

RQ

RQ When was I a girl?

Q. Aye, now you were born, when, 1892?

RQ 1895!

Q. '95 you were born?

RQ 18th June 1895 that's 92 years, and then we lived in Oakbank and we went to Wallyford and we came back and we went to East Calder, then we left East Calder and came here and we're here seventy nine years.

Q. Now, you say your dad was a contractor in the mines?

RQ Yes, a contractor in the mines with the Scottish Oils, and he worked in Pumpherston first, and then it was through working in Pumpherston that he got the contract to come here and we had to flit away here, and do you know what happened, now this is another thing that happened, there was a lady along there, Mrs. Crone, aye, her sister and I were at the school together and we were both dux of the school, and in those days you didn't go to college, the schoolmaster took you, and wait till you hear what I say, I was the only daughter and two wee brothers, you see, and my father was a miner a hard working man, and he says..... and I was wanting to learn the piano you see, and he says, would you ask your father, would you ask your parents if you could be allowed to be a schoolteacher, and I'll take you three nights a week for an hour, and learn you to be a teacher. Well, I wasn't wanting to be a teacher, but the other lassie, they had nine of a family, and her father was a ploughman, and of course, they couldn't afford for to let her be a teacher, you ken. To go to domestic service..... so the next day we got back to the school, and he says to me an..... he asked her and she says, oh no sir, I can't be a teacher, there's nine of a family of us, and my father is only a ploughman, and I'll need to go to domestic service.

He said, oh, that's alright, and he says, what about you, Robina? I said, oh no sir, I think that I'll get married when I'm seventeen! So the war broke out..... the 1914..... I came away here, I was glad we flitted away here that let me get out of that, and during the 1914 war, I had an uncle was in Salonica, and he was sent home with some of these troubles, they had, some kind of fever, and he was getting married, and in those days, you went to Edinburgh and got married with a special license, then you went up to the court and got signed in. So I was supposed to be the best maid, and my uncle was the best man, and we got to Edinburgh, and you had to got to Princes Street Station to go to Mid Calder Station, and when we came to the station, this was after I had been here for a long time, and and who is there but the schoolmaster! "Oh," he said, "hello Robina, is this you getting married today?". I said, "No sir, I'm not married yet!" He said, "I thought that you were getting married at seventeen!"

Q. And how old were you then?

RQ Well..... 1914...

Q. Oh you were..... yes..... about nineteen?

RQ About nineteen..... about nineteen aye..... but I was going to get married at seventeen! So I was telling somebody about it the other day, and I said if I met him the now, well, he would be dead now, if I met him the now, I'm not married yet!

Q. Not married at all? Yes!

RQ I came away here and I was quite pleased, but I would have made a fine schoolteacher, but however I learned the piano and I played the piano.

Q. How many..... how many was there in your family?

RQ Two brothers and me, three of us, and one of my brothers, he worked in the mine, the two brothers worked in the mine.

Q. Can you remember which mine?

RQ Aye, No.4 mine, and No.7, and No.5 mine. No.5 mine would be a newer mine, that would be the last mine, and my mother..... my father went to East Calder when we came here with the contract, and he brought five men from East Calder with us and they lived with us, for they were good workers and my father brought them.....

Q. That would be his crew?

RQ Aye!

Q. Can you remember their names?

RQ Oh well, they are dead long ago too!

Q. Aye!

RQ There was a man called Dan Green and one was cried Jock Waddell and one was cried Salmond..... a fella Salmond.... And Eck Bowie was one, but oh they are dead years and years ago, and they came and lived here with us.

Q. And how long were they with you?

RQ Oh they were a long long time! Because, I mean, when we came here, there weren't very many houses you see, and this was three blocks that were built and we came in to it, but then they were building other houses down Glen Road there, but they didn't want to..... they had a in East Calder, and they didn't want to come and stay here for ever, do you see what I mean, and they went to East Calder every Saturday at 12 o'clock, and they had to walk, there were no buses, and I used to go to my grandmothers at East Calder, on a Saturday, and we used to meet at five o'clock on a Sunday, and walk back here, you ken, for their work on Monday.

Q. So, you say that you learned the piano?

RQ I played the piano for years!

Q. Who taught you?

RQ Oh, I went to Edinburgh and got learned.

Q. Why did you choose the piano?

RQ Well all my mothers folk were musical folk they were all musicians and singers and pianists, and my granny had a piano, you see, and then my father bought me a piano.

Q. Now, what can you tell me about your granny, can you tell me anything about your grandmother?

RQ My grandmother?

Q. Aye!

RQ What about?

Q. About herself, what was she like?

RQ My granny died at 92, my granny lived to 92!

Q. And where did she stay? Did she stay in East Calder?

RQ Yes! She lived in East Calder, she lived in Oakbank, she had the Post Office in Oakbank, and she only moved from Oakbank to East Calder.

Q. And what was her name?

RQ Her own name?

Q. Aye!

RQ You mean, _____, Woods her name, Mrs. Woods. Her own name was Sarah Clark.....

Q. And what did your grandfather do?

RQ My grandfather worked in Oakbank Work, that was the Scottish Oils too, he worked in the Oakbank, my grandfather.

Q. And what did he do?

RQ Well, I can't tell you what he did, well, maybe just..... labouring about or that, you know, I don't know..... but it's a long time back isn't it.

Q. It's a long long time, eh!

RQ A long long time!

Q. Now, see looking back, and I'm asking you, what is the most memorable event that you can remember? What sticks in your mind? In 92 years?

RQ Oh, there's lots of things!

Q. Yes, but can you think..... is there one particular thing?

RQ Well, I can't tell you, for there were lots of things, weren't they! But I can tell you one thing, my father went off with _____ disease, that was heart trouble, and the doctor confided in me, and he said don't tell your mother, and he said, _____ he was a great fitba' man my father, and my brother played with the Hearts in Edinburgh at one time, _____ fitba' and he said, never let your father bide a

place without you going with him! Well, he was in to with a man, that was to do with the fitba' and he was awful ill too, and I used to take the two of them, Hearts..... Hearts and Celtic are playing at Tynecastle, and Rangers and Hibs were playing at Easter Road... every.... every Edinburgh holiday, and I used to say to my father, would you like to go and see the Rangers and Hearts or whatever team was there, and he used to always want to take this man with him, because they were kind of hard up folk, and he used to send me up and say, Jock, would you like to go to the football match, and he would say, aye, and I would take the two of them away to the football, and take them to their tea, and my father would say that nobody could ever have a better daughter in their life than me! But he wasn't knowing that I had to take him! I couldn't let him go his self, and he lived five years, after that! He was a great man, he was on the..... parish... parish councilor and he was on your West Lothian Education Committee.

Q. And how old was he when he died?

RQ He did an awful lot of work for Livingston Station! And I just put it ben the room the now, a photo, of a gala-day, here, about the first gala day from when we came here, and it wasn't held here, it was held in a field, and in those days, you know what they done..... It's awful faded, I just put it ben the room, afore you came in. I found it lying about the fireside, and it was just the field away down Glen Road there, and what we did then, we just brought a board with the bags and you got a bag and me being a young lassie, I got to pour milk. You used to come with a "tinnie", with a bit paper, a bit ribbon on it, and I brought it to show my nephew it, because he is the President of this Gala Day, and I was telling him about his grandfather being the president the Gala day, and what it was, and you see my father..... will I show you it?

Q. Yes!

RQ It's awfy faded..... my father..... and another man holding the wee lassies a bag and all them that is in the photo are all dead.... that photo.... look

at that.... there's my father there.....

Q. Oh yes! Are you in that photograph?

RQ No, I'm not in it!

Q. You're not in it?

RQ Well, that's the bottom of Glen Road where it's all houses now there..... and that's along what you call the avenue, and that's what you call Woodland's in there, and the High School is along there, you ken, the Deans High School, and that's what you done then, you just went there, and you all sat on the grass, and my father handed out the bags, and I poured milk, and when we ran for a race, we got a penny.

Q. So, where would you get the "tinnie". Where would..... would you actually buy it or what?

RQ Oh, you bought them..... just a tin mug, and I met a fella on Saturday there, and he belonged to..... he belongs to a place they call Old Deans, and I met him along there when the Orange Walk was going away at half past eight and I went along, and he said, do you not mind R? I didn't know him, but he told me his name, I ken't the name, and he said, do you mind when we used to come over to the Deans for the Gala Day with a tinnie, and we got a drink of milk, and I said, that's a long time ago!

Q. Do you know who he is, who is the man.....?

RQ And he..... minds of that, a laddie.....

Q. What's his name, do you know his name?

RQ Mc is his name, but he lives in Bathgate now, and I was talking to another man down there, a Danny McKenzie, and he was talking..... did you see that book that was published, about Livingston, well there's a photo of me

and my father and mother and my brother standing at the door as the procession is coming along in that book.

Q. I've seen the book, but I've never really paid much attention to the photos!

RQ Well, you see the Gala Day coming along the street, and you see my mother and my father and me and my young brother, he was just a laddie, but he joined the police force, and he died in 1983, and..... he was seventy..... and he is standing beside us as a wee laddie, and the procession is coming along past our door! Now, do you know anybody there, that's ten or eleven years ago.....?

Q. That's Tam Dalyell!

RQ That's right! That's me and Tam, eleven years ago! And that's me getting me getting my bouquet of flowers at the Gala Day.....

Q. That's nice that!

RQ That was taken in 1977! And then see this one.....

Q. Is that you crowning the Queen?

RQ That's me.....

Q. That's a beautiful outfit you've got there!

RQ And then I've got this one up here..... I've got this one.....

Q. Now, you're telling me about the Labour Party, what made you want to be interested in politics?

RQ Well, there was only my father and my mother and another man and wife kind of discussed politics, and I got a wee bit interested and I went and joined it, and I was the only woman in the Lothian's that joined it at that time!

Q. When was that?

RQ That was 1917, and then Shinwell came here about 1918, and that day that he came I went into a shop and got a lemonade box for him to stand and speak on, and there were only five of us at the corner, up at the top of the street, and the men were coming up to go to the bowling green to play the hat trick, and when they heard him speaking, they all went away back in case Crichton or of them would get to hear about it!

Q. Now, the Labour Party wasn't very popular at that time, was it?

RQ No, no, it wasn't popular! Shinwell got the prison and Jimmy Maxton got the prison for advocating the politics..... you know, the managers and that were up against the likes of that! They cried them rebels!

Q. Was your dad..... was your dad in the Unions? Was he in the Union in those days?

Was he in the Union in those days?

RQ Aye, my father was a Union man!

Q. And how was he viewed? How did..... for example, who was the manager at the time? Where he worked?

RQ Robert Crichton was the manager at the..... all the Scottish Oils.... Manager over Pumpherston, Westwood, every place..... he was the manager there, and my father worked in Pumpherston, and they met Crichton there, and he said to my father would you not like to come here and get a contract, and he gave him a contract and that's how we came away here. My father was a hard working man, although he was a labour man, I mean, he was a labour man, and that's what Crichton said to me that day, I'm giving you that red rose for your father and for yourself, because you have to the courage of your convictions, and that's in the paper, when..... I mean, we didn't care for anybody.....

Q. Aye! Did your dad and Mr. Crichton fall out?

RQ What? No, no..... when they were working, you were arguing about politics they didn't see eye to eye, oh no, they didn't fall out, but my father had his say and Crichton had his say, and then all these years that's the most memory I think, is him saying to me, you are like your father, you have got the courage of your convictions!

Q. That was a beautiful compliment!

RQ Was that not a compliment? To me?

Q. Yes!

RQ And down came the lady Doctor, Mrs. Lang and she says, oh my, I'm surprised at Mr. Crichton giving you the flower!

Q. She thought that she was going to get it!

RQ She was a Tory, they were great Tories! They were all Tories that were there, I was about the only Labour..... my mother and me were about the only Labour ones, but I don't care for anybody, I say what I'm going to say! And I'm 92 year old, and there is not a person in the world can point a finger at me!

Q. Quite right!

RQ There's not a person in the world that can point the finger at me for anything! But I've led a good life, and but I've never drunk or smoked or nothing like that in my life, I've led a good life, and I've looked after my father and my mother and my brothers, I've looked after my family!

Q. Now your mum..... your mum being in the Labour Party that is very odd!

RQ What?

Q. Your mum.....your mum being in the Labour Party!

RQ Aye, but then we formed a women's Labour Party!

Q. Who did?

RQ I formed the womens Labour Party here!

Q. You did?

RQ Aye, and I used to go to Queensferry and Whitburn and all the different places, and look at the hundreds of women's Labour parties there are now!

Q. Did you make..... did you not make a lot of enemies?

RQ No, I never with anybody about it! Ken..... what it was.... there was nobody argued with me about it, and there was one time, that my father was on the parish council, and he never discussed anybody's business, and he didn't want to know anybody's business, but this man was a great Tory and he was awful hard up, and he came to my father, well he came to the door and he said, could he speak to my father? So, I said, well come in and go into the room with my father. So in he goes, and..... he thanked my father, whatever he had said, so a while after, an election came, and here my father had to go inside the polling booth, and I went up for to vote, and here is this man standing outside the door with a big red, white and blue rosette in, for Tory, and I think that he must have felt rotten but I didn't know what he was asking my father, I didn't know anything about his business, and he said to my father, he said, I feel rotten at you coming up here, and me with this rosette, after you doing me a good turn. The man says..... and my father says, listen son, it is all the same to me what you are, you can be a Communist or Tory or whatever you like, I'm a parish councilor and I'm here to help people, and I don't bother

what they are in politics! So my father went into..... he was the next one into the polling booth, and this man says to me, you know, R, I felt rotten, your father has done me a good turn! I said, "Listen, I don't want to know what my father did, I have nothing to do with the Parish Council, and I don't want to know anything about it!" I said, "If he has done you a good turn and you've thanked him, well it is a closed book!" The man felt rotten himself, but we didn't bother about that, whether you felt rotten about it or not, everybody knew where we were, and then during the election, Chamberlains election, he got defeated twice right enough, I used to go to folks bairns, to let them go up and vote, ken.... because there wasn't very many at that time to vote, but after he went away to England..... his wife and him they used to write to me, you ken, and he got a presentation in Bathgate, and there was an old man from Bo'ness, well he was 92, and he presented him with a writing set, and there was Tam Dalyell, and Teague the lawyer, and Manny Shinwell, and this man and me got our photo taken! And my brother up here, took it to London to show my other brother, and it never came back!

Q. Oh dear! Aha!

RQ So, the other day, there was a young lassie flitted to the top flat there, and I was talking to her, the day, the first time that she flitted in here, for there was furniture coming and she said, "How are you getting on?" I said, "I don't know you hen!", I said, and she said "You've kent me since I was a wee lassie", she wasn't very old yet, and she said, "My mother came to your house a fortnight ago, and asked you if there was an empty house in the flats!" I said, "Oh hen, I didn't know it was your mother, and Gary says to the woman, "Come in", and she came in, and she said "R, are there any empty houses in the flats." I said, "There is one straight up from me", so here I didn't know any more about it, and here the lassie got it! You see, I found out last week, the lassie had got it! But I didn't know the lassie! I didn't ken who she was! Till here, last week, there was a man coming in, and another man with a board like this, and the first man said, "hello, R", and I said..... "Oh, hello, Joe, how are you keeping?" he said, "I'm not very well", he had to pack up his job with

sciatica! And he said, "I'm going up to my daughters, and thanks very much to you for telling the wife that there was an empty flat here!" "She went right away and she got it!" I said, "You're wife!". He said, "That was my wife that came down yon night and asked you where.....!" "Oh Joe", I said, "I didn't recognise your wife!" So the man goes up with him with this board, whatever he was up for, I don't know, and they came back down, and he said, "They tell me that you are a personality in Livingston Station!" I said, "Is that a fact?" He said, "Aye, I've not been long in Livingston Station, but every place that I've been at, I've heard nothing but about you!" "They tell me that you were a great friend of Manny Shinwell's" I said, "Aye!" He said, "My father was in the Labour Party, when it started, and my grandfather was in the Labour Party when it started oh, years and years ago before I was born, and then my father was in the Labour Party, and I'm in the Labour Party". I said, "Where do you come from?" He said, "Bo'ness!" I said, "Oh many is the time that I had to go down to Bo'ness and try and organise a womens meeting!" He said, "Oh, aye, I ken all about you, the Bo'ness folk talks about you yet!" I said, "Do they?" "I've got a cousin through marriage that lives in Bo'ness!". He said, "Who is he?" I said, "Ex-Inspector Morrison!" "My God!", he said "That's my pal, I'm never out his house!" "How do you know him?" I said, "He's married on to my cousin!" And he said, "Oh, I've heard Bob talking about you!" "When I go home the night to Bo'ness, I'll need to tell Bob!" "I was talking to yon Communist, what am I going to say, "I'm going to tell Bob that I was talking to yon Communist up at the Deans!" He said "What communist?" He said, "A friend of yours!" "You ken R!" I said, Bob will be saying, she's an awfy woman!" You ken! And he was telling me about the Labour Party and I had never seen him in my life before!

Q. There you are, you see!

RQ He said, "What a work you done for the Labour Party!" So I did!

Q. You see, the 1921 strike, can you remember that?

RQ Oh aye, I ken fine!

Q. What can you tell me about it?

RQ Well, I'll tell you this, in the 1921 strike, my father and them were on strike and I had an uncle worked in the Oilworks at Pumpherston in the office and my father and them went to Pumpherston for to try and get them to come out with them, and they wouldn't come out, but my uncle came out and through coming out, he got the sack from Crichton. For coming out, and I used to say to folk, they weren't..... well, some of them were with Crichton and some weren't, but we used to run concerts to help them, and my father formed a soup kitchen up at the top of the place where the kirk is the now! Formed a soup kitchen and all them that had bairns were going with vegetables and butchers in Bathgate and other places were giving them lumps of beef, and everybody went to the soup kitchen in 1921, and got a plate of soup or a can of soup you ken, for the family!

Q. What did you do for money during the strike? How did your dad.....?

RQ Well, we never got any money, but my two brothers, they were on strike, so was my father, but they went to the Parish Council, but they never got anything!

Q. So, how did you live?

RQ Well, my mother had a wee bit money past here, you know! And my father being a contractor he was making good money, and we had to just live on what my mother..... ken, what she had saved up, but a lot of folk had to go on the Parish Council, because I mean, they had no money coming in,
.....

Q. And how did that work, I mean your dad was refused, why was he refused?

RQ Eh?

Q. Why was your father refused the Parish money?

RQ Well, because..... they wanted to know if you had any money in the bank! And you see, what a lot..... it wasn't so much of the bank then, you had the money in the Co-operative, but a lot of folk was cuter than my father, they went and lifted the money out the store, and kept it in the house, and said that they had no money, and they got parish allowance.

Q. Oh, I see, they were cheating?

RQ They were cheating, but my father was such an upright man, they wouldn't do that, so we managed through alright!

Q. I see.... if you had no money, there would be parish.....?

RQ If you had no money, you had to go the Parish Council and they gave you money. Well.... do you know, after my father died, and my mother was ill..... my mother turned ill, and she had to go on social security and do you know what I got for a week to keep me! Nine shillings a week!

Q. That's not much, is it!

RQ That's what I got from the social security! To look after my mother! And a man came this day to interview..... he came down to see if you were needing something, and my mother was lying in her bed, and..... well, she wasn't able to get up, and do you know what he said to me, his father was the manager of the mill at Mid Calder, they were well off folk, he said, "If you're mother got money for clothes, would she be able to get up out of her bed?" I said, "Oh, I don't know, she's not able to get up out her bed!" He said, "What does she usually wear?" I said, "Well, she has to wear woolen combinations" and they were only three pounds a pair, at that time, you see! I don't know what they will be now! So, "If she got a pair of combinations, and she didn't get enough money to pay them, how would she pay them up?" "Oh", I said, "I would just need to pay the man sixpence or a shilling a week, you know to him!"

So, he goes away, well..... just as he was talking to me, a young woman knocked at the door and said, "Could I speak to you?". I said, "I am sorry, I've got a visitor in!" I said, "Come back later on!" So away he went. Well, the man across from me, he was _____ at the Social Security, and the young woman came back again and I said, "Come in, Cissie, what are you wanting?". She said, "I've had to give up a good job in Edinburgh, I'm a sewing maid in the Royal Hotel in Edinburgh, and I've got to give up my job to come home and look after my father and mother!" She said, "Do you know all that I'm getting to look after them!" "nine shillings a week!" "And I'll need to try and find out if I can get anymore, for I am giving up a big wage, so I said well, the man across the road from me..... I said, "My father was _____ afore he died", and I said, "I'll get him over!" So I _____ Paddy _____ and I said, "Do you want him to go to your house?" She said, "Oh no, I don't want my father and mother to hear me talking!" I said, "Well, I can't ask you in the room because my mother is in the room bed!" "But you can stand in the scullery there, and I'll shut the door!" So he said to her, she told me when he went away, he said, "I'm..... he came back over, and he said, "I'm going to the Tribunal today, to speak for two men", and he said, "I'm going to speak for Miss Perry!" You see! So he said, "How much do you get, R?" I said, "I get nine shilling a week", and I said, "The man has been out the day, and he said if my mother gets combinations, how will you pay them up!" "If she gets a dress, well, I'll need to give a shilling a week to somebody". You see! Well, he said, I'll find out about that when I go in!" So in he went and he came back! And do you know what the fella said that came out and interviewed me!" "Oh, she doesn't require anything, her mother is lying in bed, like an old lady, and she is sitting dressed to kill!" And that was during the war years, and do you know what I had on me! My mother used to knit stockings, home knitted stockings, and I had a pair of home knitted stockings and you had to get coupons for your shoes, and I had to be buying a nightdress for my mother, for one minute she was sweating, and the next minute she was shivering. I had to dry her and put another one on, you know! And I had a pair of shoes, you know, with soft kind of pelt.....

Q.

RQ Well, you had to give coupons, and I hadn't enough coupons, because I had to keep buying her these kind of things! And I sewed them on with black wool, and he said that I was sitting dressed like to kill! And my mother was lying in bed like a lady! And my hand to God, we never got one penny and we never got one thing! And that was the God's truth!

Q. Oh, that was rotten!

RQ Well, we couldn't..... now, what could I..... I couldn't have my mother lying dirty, could I?

Q. No, no, quite right!

RQ And we got nothing! And the lassie never got nothing either! She got nine shillings a week just! And another lassie bid up there, and she looked after her mother, and she got nine shillings a week!

Q. That was during the war years?

RQ And that was what we got! Stuff was cheaper, but what could you get for nine shillings!

Q. Absolutely nothing!

RQ I mean, it was terrible, wasn't it! So, I mean, I know all about the strikes and all about these things!

Q. So..... that was the 1921 strike!

RQ That was 1921..... and then there was.....

Q. And how long did that last?

RQ Eh?

Q. How long did that last?

RQ Oh, it lasted a good while, and then they had another strike in 1926.....

Q. Aye, that was a big one?

RQ And that Betty was in the now, she was telling me that her two brothers went up to Blackburn, and they got nothing! You know, Betty was telling me you know, not the now, but she told me one day..... Betty was born beside me, you see, she is 65!

Q. Is she?

RQ And I was in No.7 and she lived in 63..... I was No.7 and she was No.3, and she was born beside me! And then when my mother died, I moved down next door to Betty to No.2! And Betty, she has come about me all her life! Since she was a wee lassie, and she still comes yet! And she was telling me, just a week ago or that, she said, "I was thinking about yon strikes, R!" She said, "Do you mind when my two brothers went up to Blackburn, and they got nothing!"

Q. And where did they go, to Blackburn? To the Parish?

RQ Up to Blackburn! You went to Blackburn for the Parish, and you had to walk, for there were no buses!

Q. It was Blackburn that you had to go to?

RQ It was Blackburn that they had to go to! That's where the Parish Council was, Blackburn! And they walked to Blackburn, and they got nothing! And they had to walk back again!

Q. And who gave you the money, was it the minister, or who was it?

RQ Well..... I don't know who it was.....oh.....no.....

Q. Were the men sitting there?

RQ The Parish Council must have got money from someplace! There were a lot of people on the Parish you know! In those days, you know, a lot of folk likes of colliers, that was maybe working a shift and off a week, they were on the Parish, ken, at that time! They got! But the coal miners..... the shale miners, that was just off on strike, some of them got it and them that said that they had no money, they got it! But her father and mother..... her brother got killed in the mine, and they had..... they had got ken..... a clump of money..... you know.....

Q. Compensation?

RQ Aye, compensation, aye! And of course, they knew that, and well, they had to keep their family! Oh, it was hard times yon time, wasn't it!

Q. Oh, it was! Now, what do you think of the strike? I mean, you were a young girl then! A young woman?

RQ Aye, I mean they were fighting for their rights, weren't they? I mean, they were wanting a rise in their wages, the cost of living was going up and they were wanting rises and that's why they were on strike you see! To get more money!

Q. Do you think that was the right way of going about it?

RQ Oh, I don't know!

Q. I mean, when you think of the suffering, when you think of the suffering that those men in those families went through, do you think that it was the right thing to do?

- RQ Well, it wasn't the right thing, but it's like the now, they are going on strike the now again, the Social Security..... and everybody is going on strike! For the man was telling me one day, he said, we are wanting a rise, and we can't get it either! And ye ken, the teachers are always wanting a rise, and they can't get it either, do you see what I mean! They are wanting to fight for their rights!
- Q. So, if there is no money there to be had, how can you get the money?
- RQ How can you..... what?
- Q. How can you get..... say someone wants a rise, if there is no money there
- RQ everybody has got a lot of money!
- Q. Well, right enough! You know!
- RQ Yes, but the cost of living is terrible! I have to pay the same as everybody else for everything that I get!
- Q. That's right enough yes!
- RQ Aye, everything is an awful price isn't it?
- Q. Aye, but you are not going on strike are you?
- RQ Not me, I'm not going on strike! No, but I mean, it's an awfy job, them that's got families..... well, when I was young there was no family allowance! But I mean, they are getting family allowance now! But
isn't it!
- Q. It's certainly that!

RQ But I mean, when I was young, there was nothing like that! And especially the coal miners, they had awfy poor wages! But my father was a contractor and he was good to the men that worked to him. They all told me that for years after that, that he paid them well and he was good to his men!

Q. He used to give them so much money?

RQ Well, he worked..... he was the contractor, and the harder they worked the more they got, you ken, and that!

Q. Now, as a contractor, did the Scottish Oils pay your father, and then he paid the men?

RQ Yes!

Q. That's how it worked?

RQ It would depend on how much shale was coming up, you know! And the more shale that was coming up, the more money he got, and he got his wages he got the big sums of money, but he paid these men, and I met a fella, och, a while ago, and he said my father used to tell me about your father was always awfie decent! They were supposed to get so much wage, but he always gave them extra!

Q. Now, did your father buy the tools?

RQ Oh aye, my father supplied the tools!

Q. Aha! And what about explosives?

RQ They had to get shovels and picks and all these things..... for the shale....

Q. And your father supplied that?

RQ Aye, they supplied that, when you got the contract, and they had all to

do that and one night, wait till you hear this..... there were these two fellas worked next to my father, not with my father, but next to my father and here, they had these pit lamps they cried them..... ken, they lit the lamps.....

Q. The tallow lamps?

RQ No, a different kind of lamp..... a pit lamp, you had to put oil in it and a wick and..... here this day, this fella had left his pit lamp, and my father came home from the work and he said to me "Will you go along to Sneddon's and tell them some of them have left their pit lamp". "They'll need it the morn!" Well, I wasn't aware that there had been laddies chapping at their door, the night before, and running away, so I goes along with the pit lamp, and it was kind of grey dark, you see, and I knocked at the door, and the next thing was, that I got a pail of water fell on me! And I'm soaking! And I couldn't speak, they took the breath from me! And the fellas..... the two fellas..... oh, oh..... what's happened to you, what's happened! And after I got my breath, I said..... and the pit lamp was soaking..... I said, "One of you left the pit lamp in the work, and you need it for the morn!" He said, "Oh, we'll need to come along with you and your father will go off the lead!" And I was soaking! I said, "What did you fling the pail of water on me for?". "Well", he said, "It's like this, we'll need to explain to your father!" There was no televisions in those days, and they were sitting reading the paper, and they couldn't get peace for folk chapping at the door, and when they opened the door they ran away! Well, they were doing it every night and they planned this night, that they would have a pail of water at the back of the door and when somebody chapped, one would be standing here ready to open the door, and the other one had the pail of water ready to fling out! So here, I was the next one that chapped the door!

Q. And you got it!

RQ And I got the pail of water! So the two of them came along, and my father said, "In the name of God, you are soaking, what's happened!" They said, "We'll need to tell you what happened!" "It wasn't you two,

was it?" And oh, my father was crying for them and everything! He said, "Oh, let me explain what happened!" "We can't get reading the paper for chapping at the door, and we are answering the door and they are running away, and we made up our mind, the night, that the first one chapped at the door, got a pail of water!" And..... my father said that it was quite alright! But I was drowned!

Q. You would be!

RQ That's how they entertained themselves! And there were no lights on the street or nothing, you ken, you just went..... if somebody had a light blind, you knew where you were, but if somebody had a dark blind, you didn't ken where you were! And one night my father said to me, "You'll need to go up to the shop for me". We had no lights or nothing, and it was the black out time, and he wanted me to go up to the shop, and that day, a man said to me, "If ever you want to go up the street at night", he said, "Burl yourself three times, and then you will know where to go!" So, the next night, my father said "Well, you won't be able to go up the shop, it's dark!" "Oh no", I said, "A man telt me to burl three times..... so I burlled myself three times, and here I landed up against a pailing, and I had to stand there..... just..... I was at the main door and the pailing was there, and my father shouts, "Is there anybody there I said, "Aye, I'm standing here, I can't move!" He said, "Have you not been to the shop?" So he came over, and I said, "No!" He said, "I told you to come out of the door and walk straight up and you would get to the shop!" "Aye", I said, "But this man told me that if I burlled three times, I would see better!" I said, "I've burlled three times, and I've landed..... I've landed in the pailings here!" I was holding on to the pailings and I didn't know how to get home! You know, you had laughs....

Q. You did aye!

RQ I met a fella one day, and I was telling him about it! And he said, "Oh R, don't tell me nothing about standing at the pailing". There was a big tree as you went up to the hall, and his mother says to him, "You

cannae go up to the hall because it's too dark, and it's a black out!". "Oh, he said, "I can go blind!" So he walked right up, and the next go is, somebody had to bring him home, with a pair of black eyes! He walked into the big tree!

Q. Oh dear!

RQ Oh, thon was terrible. You wouldn't mind about that, the blackout! You had all to put black..... you know, just along there a wee bit, a bomb dropped there one night..... aye, a bomb dropped there..... from the last war! There was a train going along the railway there, and here the fella put some coal in the engine, and here it made a flame..... and my brother and his wife lived up our stairs, and she came running down.... Robert's 47..... he's just a wee laddie..... and he said, I hear them pulling a lever, and the sirens went, and the next..... there was an awful explosion..... and we put on our dressing gowns and ran away along the street, to see if anybody was hurt and here it happened..... where the
now, it dropped there, just a few up from where the train was going along! What a carry..... what a state they were all in, that aeroplane going!

Q. I'm amazed..... you know, during the war..... I mean, the Germans knew that the works were there! Why didn't they try to attack the works?

RQ The Germans! Some Germans had came here once with a band. They were spying about here, but it was that..... not that engine driver..... the engine that man that was working there, it was his fault! He was going putting the.....

Q. Oh, he was showing the flames!

RQ No, he was putting the coal in, but you could see the red light of the fire, but every place was in darkness! And of course, the aeroplanes came over, the Germans, and they were trying to follow this train.... well, it wouldn't be a train, it would be a goods train, and they tried to follow

it, and Mary says, she came running down the stair, and she said, "I hear them pulling the lever, it must be the Germans, because the sirens went!" Well, they were just along here, and they came along here to follow the thing, and they dropped the bomb, but they dropped it a full length from the engine! They were lucky they escaped weren't they!

Q. They were that!

RQ Oh, and it was an awful explosion! And then, everybody came out! And we were all running about in the dark to folks houses, that came away along there to see, but they were all right, they were shaken with the
There are houses in the place where the hole was, they built it up, you know, just at the very end there!

Q. Now, that's the Second World War, what about the First World War?

RQ Eh..... aye the last.....

Q. The first one?

RQ Aye..... the last..... 1939! Because Robert is only forty seven, he was born in 1940, Robert!

Q. Yes, but what can you remember of the First World War?

RQ Oh, I ken, the First World War, 1914!

Q. What were the conditions like?

RQ Well, it was the same.... it was the zeppelins that came then! And they came and bombed, and my brother was in the police force, and he had a wife and a young daughter, and they were evacuated from London to here, to stay with us, you know with them dropping bombs in London, and they came here in September..... I mean, a lot of folk evacuated from London to here, and the next the bombed at the Forth Bridge, and my brother came from

London and he said, "Well, I've sent my wife and my daughter here to be safe, but I think they would be safe in London", and I never knew for years after it, I was going a trip to Burntisland, and we went..... there was no new Forth Bridge then, and we had to go over the Kincardine Bridge, and on the road to the Kincardine Bridge, we went down past the place, you've heard of Torphichen! Well, down past Torphichen, and there's this beautiful cemetery as you go round this turn, and here's all the crosses, and the driver said, "That's the Germans that tried to bomb the Forth Bridge, is buried there, and Sandy, Robina's man's mother bid in Torphichen and she never knew, she came last year, she never had saw this, although they bid at Torphichen, and it's just down from Torphichen, and you go round this turn to go over the Kincardine Bridge, I don't know how far it would be along, and there is this beautiful cemetery, and all these crosses are there, and I was telling her, and she said that the next time she comes..... the next time that she comes, she's going to visit somebody at Torphichen, and she will go down there, for she never knew that them that come to bomb the Forth Bridge was there, and she was a cook in Edinburgh Castle at the time, and they are all buried down there!

Q. Oh, I'll have to go and see that!

RQ Well, I know it's down past Torphichen..... you go round a corner and you go straight along.....

Q. And they are the Germans from the Second World War or the First.....?

RQ It was the Germans.....

Q. Which war..... the Second.....

RQ The Second World War!

Q. The Second World War?

RQ It was 1939..... war, the Second World War and they are all buried down

there, and that's the way that my brother came, it came through the wireless about them trying to bomb the Forth Bridge, and that's the reason that he came and took his wife and daughter back to London!

Q. They were safer?

RQ Well, it wasn't very safe in London, but however they got through it! And he was in the Police Force and he was always going out on duty.

Q. So you remember Lord Haw- aw?

RQ He used to come on the television!

Q. Aye!

RQ Aye, you mind, he used to come on the television every night..... themselves wireless.....

Q. And what would he say?

RQ He was a great bore..... Haw-Haw..... when he came on..... and do you know about that man coming and he said that he was a friend of the Duke of Hamilton... you mind he got the jail..... he was in the jail.....

Q. Oh, Hess?

RQ Aye, Hess!

Q. Can you remember that?

RQ Oh, I mind of that fine!

Q. And what did you think of that?

- RQ I don't know whether he knew him before or not! You ken, the folk often wondered if he did really know him!
- Q. Well, it's an odd place to go land..... the Duke of Hamilton.....
- RQ I mean, he came to..... what made him come to here to go to the Duke of Hamilton's.....
- Q. That's it.....
- RQ He must have met him years ago..... do you not think so!
- Q. I think that they knew each other from prior to the war!
- RQ Yes, I think that too, but then you couldn't say that! Because the Duke of Hamilton said the didn't know him! You see, you had to watch what you said then, hadn't you, well you couldn't open your mouth too much!
- Q. No, that's very true!
- RQ Ken, you couldn't open your mouth too much!
- Q. Now you see..... can we go back to when you were a little girl.... when you were a lassie, what kind of games did you play.....?
- RQ Oh, we played at jumping ropes and peavers.... do you ken what peavers are?
- Q. No!
- RQ Oh, well, you make beds with chalk and you took..... a round wheel and..... a wooden wheel and you put it there and you used to jump on to this one and then onto this one, like that, you ken, and then if you went on the line, you were out!

Q. Oh, something like hopscotch?

RQ Is that what you cry it now?

Q. I think it is, aye, hopscotch!

RQ You made it with chalk on the pavement, and made it into squares and you had this round wooden wheel and it was the peaver supposed to be, and you went with your foot like that, and knocked it on to the next one.....

Q. Aye, something like hopscotch?

RQ You had to try and not tramp on the line, and if your feet went on the line, you were knocked out!

Q. You were out!

RQ And then when I lived up in No.7. Mid street, there was a woman next door that had three girls to us.... we had our own door and we had a close, and we played rounders there, and when we came to Livingston Station at first, these three blocks where we were..... there was no entertainment, and the men and women and family all came out, and this crowd down here played at rounders and that crowd played and that next block..... and we all played at peavers..... rounders..... every night, that was entertainment! But here, when you look back, it was grand! But all that's away now, and then we flitted into..... they built houses in Mid Street, and we went there and we had the corner.... and everybody used to play at rounders, and when the war finished.... 1939 war finished..... I took that piano out on to the pavement, and everybody came down and they danced up and down this close of ours! You ken! They had quadrilles and lancers and everybody came and danced with the war being finished and everybody came and danced to the piano out on the pavement! That piano there!

Q. That's fine, aha!

RQ And played the piano, and everybody danced all day, and some were bringing pots of tea and cakes, and the whole place was there!

Q. It must have been..... now can you remember the prisoner of war camp.....?

RQ Eh?

Q. Can you remember the prisoner of war camp?

RQ Aye, I had some of the German prisoners came up here!

Q. Did you?

RQ Yes, and my brother took them to the Hibs football match, and they were at Livingston Village, these German fellas, and they came up and visited me..... my mother and me..... and I was down once or twice, and then Polish fellas too..... and some of them got leave to stay here and work on the farms and they married local lassies!

Q. And what did you think of the German prisoner of war? What did you think of them? Did you see them as bad?

RQ No! The fellas told me that they had to go! Ken... they came up to my house..... our house, and the fellas told me that they were not wanting to fight, but they had to fight..... well, our ones had to go and fight.....

Q. Well they were soldiers!

RQ Well, they had to..... well, our fellas got called up too! And they had to go and fight just the same! Although they weren't wanting to kill, they had to go! But they were nice fellas!

Q. Aye!

RQ They wrote to us for a while after they went away, they wanted me to go to Germany, but I wouldn't go there!

Q. Why not?

RQ Oh, well, I only knew them from here, we didn't know nothing about them! Do you know what I mean, we didn't know anything about them, we wouldn't go and stay there..... we didn't know nothing about them, they were nice enough while they were here! And then during the war..... the First War at Bangour..... I used to play the piano at Bangour..... and we used to bring wounded soldiers down to the house.....

Q. That's in the First World War?

RQ The First World War! And we used to bring wounded soldiers down..... that I was playing the piano, and my father was awful good to them because he was a contractor and was getting more money, and he was kind to the fellas..... and you know, they went away after they were demobbed and went away home..... and one of them was wanting to go with me as his girlfriend..... to England..... but I wasn't wanting men..... I was too busy playing the piano..... I wasn't wanting to..... and do you know what happened..... my mother was in her bed..... it was years and years after, a car stopped at the door this day..... and I wondered who it could be, and out came this well dressed fella..... he said, "Oh, hello R, how are you getting on?" "It's a long time since I saw you!" I said, "I don't know you, I have no idea who you are!" But I said, "Come in!" My father was dead by this time. Well, that was 1955, my father was dead then, so in he comes..... and he was one of the fellas that used to be at Bangour during the war..... mind an invalid..... and it was him, and he had got an awful good job, and he was taking medicines to the different infirmaries..... and he was taking.... he had been at Edinburgh Infirmary, and he was going to Glasgow Infirmary, but he had never been to Glasgow, and he asked them in Edinburgh how he would go and they told him where to go, and when he came along that road and saw..... he said, oh that's like

Bangour Hospital that I used to be in during the war, and here he stopped somebody and said, could you tell me what place this is? They said, oh this is Bangour Hospital. "Oh", he said, "I used to be here during the war", and he said "where is Livingston Station from here?" And they told him how far to go along the road and go down, and the came down and he came to us, and he had never been there from the war years, till that time, and he said he would come back, but he never came back again!

- Q. You said that you were playing the piano? What tune..... what music do you play?
- RQ Oh, well, it was concert parties..... we got concert parties up here, and there used to be a lot of good singers here, and good dancers, and they used to come to our house in Mid street and I used to practice the songs with them, and the dances and we went and entertained the wounded soldiers!
- Q. Can you remember what tunes..... can you remember what tunes that you played?
- RQ Aye..... I used to play "Keep the home fires burning" and "Roll out themselves Barrell" and all those war tunes, and they used to all sing them and the most of them.... a big lot of them were English.... and do you know what they like us to play and sing..... "Loch Lomond" and "Ye Banks And Braes", and they knew every word and every verse and the Scottish folk here, when I played the piano at different wee functions..... somebody would go to sing "Ye Banks And Braes". They could sing the first verse, and they didn't know the second verse! And they English folk kent all the verses!
- Q. Could you still play that on the piano..... do you still play the piano?
- RQ Aye, I'll play you it!
- Q. Can you still play that for me?
- RQ Play what?

Q. The "Banks..... "Loch Lomond".....

RQ Aye, Ill play..... do you ken the "Star of Rabbie Burns"?

Q. Aye!

RQ Well, I'll play you "Rabbie Burns".

Q. Aye, go on.... aye!

RQ The top of the piano is needing tuned but I mean.....

Q. That's alright..... that's fine!

RQ The bottom is alright, but the top is needing tuned..... I'm waiting on the piano tuner coming but he is on holiday the now..... I don't know when I will get him! I'll play Rabbie Burns for you!

Q. Aye!

RQ Right! (Playing piano)

Q. Brilliant! That's brilliant!

RQ The piano is needing tuned! Right I'll play..... (playing piano again)
.....

Q. That's great! Brilliant!

RQ Well, you ken what I am going to tell you! This is the truth..... I'm not blowing about myself now, but I'll tell you the truth..... I've got such a good memory that I've played to all these professionals..... singers, and you had to be able to play, and do you know this, my brother came from London before he died, and he couldn't believe it..... Kenneth McKellar.... the piano is needing tuned now, the top..... it's better when it's tuned,

Kenneth McKellar came on, Robert Morrison will come on, and Moira Anderson will come on, and I can sit and play all the accompaniments, they are all in my brain..... but I can't understand it.....

Q. I'll tell you what, has anybody ever recorded you, while you were playing?

RQ No!

Q. Well, shall we do that?

RQ Well, if you like!

Q. Shall we do that now?

RQ I can't understand it, I've _____ to go to concert and this time I forgot his music, and I said to him, "Well what are you singing?" "I'm singing "Hurrah for the Highlands", and some songs that had a lot of accompaniments, and he said, "Oh, now, I've come away without my music!" So I said, "Dinna worry", I said, "I can play for you!" Oh, the fella couldn't get over it! I didn't understand it..... I have all the accompaniments in my brain.....

Q. Aye! Hold on! We are going to listen to that, and then we will record you..... hang on!

END OF TAPE

Transcript

RQ

Industrial Information

I was born on the 8th June, 1895.

My Father was a contractor in the mines with Scottish Oils.

The more shale that came up the more money they got paid.

My Father got big lump sums of money but he had to pay the men who worked for him out of this. They were only supposed to be paid so much in wages, but my Father was always very decent because he always paid them more.

My Father had to supply the men who worked for him with picks and shovels.

They worked underground with tallow lamps. You had put oil in this type of lamp and a wick.

My two brothers worked in No. 4, No.5 and No. 7 mines. No. 5 mine was the newest of the mines that my brothers worked in.

During the 1921 strike my Father was also on strike.

I had an Uncle who worked in the Oilworks at Pumpherston who tried to get them to come out on strike as well but they wouldn't come out. My

Uncle got the sack for coming out on strike. Mr. Crichton was the manager who sacked my Uncle.

Soup Kitchens

My Father helped form soup kitchens and all of the people that had bairns were getting lumps of beef and vegetables. Everybody that went to the soup kitchen in 1921 got a plate of soup.

Money During the Strike

We never got any money during the strike. We had to go to the Parish Council but we did not get anything from them either.

My Mother had a wee bit of money and my Father, being a contractor, was making good money so we had to live on that during the strike.

First World War

During the first World War in 1914

Conditions

the zeppelins came and they bombed the place.

A lot of people were evacuated from London to here.

The German tried to bomb the Forth Bridge and we had to use the Kincardine Bridge instead.

The Second World War

During the Second World War the

German Prisoners

Germans burned down the place with

their bombs.

During the first and second World Wars there was a lot of German prisoners that were taken captive.

Domestic Life

Housing

There weren't many houses built at that time. This house was in the three blocks that were built.

Then they started building other houses down in Glen Road in East Calder.

Social Life

Piano

I wanted to learn the piano because all my Mother's folk were all musicians and singers and pianists. My Granny had a piano and my Father bought me a piano.

Wee Lassie Games

When I was a wee lassie we played at jumping ropes and peevers. The peevers were when we made beds with chalk and we took a round wooden wheel and put it there and we used to jump from one to the other, something like hopscotch.

There was a woman next door to us that had three girls and I used to play rounders with them. When we came to Livingston Station at first and there was no entertainment. The men and women and family all came out and played

rounders with us. Everyone used to play rounders.

Dancing

used to take the piano out onto the pavement and everybody came out and danced up and down this close of ours. They had quadrilles and lancers and everybody came and danced with the war being finished.

Football

My brother used to take the German prisoners to see the Hibs football match.

Singer

I've played to all the professional singers.