



Recording Work Memories: the 60 Voices Project

Interviewee: Marjory Gooch

Marjory became a civil servant after leaving school, on the advice of her mother. Deciding to join the Civil Service, she went to Red Lion Square in London full time for 6 months to prepare for her CA and Co examinations. Taking the tube to Putney every day, she decided to learn a page of the dictionary every journey to widen her vocabulary.

Marjory's first post within the civil service was as a CA in the Ministry of Health at Acton which was part of the Establishment Division. After the CO exam, she went to work for the Ministry of Health in Whitehall for 2 years within the Registry. She was working in a basement in Whitehall when war broke out in September 1939. Marjory even remembers seeing a barrage balloon above Westminster Bridge. She had the chance to go back to Acton, getting the bus from Putney.

Marjory then moved to Blackpool in January 1940 to work for the Ministry of Health, living in hotels on the front. She worked on files throughout the evenings, an unforgettable experience for her and the rest of the young girls she was working with, living away from home.

After 2 years, Marjory left Blackpool and went to Nottingham to work at the Regional Office of the District Medical Officer. The work was then deemed as 'non-essential' during the war, and Marjory was released to WRENS, retaining her Civil Service status and pay rate. In the WRENS, she had 6 months training to become an Air Mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm. As a mechanic, she went to Arbroath in Scotland, to perform daily checks on the electrics of planes that were due to fly that day. Marjory notes how her and other women were treated equal to men, as she lived in a hut of 50 in double bunks. Once the war was over, she was discharged and went back to Blackpool.

In 1947, as the post in Blackpool was closing, Marjory was up for promotion to EO. A year later in 1948, local offices were starting to prepare for the National Health Service to take over from Friendly Societies. She was given a choice between Ipswich and London, opting to choose Ipswich, working with an HEO to open one of the first local National Insurance offices. After working in Ipswich for a while, Marjory resigned from the Civil Service after the end of maternity leave for her first child. She took time out to bring up her family, moving around the world with her husband, who worked for the MoD.

Marjory later returned to the Civil Service, applying for a post in the local office in Bath and was re-instated, acting as CO/acting EO for 10 years. Interestingly, the Bath office that she worked in was a prototype for computerization.

Marjory has many funny stories from her time working as civil servant. She mentions how landladies in Blackpool would let all their rooms and sometimes in the summer a bed would be

made up in the bath, meaning no one could take a bath! The landladies charged a Guinea a week for breakfast and lunch, thus were called 'The Guinea Pigs'.

One day in Blackpool, there was a particularly bad storm. Marjory was working in a hotel on the sea front and the storm was so bad there were no trams running and it was even too windy to use the front door. An RAF squadron was stationed there, and four and five of them formed a 'chain gang', helping Marjory and others to the safety of the hotel, by pushing them safely along the 'chain gang'.

Whilst in the prototype Bath office, Marjory worked in the basement helping to set up computer records. Different sections were working on the project, and as the records were being put onto the computer, somehow all the insurance numbers were put in but not the suffixes. To this day, she has no idea how the problem was resolved.

Marjory retired in 1983, with her and her husband deciding to learn to play bridge. After her husband's death, she decided to stay in Bath for another 3 years. She then moved to Thame to become Chair of a retirement development, of which she lived in. Alongside this, she also worked 2 – 3 days a week for Cancer Research, a new experience for Marjory, having had no commercial work experience before. She stayed there for 10 years.

Marjory then joined the CSRF group, enjoying days out and pub lunches with the group. She also had a telephone buddy for 3 years, and even though she retired and moved away, they still speak once a month. Marjory spoke of how much she enjoyed her involvement in the organization, and how the group helped her settle into a new environment.

Regarding advice with retirement, Marjory says to make up your mind with what you want to do in the future and plan for it. Find something social and enjoyable that will be part of your life for the future.