in that factory.

58:41 Do you think they were good employers on the whole?

Yes it was the money.

The money was poor you think?

Yes it was.

59:00 You stayed there for how many years?

15 I was 22 23 24. 15 to 24. 9 years. I finished then in the August and I had a baby in December. I did go back then a couple of years later I went back, because I separated from my husband then, because I had mother-in-law trouble. So I went to live with my mother then because my Grandparents had died. I did work then for about a year or so back in LouisEdwards, everything was so different then.

Did you do the same job?

Yes doing the same type of work but it was a happier place then. When we worked there before you were disgruntled, you're not happy there.

1:00:24 So you were happier when you went back?

Yes

Were your wages better then?

Yes they must have been.

How old were you when you went back, do you remember?

About 31 - 32 something like that and I went back for a year.

So that would have been mid 60's?

Yes

1:01:00 Tell me about the other factory?

In the furniture factory.

Yes. What factory was that then?

It was Colonial then but they were all Christie Tyler and they were all had different names, whatever they were.

Where was that factory?

Up in Glyncorrwg and what it was my sister in law worked up there and her sister was a friend of mine so this girl only wanted to do half a day, so they asked me would i be interested in doing half a day. By that time I had got married and again and had a little boy, so that suited me alright so I was doing half a day then for quite a while.

1:01:52 Just half a day one day?

No every day half day.

When did you start doing that?

72.

Tell me the about the job up there what did you do?

Well that was machining then. Of course it was learning all different parts of the furniture. So you were starting a different thing again and it was thicker material. Once you got into it that was good money up there.

Do you remember how much you earned?

I can't remember up there, I would say it was double to what I was earning in the sewing factory.

1:03:08 How did you get up to the Glyncorrwg then, where were you living?

I was living down in Cymmer then. Where I used to live up the hill and the street up there I was living down in Cymmer then.

So how would you get to Glyncorrwg?

We had a car then so I used to drive up there.

Otherwise it would have been quite difficult?

Well there was always people passing working up the factory you could have always said 'do you mind picking me up?'

1:03:46 But you could drive there then?

Yes

Can you remember did you have to train to work?

No because i could already sew it was just heavier sewing machines and the material was heavier. I mean you did sew cotton but it was thicker, you see flowery furniture around.

1:04:21 Can you remember you first day at work up at Glyncorrwg what was the factory like, how many of you working there?

It wasn't as big as Louis Edwards. There weren't so many girls, say 40 odd and of course i knew a couple of them so you felt more at ease because your knowing different girls and the supervisor was my sister in law's sister which, she had worked in Louis Edwards and of course we used to go to work together. It was easier sewing because it was more or less straight sewing, not fussy things like the clothes factory.

So thicker material, but easier lines in a way?

You did straight sewing everything was more or less straight, nothing fussy like putting a collar on or putting a zip in you didn't have none of that. Once you knew all your parts, that was the worst part, picking up which part. I used to ask the girl in front is this right, or the one behind me, they were all helpful.

1:05:33 Were there a good gang of people up there? Did you make a lot of friends?

Yes

You said there was 40 girls working there, how many were working all in all in the factory do you think?

See you had a lot. You had the cutting room boys which were 2 and you'd have a couple of girls helping. Then you'd have all the boys up in upholstery, would have been about 30. Say about 150 overall, I would think because you all had the cutting room, the girls that was putting the work together, the feeders, then they give them to you and that at that time there were 3 factories in Glyncorrwg, perhaps you would have seen them they were combined.

1:07:22 2 Christie Tyler factories?

Yes. It was all one but there wasn't enough room for them in one factory so all the men then would upholstery up the top factory and then you'd have the service boys, back and for fetching the suites that were sewn up there.

How did it work? Did you used to sew and then send that stuff up to the men?

Yes

They'd upholster then?

Yes but before then you'd have the fillers who used to fill the cushions and the seat cushions and then you'd have scatter cushions to fill. They would have to be done before the men had them. Once the men done all that all the cushions would go with it, scatter cushions and the girls then would be finishing them, putting all these things together. They would be out in the bay then ready for the men to deliver to wherever they had to go.

1:08:35 Did you enjoy that work?

Yes I enjoyed that because then when I was laid off because there weren't enough work we went over Trefforest from Cymmer. That was about 50 miles. 25 miles there and 25 miles back.

Was that the same factory?

Same factory

Christie Tyler was in Trefforest as well?

But a different name to Colonial, but i can't remember what they were called. You'd have them in Bridgend that was a different name and then another place further on. But i worked over there for a good while. 3 of us used to go over there, because there wasn't enough work for us in the factory. While i was over there the boss had asked if i would be interested, as they were doing their own developing then. That meant they'd want a machinist there. So I took the job and we had our own designer as well. So he'd be designing and that's what we were doing. 2 men and myself working with a designer.

To develop a pattern?

Yes the designer would do a drawing of what furniture he wanted and then he'd give it to Don one of the chaps and he'd say now this is what i want and he had to sort of make patterns to what the designer wanted and then it would be working out the same as the drawing which was sometimes easy and then there were some that were hard to get what he wanted. It all worked out in the end.

1:10:48 Did you enjoy that work?

Yes I used to love that.

Did you used to get paid more money for that?

You'd have I say £200 a week, perhaps before stoppages and that. I didn't have to rush to earn my pay like the girls did on the floor. Like i said the money was good and you'd have good bonus all depends how quick you are. I think I was having about £200 then which was quite good money, but you didn't have to rush.

For this development work?

Yes

1:11:37 When was that?

Say 72 perhaps

You went in 72 to Glyncorrwg.

My husband been dead 14 years and 9 years after that before that I mean I worked in Social Services, night sitting. So from then to, when did I say I went there?

72 you went to Glyncorrwg till about 1990.

Yes

So you were paid about £200 in the 80's?

Yes

1:12:31 Were you given perks by the company, could you buy furniture cheap?

Yes you could.

Did you do that?

Better still the chap I was working with, if I liked something he would, as he had a little shop or place where he would do private work. So he did all my furniture then for me. So I didn't have to pay for doing it, because if he had anything then I would sew it for him. Say I wanted furniture he wouldn't charge me and i wouldn't charge him for sewing.

So you had your furniture for free?

Yes except we were paying for the material and the poly and things like that.

1:13:24 That was a big perk?

Yes so of course like i said I was getting a bit old for that, but I still do a bit now and again.

You still do it now?

Now and then.

What were your holidays like when you were there were they the same?

That's what I was saying they were good holidays you'd have your 2 weeks, and then you'd have a week for Whitsun, I'm saying 2 weeks for Easter, but was it 2 weeks? But it was more than what you were having in the other factory.

1:14:27 What about trade unions were there any?

Yes you'd always pay for the union; they'd take it out of your pay.

Do you remember any disputes when you were there?

No I don't think so because everyone was earning. The men, the upholsters were earning good money. So there was nobody with any quibbles because you were doing alright.

1:15:00 Were they good employers then?

Yes

Everybody was quite happy?

Yes

They treated people well?

Yes

1:15:09 Do you remember any kind of Christmas Do's and things while you were there?

Yes up in Glyncorrwg we used to have it up in the club.

You didn't join the other factory for a Christmas Do?

No we just had our own.

Not the factory club?

No they'd have a club the Ruby club that was up there. Go to the club up there, patronised the village really, to have something special.

1:16:01 What about the conditions at work were they good?

Yes there was nothing you could argue about everything was tidy. That then was when we had to move development because the factory was closing then we had to go down to Pendragon in Bridgend, near to Sony's

On the estate.

Down that area it was.

On the estate?

Yes Waterton Estate.

1:16:40 Was this after Trefforest?

Yes like i said that was after I had the other job for the development. We finished in Trefforest it was long and up over the Bwlch. If you had bad weather they'd have it first up the Bwlch.

Is that the way you used to go?

Yes

Over the Bwlch and through Rhondda and through Porth and Pontypridd?

Yes

That's a very long way?

Yes

Lots of traffic as well

Yes it was a nightmare but if you wanted to work, that's where you had to go.

1:17:22 Were your hours long in that job, in the Development job?

No same as the factory but you did have a lot of staying behind and then Saturday and Sunday. I think I used to work more often than not Saturday and Sunday because we didn't have bonus me and my friend who was the supervisor we would do extra work, you'd have to go to get extra work and extra money.

You really enjoyed that job?

Yes

1:18:00 So when did Trefforest shut then, or did you just finish?

No we just finished.

And then you went to Bridgend?

Yes because I was offered a job and I thought well it used to be in Duffryn. It's in Cymmer. Which way would you go to Cymmer? Port Talbot or Bridgend Way?

I went through Maesteg.

Maesteg yes. It's if you were living in Cymmer and you wanted to go to Port Talbot you would pass through Duffryn and come to Pontydyfren and then Port Talbot.

I was a long way then?

Then I moved to Port Talbot then because my husband was working in here I come down this way because he wasn't driving, I thought it would be easier for him to get to work because he would catch a bus at 5 to start at 6, so I moved down here. That meant when I was working in Glyncoirwg living I would have to travel all the way up to Glyncoirwg.

1:19:22 Looking back then how do you feel about the time you spent working in the factories?

In Maesteg?

Well everywhere.

Like I said when we moved down here it was our decision to move here. So you had to put up with travelling all the way back up there then. All my family were living up there, my mother and father were alive then so we were 6 children, so my brother was living in Glyncoirwg and all the others were living in Cymmer. So you had places to call in.

1:20:23 When you finally finished in Christie Tyler's did you retire then?

No when we were down in Pendragon well of course there was other developments there in Pendragon as well as us we were only 3 and we went to join them down in Bridgend. Well of course we were, I was the last one in because there were other machinists doing that work, so I had to finish.

They made you redundant?

Yes. Then I had a job then with Social Services, night and day sitting, which I didn't mind that it was a change from sewing.

1:21:15 When you left Christie Tyler's did they give you a retirement or farewell do?

No because it was just 1 or 2 of us going.

They didn't give you a present when you left?

No because i wasn't there years and years.

Are you in contact with any of your former work mates in Christie Tyler?

Yes I often phone them up or they will phone me up and we have a chat on the phone. Perhaps I don't go to see them, my sister in law and sister she comes down now and again and we phone each other. She was also the one I did work with in LouisEdwards.

Apart from the travelling how do you feel about the years you spent working first of all in Louis Edwards and then Christie Tyler's?

Well like I said I used to be like that because all the walking down the hills and back home and down to Louis Edwards it kept you, then again you didn't have the food like you have today when we were young. We always had chickens, my Grandfather kept a pig and then my Uncle would be digging in the garden planting and that, you never had the sweets they were on ration, you didn't have like you have today, just pick anything up.

1:23:32 How did you feel about the work, the time you actually spent working and I suppose the camaraderie?

You had your bunch of friends everyone had their own group of friends and we was happy enough it was just the money; you were killing yourself for peanuts.

Would you say you were happier in Christie Tyler's?

Yes.

Was that just the money or the work and friendship?

The work and the friendship. The money as well because you were able to buy a car and able to buy a house which you wouldn't have done working in Louis Edwards. You didn't have that type of money. I remember going on a trip to Illfracombe with Louis Edwards they used to have day trips taking you places.

From Louis Edwards?

Yes I forgot about that. You did.

Did you do on trips with Christie Tyler?

I don't remember that you'd just have a do Christmas time, I don't think they had trips like that unless the girls themselves make a trip, which a couple of us did, we went to Tenby once about 8 of us. Everybody else did their own thing; it was just the Christmas one that you all went to.

Up in Glyncorrwg?

Yes I mean Louis Edwards was a bigger, lots of machinists.

85:36

END OF INTERVIEW/ DIWEDD CYFWELIAD