

Interviewee(s): Sheila Young (SY)	Interviewer(s): Irene Bailey (IB)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	East Linton

TITLE	<i>Irene Bailey interviews Sheila Young.</i>
REGION	<i>Lothian</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Childhood, primary school, community, rural life.</i>
COUNTY	<i>East Lothian</i>
TOWN	<i>East Linton</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>16/01/19</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Irene Bailey</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2019</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Irene Bailey interviews Sheila Young about her childhood growing up in East Linton. They talk about primary school. As an only child, Sheila at first found school a bit of an adjustment as she hadn't been around other children much. She discusses some of her teachers, including the head teacher Mr Roy, who would walk her home for lunch, as they lived close by. She also talks about making friends and going round to play with them. They discuss going into Dunbar every weekend to see her grandparents and her mum taking her to Edinburgh and showing her the High Street.</i>

Sheila Young – SY; Irene Bailey – IB.

Keywords: Schooldays; Primary School; Mr Roy; Childhood Friends; Shopping; Edinburgh.

Schooldays – 0h 00m 00s

IB: This is Wednesday, the 16th of January and it's Irene Bailey and I'm in East Linton and I'm interviewing Sheila Young. Sheila, you have lived in East Linton all your life, I think? Em...

SY: Apart from some time in Larkhall, in Lanarkshire.

IB: When you were older?

SY: Oh, yes.

IB: Yes.

SY: As a child I was always in East Linton.

IB: As a child you were in East Linton.

SY: Yes.

IB: What can you remember about your schooldays in East Linton? Can you remember starting school?

SY: Yes, I do, and ma mum sat me down, mums were allowed in the room, and she sat me down next to a little girl that I didn't know but she knew her mother, cause there was no playgroup, no nursery, so I didn't know any of the other children in the class. And I had never played with other children, cause I was a child of elderly parents. Em, so I found it all a bit strange. I came home for ma lunch.

IB: Mmhm?

SY: Walked home. That was an adventure in itself because we'd to walk past the big Clydesdale horse, well, a thought it was huge cause I was only little. Em, most of the children liked the horse but I didn't, cause I was afraid of its feet, cause they were so big and mine were little. I did go into the stable to see the horse – the man encouraged us to come in and feed it and all this, but it was quite exciting I suppose, walking past a horse on your way to school. Don't think many children would do that now. And I always just walked to and from school cause I was fairly close.

IB: And did you walk by yourself?

SY: A bigger girl took me, a girl who lived a few houses along. I remember her taking me. I still know her.

Primary School – 0h 02m 00s

IB: Uhuh?

SY: Which is lovely.

IB: And did she-?

SY: I don't remember my mum taking me.

IB: Did she chat to you on the way to school or did she just-?

SY: She probably tried to get me to talk. She would talk- try to make me speak cause I was very quiet. Being an only child.

IB: Uhuh?

SY: I wasn't really used to other children at all. School was a bit of a mystery at first.

IB: Can you remember your first teacher?

SY: Yes, I can and she still lives in Dunbar. She was called Miss Selkirk, then, and she's now a Mrs Gardiner. Em, yes, she was- she had quite a harsh voice. The treat of the week was Friday afternoons, when we were allowed to bring one of our toys in, and I remember once I brought in a... Because there was sort of china dolls in those days, they weren't real china but they were material like that. And she pushed my doll right up into the top of the cupboard and cracked its head. I was most miffed at her.

IB: Oh.

SY: Yes, we got to take a toy to school on a Friday afternoon to play with.

IB: That was quite, em... Something-

SY: Well-

IB: -then, wasn't it?

SY: Don't know, didn't know any different.

IB: Uhuh. Can you remember any of the work that you had to do in the classroom?

SY: Em, I remember the little chalk- the little blackboards and the chalk.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: And I remember when I was older, getting a big row cause a blotted ma ink.

IB: Oh.

SY: I was not a neat worker, and we were learning to do cursive writing in primary three, and I remember that teacher too. She was an older lady called Miss Stewart, and ooh, I got a terrible row for making a mess of my piece of work.

IB: Um, was that with ink?

SY: Yes, it was ink and a pen.

IB: And did you have to dip the pen?

SY: Yes, as far as I can remember.

Mr Roy – 0h 04m 00s

IB: Uhuh.

SY: I do remember holding a pen.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: And making a mess. She was very cross.

IB: So, like with a... An old fashioned fountain pen?

SY: Mmhm, yeah.

IB: Uhuh. In primary three?

SY: In primary three.

IB: In primary three.

SY: So I would be seven.

IB: Uhuh. How many classes were in the school?

SY: I think there'd be about five or six. I can't exactly remember. Don't think there was one for each stage, there wasn't. It'd be five or six. Em, think I was nearly always in a composite class. The classes were very small. In my primary seven, it was a six-seven, and there was seventeen of us.

IB: Right.

SY: I do remember that.

IB: Mmhm. Who was the head teacher? Can you remember?

SY: Mr Roy. All the time I was there, it was Mr William Roy and he did his head teacher duties and taught us fulltime. So when he did his head teacher duties, I don't know. All his form filling. Perhaps there wasn't as much then.

IB: Perhaps not, mm.

SY: He must've done them after three. But he managed to teach fulltime. Oh, and he entertained us. The treat of playing with your toys, or other people's toys, on a Friday afternoon was primary one. But by primary seven, the treat on a Friday – he read you stories called *Wee MacGreegor*, which I've managed to get. I can't remember offhand the author but I thought they were hilarious. It was about this wee boy in Glasgow, brought up in the tenements. Mr Roy had been brought up in Glasgow and he loved these stories and I looked forward to them very much. And as an adult I sought out these books, and av got them.

IB: Uhuh, and you remembered him reading them?

SY: Oh, I remembered- oh, I do, yeah.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: I thought he was a wonderful man.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: I used to wait for him at the bottom of School Road, cause he had his lunch at home as well.

IB: Oh right [*laughter*]. And did you walk together?

SY: Yeah, I walked up the School Brae with him, cause you see I was more used to adults than children.

IB: Yeah.

SY: And he was a great big man but that didn't bother me cause so was ma dad. So we just walked up to school together and he would chat to me about what a was doing.

Childhood Friends – 0h 06m 06s

IB: That's really nice.

SY: Oh, it was lovely. He's a lovely man, aye. Em, he retired into Dunbar, loved golf... And his wife, his daughter took her back to Australia with her and she lived to be over a hundred, Mrs Roy.

IB: My goodness.

SY: And they lived in the school house, which was then Abbeyfield, which's now been bought back intae a private house, they're turning it back into... I thought they'd make it into two houses but it's to be one.

IB: Uhuh?

SY: And it's still being renovated.

IB: My goodness. And did you have a sense, when you first started school, did you have a sense because you were an only child- how did you feel being surrounded by all these other children?

SY: Oh.

IB: Did it feel as if there was lots of them?

SY: Yes. Much more than there really was.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: And then I started to make friends and what they would call 'playdates' now.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: I arranged to go to people's houses or ma mum would arrange for me to go to people's houses-

IB: Yeah.

SY: -after school.

IB: And who were your friends?

SY: I was friendly with Anita Pate, who's now a well-known glass engraver. She does stained glass, as well. She was always very good at art. And I used to go down to her house at East Fortune and she'd a pony and I wanted to go on it and I did, not telling my mum and dad I was on it. They knew I was down there, of course, somebody brought me back but I didn't tell them I was going on her pony. But I did. And I got a row for that.

IB: And-

SY: I was friends with Sonya [Korjack?] but I couldn't go to see her. I think she came to ma house once or twice. She lived in a cottage right at the foot of Traprain Law. Her dad had a pig farm. They were Ukrainian.

IB: Mmhm?

SY: And she became a primary teacher like me.

IB: Wow.

SY: Who else was I friendly with? Used to walk up to school wi a girl called Veronica Chism and I'm- she lives in Crieff now and I'm in touch wi her. She's a great-granny and I was telling her I was a granny at last.

0h 08m 10s

IB: And when you played with these friends, what kind of things did you play? What did you play with?

SY: Blocks-

IB: Or did you make up games?

SY: Yeah, we made up family sort o games. Ye know, being... One being mum and one being dad and then there was the children. I remember making up games like that. A lot of skipping, but I don't remember the rhymes. I remember running in through the ropes. But I wasn't very good at it. I do remember doing that in the playground. Em, or one ball – how many times you could get the ball sort of under your leg, bouncing the ball. I remember that. But I can't remember any other games we made up, or played.

IB: And did any of the games at playtime in the playground- did you play mainly with the girls, or did the boys and girls play together?

SY: Played with the girls, never wi the boys. The boys all seemed to run about with a football from what I remember. Or played at pretend guns. Wasn't interested in boys at all. They were very silly. I didn't like them. And too wild for me, having had no brothers. Oh no, not interested in them.

IB: And at primary school, what kind of subjects did you do? Do you remember different things?

SY: Yeah, I remember doing reading in the morning, and maths, in the afternoon you would mebbe get art, or history. It wasn't topics, it was like history and geography – a great emphasis being on the capital cities. And rivers, lists of rivers to learn. Eh, ye got singing together for music, which was ok. Em, I liked the art lessons, but I don't remember actually learning anything about art, it was just like 'here's your paper and we'll paint a sunny day' or something like that.

0h 10m 14s

IB: Mmhm.

SY: Wasn't any sort of basic teaching there. Em...

IB: Did you do any handcrafts?

SY: Yes, as I was older we did a lot of raffia work. I remember getting raffia and the bases of baskets and we wove them into little baskets.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: And we did knitting and sewing. After, it must've been after three o'clock, I think we were in to four. After three, you changed your classroom from about primary five, six, seven.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: And went to see one teacher did knitting, one teacher did crafts with boys, I don't know what they did but it was some kinda... I don't know if it was woodwork. Probably not, I really don't know what they did. And we did a bit of sewing, and a wee bit of knitting and that kind of thing.

IB: What kind of things did ye make?

SY: I sewed an apron for going to secondary school.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: And then I think it was secondary school I sewed a blouse. Knitted, I think we knitted like scarfs for our dolls, quite plain. Eh... And I enjoyed that. I enjoyed that.

IB: Yeah, em, did you do any of those things with your mum?

SY: Yes, I did knitting with ma mum, cause she knitted a lot. Eh, any kind of crafts that was on the go. I remember making... She bought me them at the pet shop in Dunbar, which also sold craft things. It was like a glass piece with black painting on and you'd to put silver paper, different coloured silver paper behind it and I made crinoline ladies.

0h 12m 02s

IB: Oh.

SY: And I was absolutely very keen on them. I made two for ma granny and two for ma mum. But that was at home. Yeah, I did knitting cause ma mum was always knitting.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: But I didn't- we didn't have a sewing machine, so I never learned to use a sewing machine.

IB: What about, em... Did you- well, when you made the apron that was obviously, was that hand sewn?

SY: Yeah, hand sewn. It was hand sewn.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: And you got a row if your stitches got dirty, and mine always did. And ye had to unpick it.

IB: *[laughter]* Yeah, yeah. So, ye said that ye came home for lunch-

SY: Mmhm.

IB: - in the middle of the day, and ye had... How long did ye get for lunch in the middle of the day?

SY: Must've been an hour, cause I had a full meal in the middle of the day, cause that's what ma dad liked.

IB: Alright.

SY: Dinner was at lunchtime.

IB: Right.

SY: So I had a heavy meal, don't know how I stayed awake.

IB: What kind of thing would-?

SY: Oh, it'd be like, say, stew and potatoes and lots of vegetables, which ma dad would pick up as he went on his insurance rounds, round the country.

IB: So he was coming home for his dinner?

SY: He came home for his main meal then.

IB: Main meal.

SY: We'd a high tea at night.

IB: Right.

SY: A lot of food, a lot of food.

IB: Right, right.

SY: And a pudding at lunchtime as well. Probably... Rice pudding was a great favourite or something with custard. And I ate every bit.

IB: So you're mum would spend the morning-

SY: Oh yeah.

IB: -cooking?

SY: Shopping and cooking.

IB: Mmhm. She obviously-

SY: So she didn't work.

IB: She obviously didn't go out to work.

SY: Didn't work. Since before I was born.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: And her afternoons would be spent, if it was in the house, very keen on housework, lots of polishing going on. Not if I was in.

IB: No.

SY: So she must've done it in the afternoons.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: And maybe visiting some friends.

IB: Right, and then you would have high tea?

Shopping – 0h 14m 02s

SY: At other people's dinnertime.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: Mmhm.

IB: And what kind of things would ye have for your high tea?

SY: Oh, could have like eggs. Something like eggs and home bacon; like she was great for fruit loafs – nothing fancy. I didnae really have fancy cakes 'til a was much older. I know that there was a baker, there was two bakers in the village then. Em, there's none now. It was a great treat going up the street.

IB: Mmhm?

SY: And your world was so much smaller. That was a treat, going up the street for the shopping. Maybe cause it was school holidays or something.

IB: Right.

SY: Cause I always got a bit of a cone from Tony's ice cream shop and when we went to the butcher's I got a slice of boiled ham.

IB: *[laughter]* So, all these shops were in the village?

SY: Mmhm.

IB: And your mother was-

SY: You never had to do food shopping outside the village.

IB: Right.

SY: And there was a wool shop as well where she got her wool.

IB: Right, uhuh.

SY: A haberdashery that you could get underwear.

IB: Uhuh?

SY: You didn't have to go out the village for that.

IB: For clothes?

SY: No, there was a clothes shop as well.

IB: Mmhm. So, there was really quite a lot of shops on the High Street then?

SY: It was a real community with lots of shops. Two shoe shops, when I was a little girl.

IB: My goodness.

SY: Mm, although I can't say I used them very much. We used to go to Mason's in Dunbar.

IB: Right.

SY: Cause, em, my feet had to be measured properly.

IB: Uhuh, and when you went to Dunbar was that on the bus or did ye go in the car or-?

SY: Used to go in the car every weekend to see my grandparents, who lived in West Barns then, and then into Dunbar. They lived in Dunbar after I was seven. Em, and then we went to the shops in Dunbar, a walk about. I loved the harbour, a always loved to go for a walk around the harbour. Sometimes my mum would take me intae Edinburgh in the train, which there was a station in East Linton and we got on the train and went tae Edinburgh and she took me down the High Street and showed me all the closes and things.

Edinburgh – 0h 16m 04s

IB: My goodness that must've been a big day out.

SY: Definitely, and we had high tea somewhere on the Bridges.

IB: Right.

SY: We went upstairs and it was very posh I thought. The waitresses wore black dresses and white aprons – very posh.

IB: Mm, possibly Patrick Thomson's.

SY: Oh, I got my hair cut there.

IB: Somewhere like that?

SY: Yeah, yeah.

IB: Well, that would be a big adventure.

SY: Yes, it was. And I love- I still love the High Street.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: And it was ma mother who took me down there and showed me everything.

IB: Right.

SY: Of course I was taken to Holyrood House and the castle, and various places in Edinburgh by my dad, who loved history. We were always going to old churches and castles. My mother used to get very fed up with it, but I was quite interested.

IB: Uhuh, yeah. But, um, coming back to the High Street in East Linton, I mean there must've been a fair amount of people in the village to sustain all these shops? Ye know, to keep the shops going.

SY: Well, people didn't go out the village to shop.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: For basic food and things it was all done in the village. Although there's far more people in East Linton now they shop outside the village. They go away to the supermarkets but there weren't any supermarkets.

IB: No.

SY: The co-op in East Linton was the biggest shop I'd been in.

IB: Mmhm.

SY: Until I was certainly out of primary seven. Everybody just stayed in the village and people worked nearby. It wasn't a commuter village-

IB: No, no.

SY: -as it is now.

IB: Were you allowed to go up the street on your own?

SY: No.

IB: No?

SY: Or to the park. I wasn't allowed to go to the park on ma own to play.

IB: Oh, right. Right.

SY: Nope. Not till I was, I don't know, ten mebbe.

IB: Right.

SY: I was not allowed out of ma garden 'til I was ten. About ten.

0h 18m 00s

IB: So you played in the garden?

SY: Played in the garden a lot on ma own.

IB: Mmhm, do ye- and do ye remember, sort of as a child, did you play more outside in the garden or inside?

SY: Well, I suppose I played quite a lot outside because ma dad turned his hut into a house for me. It was like my house, and I'd old cutlery in it and I would... I remember repeatedly setting the table, for obviously ma toys. But I was fascinated with setting the table. And a still do like setting tables. A wee girl across the road, Jean Fletcher, she used to come and we used to play out there. I think she was getting away from her brother and sister, cause it was always quieter over here. And we had dry

macaroni for food, which I fed to ma dog. Didn't go down very well. I had a dog 'til I was about... It was ma mother's dog, she had it before she had me. I think I must've been about eight or nine when she was put down. She was old.

IB: Mm.

SY: But she played with me.

IB: I was going to say did she-?

SY: She did anything a wanted her to do.

IB: Uhuh.

SY: She sat in the pram, she wore a doll's hat, she was ma friend.

IB: She was your friend.

SY: Mmhm.

IB: Mmhm, very good. Em... Right, well, I think we've kind of covered quite a lot.

SY: Mmhm.

IB: And I know you mentioned your grandparents, em, living in West Barns. I think that's mebbe a whole other interview.

SY: Mm.

IB: About your grandparents.

SY: Well, a could make non-alcoholic cocktails when I was about six. Ma granny loved them.

IB: *[laughter]* I think that's definitely-

SY: A story.

IB: -a whole other story. So, em, we'll call it a day.

[pause in recording]

We've, em, started recording again cause Sheila has remembered a story that- about the outside toilets at school. So she's gonna tell me about the outside toilets.

0h 20m 12s

SY: I was forced, through necessity, to use the outside toilets probably about playtime. They were cold, you could hear everybody else because they weren't properly built up – oh, I hated them with a passion! And I avoided going there, using the toilet at home all the time, and maybe only once a day, but I really hated them. We all hated them. And they were all outside.

IB: Uhuh, there was no roof?

SY: There was no roof.

IB: No, no roof. And were they separated from boys and all this?

SY: Oh, yes.

IB: Yes.

SY: And there was a shelter between them, where you would go if it was raining, cause a lot of the time they didn't take you into school if the rain came on, you'd go to the shelter.

IB: Mm, and you just...?

SY: Stood in the shelter 'til they took you in eventually.

IB: Right. Right, ok. Ok, thank you.