

TRANSCRIPT

BISHOPSGATE VOICES 4

***Interviewee: Monica Henderson (MH)**

***Interviewer: Jenny Kallin (JK)**

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***Place: Bishopsgate Institute**

*[FIRST CD]

*[BEGINNING OF RECORDING]

*JK: Hello, my name is Jenny Kallin, I'm recording at Bishopsgate Library. And today, I am talking to Monica Henderson. Monica, please could you tell me your present address?

*MH: 15, Stillslane, Stepney, London

*JK: Lovely. And the year you were born?

*MH: Thirty-first of the tenth, thirty-seven.

*JK: And where were you born, which area?

*MH: In Wapping, which comes under Stepney type of thing.

*JK: And was that in hospital?

*MH: Yes, St Georges' hospital, but it's in [???].

*JK: And we said you started work when you were fifteen?

*MH: Yes.

*JK: And did you work your whole life or did you just?

*MH: Yes, yes, there was a short time in my life when I was an itinerant catechist, that has nothing to do with Bishopsgate, is it really?

*JK: Ah, all right.

*MH: But hmm, I worked all my life, either in Stepney or which also, E1, which is Middlesex Street, isn't it, yeah.

*JK: [indiscernible]

*MH: And also I worked in the city, in E2, E3 and E4.

*JK: And when?

*MH: EC, two years E3.

*JK: And when you were a little girl, did your mum go to work?

*MH: I don't remember, well she did office cleaning in the city.

*JK: All right.

*MH: But I was the youngest of ten children. So she never had a career, she wasn't a career woman [laughter].

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: But she used to do this office cleaning, either early morning or in the evening. And, she would always be home in time for us to go to school. She would get fresh rolls on the way home, a cup of tea in bed, so she was [laughter], yeah.

*JK: And what about your dad, what did he do?

*MH: He was a, he used to do the pavements in the roads, stonemason, I suppose you can call paviour, paviour, that'd be the name, yeah. But in his early life, I think he did do a little hand at tailoring, but I don't think it lasted long, but it was on the council, doing pavements.

*JK: And when you were a little girl, did you come in to Bishopsgate? Did you come to things in the area, like the market or the station or?

*MH: Euh, Middlesex Street, in the Petticoat Lane market, that was the main thing, really. When I was young, especially on a Sunday. You would all go down to the market, where the records, because nobody had, you know records players or that.

*JK: Ah, I see.

*MH: You would hear the records, also you buy your material, because you made your own clothes, so you would go to Paul's, special place down there where you could get you material to make your dresses. And also you always got nice handbags down there. There was always Ginsburg, I think it was, there was a shop. There was a shop, which used to have all the.

*JK: Did you go down with all your brothers and sisters, or would you go with an adult?

*MH: No, this wouldn't have been as a child, Jo, no, no, not as a child. It would have been like after fifteen, after you'd have found your feet, you was walking, yeah.

*JK: And when you started work, did you want to go to work or did you want to say on at school?

*MH: No, I didn't, I didn't think of it, I just, I don't know, you just programmed, that when you got to fifteen, and also in our area, most of the children were put in the rag trade, into dressmaking, machining. Hmm, you saw that you weren't clever enough for office work, you know, unless you went to a Grammar school, and euh, so we were just naturally all running into the machining, and also so therefore it would, it would be local, and you'd now lots of the people there, because if they didn't go to your school, they went to a neighbouring school, or they lived in the area. They, really, was like a.

*JK: So it's quite social?

*MH: Yeah, and you would all sing [laughter] this big floor, you know with the machines going, but if someone started singing, then everybody would join in and euh.

*JK: Would that be like the local pop song?

*MH: Yeah, all the latest songs, you know, "Three coins and a [??]" or something like that, you know and yeah.

*JK: And the management didn't, didn't mind?

*MH: No, no, no, as long as you were all getting on to do the work, you know, yeah.

*JK: So when you first went to the job, did you have a formal interview?

*MH: I don't think so, I can't remember. I think somebody, I can't remember the first time going, you just found yourself work, I don't know. Something must have, maybe somebody said, someone's sister has left school, have you got a job, and yeah, I don't know.

*JK: And what did you wear to go to work?

*MH: Just ordinary clothes you, a skirt, dress, or whatever.

*JK: Did you have to put on a uniform there?

*MH: No, no, we all used to bring our own pinafores, half pinafores, because in there you would have your scissors or your tape measure or something, and you always kept it on because of the material, so you could, you just naturally wore a pinafore, half pinafore, hmm.

*JK: You started at eight in the morning?

*MH: Sheila said she did, but I can't remember starting at eight, it might be half past eight, yeah. But see, when I first started, it was in Stepney, and you walked to work, just, it wasn't far away. And then, when we come to Bishopsgate, which is, you know, Strype Street, you'd get the bus. But then you could walk as well, people didn't, you know, think of buses and being, because for a while, we did dressmaking in Old Street, which wasn't far from here. And, there was a factory there, when all these girls used to come out, they were rough, we thought they

were rough, you know [laughter], there were most probably really nice girls, so we wouldn't bother to wait for the bus, because there was always a fight to go on the bus.

*JK: Ah, I see.

*MH: And we would walk to Old Street to our home in Stepney, and just didn't think nothing of it.

*JK: It kept you fit, then?

*MH: Yeah, yeah, hmm, yeah.

*JK: And when you started work, did you have a break in the morning or did you have to go right through to lunch?

*MH: You used to have a break, they would bring round the tea trolley and you'd all have your own cups, and you'd have your own piece of material tied on, so you all knew your cups.

*JK: That's clever.

*MH: [laughter] Yeah. Or you'd have a special pattern, and you all knew that. Euh, we used to have a break and we'd have a roll or something, because lunchtime, we used to go home, when we worked in Stepney.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Because our mum used to cook our dinner. And we used to go home and go back to work.

*JK: And what happened when you worked in Bishospgate?

*MH: In Bishopsgate, I should imagine we stopped and had rolls, I think we did, there was like a canteen, it wasn't a canteen, but it was a room where you ate in. And I think we got rolls in, Kossoff's.

*JK: Bakery?

*MH: And we would, you know, hmm, we would have rolls.

*JK: And this was in Strype Street?

*MH: Strype Street, yeah.

*JK: What was the name of the company?

*MH: I can't remember, but it was a, Ma if she was here, she would remember the man's name who owned it. They were Jewish Hungarian, Hungarian Jews I think, who owned it. We didn't work there for years and years and years. But it was a few years, you know.

*JK: And what garments did you actually made?

*MH: Oh there, it was when we was doing, it must have been knitwear, still, because I can remember, I was classed as a good machinist, Marks and Spencers had these very wide rib hmm cardigans that were in fashion, with a zip, right at the front. And I had the job of putting those zips in, because you kept, you went in line with the grain.

*JK: So you had to get it really straight?

*MH: Straight, and I could remember Marks and Spencer's coming round, everything had to be covered up, let them see it was clean, we had all white sheets over the machines [laughter] and everything. And, so, it was knitwear as well that we did there.

*JK: And they were sold in Marks and Spencer's?

*MH: Yeah, not all their things, but I know that I had this order for these cardigans?

*JK: So did you feel quite proud that you could do that?

*MH: Not really, no, no.

*JK: [???] good skill?

*MH: No, you didn't, you just, you know, everybody, you're all just machinists. But I happened to be lucky that I could do these straight lines, so [laughter].

*JK: So when they brought you a new pattern, did you have time to practice it, to get better at it?

*MH: Hmm, I don't think so, I don't think we did. You had a sample to go by.

*JK: Right.

*MH: So you would look to see the area it was done, and then you would just start.

*JK: Copying them?

*MH: Yeah, doing them.

*JK: So if you sewed one part, and would it move on to someone else to do the next bit?

*MH: Well these cardigans, I think they were already knitted to the shape, like the, they would have the calf, and eh, so most probably this was cut, the only other person who would have handled these particular cardigans with the zip would be the overlocker, that's a machine that, you know, no, I haven't any overlocker on this. No, but it covers the ends, so it doesn't [???], yeah, like a blanket stitch, but only it's a.

*JK: Yes, a machine.

*MH: So the overlocker, would most probably machine underneath, and zip in the front. But the rest of it, would have been knitted, you know, between the shape.

*JK: Were there colours in there?

*MH: Oh, no.

*JK: Were there different colours in there?

*MH: I don't know, I can't remember.

*JK: So did you actually see the finished garment?

*MH: Yeah, you saw them, yeah. You didn't take much notice of it though, because you, there were bundles of them all around, so you were just interested in your little patch and talking to your friends or whatever you did and.

*JK: Did you know how to do the scraps? Material. Did they just used to sweep them?

*MH: Just sweep them up, yeah, anything that come off, yeah.

*JK: When you got to like lunch time, how did they let you know? Did they ring a bell or buzzer or did someone just come round and say?

*MH: I think we'd just be all watching the clock? [laughter]

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: It was one, I know we did, one in Stepney, when I worked in the Albion Knitwear.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Well, I worked there for a long time in the rag trade and we used to, you know, watch for the clock. We had a [??] lady then, though.

*JK: Was she strict?

*MH: She was, but just making sure you know, that you did your work, or if there was something, if you were doing, say you would be doing samples, not only me, but other people, and dresses and all that, not just knitwear. And it was taking a long mile, she wouldn't mind giving you another locket to bring your money up, you know, she could do that sort of thing, because you were, had to go slow on something or you. But remind you to getting to the full flow, you would, she was watching over everything.

*JK: Right.

*MH: And euh.

*JK: When you arrived in the morning, did you have to clock in?

*MH: Yes. In the Albion Knitwear, we did.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: In Stepney, we used to clock in.

*JK: And what about.

*MH: And she would be on the, if you were late [laughter] I mean it was piece, but if you were late, she was still there to tell you off.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Yeah and, she would be there, and she would tell you. I forgot what she would say to you, but you know, [?this is strange in there?], you know.

*JK: Does piece-work mean that you got paid for each bit you do?

*MH: Yes, say that I was making that dress and it was at the time say seven and six, you know, maybe put the zip in and do some things. So the more you did, the more you earned.

*JK: Oh I see. When you went home with the money, did you have to give some to your parents?

*MH: I used to give some, we did always give out some to our mum, yeah.

*JK: But you could keep some for yourself.

*MH: Yeah,

*JK: So did you just go and spend it all or save some of it?

*MH: You save, because you start going on holidays, because that's in the early days, you started going abroad, which was a big thing, I mean you didn't fly, you went by train and boat and everything like that, so you'd save for that. I mean we were such a small, we only had these two weeks off in the summer. You didn't have all the holidays you have now. And you used to get paid if you, you'd have one week board of

trade, which wasn't much money. And the other week have your journeys.

*JK: Hein.

*MH: So if you were off sick or anything like that, you didn't get, it knocked your money down for your holidays. But we all used to look forward for that two week when our factory would shut.

*JK: Everyone had their holidays at the same time?

*MH: At the same time. And it was either June or July, that was the hottest time, because when we went to Rome once, ah, it was so hot, yeah.

*JK: So when you came back to work, everyone wanted to talk about all their holidays.

*MH: Yeah, yeah. And twice we went, three, a few times we went abroad by train. It happened to be that there was other girls in the factory who didn't know where we were going and they had booked up the same place and we were on the same train, yeah.

*JK: [inaudible]

*MH: Yeah, yeah.

*JK: Was there a big turnover of staff or?

*MH: No, people used to say there for years, yeah. There was the odd one or two that would come and go, but, mostly, and I still know a lot of them now, because those who still live in Stepney, yeah. You see them.

*JK: When you first said they got married and had children, did they come back to work or usually?

*MH: Wah, if they had someone to look after their children, but lots of people years ago once they had a family, they used to more and less. Or they would get outdoor work. They would do machining at home, if they had children. Take a bundle of work home and make one bundle of work a week, would help with their money.

*JK: And the factory would do that?

*MH: Because when my mum was ill, I did that. I worked at home for a while, because Marie was an overlocker and I was a machinist. So machining was what they wanted done at home. My dad bought me a machine, and I used to be at home, you know, yeah. That was a big thing, years ago, the rag trade.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Nearly everybody worked in it, yeah.

*JK: So when you worked at home, did you missed all your friends there? Because you did have.

*MH: Hmm, I didn't really like work at home, but I can always remember the cold winter, and I was machining at the front of the window and it was snowing.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: I remember that [laughter]. But I mean, I wasn't at home for years, or that it might be one year or half a year. Then I got a little job in an umbrella factory, so I could do half days, instead of doing this homework, I went out and did a few hours umbrella, doing machining, the gaine, you know, making the little covers.

You know Fulton's, the big umbrella place, they were everywhere, they were really well-known umbrellas, that was when I first started, they had a little factory along, a couple of rooms, along Commercial Road, and I used to work in there, Mr Fulton, yeah. Now I think he is in Harrods and everywhere, yeah.

*JK: That's because of your good work, you see.

*MH: [laughter] There was a woman that used to machine the edges of the umbrellas, and she would just let the machine, let the fabric roll on through, and one day, even steam euh smoke started coming out of the machine. She was so clever, you know.

*JK: Unh.

*MH: So people are clever with their hands, aren't they?

*JK: A little earlier, you said you went on a strike occasionally.

*MH: That wasn't in Strype Street. See, this was in the Albion Knitwear, Cable Street. And euh yeah, if we wanted more money for something, you would say, all right, all turn the pair of, we would all turn quiet, but we didn't have a Union then, at the Albion Knitwear, you'd have to deal with the governors and.

*JK: Just.

*MH: And then they would give you an extra penny or [??] with something on it, then you would be off strike.

*JK: So how old you were when you went to Bishopsgate to work?

*MH: I might have been about nineteen in that photo, yeah. So.

*JK: Did you work there because it was more money or just?

*MH: I can't remember actually. I can't remember why I left the knitwear. There was a reason why I left the knitwear. Except that means I wouldn't have worked for that knitwear for that many years, would I? I feel I was there for years, but that's when I would have gone from the Albion Knitwear.

*JK: And do you know how long you stayed at Bishopsgate?

*MH: A few years, yeah. Because then we went to this job in Old Street. I mean there, that's where we were machining and you know the heating we had, do you remember the old brown euh black oil heaters?

*JK: Euh.

*MH: The stove?

*JK: Hmm. Yeah.

*MH: We had those next to us, I mean.

*JK: Is that dangerous?

*MH: I know, I mean what is, what were they called?

*JK: Health and Safety.

*MH: Health and Safety wouldn't? And you know what we used to do? We had a frying pan on top and we would be frying bacon [laughter].

*JK: [inaudible]

*MH: While we were working, and turn the bacon over, and all this material. I mean Health and Safety and also, I mean. It could have gone, they used to let us do it, that was only in one room, it wasn't a big factory, it was like a small, Miss Milich, Mr and Mrs Milich owned that, I can remember their names.

*JK: Do you know how many people worked at Bishospgate? Roughly how many?

*MH: Oh I was in the hotel.

*JK: That was all the workforce?

*MH: Yes, yeah.

*JK: So was it all female?

*MH: All the machinists were. Except for the g-, yeah, all the machinists were. Hmm, I can't remember the cutters, if they, because sometimes you had men cutting. It was mainly women who did the machining, though. I mean, in tailoring you had men, but in dressmaking and the rag trade, it was women.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: But you had women doing the cutting. But I can't remember any men. The only men I can remember in Strype Street were the owners, yeah.

*JK: Did you like working with all women?

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: You just accepted it.

*MH: Yeah, you would have friends and you would have a laugh. We did used to have good fun, you know, it wasn't, it wasn't back bite, you know anything like that. You would just, and also, when you went out weekends, you'd still meet the same people, you know.

*JK: Did you ever wear the clothes you had made?

*MH: Euh.

*JK: Did that put you off?

*MH: Occasionally, you might buy something cheaper, but not a lot, you had it made. We were machinists, oh I'm touching my mike, but we used to go to a dressmaker to have our clothes made.

*JK: And when you had them, did you sort of look at them and say I could have done this better or?

*MH: Not with Peggy, no.

*JK: She was good.

*MH: And they used to cut, you know, the design like anything that was the latest fashion shift or something. They know how to cut things, I mean, we used to make our own sometimes, but oh there was once when Marie had some suits made by a woman called Alice [laughter], I mean, we were machinists, but that was a suit, and this lapel, one was out there like that, one was the little one, and the skirt was, pencil skirts were in, she cut more.

*JK: Oh dear.

*MH: Sheila, our other friend, who's being questioned today, she lived in the next [?street mile?] and said I've got to go round and show it to her. She [???] an horrible rant to her with this suit on, and we went, and we went to Alice, but we didn't go anymore though [laugh], yeah. Hmm, I'm trying to think of other things, I remember Strype Street.

*JK: Do you remember what happened at Christmas?

*MH: Christmas, we had a party in Strype Street or the Albion Knitwear.

*JK: Was it in the factory?

*MH: No, or you, there was somewhere at Algate, it was in a basement, because we had a photo of that as well. But I didn't bother to, because it's a big case, you got to get it out of the wardrobe, we had it a couple of times lately, but maybe we could still give it to him, one of the mains.

*JK: [indiscernible] That would be absolutely fine.

*MH: Because it's just this photo, I mean it don't tell you nothing, we were at a Christmas party, we got Christmas hats on. But it was the do from Strype Street.

*JK: Right.

*MH: And then we got this other one, we were coming at, stand outside a pub, we would be to a Union meeting, but you can't tell, you can't tell that it was.

*JK: Did you get a Christmas bonus?

*MH: No.

*JK: No.

*MH: At the Albion Knitwear, where we got our Christmas, was a ham roll and a penguin biscuit. That was our Christmas box. So one year.

*JK: [indiscernible]

*MH: I know, that's when these morning teas used to come round. And you had this free roll, ham roll and a penguin biscuit. And so one year, they said, all refuse it. So we all refused it and the next year, we got a box of chocolates [laughter].

*JK: [laughter] And what about the summer outing? That was from Strype Street?

*MH: Yes, yes, I mean they would pay for the coach, and I can't remember where we went that day.

*JK: Would that be a work day or would it be a weekend?

*MH: A weekend, I don't think we would have a day off, no. I mean at one time we even used to work half day Saturday.

*JK: Did you?

*MH: Hmm. Then I stopped, and very early on in my life, but Marie would have done it more, my sister, and yes that would have been on a Saturday, you would go to the seaside or somewhere.

*JK: That was for fun?

*MH: Yeah. I mean, you just went to the seaside, you didn't even go to the seaside that often. I mean now, it's nothing to get in. But you didn't go anywhere really, you mainly stayed in your area.

*JK: Did you go to the cinema?

*MH: Oh yeah, because we didn't have television, so the latest films that, we used to queue up for them and euh.

*JK: Was there anywhere near Bishopsgate you would go to?

*MH: No cinema, no.

*JK: No cinema.

*MH: No, the nearest one would have been one I can't remember the name, but it was round the back of Wentworth Street, somewhere was a cinema. But I can, I could remember going there once, but I didn't like it. It had a funny feeling about it [laughter]. But we would go to Goulston Street for swimming, which is, I don't know if it comes under Bishopsgate, but it's just off Wentworth Street.

*JK: Yeah, I know where that is.

*MH: You would go there for swimming and we would come to Wentworth Street market on a Sunday in order to get pickled herrings and Dutch herrings.

*JK: Lovely.

*MH: Yeah [laughter]. And also, there was a Kosher place, between Strype Street and Wentworth Street, there was a little street, there was a Kosher butcher's, which there wasn't lots of it. I can always remember all the chickens and things like that there, but it was a, you know, the Rabbi would go there, yeah.

*JK: And did you go to a library?

*MH: No, I wasn't a reader, I wasn't a reader. I wish I was a reader, because it would have helped a lot more.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: But anyway, when I did start, I mean when I worked in Finsbury Square, and they, that was my first break from dressmaking. Big thing, I got a job as a filing clerk there. But it was much easier, you know, when you had more holidays. I don't know, yeah.

*JK: And did you miss the old, the old.

*MH: You missed the old friends, although my friends were, wherever I worked. I always made friends with people but, you, there was, it was our family, really the dressmaking place. I still know them because they live there and you knew their mums, dads and brothers and sisters and who they married. It was more of a small village then.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: But a lot of us are dying now though.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: [laughter] But, I can't, if Marie was here, she might remember other things, but I can't. I feel as though there is nothing else to say, but.

*JK: Oh no I'm sure there is, don't worry. [???] let me have a look at this. So you said you used to walk to work? Did you use to walk to work with friends? Did you meet them on the way, or did you walk around on your own?

*MH: But I only used to work when I was at the Albion Knitwear, so I would walk with my sister or, and then you would meet other people who were walking there, but you didn't meet up to walk to work.

*JK: So if you went out to.

*MH: Sorry.

*JK: Sorry, if you had to rely on your own, did you, did you walk about and feel comfortable?

*MH: Yeah, you did then. You didn't feel frightened. I never. I don't even feel frightened now.

*JK: Oh that's good.

*MH: Yeah, yeah. You know, you, I just don't feel frightened, you are wise, you are not silly, you know you can sense sometimes if something looks a bit dodgy, but no, I mean things were a lot different then. I mean we would leave our street door opened then, you didn't expect anyone to run in and rob you or anything.

*JK: So you know, when you left Bishopsgate, do you know what happened to the company, did it keep going? That was a long time.

*MH: I don't know, I don't know what happened. We didn't keep in touch with them, really some of those people in that photo from Bishopsgate, they come from my area, so we still kept in touch with them, but they changed their jobs as well. Or they got married, young girls got married and yeah, we knew quite a few of them, and a lot of them come from Stepney.

*JK: Have you been back to look at it today?

*MH: It's put down, there's a, there's a, the actual factory was an old school, the building, so the building was solid.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: And it was an old school when we were used to work in it, but now, the other, in the photo, it's not got the place where we worked

behind, it's a, it's the one that's still there. So our actual building, I don't know why they put it down, they put a garage there, a petrol garage there.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: If you go down there, there's nothing really there.

*JK: Because sometimes now they just turn buildings into.

*MH: Specially nice old school buildings, because they are solid, didn't they.

*JK: Quite well [???].

*MH: Hmm.

*JK: So, how could you say Bishopsgate changed since you were.

*MH: See, I didn't think of it as Bishopsgate, I just saw of it as Middlesex Street, you know, the lane, the lane.

*JK: [inaudible]

*MH: And it was, I don't come down here on a Sunday now, so I can't compare it. But then it was all Jewish stores or and.

*JK: So did you have any Jewish friends?

*MH: Hmm, not really. We had Jewish neighbours, Mrs Glasso lived across the road, no we didn't really have Jewish friends. Marie, I keep talking about my sister [laugther], no I didn't. We were surrounded by, I mean we knew Jewish people, we all got on well, we were all neighbours, but people who had the cornershops were Jewish, you know, Mrs Freeman and that.

*JK: Were there any Jewish girl working in the factory?

*MH: No, no, no. That's why they, I suppose we weren't their friends.

*JK: Yeah, because you didn't actually work with them.

*MH: Hmm.

*JK: And when you, if you hadn't finished doing something and it was time to go home, did you have to stay and finish it?

*MH: No, you would just leave it to the next day. Yeah, yeah.

*JK: Did you ever had like rushing orders, they had to work really hard and you got panicky or?

*MH: No, not really. I can't remember any panics.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: It's just a new style coming and we would have this sample to go by and would look it, you'd get your bundle of work, take dozen dresses and there you would go, there was no panic. But you had to work as fast as you can to earn money.

*JK: So can you remember how many you would do in a day?

*MH: I can't remember. But he was always pleased when you finished one bundle, you got another bundle down.

*JK: And how many where in a bundle, do you know?

*MH: Well, there would be tens, twelves, or.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: You know, different, I suppose it was how many colours. Maybe someone would have five colours, so you would have five in them. But hmm, but we did have some good times there dressmaking.

*JK: Can you remember any larks you got up to?

*MH: Euh.

*JK: Was it noisy, I mean because.

*MH: It was noisy, it was noisy with the machine, yeah but you could still, we used to have a radio on. Hmm.

*JK: So you just shout above the radio and [???]?

*MH: Yeah, we would have. But you took no notice of it. But when everybody was singing, that's when you could hear that was the singing. Yeah, and I could always remember. Ah I tell you what, we must have been at work and Christmas party must have been on the nighttime because I couldn't use to go to work with our earring pins and rollers or curlers.

*JK: All right.

*MH: But you would have a turban on. And I could always remember a friend of ours singing that song of bird lives, "Come on, let's crawl to the ugly bug bal" [laughter].

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: And euh, no some of them, we used to have a laugh, we could laugh at yourself, really.

*JK: That's good. And did you do each other's hair when you took the rollers out?

*MH: No, we must have all gone home, to get dressed. We all lived local, didn't come on trains and things like that going to the city, all lived local. And you wouldn't have a taxi then, we must have all got a bus wherever it was, Eastham or a hall or something. Hmm, we haven't photos of that, but that's not Bishopsgate, that's Stepney.

*JK: And was there any a time when there wasn't enough work and you would just be sitting about?

*MH: No, there was always work. Hmm, there was always work to do. You were never sent home. Yeah.

*JK: And a new person came, did you have to teach them how to do things?

*MH: Yeah, you would just naturally help them. But you didn't have lots of people coming. I don't know, everybody seems to be there, you know. There wasn't a big turnover of different people coming. Hmm.

*JK: So lunch time, did you stay in the building? Or did you use to go out for walks?

*MH: In Bishopsgate we used to stay in the building and have our lunch, but then you would go at. I could remember Grace Kelly was getting married at the time and it was on television. So we were in Wentworth Street looking in a television, the wedding, you know.

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: Yeah, so you would go out, looking in the shops.

*JK: So at that time, you wouldn't have a telly at home?

*MH: No, no, no.

*JK: But did you have radio at home?

*MH: Yeah, you always had a radio. Yeah, hmm. Yeah, but I don't know. There's lots of changes that have happened, but I can't remember.

*JK: Were there lots of shops in Wentworth Street at that time?

*MH: Yes, like there is now. It was more handbags and but of a good quality.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: And clothes shops, but it's similar what it is now, but shoe shops. But I'm not sure what's down Wentworth, now. Of course, there was Mark's where you got your pickled herrings and Dutch herrings. And also, there was, in Wentworth street, Middlesex Street itself, it was Blooms that you could get a soup. I could remember that. Hmm.

*JK: So you had that for your lunch, if it was cold.

*MH: Yeah, but I don't think I ever bought it much because I think it was too [???] for.

*JK: So can you remember how much you got paid?

*MH: My first, all I can remember was that my first money was seventy and six, so that was one old pound, euh I got even a job of thirty, one pound thirty, ten shillings, and seventy-six pence, so, it wasn't even two pounds. You know, so, but it was good money then. But that was when I first started. As you say, what did they first show you. When I first started I did, I used to have to bring the hangers up. I did this sort of running around jobs.

*JK: [???

*MH: Yeah, yeah.

*JK: Did they press the things? Do they have.

*MH: Yes, big Hoffman's Presses.

*JK: Did you have to do that?

*MH: No, no, but you knew the girls who did it, yeah, the big steam. No, we used to come and there was others who did the ironing, and then would be the finishes, and there were always older ladies, who sat there sewing buttons on. Although they had the machines to put them on, but.

*JK: And could you choose which job you did, or which jobs girls did? Or did they just sort of.

*MH: I don't know really. I mean there was another girl who did the "felling" we say, the "felling" would be to turn the ends of things up. There was all different jobs. Hmm, hmm.

*JK: Did you ever get new machines while you were there?

*MH: We had a mechanic on sight, if anything went wrong, he would come and do it. Michael his name was.

*JK: Did the girls like that when he came in? Did they used to tease him or things?

*MH: Not really, he would just be part of the workforce, you know [laughter]. Hmm, hmm.

*JK: Did you have a locker?

*MH: No, no, no. Your machine was your area and you know you would have a bag in there if you, a cloth bag, which we most probably made yourself out of bits of material or leftover.

*JK: [???

*MH: But you hang your coat, as you come in, there would be somewhere to hang the coat.

*JK: Would they have the outside space, like a playground or?

*MH: No, not in Strype Street, no we just had the building itself, yeah. Hmm. I could remember it was snowing when we were walking there and one of the governors was, he had a sports car, I mean then, and they were playing snowballs with him. That's why because he was working behind his car and people were throwing snowballs at him, yeah.

*JK: Do you remember if it was very hot in the summer? In the factory?

*MH: The main place I could remember me being hot is this one in Stepney. The Albion Knitwear was very hot. We used to put a piece of cardboard tight on, because underneath our machines, it was a bench, a long bench. There was this, like an axe, you might just say going round long, and that would be going round and it would walk in all the machines. We used to tie a piece of cardboard onto it, so as it went round it was fanning your feet.

*JK: That's clever.

*MH: [laughter]

*JK: That's really clever.

*MH: Yeah, and also [laughter] on the wheel that was, if you had an open wheel, you would put bits of rag on it, so as you were machining, you would go round and.

*JK: [???

*MH: But mainly, the one underneath, was the one that kept you cool.

*JK: It was Strype, the factory in Strype Street, was that more comfortable in the summer, not so hot?

*MH: Hmm, you couldn't have done the same thing there, but we weren't on a bench in Strype Street, we were on individual machines, like a classroom.

*JK: [???

*MH: Yeah, like a single machine here, and then someone would be in front of you. And then you had a down on either side of the wall. You know, say five machines, then there was a couple in the middle. Also a big table with the, with, oh excuse me, with the material on or clothes.

*JK: What size were the machines, were they like, were there bigger than.

*MH: They were called heavy-duty machines, but they were just like and ordinary sewing machine. They weren't extra, extra big. Hmm. What was I gonna say about Strype Street just now.

*JK: Sorry.

*MH: No, it's all right.

*JK: We were talking about the lay-out of the table.

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: And what was the lighting like? Was it good?

*MH: Ah that's what I was going to say. It was the first time and only time I read the needle go through mine.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: That was in Strype Street. It went through the thumb. It went right through.

*JK: Ooooh.

*MH: It sort of turned it. But euh, it just frightened you more than anything.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: I can't remember.

*JK: Did the needle got up there?

*MH: I just put a plaster on it and you got on with it [laughter].

*JK: They didn't send you to hospital?

*MH: No, because the needle didn't brake. If a needle broke in there, then you'd have to go, but if I turned the handle slow, when it come back out again, so the needle hadn't broken.

*JK: It was just.

*MH: I most probably blunted it.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: So, it must have bled. But you would have just put a plaster on it.

*JK: So was that quite unusual for that to happen?

*MH: Yeah, it wasn't many people who caught their fingers underneath, because all the time you're machining and your needles there and your hand was at the side of it, but my thumb got there, I don't know how my thumb got under there.

*JK: Did you make your [??] when you worked all day?

*MH: No, no, but even your back. You'd have any troubles like that when I was, yeah. As we say, health and safety would have.

*JK It would look different now.

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: Hmm. When you went to work like on a Monday morning, did you hate going back to work, did you sort of?

*MH: No one ever wanted to go back to work, you always dreamt of not going, but you just went. I don't know, you just took it because it was part of life, so you went back to work, hmm. I could remember a friend once, she said she put to tell them, I mean you never got paid, I mean you never got sick pay. And I could always remember a friend of mine, she had had time off, and so to make sound ok, she put cigarette ash under [laughter].

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: I mean she was only young, wherever it worked, I don't know. But I could always remember, she said [laughter].

*JK: [laughter] very clever.

*MH: But you didn't get paid for them, no, no, no. You only get paid for what you did. Yeah.

*JK: Yeah. So could you remember being off for any length of time?

*MH: Not really, no.

*JK: So if you didn't sew very well, you just went in anyway because?

*MH: Yeah, unless you are really ill, then you'd have, but I can't remember, you know being off and off. That's why when I started working in the offices in the city and that, I couldn't get out. You got paid when you were sick, and they used to ask you if they were going to change the office around you. You said, all right, yes, fine

*JK: And when they paid you, how did they give it to you? Was it euh.

*MH: In a packet, a brown envelope. And your number on it. Yeah, cash, hmm.

*JK: Was that at the end of the week or?

*MH: Yes, once a week, yeah. Hmm.

*JK: And everyone got theirs at the same time?

*MH: Yes, yeah. They used to come round, the man from the office, Mr Livingstone. That's see, this is the Albion Knitwear, I could remember their names from there. But he would come up with a triumph, the wages and. Give it to you from your clocking in number.

*JK: Oh I see, that's how they did.

*MH: And your name would be on it. In fact, I could even still have an old, it's possible that I could still have an old pay packet at home. Because I used to keep little tiny medals and things and all in little trinkets in it. But then that wouldn't have been from Strype Street, that would be from the Albion knitwear.

*JK: So can you remember what happened at Strype Street when you got paid?

*MH: No, it must be the same sort of thing. Similar sort of thing, yeah.

*JK: So was it a nice feeling going home with your money in your pocket?

*MH: Yeah, yeah, hmm. Well just like everybody, likes getting paid and yeah. But you still always gave your mum money and then if you were saving up for something, you'd know, you'd join a club, most probably a Christmas club. People used to, might be somebody who took money and then at Christmas, you would get so much pay, but then you could have a loan in the meantime or you should get it out for your holiday.

*JK: Did you go for day trips yourself, like not through work, did you go by Liverpool Street on the train in anyway?

*MH: No.

*JK: You didn't ever think of that.

*MH: No, no. The only time, if, if you went would have been Fenchurch but Stepney Station which is called Limehouse now.

*JK: Right.

*MH: To Southend or somewhere like that. But hmm, you didn't really go, you know. And people didn't have cars when we were younger, the odd person did, but not like now.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Yeah, of course we used to go hop picking when we were children. See it has nothing to do with Bishopsgate, is it?

*JK: No, but it's still [indiscernible].

*MH: Yeah, I know, when we were young, yeah. So, I, we used to love it as children, yeah.

*JK: How long did you go for?

*MH: A month, more or less at a time.

*JK: Was it the whole family then?

*MH: Yeah, all those who weren't at work would go, then those who were at work, would come and visit weekends, they'd even come down on a bike or they might get a lift in a lorry or they might come by train, but you know, they would come down. You could turn an open fire, it's like camping.

*JK: God, so you looked forward [???]?

*MH: Yeah, mum would make a stew on an open fire and you just lived in this one hop. You made your bed with faggots, you know, bundles of wood.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: The farmer would come round on a tractor and give you so many branches and you would make a bed and you would put straw on top of that. Then you would take big teaks down they called, like a big duvet cover really, fill it with straw and that would be your mattress and then you would have your sheets on top and even the pillows used to put straw in. But hmm, so we really, it was an experience but people, you just loved it. During the day, you would pick hops, hmm.

*JK: So how old did you, so how old were you when you kind of stopped doing that? Was that when you were very young?

*MH: When you started work really, you would stop doing it, yeah. Because we an Ma after we had started work, my mum didn't go, my friend's mum still used to go to Whitbread and we used to go down to her. And you still, you know, lived in the huts in there, you just loved hop picking.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: And as children you loved it, because you were in the open air, you were running around in the field, you saw the cows, you saw the pigs and you know, you just loved it, yeah.

*JK: Freedom?

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: Lovely.

*MH: And you'd have to walk down the lane to get the water in a big bucket and you'd bring it back on a stick. Two hands holding it.

*JK: So was it hard when you came back to London, then?

*MH: I can always remember when I used to come back from London standing on the street and looking at the [noise] looking at the railway, I used to run down across that street to Fenchurch Street and seeing the lights on and there was this feeling of being home. So you like both places, you know.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Yeah. But it was an experience, hop picking, really loved it, but you didn't take any notice of it. It was part of life and if your mother didn't sab what she had earned through the hop picking, what was left, my mum would always take us into Maidstone, we would get a new pair of shoes.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: Because our mum used to sab sometimes, because she had all these children. My aunt, my uncle's wife, she had a few girls, she would have all her money to count at the end, but my mum would always have some. She was a very easy going person my mum. She would take us into Maidstone and we would all get a new pair of shoes.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: I can remember one pair, they were green and they had like a little leaf down in leather at the side.

*JK: That's pretty [laughter].

*MH: [laughter] So there're things you remember, hmm.

*JK: Yeah, oh.

*MH: But Bishopsgate, Bishopsgate.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: I'm looking at these buildings there. Yeah. Gardeners called, I remember when that was up. But that's not Bishopsgate is it, that comes under Stepney or White-.

*JK: What was gardeners [???] was that a big?

*MH: It was at the end of Middlesex Street, where Commercial Road goes and you got euh, not Mile End Road, Whitechapel High Street [noise] but there was this big shop called Gardeners, and it was called Gardener's Corners, of course, they pulled it all down. The island is still there, more or less, they've built on it.

*JK: So what kind of shop was it? Like a department store?

*MH: Yeah, a department store. I don't remember going in it much, but everybody know Gardener's Corner, you know, it was a landmark.

*JK: Did you go, when you were working, did you go up to the West End for shopping?

*MH: Yes, sometimes, but not a lot. We mainly got our clothes down here or when we used to sometimes down the markets, not only Wentworth Street, but Roman Road market, you could get really lovely good quality coats, you know, really.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Bearing that you were in that trade, you knew that they were.

*JK: Yeah because you knew.

*MH: The material was good, and they were really good and you.

*JK: Do you still feel like that when you buy modern clothes? You look at them and that's not well made or?

*MH: Yeah, yeah. Hmm, yeah, yeah. A lot of people complain about Marks and Spencer's, but I think it is pretty good, I mean the odd thing now these modern things, they are just thrown together.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: But on the whole, I think Marks is still, takes some beating.

*JK: I do it as well.

*MH: Hmm, hmm.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Yes, so. I'm trying to think of things to say.

*JK: No, it's ok, you're doing us absolutely a brilliant job [laughter].

*MH: [laughter]

*JK: So when you, did you feel a great kind of sense of the bosses and us, us and them kind of?

*MH: Yeah, yeah. There was a, at Strype Street, there was, the bosses were there in the background and they didn't really, we didn't really see much of them, they weren't.

*JK: They didn't interfere?

*MH: No, and I could always remember Pushkas, a famous footballer in Brasil.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: He was here, he must have known them, because he was coming to the factory, and I think some of them might got his autograph. But it was a, you know, it wasn't a 'them and us' it was, you know, friendly. Hmm, but in the other place, there was always the, mind you there was alright, they just kept the, they would walk around the factory, but, that's in the Albion Knitwear, they just walked around the factory where Mr Isador and Mr Wheesable [laughter].

*JK: It's their names [laughter]?

*MH: Yeah [laughter]

*JK: [laughter] So.

*MH: I can always remember going on strike one time there, though they were saying, don't, "When you're coming tomorrow, don't go up to the floor". Don't, you know, start the machines, because a few of us, we were only young.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: We come into the yard, and so we'd just hanging around and and formal, because we used to make our, our own material, then. There were these big looms, you know and the war, they used to knit material. And Mr Maurice, his names was, he was tall, thin man, and he had half glasses and he, he came up to us, and it was only a few of us, and he said, "What are you doing down here?".

*JK: Hmm [laughter]

*MH: So we said, we're on strike [laughter].

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: Of course, when we went upstairs, I was all working, it was only three or four of us who was downstairs keeping to this word of going on strike [laughter]. So as you can imagine, we all had a go at him.

*JK: Oh, so it just collapsed, then?

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: I don't know, we might still have gone on strike, I can't remember, but I can always remember this instance where we were all sort of, "We are on strike" [laughter].

*JK: Can you ever remember being told off? Or, you're a good girl?

*MH: No, I can remember Mrs Strange saying to me that I was talking. She called out Monica "whistle and write", which meant work and talk at the same time.

*JK: [indiscernible] [laughter]

*MH: But they, you know, it was good memories of the rag trade and of course, as we say, we first started going abroad when we was, which was something, you know, really nice.

*JK: Exciting.

*MH: We send a card, "We even have grapes growing outside our window", because they had a.

*JK: No.

*MH: You know, their cupboard, it wasn't a hotel, it was a pension. "Pensione" or whatever you call it. But I don't know what else to say.

*JK: Did you carried on living at home?

*MH: Yes. Nobody thought of leaving. No.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: There was ten of us children and I know, two brothers died and a sister. But the rest of them got married, but me and my sister Marie, we were the two youngest, and we didn't get married, so we always stayed at home with mum and dad. But you just didn't think of moving.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: I mean you still went out every weekend, you had your young friends and they would come round. You would have parties in your house because our mum and dad were easy.

*JK: [indiscernible]

*MH: No, especially if they went around on holiday, that would just be an excuse, we, you know, the party was in our hands. But people just, you know, there wasn't drugs or anything like that.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Back then, you had a, by then you had a record player or someone would be on the piano but hmm, why did I start saying that.

*JK: No, it's good.

*MH: [laughter]

*JK: And were you ever unemployed?

*MH: No, always worked. Yeah, even when I stopped work for a while, hmm, which is nothing to do with Bishospgate, but I was working, hmm, in EC3 at the time, when I stopped to be an itinerant catechist. And even when I come home, because I, naturally you didn't earn anything while you were away. But each time, I come home to London, I would get a job and I was fortunate, because Guinness Mahon, which is a merchant bank, they used to take me on and give me a part-time job for just when I was a home. So they were very good, and I know, one year, they couldn't take me on, so I still seeked for another job, and I got one with the gas company in Bow. So, I have always worked.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: And I always paid my stamps, you know.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: So that you got your, hmm, your old age pensions, or whatever it was, yeah. So I never had time. I mean there was times when I wasn't working, but I always paid the stamp and got a job when I come home. Hmm.

*JK: And talking of stamps, did you use to collect the co-ops stamps?

*MH: We used to have co-ops, hmm we still got our old card book at home. Hmm. Yeah we must have collected stamps. I still know the card number, I do it in the lottery.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Three, seven, nine, and four, five, seven and the last seven is a seventeen.

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: But as children, you used to go to the co-op, to do the shopping. And you'd give the co-op number.

*JK: Oh, I see.

*MH: So you all new it. Three, seven, nine, four, five, seventeen, seven, rather. Seventeen is what I do in the lottery. I think I'm talking too quick. I doubt if you'd be able to decipher all this [laughter]. Oh dear.

*JK: You had quite, quite a hard life then? Quite lot of.

*MH: It wasn't, it wasn't really. You didn't take it as hard though. Because you expe-, that's what you expected. I mean we had outside toilets and that's nothing to do with Bishopsgate.

*JK: At home?

*MH: At home, yeah. In the winter the water would freeze. So, you know, you had to go outside to get water, then one of my brothers, become a plumber so he brought the pipings to the kitchen.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: We had water inside, you know [laughter]. But I can remember coming home we'd been out one new year's eve, and, because we used to say to parties, but there's was no, there wasn't any drugs or anything around and you'd be at home because it was new year's eve, you'd stay partying all night and then would be coming home, because everybody went to work on New Year's day, then.

*JK: Did they?

*MH: And I could remember coming.

*JK: To work the next day?

*MH: Because we was at this party and I was caught, and we couldn't come home because it was snowing and the trains didn't start to a certain time in the morning or something, so we had to stay there. There was a group of us, so we all knew one another. And when we were coming home, we were on the bus coming home and people were going to work. And I could always remember coming in and my mum said, if you're making a cup of tea, I'll have one.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: But the water was frozen. And what we did, we run outside, we put newspaper round the pipe and set fire to it.

*JK: Oh!

*MH: Really, we could have a made it burst, but we never, we got the water flowing again.

*JK: You had to be quite resourceful.

*MH: Yeah [laughter]. Yeah, there's lots of things like that though where you, you didn't have bathroom outsides, so you went to the local baths, to have a bath, once a week. The rest of the time it was a tin bath, in the kitchen or whatever, hmm. That has nothing to do with Bishopsgate, is it?

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: Because you didn't have central heating then, did you? And my mum used to have bricks in the kitchen range, you know the old black kitchen range? And then she would wrap it up in a sheet or something, put that in a bed to warm the bed, yeah.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: She looked after us well.

*JK: Yeah. So where did you go to primary school?

*MH: That would have been in Lukin Street, where they got bombed, and so therefore, we went to, we shared a school with Heckford Street, which is all in Stepney. And then we went from there, that was round the junior, things were, we were even sharing another school, you know got to the eleven plus age, you know.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: There was, so, this name of the school would have been St Mary's and St Michaels, Johnston's Street, St Mary's and St Michaels, and then Bishop Challoner. It was also called these other names, because we went to these different buildings. There was Heckford Street and [Regman's?] Road [laughter], yeah.

*JK: Did your all brothers and sisters go to the same school?

*MH: Yeah, see I was the youngest. I mean some of them were married, by the time I was, when I was young. My eldest sister was. And euh, I could remember two of them getting married, my sisters during the war. That wasn't a big white wedding, but they looked, they had suits on them, big hat, one of them I had the picture, you know. But euh.

*JK: And did they moved far away or did they stay in the area?

*MH: One stayed in the area and one went to Cat-, euh Bellingham, which is just outside Catford. Hmm, yeah and then, my two brothers got married. You see, these were the younger ones. My oldest sister was married, I think. And she died about four weeks ago. She was ninety-two [laughter].

*JK: [???] age. Did most families have ten children? Was there lots of big families?

*MH: There was. Some had seven, ten. The odd one would have fourteen or something like that, but otherwise, then there was other friends who only had one or two, so.

*JK: Did you like being in a big family?

*MH: Yeah, we just didn't take in, I got more than any of the others, because I was the youngest. So my mum and dad were a bit.

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: So I was the old one to get a gold bracelet, things like that, when I was twenty-one.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: [laughter]

*JK: Oh, a gold bracelet.

*MH: Yeah, but I mean the others, they didn't have that sort of treatment, because there was no money. Hmm.

*JK: Is there anything else to ask you.

*MH: No. See Marie might have thought more things from Strype Street, but euh.

*JK: So when you went out after work, did you go, would you always go home first?

*MH: Yeah, you went home and mum would cook a, if you had a, if you didn't have a proper dinner, dinner time, then you would have a dinner overnight, or if not, it would be a tea, it could be bacon and egg or. She

was always cooking, she was always there, although she did office work, if you went in and her mum wasn't there, it was, "Where's mummy?"

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: You know, so. Or she would leave kippers or something, you know for, she's gone to work and just cook the kippers or, something, you know, hmm, and then you'd go out. You'd go out to. There was a club at one time we belonged to, which was, belonged to the church, St Cecilia's girls club, and the boys went to the boys club. Hmm, but then there would be dances in some of the [??] civic or somewhere like that, there would be dances you'd go to. And also, people used to go in, mainly weekends, on Saturday night you would go to the local pubs, but they all went there, it wasn't because you were alcoholic or nothing, it was just where you gathered.

*JK: I see.

*MH: And you'd know lots of people in there and someone would say they've got a party, do you want to come? And you went to all these different parties, if not, you went to a, euh to, not Tubby Isaacs, but something Isaac's fish and chips, a chip chop along Mile End Road [laughter]. And then, if you, someone would have been in there, and someone would come in and say, do you want to go to a party? If not, then you'd go home or whatever.

*JK: [laughter]

*MH: But you were a crowd altogether.

*JK: Did have to go to work the next morning?

*MH: No, not a Sunday, yeah. Yeah, I didn't, yeah. But it was dancing. Pubs. Clubs, yeah. Because it wasn't anything, but you had, you know, you weren't as they say now "bored" but you had friends, you would.

*JK: You did enjoyed it.

*MH: Yeah, it was, even if you weren't round one another's house, hmm, or just talk about, I suppose what young people talk about, I can't remember now, you know [laughter]. Yeah.

*JK: And what about getting up in the morning when you didn't have work? Did you, did you have to be nagged and shouted at or?

*MH: No, my mum used to come and give us a cup of tea in bed.

*JK: Oh. To get you up?

*MH: And even when Mum died, my Dad used to do the same. A cup of tea in bed.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: [laughter] Yeah. And you just got out, I suppose. You didn't wanted to go out, natural, that would be. We weren't all good girls, but euh, we just go out and went to work, yeah, so, hmm.

*JK: So do you have any garments at all that you made? Sewn?

*MH: Have, yeah, sometimes.

*JK: Did you keep any of them?

*MH: No.

*JK: You haven't got any of them, now.

*MH: No, not now, no. I was little when the miniskirt was out. I can remember having bits of material or leftover in bundles so you could have, so you would piece them together and make a little top with a round the neck and then just a little [???] miniskirt. I got a photo in it.

*JK: Did they let you take it home, then?

*MH: Yeah. And I think I made one in pink, and then like a turquoise, hmm, yeah, these bits and pieces, that might have, as they're cut, might have only took half of, hadn't cut the full shape out, it was where they had laid the material over, so there would be a nice big piece like that, so there would be half a back, half of front and you would make things.

*JK: Do you know a material, materials made for, were there?

*MH: Hmm.

*JK: Cottons and [???]?

*MH: The dresses were cotton, hmm, but I'm trying to think what this material would have been, what that might have been synthetic, because I mean, it had a backing into it, this turquoise material and nylon, there was like a nylon material, yeah.

*JK: Is that harder to sew?

*MH: No, no, yeah, alright, no.

*JK: Did you have to use different threads? Different materials?

*MH: No, always just cotton. Just to, one, suppose if you had certain materials in them, tailoring places you would, yeah.

*JK: Did you have to change the colour threads?

*MH: Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, every bundle we got, if you had to use different cotton.

*JK: Did you have your own little, did you have your cottons with you or did you have to get up and?

*MH: Euh, you had a selection of them with you in the well, there was like a well in the middle, it went down all the bench.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: There would be like what we call a well, we'd have loose cottons in there. But if not, the factory just, there must have been a box where we went and got some more. Yeah.

*JK: If you made a mistake, did you have to undo it?

*MH: Hmm, hmm, yeah.

*JK: Did you like undoing, did they ever taught you how to do that?

*MH: Not for dress, not for machining, you'd just sort of pick it and pull it and make sure you didn't make holes in the material.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Hmm, I did do passing for a little while, which is to examine the clothes, you know, I didn't do it very long, I didn't like it.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Because sometimes you get a pocket, instead of being square like that, nice square.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: It would be, that one would be that size, and that one would be like that and it would be, it wouldn't be straight [laughter]. I never used to like to give them back.

*JK: Oh.

*MH: Because you had to give it back to the machinist, and say put it right. And of course, my best friend didn't like it. I didn't want to do the passing no more [laughter].

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: So I didn't, and also, there wasn't a, someone, a runner of the factories, I was looking parcels of work on another floor, outdoor work, it was called. And this governor of this other firm, he more or less said to me, I see you're right, if you let all this pass, you know. Don't be too fussy with it, and I didn't like it either.

*JK: No.

*MH: I said to him, no, I don't want to know about this, I go back to my machining [laughter], yeah.

*JK: But did they let you, if you said you didn't want to do it?

*MH: They must have, because I don't even know how I got the job of passing.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Unless, mind you, they had just asked me to do it. I don't know. They must have just asked me to do it. Because I wouldn't have volunteered it. Hmm, but I just went back to machining, yeah.

*JK: And then, you said they went on, they put the clothes on hangers.

*MH: Hmm, hmm.

*JK: Did they wrap them in anything?

*MH: Yeah, they had a machine by then, with that polythene, yeah. And what they did before, I don't know, but they used to, you'd put it on a hanger and that would be gross, then they would pull it down and they would cut it, and that would be put on a rail, yeah.

*JK: And then, do you know what happened to them? Would they just be driven off, then?

*MH: They would be taken on a rail and lorries would come or vans would come and take them to the wholesalers, yeah.

*JK: Were these women's clothes, did you do any?

*MH: No men's, no.

*JK: Any children's?

*MH: No, no, it was all women's clothes. Hmm, I could remember when we walked at Old Street, we didn't make them, but that firm, there was only one floor, they used to do these lovely women shawls and they used to be sold in a shop in Regent Street, which is a very good [???] shop, and I could always remember like we bought two, one in black and one in like a raw blue.

*JK: See, they haven't come back into fashion, haven't they?

*MH: I know, I don't know what has happened to them, they have gone, gone with the wind. I think the black one would go to one of the

nuns, because at the time, this was a few years ago, when it was most probably not in fashion anymore, we gave it to one of the nuns.

*JK: So where was this happening?

*MH: In Harding Street. The nuns was in the same, lived in the same street as us. Their convents still there.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: And yeah, yeah but, these were really, really good quality, but we never made them, so I don't know, it was just one floor, so I don't know, the name Pigalle was well first being used. I don't think it's such a good name now, but it was at the time Pigalle.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Yeah.

*JK: So did you ever learn to drive and get a car?

*MH: Yes, yes I did, yeah.

*JK: How old were you then? Was that, what was that eighteen?

*MH: I wasn't very very young, I suppose I was in my late twenties or early thirties, something like that, yeah. Hmm, hmm the family bought us the first car, for me and Marie because we were still at home with our dad, and they knew that, we both had time off to look after our mum and Marie used to look after my mum as well. Although she went to work. And so the family went Christmasy and bought this, what was it called, a Singer Chamois, and they gave us the keys to it, yeah, it was nice, that was our first car.

And of course, yeah, I have only ever had two cars, two cars, yeah. I haven't got one now, because I had a nervous breakdown, so I got rid off the car, yeah. I only ever had two cars, I had the Singer Chamois for a long while, then I had a Nissan Micra, and that was still good and I gave it to one of my nephew's daughter, my great niece, yeah. I was driving for a long while, though, yeah [laughter].

*JK: Oh, we could write a whole book on your name [laughter].

*MH: But it does seem, it doesn't seem anything special, really.

*JK: It makes you realise the changes.

*MH: Yeah, oh yeah, there's a lot of changes. Yeah, I mean to what we were then, we're really well off, you know now, you got much.

*JK: You thought of yourself as well off?

*MH: Yeah, yeah, now. I mean I don't feel that I'm rich.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: But I know, I realise that, I mean we can afford to buy whatever we want to eat.

*JK: Right.

*MH: Well, you know, my, I could remember, you know, [???] to go out and get some vegetables and things like that for our mum. Hmm, so I realized that is a, that thing gone, that sort of time is gone.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: I mean I couldn't buy clothes, hmm. Hmm, I can't, I haven't got, you know thousands but [laughter], but you could afford to, yeah. Yeah, I got a nice house, we've got a television, we got a dishwasher, we got a washing machine, you know like [laughter] those things you just didn't have. You got hot and cold water, which we didn't have. You got inside toilet [laughter] you know like a, but it's all nice, I mean to what we did have, yeah.

*JK: When you started work, when you first started work, and you came like to Bishospigate, did you feel that people around you were quite, wealthy and prosperous?

*MH: No, no, no, no.

*JK: You felt?

*MH: I mean, when I was in the dressmaking trade, it was just in the East End, you didn't think of the City. You know what I mean?

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: But it is when I went to work in Finsbury Square that I knew that I was working in the city, then. And euh, no, I just did my filing job.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: And I enjoyed it. Hmm. And I used to like lunchtime so I used to go and sit in Finsbury Square.

*JK: Yes quite nice area, isn't it?

*MH: Yeah, hmm. And I used to get sandwiches there. And I could always remember I was addicted to, euh egg and tomato sandwiches, I don't know why I used to, everyday, it was eggs and tomatoes sandwiches, you know, like now. But they are things I remember, you know when I first went to the city, then I got a job with, hmm. I swear I could remember as well with Guinness Mahon, euh, when I left [???], and I worked for Guinness Mahon in Great Church Street, hmm, I can always remember, they took me on for filing, for the investment department.

And I got on well with everyone there, and I could always remember some other friends of mine from dressmaking, started working for the government doing something like filing and that, hmm and they were getting more than me, that was earning more, so the governor, the man in the office, euh Guinness Mahon, I didn't say it to get more money, but I was talking to him and I said yeah, some friends of mine, she's working for so and so, and they are earning so much. I got a rise with.

*JK: Oh

*MH: I couldn't believe it. I mean coming from the, where you had to, I was just talking to him and I said what they were getting in the government euh, and I got a rise and, well, Guinness Mahon, was just really good to me for years.

*JK: What sort of company where they?

*MH: Merchant bank. Merchant bankers. The Guinness family it was. Yeah.

*JK: And it was in Great Church Street?

*MH: It was in Great Church Street, no 3. But then it moved to St Mary-at-Hill, which was still EC3, but euh whether they're still down there, I don't know, the building is still there, but I never had any course to walk down the street to see if they are still there. But I get a little pension from them, it's a hmm. I think it works out at about twenty-six pounds a month from them.

*JK: So do you know, how roughly, how old you are when you started there?

*MH: I have been quite a few years in the dressmaking trade euh, might have been in me, I would have been in my thirties I reckon. Might have been in my early thirties. Hmm, because I worked there for quite a while when I was with them when they moved to St Mary-at-Hill, I was there for a few years with them.

*JK: When you worked there, was that a big office?

*MH: It was a, it was an investment, yeah so there was, one, two, three, four, there was four other men, who would work on the investments. So I was the filing clerk, but I got on well with all of them. That was really good, and in fact, I got on with everyone, because even secretaries used to come in, because I used to keep a, I'm not being, because I used to weed everything out.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: When you got to a certain age, and I used to keep lots of things. So the secretaries where sometimes coming and asked me for things in the file, which I didn't have and they would help me and I could always remember like a, forgot what she did for me, but I know one of the secretaries, but you got on with them.

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: It was nice. It was friendly. Yeah.

*JK: Was it different working with men, then, after the rag trade?

*MH: Yeah, it didn't make any difference though. I have never had, you know they were young men, but euh, and they were all married, yeah, they were all married, yeah. And I used to buy the biscuits, so I used to take a collection of them, from the biscuits and then when the lot-, you know when the scratching cards first come out?

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: I was working, and we started doing them. We would only get one and had to come back with it, they would all be interested, I mean they are all investment bankers.

*JK: Yeah and they would play.

*MH: And they were always scratching and "Oh, I won a pound, you know", you know, and go out and buy another one. So you got on with them, you got on well with them, yeah, and euh.

*JK: Where would go for lunch when you worked there?

*MH: Euh, I was just sometimes, in a nice way, I used to sit in St Dunstan, euh, it was really another church, St Dunstan Church, St Dunstan Hill or something like that. It was round the back of the building, or else I would go, walk down, Cheapside East, East Cheap or wherever, hmm, shopping, looking for shops, or I would go to Leadenhall Market, and often sometimes, I see yes, I used to go to order on the mall, in [?Ashpice?] the butcher's all I wanted, like a piece of beef this big, shops and things like that, then I would pick it up in the lunchtime, in my lunch hour, would go home and we had a little freezer at the top of the, I put it in there, and then I would come back to work, so.

*JK: Oh, that's nice.

*MH: And I could remember our dad come up one Christmas, and led me in Leadenhall Market where we got our turkey, hmm, so lunchtime was either shopping or sitting nicely in there, you know in the park or something, or I would be going home, even, just popping home for a minute.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: Yeah. Because there wasn't any strikes, so that was so near the city, I could always walk to work, you know, yeah, hmm.

*JK: Did you feel like, it was kind of, did you have social gatherings out as well, like outings, did it change by then?

*MH: Hmm, like being out and all that?

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: No, you sometimes on the lunchtime you might go out with some of the friends, not a lot, like we went in to Balls Brothers, it might been on some occasions, but that sort of the only gathering I did with them, and there would be Christmas Parties, which were nice, you know nice, euh I could remember going to them.

*JK: Do you know where they were held?

*[SECOND CD]

*MH: I don't know, I don't know if it was the Café Royal, is it the Café Royal in Regent Street?

*JK: It's quite posh.

*MH: Oh yeah, they were nice places, oh no.

*JK: Hmm.

*MH: We all lay there nice with nice big blues, which was all nice, yeah, hmm. Of course, again, for us it wasn't any trouble, because we could get a fifteen bus home. You know, you didn't have to get taxis [laughter] where some people had to get coaches in or things like that. I always lived in local.

*JK: Quite handy.

*MH: Yeah. And, I can't remember.

*JK: Do you remember at what time you finished work?

*MH: Normally half five, yeah.

*JK: So was that a shorter day than in the factories?

*MH: Yeah, nine till five, wouldn't it, yeah, when you work nine to five, yeah. And in my later years, after I stopped being itinerant, I worked in Bread Street, you know Bread Street?

*JK: Yeah.

*MH: Yeah, I worked there for a [?fax?] and hmm I worked there for about twelve years.

*[END OF RECORDING]

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