

Scottish Oral History Centre (SOHC) Transcript of Interview

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Name of interviewee: Elaine Allison (EA)

Name of interviewer: Rory Stride (RS)

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Transcript

00:02

RS: Good afternoon.

00:03

EA: Good afternoon.

00:04

RS: To begin, could you tell me your name, your year of birth, and where you are from?

00:06

EA: Elaine Allison, August nineteen fifty-three [1953], and I'm from Glasgow.

00:14

RS: Could you tell me a wee bit about your upbringing Elaine?

00:16

EA: I was brought up in Bridgeton, born and bred in Bridgeton, stayed there until I was seven when my dad died and then we moved to Camlachie. From Camlachie, that's where I got my job in Templeton's which my mother didn't want me to get because I had bad lungs [laughing]. It was the last place she wanted me to go and work, although my sisters were in there. But she wanted me to stay away from it but it was the only place that I could get a job at the time.

00:43

RS: I see. So was Templeton's your first job then?

00:47

EA: That was my first job, aye.

00:47

RS: Yeah. And what age would you have been?

00:49

EA: Fifteen.

00:50

RS: Fifteen, and that was straight from school I take it?

00:52

EA: Straight from school.

00:53

RS: And what year would that have been in Elaine?

00:55

EA: Nineteen sixty-eight [1968].

00:57

RS: Nineteen sixty-eight [1968]. So can you tell me a little bit about how you ended up getting that job in Templeton's then?

01:04

EA: Well it was just because my sisters worked in it and my mother worked in it jobs came up. But I had applied for a job in Pratt's fancy Box Factory[?] which I didn't get [laughing] because I went to Catholic school.

01:19

RS: Oh really? That's interesting, isn't it?

01:23

EA: Uh-huh. I was getting the job and they said "Oh, can you start on Monday?" And I said "Uh-huh." "Oh, I'll be back in a wee minute." And she came back and she said "I forgot to ask you what school did you go to?" I was like that "Sacred Heart Secondary School." And

she went “We’ve no jobs at the moment, but we’ll let you know.” Never heard from them again. So I just ended up applying for Templeton’s but it was in an office part of Templeton’s but the office was actually in the factory. It was just like a bit that was cut off from the factory and it was called an office. You were behind a desk in the factory part. I was only supposed to be there ‘til I was sixteen and then... It was the finishing department I was in. That’s when the carpets are all finished and they come in and you go over them. You feel to see if there’s any bits missing and you hand sew them in.

02:15

RS: Oh right, I see.

02:16

EA: They’ve got big tables with lights on them and you pulled them over and you fixed it so... Once I was sixteen I was supposed to get to do that because it was piecework, so you could earn as much as you wanted.

02:28

RS: Of course.

02:29

EA: But every time I taught somebody my job, I’d get onto the factory for about three weeks then the office person would leave and I would get took back into the office [laughing].

02:40

RS: Oh dear.

02:41

EA: So this kept happening until I actually left to get married.

02:46

RS: Ah, right, I see. So you mentioned your mum and your sisters working in Templeton’s as well.

02:53

EA: Uh-huh.

02:54

RS: What sort of jobs did they do?

02:56

EA: Well my mum was the cleaner. She was in first thing in the morning, she was in from about five in the morning 'til eight and then the factory workers would come in. And then she was in again at night time from five 'til eight at night. My sisters... The one just older than me she worked in the finishing as well but she was in the narrow carpets, you know, just about this size.

03:19

RS: Aye.

03:20

EA: She worked in there finishing them by hand. My other sister, my older sister, she worked in the twisting... That was in the upstairs where they twisted the cables... The wool, to get two different colours and put them in a spinner. So she worked up there.

03:37

RS: Oh right, I see. Did you see much of one another throughout the day?

03:40

EA: No [laughing]. No, by the time I'd started my older sister had left.

03:45

RS: Ah, right. Ok.

03:47

EA: The one just older than me, she was... I would see her if I would get sent through there. Excuse me [coughing]. For documents or anything.

03:56

RS: Oh right, I see.

03:58

EA: I would see her then but she would go like that "Go away!" [laughing] "Don't come and talk to me."

04:07

RS: So you were based in that little office area?

04:10

EA: I was based in the office with the supervisor and the manager in there.

04:16

RS: So what sort of... Could you describe to me a little bit about what you would do then, in the office, what your job was?

04:22

EA: Well when the women were working on the carpets they got paid so much for each carpet they done. It depended how quick they done it. So you would have a ready reckoner and you worked out how long they had spent on this carpet and that's what they would get paid for each carpet they done.

04:43

RS: Oh right, I see. So you had a bit of power I suppose over them [chuckles]?

04:49

EA: Oh... Just a wee bit [laughing]. It was quite good because there was the older ones that worked in there. Sometimes if they really needed money that week they would just pull the carpets over, they wouldn't check them.

05:01.

RS: Oh, of course. Of course.

05:02

EA: They'd just pull them over and you'd look and you'd go "They've no done it." But it always got a second check after us so it would come back to them and they wouldn't get paid for but they didn't because they'd go the big wage for when they needed it. They probably needed it for bills and things like that. So they would just pull the carpets over [laughing]. I could never do that, too much of a coward!

05:30

RS: Yeah [laughing]. Could you tell me a wee bit about of the sort of people you worked with Elaine?

05:32

EA: Let me try and think now... It's a good we while back.

05:34

RS: Take your time.

05:35

EA: It was mostly... Well, they were all older than me because I was the youngest in the factory at the time. I was actually probably the youngest when the factory started closing, you know, one of the youngest. But I made friends with a couple that were maybe two or three years older than me. But the older ones, they'd take you under their wing and tell you "Don't do this, don't do that." And just everyday... Just talk to them about everyday things and that when you got a chance to talk to them. Because you weren't really... They were supposed to be working so you weren't really supposed to be talking.

06:19

RS: Of course.

06:19

EA: But we all got on fine and they had nights out, they'd invite you to nights out. Oh, I couldn't drink but you could still go.

06:28

RS: Still part of it.

06:30

EA: Try to look as though you were eighteen to get into the pubs! I didn't drink but they always made you part of it. They would have weekends, know. Like go away for the day on the bus and you'd go with them to do things like that.

06:42

RS: Oh right, and would that just be between themselves they'd arrange that?

06:45

EA: Just in the factory, aye.

06:47

RS: So it wouldn't be the company arranging it, no?

06:50

EA: No, no. The company never arranged anything like that, neither they did.

06:54

RS: Was it a lot of women you worked with, or those in the factory floor?

07:00

EA: In my department it was all women. But because I worked in the office I got sent up to see different departments and a lot of the men were on the weaving, so they were. And they twisted a lot of the wool and things like that. There is a lot of men in the factory as well but we didn't really see an awful lot of them. And they worked in the back of the carpets. It was jute carpets so they'd get glued as well. It went through a big machine to get glue on the back of them, so the men did all of that kind of work.

07:33

RS: That kind of work. I see, I see. What was the wages like, can you remember that? Was it...?

07:36

EA: My first wage was four pounds, seven, and six [laughing]. I'll always remember that. Four pounds, seven, and six, so if you work that in to a forty-hour week...

07:46

RS: Yeah.

07:47

EA: No... It's not really a lot 'cause my mother got three pounds of that.

07:49

RS: Did she?

07:50

EA: She did, aye. You gave her three pounds dig money and we had one pound, seven, and six to keep us going.

07:59

RS: Oh dear.

08:00

EA: You probably won't know what the seven and six is.

08:03

RS: No, I'll ask my dad [chuckles].

08:04

EA: Seven shillings, what would that be? There's five pence to a shilling so that's forty pence. One pound forty pence, roughly.

08:13

RS: It's not much is it?

08:14

EA: It's not a lot to... You had to buy... We needed tights, make-up, clothes, that's what I was left with. As long as my mum got her three pound [laughing] she was fine.

08:28

RS: I take it you were still in the house as this point when you started in Templeton's?

08:29

EA: Uh-huh. I was still in the house 'til I left there.

08:34

RS: Yeah. Who else was in the house along with you at that time then?

08:34

EA: Just my other sister was still in the house. My young brother and my older sister... My older sister was in America by then and my younger brother was out the house, and he got married young.

08:47

RS: Ah, I see.

08:48

EA: So it was just me and my other sister.

08:50

RS: Yeah. So that's why you had to make such a contribution I take it then?

08:55

EA: Uh-huh.

08:55

RS: Can you tell me a wee bit about, and describe to me, the sort of conditions of the factory that you seen when you walk around?

09:01

EA: Eh. It was actually quite clean, know, for being a carpet factory it was always kept really clean. Because you swept up after yourself and that, you know, when you were doing things. Whenever I... 'Cause I used to go up the stairs and it'd be... All the oil and things like that would be up the stairs for the machines but it was always kept immaculate, so it was.

09:26

RS: And 'cause they would look after it themselves and...

09:28

EA: Aye. 'Cause there's a lot of fluff that comes off the carpets and that's why my mother didn't want me to go into it.

09:34

RS: Of course.

09:34

EA: [Laughing] Into the lungs.

09:37

RS: I know. That's a good point. Was that an issue, did that ever have any impact on your health impact working there in Templeton's?

09:44

EA: Well I always had bad lungs any way so I didn't really see much difference with it. But I ended up with TB.

09:51

RS: Oh right, ok.

09:52

EA: So that's when I actually left. I was off with... I was ill for a few months and I was off and then they finally diagnosed it as TB. I was getting in one week and I got diagnosed the week before.

10:09

RS: Oh dear.

10:11

EA: And that's... I was still in their payroll up until a year after that but I was on the sick. That's when they were closing the factory down, round about then.

10:19

RS: I see.

10:22

EA: But I think it affected a lot of people's lungs because of the fluff and the dirt going into it.

10:32

RS: Yeah, that's something I hadn't really thought of actually it's an interesting point.

10:34

EA: They used to... People back then, they took their rugs outside the door and they hit them. And if you think of all the dust that's coming off that just from being on your floor. So if you think of all the dust that's on it from a factory.

10:46

RS: Yeah, and the amount of them as well.

10:47

EA: The amount, uh-huh.

10:51

RS: A lot. Was it quite a noisy place on the factory floor?

10:54

EA: No in my bit it wasn't noisy but if you went upstairs to the looms, the looms were really noisy so it was. But our room was really quiet. I'm saying "room" it was a great big place. It was actually quite quiet, so it was. 'Cause they had the radio on we could hear the radio all the time.

11:15

RS: Oh, I see. So that must have been quite nice I suppose. Was it your supervisor that allowed you to have the radio on?

11:20

EA: I think it was actually the company. They could have the radio on in any of the departments but if you were in the looms, the weaving, you wouldn't hear a radio.

11:34

RS: Of course.

11:35

EA: Although they did have them on but you didn't really hear them very well.

11:36

RS: The noise of the machinery I take it?

11:39

EA: It was good. As I said they had the radio on and on your breaks they had a tea lady come round as well with the big urn on her trolley and you get... They had rolls and black pudding and sausage and things like that, or scones. But you had to buy...

11:55

RS: Would that be your mid-morning breaks sort of thing?

11:58

EA: That would be your mid-morning breaks, and they done it at lunchtime as well. Although they had the big canteen as well. Because at Templeton Street the factory was at one side of the street and the offices were across the road at the other side of the street, the big offices.

12:13

RS: Did you use the canteen much? Was that...?

12:16

EA: No, I didn't use the canteen much at all. We always... Because they came round with the trolleys we just had it there and I sat in the office and had it or I'd go outside with some of the girls because you're right on the Glasgow Green. And then in the summer we would go out into the Glasgow Green and just sit and have our lunch.

12:33

RS: That must have been quite nice actually, a bonus having that on your doorstep.

12:36

EA: It was. That's when we had nice sunny weather all the time. Can't complain the now because we've got gorgeous weather the now.

12:44

RS: No, that's very very true. Did you enjoy your work? Did you enjoy where you worked?

12:48

EA: I loved my work, so I did.

12:52

RS: Can you tell me a wee bit about like what you enjoyed so much about it?

12:55

EA: I just enjoyed the work that I done and the people that I worked with. There was no animosity or arguing or anything like that. You get too much of that in workplaces these days, so you do. I enjoyed doing... I liked... A lot of it was to do with mental arithmetic and things like that and I loved that at school. So because it was ready reckoning and making all that up, I loved it.

13:25

RS: Yeah. Did the company sort of support you in any way? Did they give you any training or anything like that? Or offer you...?

13:30

EA: Well when I started I had to... They just had the training there and then when you started. They showed you what to do, how to work it out. It was my actual boss that did that, that morning.

13:45

RS: And did you get on well with you boss?

13:46

EA: I got on brilliant with my supervisor and my boss.

13:51

RS: Do you remember their names at all?

13:53

EA: My boss was Betty Wilson and the supervisor was Isa Anderson.

13:59

RS: Oh right, ok.

13:59

EA: Isa actually moved down to Dalry, so she did, when the factory closed. Because she kept in touch with me, so she did. Christmas cards every year.

14:10

RS: Oh, that's nice.

14:11

EA: Betty used to send them as well. I know Isa died but I don't know what happened to Betty.

14:19

RS: That's a shame.

14:20

EA: I remember some of the workers names as well that I worked with.

14:21

RS: Yeah, have you got a few? Is there any...?

14:22

EA: There was Margaret Ogilvie and Cathy Skinner, a May Lyle, and a Ruth Nesbitt. She was my best pal in there, so she was.

14:32

RS: Oh, was she?

14:32

EA: Once I moved down here that was it.

14:36

RS: Did you move down to Irvine once the factory closed?

14:37

EA: I moved down here in nineteen seventy-three [1973]. Well, my husband moved in seventy-three [1973, I was seventy-four [1974] because I was in hospital. My husband was getting made redundant but they had a factory down here. So they said they could come down

here and they'd get us a house with the council. We were getting married in a weeks time anyway so I thought "Well we either stay with your mum or my mum or we move to Irvine." So we moved to Irvine.

15:09

RS: And you've not left?

15:10

EA: I've not left. Forty-five years come August, it is.

15:15

RS: At least you've got the seaside and the sun as well, so you can't really complain.

15:18

EA: It is. And it was great for bringing the kids up as well.

15:21

RS: Yeah. Was there anything about your work that you didn't particularly enjoy or didn't particularly like?

15:28

EA: No. I just enjoyed my job [laughing]. I liked it because once I did get onto the carpets myself, finishing them, I liked doing that and you got overtime. I did every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday overtime as well.

15:50

RS: What were the hours for the overtime?

15:52

EA: The hours... You worked from... I'm trying to remember. It was just five 'til seven at night, or five 'til half seven. They even gave you a fifteen minute break. And then on a Saturday it was four hours on Saturday morning and if you got a Sunday you did the full day and got double time for it. That's when they were really busy. But no, I liked to do it, I did all the overtime I could get.

16:21

RS: Was your mum happy because she could get more money off you?

16:23

EA: No, she didn't take more money off me. She just wanted her three pound so I was quite happy because I could go and buy what I wanted [laughing]. And then I could even treat my mum as well, so I could.

16:33

RS: That's nice. How did the company treat their staff, generally, would you say?

16:42

EA: I think they were great with their staff, with me anyway. I don't know what other people think about it but I was always treated quite well. I know we had really warm summers and the manager... I remember him coming round and... Back then they would buy salt tablets and give you them to put in your water so you weren't hydrated and I got sent out to buy the whole of our department ice lollies and that. So they were really... They were good that way. I mean, they were out on strike a few times while I worked there and I honestly couldn't tell you... It was probably just for more money, I would think. I used to think "They spend more money sending us all telegrams to come back to work once it was resolved." I thought they should have just gave them their pay rise to start with and they wouldn't be out of a fortune in telegrams. I just remember going into this big room in the offices where they had the meetings about it. But because I was only young I was like that "Do I really need to go to this thing? I'm no in the union." And she went "No, but you'll be in the union once you're sixteen. Get to the meeting!" And they were out on strike and I went "I don't want to go out on strike." I was thinking "My mum needs her dig money." [Laughing]

18:01

RS: Uh-huh. Aye, she's not going to let you off.

18:05

EA: Naw. Although she was a cleaner... When one was on strike everybody had to go out and strike. It wasn't worth getting shouted at and that if you went into work and everybody was out on strike.

18:19

RS: Oh, absolutely. You said you weren't part of the union but did you join?

18:22

EA: I had to join once I was sixteen.

18:27

RS: Do you remember the name of the union that would have been?

18:31

EA: I don't. I don't. I just remember Big John that was the union rep coming round and talking to us and he would get your union money off you and things like that. And then if you were on sick he would come and give you so much money from the union because you were off on sick.

18:50

RS: Do you remember, in Templeton's, did they have any doctors or anything or nurses come into the building to look after you at any point?

19:01

EA: Not that I remember. I can't remember, I can't think. I think there was a nurses room because I remember some folk would go in there if they maybe weren't feeling too well, going away to see the nurse. But don't ask me where it was. But I'm sure they had a nurse in there. A doctor, no. Not when I was working... I've got a... When you pull over the carpets... You pull it with your big needles, and I put my needle in and pulled it but it's a wooden table and the skelf went right up my finger.

19:35

RS: Oh, that sounds like agony.

19:37

EA: I got took to hospital with that because they couldn't get it out. I think there was a nurse there but she couldn't get it out. One of the big bosses was in and he actually took me up to the Royal.

19:50

RS: Oh really?

19:50

EA: Aye. They actually ended up having to slit the nail, peeling it back, and taking it out.

19:56

RS: Oh, that must have been sore.

19:57

EA: It was very sore. [Laughing]

20:02

RS: Do you remember anyone you worked with having any serious injuries within the...?

20:06

EA: No.

20:06

RS: Was it all minor?

20:07

EA: It was just all minor ones. As I said, there might have been in the weaving and things like that because they're working with machinery but we didn't work with machinery in our bit. As I said it, it was just big fifteen feet long tabled with mirrors. It was like... The tabled went like that at each side, slanted, and each side was... No mirrors, lights. Florescent lights under so that as it shone up under the carpet and you could see when... Like if the loom had skipped. I think it was about this size, if they had skipped a bit you could see and that's what you had to sew in.

20:46

RS: Ah, right. And that was in the finishing department?

20:46

EA: That's in the finishing department, aye.

20:50

RS: And where would the carpets then go from the finishing department?

20:55

EA: From the finishing department they went to another check and then from they went into get rolled and into storage.

20:59

RS: Ah right, I see. And then out to...

21:03

EA: Out to customers, aye.

21:06

RS: Did the company ever arrange any sort of away days or did they have...? You mentioned about playing the radio, did they have any other recreational activities for you?

21:20

EA: Not that I can think of. I know we did, as I said, go on bus trips but I'm not sure if that was the factory or just our department. It might have been the factory because a lot of the guys were on the trips as well. So it could have been them that done it.

21:38

RS: Where would you go?

21:41

EA: Oh, I don't know where it was. I just know I went on a bus and it was outside of Glasgow [laughing]. It wasn't in Glasgow, it was probably Saltcoats or somewhere!

21:50

RS: It's a day out, it's a day away.

21:56

EA: [Laughing] Maybe it was as far as Girvan.

21:59

RS: Aye. It might well have been, if you were lucky.

22:00

EA: Aye, if you were lucky. I honestly can't remember where it was, it was that long ago. I just remember going on these couple of trips with them. But for the life of me I can't remember where it was. I just know they all ended up in pubs [laughing].

22:17

RS: Yeah. That'll maybe be why you can't remember [laughing].

22:18

EA: I wasn't drinking, I was only young!

22:23

RS: You mentioned about that strike action, do you remember what year that would have been in roughly?

22:30

EA: That would've been... When did I start? Sixty-eight [1968]... That would've been sixty-nine [1969]. It was the August I was fifteen, I started in September, so it was the next year so it would have been nineteen sixty-nine [1969].

22:46

RS: Do you remember what it started over? Or how long they were out on strike?

22:50

EA: No. They were only out a couple of days. I think it was a couple of days one week then a couple of days another week.

22:59

RS: And was that a mass walkout? Was that every...?

23:01

EA: That was everybody. Aye, that was everybody in the whole factory was out.

23:07

RS: Uh-huh. And was there pickets all around the factory at Glasgow Green and round the other side at the London Road end?

23:13

EA: I don't remember seeing any pickets. Maybe I just walked about with my eyes shut [laughing]. I honestly don't remember seeing any. I'm trying to remember 'cause my auntie worked in Templeton's but she was in the Tullis Street one. I'm trying to remember. I honestly can't remember if there was pickets out. I think there probably was because that's why my boss told me "You can't come into work or else you'll get picked on." So there must have been pickets there.

23:49

RS: You mentioned your auntie working there as well. So was that your mum's sister?

23:56

EA: My mum's sister it was, aye.

23:59

RS: So your mum, your sister, and your auntie all worked in there as well so it was very much a family affair.

24:01

EA: It was. I didn't know my auntie worked in it until I had started and my mother was saying about my auntie Annie working... But she worked in the one in Tullis Street and my sister was actually in the one on Broad Street. I think Broad Street and Tullis Street are just round the corner from one another. My sister worked there before she went to America.

24:27

RS: And what were these other plants that they had that weren't part of the main sort of site?

24:32

EA: I think they just did the same type of thing but I don't think they had finishing departments in there. I think they made the carpets and then they came over to Templeton Street to get finished off.

24:45

RS: I see. But they were all owned by Templeton's, these other places?

24:47

EA: They were all owned by Templeton's, uh-huh.

24:51

RS: And do you remember any of the other locations of them? You mentioned those two.

24:55

EA: I can't, just they two. There was... Crownpoint Road, I think there was one.

25:03

RS: Crown Street maybe?

25:03

EA: Well Crown Street was later, that was as I was leaving, Crown Street. Because I got took over to Crown Street because somebody had had their carpet on their floor and they noticed there was... I think the fitter was putting it down and then they'd noticed there was a big bit missing that shouldn't have left the factory. So my boss took me over in her car to fix it.

25:28

RS: Oh right, I see.

25:28

EA: It got brought back to Crown Street and I got took over to go and fix it before it went back to the woman.

25:38

RS: Yeah. Did you have many friends in work?

25:43

EA: I had a couple of friends in the work, so I did. Ruth Nesbitt and May Lyle. Me and Ruth were mostly... We were the same age so we went out about together, so we did. But I was quite friendly with quite a few of them in there, maybe didn't go out with them and that, but you were always talking to them about their families and things like that.

26:10

RS: Of course. And did you keep in touch with any of them once you'd left Templeton's?

26:13

EA: I kept in touch with Ruth for a wee while and then she just didn't get back to me at one point. So she's maybe got married and had kids and things like that. I keep trying to find her on Facebook but her name will not be Nesbitt it will be something else probably.

26:29

RS: Of course, because if she's married now.

26:30

EA: Uh-huh, and I don't know how to find her. So, I've tried.

26:37

RS: She might have moved abroad as well I suppose.

26:38

EA: She might have done. But we were really friendly we used to go to parties and that. Some of the people in the work would have a wee party at the weekend and they'd invite you and that.

26:49

RS: Yeah, that would've been nice.

26:50

EA: We would go if the young boys were going [laughing]. "Oh I fancy him, he's going to that party. Do you want to go to it?" One of the guys, he was Thomas Martin, he stayed in Toryglen so we went to parties in his house. I really liked him.

27:13

RS: I was going to say, did you keep in touch with him?

27:17

EA: No. After I left I never really... Ruth was the only one I saw for a wee while.

27:21

RS: Yeah. You mentioned as well, was it the two supervisors that you kept in touch with.

27:24

EA: Uh-huh. Betty and Isa.

27:27

RS: And did you ever meet up with them or was it just cards?

27:30

EA: It was just cards. I think I met Isa in Irvine once or twice and we'd have a wee gab and that. I told you my sister worked in the narrow finishing.

27:44

RS: Yeah.

27:44

EA: Her supervisor, Chrissy, she actually moved to Irvine after the factory closed.

27:47

RS: Oh, really?

27:48

EA: I didn't realise. I was out shopping one day and I saw this wee woman passing. And I said "Oh, I know her face." Trying to think of her name. And then I went "Chrissy?" and she went "Elaine!" She recognised me straight away so it was quite good. You used to see her quite a lot after that but I think she's died as well now.

28:11

RS: That's unfortunate.

28:12

EA: I was young and they were all a good bit older than me.

28:14

RS: It sounds like you could have started a "Former Templeton's Workers" club down here in Irvine, by the coast. That's interesting, isn't it?

28:24

EA: I tried a thing on Friends Reunited years ago to attempt to see if anyone would comment on Templeton's but very few... No.

28:35

RS: Did... Sorry. Why did you end up leaving Templeton's, Elaine?

28:40

EA: Because of my health, and we moving down to Irvine.

28:46

RS: What age would you have been there?

28:48

EA: I was twenty, so I was. I was off ill for a few times because it was actually TB I had so I was in hospital for the first six months of my married life.

28:56

RS: Yeah, of course.

29:00

EA: Then I moved round here. So that was the last... Some of them were at my wedding and that would have been the last I saw some of them.

29:09

RS: And what year was that, sorry?

29:09

EA: Nineteen seventy-three [1973].

29:11

RS: Nineteen seventy-three [1973] you left. Can you tell me a wee bit about your life after you got out of hospital and you left Templeton's?

29:22

EA: When I came down here?

29:23

RS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

29:23

EA: Well my husband, he come down here... He moved into our house in August of seventy-three [1973]. We had actually... Before I went into hospital they had shown us houses down here. It's quite funny because I got the house next door to the one I'd looked at when we came down. We came down here and we saw the house and we said "Aye, we'll have one of the houses." And my husband agreed to come down and work. Then obviously I got diagnosed with TB and got put into hospital the week before we got married. They let me out on the Friday and I had to come back on the Sunday. I was told not to drink and not to get pregnant [laughing].

30:15

RS: Did you abide by both rules?

30:15

EA: I did, and I wasn't to wash my hair. I was getting married and I wasn't to wash my hair. I thought "No, that'll be getting ditched, I've been washing it all this time it's not going to make one bit of difference." But I didn't get pregnant and I didn't drink. I couldn't drink anyway, any time I ate or drank I was ill, I was vomiting. No, I got out and I got married and I went back in on the Sunday. That was me until the following January, the end of the January. Because you had to have... They would take sputum test off you, to test it all the time for the TB to make sure it was away and once you had so many clear ones... Once you had three clear ones that was you, you got home. I had five and I was still in there, and I'm like that "Why am I still here?" He said "Because you were at Death's door." I didn't realise it. But it was my mum, when she came to visit she said... I went "They're not letting me out." She says "You were at Death's door and they're just making sure you're completely cured of it before they let you go." So I got five sputums and they still wouldn't let me out "We want another one." So....

31:30

RS: Did you end up going back to work once you moved down here to Irvine, once you'd obviously recovered?

31:32

EA: I had to wait. I was a year still on medication after that and then I could get a job. There was a shop down where M&Co is the now, down there, that used to be actually a Templeton's Supermarket [laughing].

31:51

RS: Oh, really?

31:52

EA: It was a Templeton's Supermarket, so I got a job in Templeton's Supermarket.

31:59

RS: There you go.

32:00

EA: Went from the carpet factory to a Templeton's Supermarket. I got a job there for a while but they had me doing a lot of heavy lifting, so they did. And I was, because of my lungs, not to do any heavy lifting and after a wee while I just had to finish up in it. But I got a job in where my husband worked and it was drilling... They've got big flanges that go around the big street lights.

32:23

RS: Yeah, yeah.

32:24

EA: I was drilling the holes in them, and I got made supervisor. Me and another girl [laughing].

32:36

RS: You in charge of all the guys?

32:33

EA: One girl I was in charge of. I thought "They don't need a supervisor to... For one girl."

32:38

RS: Was that based in Irvine, then?

32:40

EA: That was in Irvine as well, that was Fraser & Borthwick.

32:44

RS: Fraser & Borthwick. What years did you work there?

32:47

EA: What age was I? My daughter was born in seventy-six [1966] so that was... It was just from seventy-four [1974] to seventy-five [1975].

33:01

RS: And have you had any other jobs after that? If you could just give a summary I suppose.

33:06

EA: Well I used to... When I had the kids I cleaned the dentist, up in Seagate in Irvine, I did that couple of nights a week. What else did I do? I did Avon to try to earn some money as well. What else? I had another wee job and I can't... I couldn't have liked it that much [laughing]. I used to do all different wee jobs. Then I got a job in Charles Buyers and Company and I was there for twenty-four years.

33:43

RS: Twenty-four years, that's a long service.

33:45

EA: Until I retired.

33:45

RS: And are they based in Irvine?

33:47

EA: Uh-huh.

33:48

RS: And what sort of thing do you do then, for them?

33:52

EA: I assembled jewellery. They make jewellery out of heather, you know, the plant? They make jewellery from that, they've been on the go for fifty-odd years and whenever you mention it to anybody they go "Never heard of them."

34:09

RS: I wouldn't have known that, I have to say. Yeah.

34:11

EA: The actual jewellery part of it is called heathergems. They're called Charles Buyers and Company and they make sgian dubhs as well.

34:19

RS: Oh right, ok, for your kilt.

34:22

EA: Aye, they make them in Irvine so they do. But they do wholesale, they bring in umbrellas and walking sticks and shooting sticks, and they sell all of them as well. They've got a place in Pitlochry just for the heathergems. They actually make the heathergems there as well. If you're ever up it's right next to the tourist information office. It's called heathergems, great big shop, and you can actually watch them making it.

34:52

RS: Wow. I'll have to look that actually that sounds really interesting.

34:53

EA: Aye, it is. They actually make the majority in Irvine, but Irvine's never mentioned. Look it up on...

35:05

RS: Google?

35:05

EA: Facebook. We're on Facebook as well, or Google. They never mention Irvine.

35:12

RS: That's strange, isn't it?

35:13

EA: It gets shipped all over the world and there's no mention of Irvine. It all gets shipped from Irvine.

35:20

RS: That's strange, eh?

35:21

EA: I think it's because Pitlochry's a tourist place, folk will recognise tourist places.

35:25

RS: Of course, yeah. Maybe because it's got that association with being like the rural Scotland.

35:32

EA: That's right, aye. Probably.

35:33

RS: For tourists and stuff, you're right. That's interesting though.

35:35

EA: He used to own... There was a horncraft place in Irvine and he owned that as well, so he did. They used to do horn... They made egg-spoons, and salad servers, and... 'Cause when I first started I was packing the jewellery and I was packing... I was just doing jewellery at first and the other girl I worked with was packing all the horn stuff and the sgian dubhs. She would do part of the order and I'd do the jewellery part. It seemed that stupid that they were doing some and then you had to wait to do the rest so it ended up the both of us just did everything in it. But I enjoyed it, I was there for twenty-four years, I really enjoyed it.

36:19

RS: Yeah, I suppose you really must have.

36:21

EA: It's a really popular thing and yet nobody down here knows about it.

36:29

RS: No, that is interesting. I mean, I know I'm over in Renfrewshire but I'm not really that far and I've never heard of it either I have to say.

36:33

EA: I know. Every time someone says "Who do you work for?" "Charles Buyers and Company." "No..." "Heathergems?" "No..." "The sgian dubh company?" "No." But nobody's... Any time like one of my bosses... He'll put on a wee bit on Facebook about heathergems in Pitlochry and I always write a wee comment "Still no mention of Irvine there." He never ever puts a comment back, no. He knows I do it just to wind him up. But all my pals in the work they all like that "Keep him going, Elaine."

37:16

RS: How did that, working with Charles Buyers, compare to working in Templeton's? I know they're very different but what one, I suppose, did you prefer? Or were they just so different?

37:28

EA: They were just so different you couldn't really compare them. But I really liked the job because once the jewellery's made it came into me and I would put the chains on it or the ear-wires on it. I checked to make sure there was no flaws in it. What you did was you got a customer's order form through and you just went down it and you'd go to the safe and pick

them out and check them, put the wires and the chains on them and then you would... We actually boxed them as well, and packed them, and shipped them.

37:59

RS: Oh right, ok.

38:00

EA: I did all of that.

38:01

RS: So that was twenty-four years. What years would that have been between, Elaine?

38:05

EA: Well I just finished last year, So...

38:10

RS: Working back...

38:11

EA: I'm trying to remember my daughter's age. Nineteen ninety-three [1993], aye.

38:15

RS: Nineteen ninety-three [1993] to two-thousand and seventeen [2017].

38:19

EA: ...Seventeen.

38:19

RS: Wow, I hope they gave you a good send off.

38:22

EA: They did, they did. They took me to Si!, know the...? Along...

38:25

RS: Is that a restaurant?

38:29

EA: It's a big restaurant, aye.

38:31

RS: Oh right. I've not been but I think I know where you're talking about.

38:32

EA: It's just across from the police station going in the way to Ardrossan, to Kilwinning way, along Irvine Road.

38:39

RS: Yeah. That was nice of them though to...

38:41

EA: Aye, they took eh... I mean it's only a small factory in Irvine but they I think there was about twenty of us and they paid for us all, so they did.

38:50

RS: That was nice. That's a nice touch.

38:54

EA: And they gave me vouchers to go to... I'll get the name of it in a minute. I can't remember the name of it. Two nights, anyway, away. And all the workers chipped in and gave me gifts as well.

39:12

RS: Very good. Elaine do you remember anything about the closure of Templeton's when they closed the Bridgeton factory in nineteen seventy-nine?

39:23

EA: I don't remember much 'cause I was down here then. They were getting ready, and closing different bits of the factory before I left. Some folk were... They knew they were getting paid off so they were all looking for other jobs. A lot of them went to Olivetti, so they did. Some went to Singer's.

39:46

RS: Uh-huh, yeah.

39:50

EA: ...To get other jobs although they had to travel. I mean Olivetti was out Easterhouse way, Singer's was obviously Clydebank. But they were all starting to leave then.

40:00

RS: Had they told you they'd been thinking of closing or...?

40:02

EA: Aye, aye, we all knew it was going to be closing. Unless maybe I just knew because I was working in the wee office bit as well, I might have just heard through them. But I'm sure a lot of the workers knew it was closing.

40:16

RS: Uh-huh. Was it just there wasn't so much demand for the carpets any more or...?

40:21

EA: Well I think there was a lot of carpet places amalgamating as well because I think there way Gray's Carpet Factory and I thought they were going to amalgamate with Templeton's but it turns out no they didn't. And they had built the big place in Crown Street but I don't think that lasted.

40:42

RS: No, it was only for I think about five years, six years. I think that opened, the Crown Street as far as I'm aware, in seventy-four [1974] or seventy-five [1975] and closed in eighty [1980] or eighty-one [1981]. So it wasn't there for long.

40:55

EA: Aye, it wasn't there for long.

40:56

RS: I think it became a cash-and-carry afterwards.

40:56

EA: It was. I was in it as a cash-and-carry [laughing].

40:58

RS: Oh, were you? Oh dear.

41:01

EA: Aye, but I was only in it the once when I got took over by my boss to repair that carpet so...

41:10

RS: What was it like inside was it quite a modern new build?

41:11

EA: It was dead modern. Dead modern and dead bright, know? And really really spacious.

41:18

RS: Was it very different from...?

41:21

EA: Completely different from what we were in. I liked the Templeton's factory, so I did.

41:27

RS: Have you been back to that building since it closed?

41:30

EA: Oh, aye. I've been into WEST [laughing].

41:33

RS: Oh, have you? Into the brewery.

41:34

EA: Into the brewery.

41:36

RS: Was that for dinner or something I take it?

41:36

EA: Aye, I was out with my daughter and my son-in-law and the kids. I think it was Armed Forces Day we were down at and it was a beautiful day so we went in and got food and drink and brought it outside.

41:54

RS: So in coming to a close Elaine is there anything, or could you briefly summarise I suppose how you reflect on your time working at Templeton's?

42:05

EA: I think because it was my first job... I think your first job always sticks with you. I just enjoyed doing it, I can't think of anything else to say. I just had a really good time. Probably if I hadn't met my hubby I'd have been there until the factory finished. Or if I hadn't contracted TB I'd have been there, know?

42:29

RS: Would you have liked to have went back if you'd had the chance?

42:32

EA: Well if I was still up in Glasgow, aye I would have went back because as I said I did enjoy the job. I enjoyed the company of the people I worked with and my bosses were really good. I knew a couple of the big bosses in Templeton's and they were really good. We had a Mr. Braithwaite, he was my big boss when I first started and then a Mr. Freeman took over, so he did. He was a wee bit more strict, I think, than Mr. Braithwaite. Maybe that's how they took him out, I think Mr. Braithwaite was maybe too friendly with the workers and that. But everybody got on well with one another and did their jobs and... I like that, I don't like any animosity in things like that. I would have went back, so I would have. My mother was still there.

43:29

RS: Was she?

43:29

EA: Uh-huh. She was still cleaning there until she decided to move to Irvine.

43:35

RS: Is she down here now as well, I see.

43:36

EA: Aye. Actually, she probably left when it closed, my mother. She's no here now.

43:45

RS: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

43:46

EA: Oh, no. She'd have been over a hundred if she was still here [laughing].

43:50

RS: Oh, I suppose...

43:51

EA: She was forty when she had me so...

43:48

RS: Oh, I see, I see.

43:54

EA: So she'd have been a hundred and four this year if she was alive. But no, that's right, I forgot she moved down here once the factory closed.

44:06

RS: So Irvine definitely does have its Templeton's contingent then.

44:07

EA: Oh, it does. Actually I bumped into a girl in... I can't remember her name but I was in the queue at the bingo one night with my mother and this girl tapped me on the shoulder and she went "Annie McAdam?" and I went "No..." "You worked in Templeton's didn't you?" I went "Aye, but Annie McAdam's my sister. I'm her younger sister Elaine." She went "Oh you're her double." I thought I must be if she thought I was Annie but... Her name was Patricia, I can't remember her second name, but she actually worked...

44:44

RS: And she worked in Templeton's as well?

44:48

EA: Uh-huh. And I thought "For goodness sake!" It's amazing the amount of... Because she told me another few folk had moved down to Irvine as well because this was the big new area at the time.

44:58

RS: Of course, of course.

45:01

EA: So everybody was moving down here but it was quite funny that night. "Annie McAdam?" "Naw." [Laughing]

45:10

RS: Did you take that as a compliment or...?

45:11

EA: I did, I did. My big sister's quite good looking. She's just turned seventy last week.

45:19

RS: Oh, I see. Was there a pride in working at Templeton's, would you say? Were you proud of it?

45:28

EA: Well, I was. I think a lot of them thought of it as a job. But I liked... I think when you take pride in your job I think you do enjoy it more, so you do. A lot of them it's you need money and it's a job so... But I enjoyed it, but then I was only young. You're earning your first money and that when you're young so...

45:53

RS: That's very true. Why do you think, and I know this is quite a big question, do you have any thoughts on why when people talk about Glasgow they often talk about shipbuilding or steelworks and the coal-mining...?

46:06

EA: That's right they all talk about that, they never talk about like Templeton's or that.

46:08

RS: They never talk about the carpet factories, or the textiles, or the clothing industries.

46:13

EA: That's right, they don't.

46:14

RS: Have you got any thoughts, or ideas, or reflections about that?

46:16

EA: They don't talk about anything like that. I've never ever gave it a thought but when you think of it, no they don't talk... As you said, it's all shipbuilding and everything, so it is.

46:28

RS: More women lost their job in clothing and the textile sector in the nineteen-eighties [1980s] than men lost, but it's never really discussed, I suppose.

46:37

EA: Aye. I think the majority in Templeton's was women as well, so it was. I know there was men there but when I used to get sent around the factory like to weaving departments and things like that there were a lot of women on the looms as well as men, so there was. I think there was actually more men maintaining the machines than there was actually working them, because the spinning was all women. And the spinning was the department my sister was in as well. There wasn't much said about it wasn't there not? You don't think about it at the time.

47:19

RS: No, you maybe don't. I just feel as if, I don't know, maybe they could do something at the building to remember it.

47:28

EA: Aye, they could. They could honour it in some way because it's a beautiful building, so it is.

47:32

RS: Yes it is absolutely stunning, isn't it?

47:35

EA: I thought they might have made more stuff in it for the public to go into. Because as you said, they've got flats in it, they've got a gym in it, but there's nothing there for Joe Schmoe to go into really. No. Not everybody wants to go a gym.

47:49

RS: No. Aye exactly, it's probably very expensive I imagine.

47:53

EA: Aye, and not everyone can afford their flats in it either.

47:57

RS: Down at the... I know it's a bit of a distance from here in Irvine. But down in Govan at the old shipyard they've actually kept that building and they've got a heritage centre in there but they've put offices and things in it. But as you say, a member of the public or a former shipyard worker can go in and go through that.

48:19

EA: ...And look, see you can't do that in Templeton's. It'd be good if they did have something like that, like a wee memorial bit that you could in and... Maybe even pictures of how it looked and how the carpets were made and that. A lot... Until I started in there I didn't know how a carpet was made.

48:38

RS: No, you wouldn't have. I've only learned in the last few months as well, I have to say. It's been really interesting.

48:42

EA: It is interesting to see it, because when you think “How do you get a pattern on a carpet?” There’s a lot of work to it, and the weavers have got to know what way to put... I can’t remember what you call them now, the big spools. If you put the spool in the wrong way you’ve not got the pattern. We used to get that quite a lot. “Oh there’s been one spool put in the wrong way.” And you’d have just this line of just colours, every yard you’d have it. You’d to pick it all out and sew in the right colours.

49:14

RS: It must have been quite time consuming as well.

49:16

EA: It is. It’s very time consuming, so it was. Sore on your fingers.

49:22

RS: Yeah, I was going to say that, it must have been.

49:24

EA: You had to sew them in with big darning needles, but it was hard because you had to... If you picture its here you’ve got to get a grip of it to pucker it up to sew it in, it’s quite hard doing all of that.

49:36

RS: You must have been tired after a day at work.

49:39

EA: Oh, aye. I used to home and fall asleep. I remember doing that, still in my uniform with my overalls on. My mother would go out to work and me and my sister would come in. My mother started preparing dinner, we finished it. We’d have our dinner and the two of us would just sit there and... [laughing] A wee half hour nod.

50:01

RS: You must have needed it. You must have certainly needed it.

50:05

EA: It was a warm place to work in.

50:06

RS: And warm, yeah?

50:06

EA: Aye, it was really warm because...

50:08

RS: Did they have any ventilation or windows, or did the windows open?

50:10

EA: Aye. They had fans in our bit. I don't think the windows really opened. We didn't see outside from our bit, no we didn't have windows in our bit. You only saw outside if you went out for a break, so you did. You didn't go out for break, you weren't allowed out on your tea-break but you could go out at lunchtime.

50:39

RS: Yeah, get a bit of fresh air. I suppose the last thing just before coming to a close, I should have maybe asked you earlier, is when you contracted TB were you still employed by Templeton's at that point?

50:50

EA: Uh-huh, I was still employed with them, aye.

50:53

RS: And how did they look after you and treat you during that time?

50:56

EA: I wasn't... Once I was... I was on the sick because as I said they didn't know it was TB but other than hearing from the union man with some money now and again I never really had any contact with them, nobody contacted me.

51:12

RS: And were they understanding about you going on... When you went on sick leave?

51:15

EA: Oh, aye. They were really understanding because I was off sick for over a year, so I was.

51:23

RS: Oh right, ok.

51:24

EA: And I still got my sick pay. Even when I moved here I was still under them and I still got sick pay.

51:31

RS: And did they... During that year, I know you mentioned the union fella, but did any of your supervisors or management get in touch or anything like that?

51:37

EA: No, no.

51:40

RS: No, but they kept paying you.

51:40

EA: Aye, they kept paying me, so they did so... But TB ran in my family so it wasn't to do with carpets, know? My father actually died of TB, so he did, when I was seven. It was just in the blood waiting to come out.

52:00

RS: It must have been a very difficult time though being that age and then being on sick from your job and then obviously a marriage as well.

52:05

EA: It was because, as I said, I was twenty when I was told I had it and I didn't think I would see my twenty-first birthday and here I am at sixty-four.

52:15

RS: Well, I'm very glad that you are here and...

52:16

EA: Every year's a celebration [laughing]!

52:18

RS: Absolutely, and rightly so. I'm very glad you are here. I suppose finally Elaine, this afternoon, is there anything you'd like to tell me about your time in Templeton's?

52:28

EA: Not that I can think of. I just enjoyed going to my work and being friendly with everybody that was there and I liked when I get sent up to different departments and all that because I could see how it was all run and have a gab wit folk about their work. A lot of them used to, on a Friday, if they were going out that night straight from work were all in the toilets doing the make-up [laughing]. I was always sent "Go see where they are." I used to go in and go "Yous have to get back to your tables, they're looking for you!" "We'll be there in

five minutes, do you want us to pluck your eyebrows?" "Naw, I don't!" [laughing] "We'll put make-up on you." "No, I've just been sent to get you back!" And if I didn't get back quick enough I'd get pulled up for it as well but... They never took anything serious really, the workers, they were all good to get on with and I fair enjoyed my job at it.

53:32

RS: Excellent, well thank you very much Elaine I appreciate your time.

53:34

EA: Oh that's no problem, thank you.