

Isabel Carr Smart 17.05.25

Interviewer 1: Today is the 17th of May, 2025. My name is Laura Merendez, and I'm accompanied by...

Interviewer 2: Suzanna Beaupre

Interviewer 1: And I'm interviewing Isabelle Smart, is that correct?

Interviewee: Yes, Carr, Smart, yes.

Interviewer 1: Carr Smart, for the Young Women's Movement, Young Women Remember Project. To begin, oh, this is a question to you. To begin, please can you tell me your full name and your previous role with the Young Women's Movement?

Interviewee: Yes, my name is Isabel Car Smart. When I worked for the Y, I was Isabel Car. I got married the year I left, and I was the Scottish Director of the YWCA, or General Secretary when I started, but the title was changed later, General Secretary.

Interviewer 1: We've got a couple of warm-up questions as well, to get us started now that the video's rolling. So, how old are you?

Interviewee: 71 in June. [Laughing] 70 at the moment

Interviewer 1: When were you born?

Interviewee: When?

Interviewer 1: Yes.

Interviewee: I was born in 1954, June 23rd, yeah.

Interviewer 1: And where did you grow up?

Interviewee: I grew up in East Lothian. I was born in Gifford, the village, near Haddington, and I grew up in the Lammermuir Hills, up at what's now the Whiteadder Reservoir. So, my house still stands at the side of the reservoir, but my school and the farm that I played on, and all of that valley's all gone now, under the water.

Interviewer 1: Fair enough. Well, that's answered the next question, which is, where have you lived?

Interviewee: Oh, where have I lived?

Interviewer 1: Well, that's for your childhood, so we can go into it further [laughing].

Interviewee: Well, how long have you got? I left home to go to study at university in Edinburgh. So, I was there for about three and a half, four years, and then I went to what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, with my boyfriend at the time, who got a job there after agricultural college. I came home from there, I went to France for six months as an au-pair and then I came back, and I studied personnel management for a year. I went out to stay in Livingston halfway through that year, and I was there for several years. I'm not anywhere near finished yet [laughing]. From Livingston, I went to Pakistan as a Church of Scotland missionary, and I was there for three years. Came home from there, got a job with Christian Aid as an area secretary, area organiser, and so I moved to Lanarkshire for that, and then I moved back to Edinburgh where I took the job with the YWCA and finally, when I left that job, I got married and moved over here to Fife with my husband. He's a Fifer. [Laughing]. So, yeah, that's kind of it [laughing].

Interviewer 1: Wow, that's quite a lot of moving.

Interviewee: It is, it is.

Interviewer 1: Sounds exciting.

Interviewee: That doesn't count every term that I was in Edinburgh, in a different flat, but anyway.

Interviewer 1: Fair enough and what sort of jobs have you worked on throughout your life?

Interviewee: Well, the three main ones are, I got involved in youth work in Livingston, and I then trained at Jordan Hill Youth and Community, but then I didn't ever work in that in Scotland, really, because I went to Pakistan where I taught French and some geography to pupils at Murray Christian School, which was basically a school for missionaries' children, but we had 17 different nationalities there and so I was there for a year, and then I went to work as a secretary for the Bishop of Sialkot, who was head of the Church of Pakistan at that time. Unfortunately, I came home sick, stomach bugs, [laughing] and after I came home, I went to Australia for a few months, then I got the job with Christian Aid, so as I say, I was doing development education work, basically, for Christian Aid for seven years, and then I moved from there to the YWCA for eight years. I had to leave the Y because of my health. I've got ME, chronic fatigue syndrome, which I got when I was there, and I've never done any full-time work since then, so I kind of retired at 46, but I've done some part-time tutoring and mentoring and different things here in Fife, and I still do. I mentor a young woman in one of the high schools at the moment, so.

Interviewer 1: Nice, that's nice.

Interviewee: Bit of a variety, yeah.

Interviewer 1: Cool. Well, the next question is, what do you do for a living now, but you've just explained that, so we don't need to go into that. So, what year did you join the organisation?

Interviewee: 1992, I think it was. November 1992. 1st of November, I think, in fact, and I was there until the end of December 2000, 1999, I think it was 2000, when, as I say, I left through ill health, basically, yeah.

Interviewer 1: And had you been involved in the organisation in any other capacity before that?

Interviewee: Not directly, but I do remember going to um, a fitness class in what was then the old Edinburgh YWCA, which was in Randolph Place, I think, and it was closed by the time I actually went to work for the Y, but yes, I did a fitness class there, and in fact, I remember as a student years before that going to see a music concert in that same hall in Randolph Place and of course, I've already mentioned that I had the connection that I had an aunt who actually worked for the YWCA in Kirkcaldy, and that was when I was a child. She died in the early 60s, and I found her personnel file in the cupboard at the office.

Interviewer 1: Nice, and do you remember how old you were when you joined the organisation?

Interviewee: To work for them, I was 39, at which time I think I was the youngest general secretary that they'd had, and Helen Hood, who was president at that time, was also the youngest president, so despite the word young in the name, they had, generally had much older people in those jobs in the past, and they still had, the council and committees when I joined still had a lot of older people on them. It's one of the things we did was go about changing that.

Interviewer 1: Changing that. Had it been like that for quite a long time then?

Interviewee: I think so, yes. I think what happened was that the people who had joined it when they were young stayed faithful and committed to it throughout the years, and so they served on committees even if they were no longer using the services. They continued to serve on the committees. I would say there was an element of people not finding it easy to let go as well, and maybe allow young women to have the place that they, so our service users were young women, but there weren't so many young women on the committees, either locally or nationally.

Interviewer 1: So they were like local committees and then national committees?

Interviewee: Yes. Well, the structure very different to what I understand it to be now, and I'm very pleased about that. Much more like the organisation I hoped it would be, but at that time it was very much building-based youth work, so we owned buildings throughout Scotland, well, throughout Britain, but for the Scottish organisation, we had about a dozen buildings throughout Scotland doing building-based youth work, and each one had a local committee which ran the organisation at that place and a local member, key member of staff. I mean, some of them had more than one member of staff, but there was what were later called project managers running each one. So yes, there were local committees and national, and there was a bit of some kind of antagonism at times between the two, but the national was really there to be supportive of the local and to provide direction, and the local

members would come from the local projects onto the national committees, and they would be representing their local project as well there. That's how Helen came to be president. She had been involved in the centre, the Roundabout Centre, and I don't know if you've heard about that, but okay, the Roundabout was at the top of Leith Walk where there was a roundabout, and they had a building there, and that project was different to the others in that it was, by and large, aimed at young women of different nationalities or origins, they might be Scottish, but so it was an international centre, basically, that worked with young women from international. So a lot of different nationalities, and they tried to work with the local communities in Edinburgh. So yeah, that was where Helen had come from, and there was other people who'd come from other projects and of course, there was also the joint YMYW project, which was something a bit different. Sometimes there had been two separate ones, Cupar and Dumfries, I don't know about others, but they come to mind, a long time ago now, but there had been a YWCA separate, but it had at some point joined with the YMCA because it wasn't managing to stand alone, and those projects were always quite independent. They weren't run quite like the ones that were purely YWCA, but we had a relationship with them, and I do remember a couple of staff from Cumbernauld always came to the national committee meetings and yes, there were loads of national committees. I couldn't believe it when I first started. I spent most of my time either at committee meetings or preparing papers for committee meetings, and I think, I think... We changed the structure. I was at the, was it the 100 years last year, that event, and met up with some old colleagues I hadn't seen for over 20 years, but I remember saying to them that I felt that our generation, as it were, whatever age we were, was kind of the transition generation that moved the YWCA from being what it was in terms of building-based youth work to becoming more of a campaigning organisation, and I believe there's really no buildings anymore at all, which is fine because I wrote the strategic plan, which they used for about at least five years after I'd left, and the plan was a good one, but the finances never really added up [laughing]. So that was a bit problematic. It was inevitable that they were going to have to get rid of some of the heavy, the buildings and not invest so much money in stone and operate in a different way, so that was kind of what we did to move that on. An' one of the other ones I was going to ask if you'd spoken to was my deputy at that time, Dona Milne, don't know, right?

Interviewer 1: Not that I know of.

Interviewer 2: We'll make a note, check.

Interviewee: I'll go over with you a list of people later on because both Helen and Dona would be interesting to talk to. Dona was a young woman herself, when she was appointed as my deputy, she was only 25. She's now director of public health for Lothian Health Board, so you'll find her in Edinburgh, yeah.

Interviewer 1: Oh, nice. We were not really involved in getting people to be interviewed. Like we, like the steering group, were more involved in interviewing part of it rather than the gathering sort of like interviewees, but we can definitely...Yeah, definitely can do that, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, because I just got an email about it, and it was probably through Helen that they got my name for me to go to the 100th thing last year, which I say I found very

interesting because of the way the organisation's moved on, and I spoke to one or two members of staff and listened to what the young president and the new general secretary, I think, is there two, is it a joint post now?

Interviewer: I think the director is Jenny.

Interviewee: Okay. [Cross over of voices].

Interviewer 1: And then I don't fully know the hierarchy of the organisation, but that's actually one of the things that we would eventually get into, but let's get into it now. What are your thoughts on how the organisation has evolved since you were there?

Interviewee: Well, I think it's evolved in a very positive way. It's, as I say, it's more of a campaigning organisation. It seems to be more focused on the kind of opportunities and development for young women, that we did back then, too, obviously, but it was maybe more done locally, but most of the local centres were used, I mean, in Kirkcaldy, for instance, they had country dance, it was older people that attended these events, but they did, they were home to a Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre, so young people had opportunities to do different things, but I personally like the way that it's moved on and people aren't gonna be worried about whether the sea's gonna come up into the basement [laughing] or the roof's gonna leak or whatever. So yes, the structure is quite different, I believe. When I started, the structure, as I say, was you had national committees and you had local, and it was somewhat confused as to where authority and responsibility lay, and one of the things I used to say was that most of the local units were either run by the manager and the committee really didn't have much of a say, or they were run by the committee and the manager didn't really have much of a say, and in some cases, one or the other was treated like a client, you know, you had managers who had problems being counselled and consoled by the committee, it wasn't exactly productive in some instances, and I think because I came in as a new broom, a lot of that did change within the first few years, so much so that, I think this is where I got the M.E. actually, about two years into the job, there was quite a turnover and at one point, my secretary was off sick, somebody else I think in head office was off sick, there was two project managers had left, and I was actually doing the jobs of about five people and trying to hold it all together, while I recruited my deputy at the same time, you know, and attended management committees at local levels, so there was quite a turnover in those early years of people who kind of decided they didn't want to be part of the new kind of way forward if you like, but I think what we did, we went through struggle, at the same time of course there was a lot of stuff happening in the charity world in terms of the, I've forgotten the name of it, but the oversight body for charities was just coming into being and we had to, to manage in more, well, in more proper ways I suppose. Sorry, one of the problems with my M.E. is I don't find words easily. I have many words, but they're not all the right ones.

Interviewer 2: Take your time, yeah.

Interviewer 1: That's absolutely fine.

Interviewee: Both of those names will come back to me just shortly after you've left but yeah, so we were having to review constitutions and ways of doing things, and there was just a massive amount of change required in a very short space of time and as I say, that was the year that I got M.E., so I did struggle with my health throughout most of my time there and eventually had to leave but yes, it was a lot of committees and a lot of confusion in some cases. I mean, for instance, the National Council, there were people sat in it who were actually managers of local projects, so technically I was their manager, but they were on the body that managed me. Stuff like that [laughing]. When I first started, I got told that the president had managed to persuade the Finance Committee to allow me to spend up to 100 pound without it being co-signed by anybody on the committee, which, okay and then I discovered that my junior admin assistant was ordering hundreds of pounds worth of stationery. Nobody was bothered in the slightest about that and I was just being asked to sign the cheque, so there was all sorts of random things that were to do with boundaries, just as I said about the boundaries of staff management and what. So we gradually changed that, both the financial [laughing] allowances and whatnot, and the National, we actually, when Dona, my deputy, was employed particularly, she and I split it between us to manage the local staff and that caused quite a stir, because the local management committees didn't kinda want to let go, but we kind of acted as direct managers of the local staff, and we instituted proper support and supervision sessions, and all sorts of training allowances and other things like that. As I say, the organisation had kind of been run for many, many years without much thought given to actual what management was and I think that was one of the things that both Dona and I brought to it was much clearer ideas of how that should happen.

Interviewer 1: And what drew you to the organisation before you joined? Like, how did you find out about it? I know you mentioned that one of your aunts was part of it, like, was that your first touch with it? What caught your attention about the job? What was interesting about it at the time?

Interviewee: Yeah, well, yes, as you say, I'd known of it since I was a child, I suppose, but not really thought about it very much but at the time that the job was advertised, well, I knew my predecessor, because she actually sat on the committee, the Christian Aid Committee, which I answered to in Scotland in my job with Christian Aid. So I knew her through that, and other ecumenical bodies I had from Christian Aid. I worked on the Scottish Convention of Women and different things and so I knew my predecessor and heard a bit about the organisation, but it turned out when I applied for the job, I really didn't know very much about it. I saw the job advertised. I had loved my work with Christian Aid, really loved it. Having been overseas myself, it was an extension of that in terms of making people in Scotland aware of situations in developing countries and, you know, I went around speaking to different organisations and whatnot, and was involved directly in development education in various places, both adult and schools but I was becoming restless, despite that. After seven years, you know, I was looking to move on and I was also becoming aware in the 80s, 90s in Britain, you know, we had all sorts of things going on. The Thatcher years, poverty on the rise, and having spent the last 10 years or so involved in overseas, I was starting to be aware more of poverty at home and the need for development at home. So the idea of being involved in an organisation, development for young women, that was very much, it was going back to my roots, I suppose, in community education and youth work, but it was

also, as I say, just a continuation of what I've been doing, but in a home situation. So it looked like it would be a challenge [laughing]. I was invited along to have an informal talk when I applied for the job and I think I left that meeting in a state of shock, because that was when I did find out some of the real ins and outs of what the current situation was. They'd had a previous appointment between myself and the woman I'm calling my predecessor, but wasn't exactly, there'd been a failed appointment in between and so I think they were very cautious about who they employed, and the organisation wasn't in a great place but knowing what I know now, I mean, that woman took on an impossible job and so did I at the end of the day. I remember one of my colleagues at Christian Aid said, it'll take you seven years to sort that out. You're not going to do that in a few months and he was just about right, actually. I was there for eight years. Might have taken a bit less if my health hadn't failed, but it took a long time just to slowly work through things and it wasn't possible without upsetting a few people, but hopefully as few as possible and hopefully to bring more opportunities for other people as time went by.

Interviewer 1: And what sort of initiatives were you part of or involved in when you were at the job?

Interviewee: At that time, I mean, by and large, I wasn't doing management. It was that need to kind of install proper systems in place. So one of the first things I did was write a kind of mini plan going forward, did a quick consultation with the local committees and staff and whatnot and drew together something that would carry us over the initial period and then later on, we did a much fuller one, which is the one that became the eventual strategic plan. So I was involved in changeover of staff, as well, and technology. I mean, for instance, when I started, there was one computer in the office and one, maybe two people that knew how to use it and we had three typists. So it was a very, very different office to what it ended up being. So one of the first things that I did was I got money from the Scottish government to computerise and we got computers in, got training in that and worked on that and that meant letting go of some staff who weren't gonna be able to go forward with that. We didn't really need the typist because everyone then was... So we had a different setup. I think the week that I started work, the assistant general secretary told me she was pregnant and would be leaving in a few months and the accountant, bookkeeper, told me she would be leaving at the end of the week [laughing]. Or the end of the month or something. So as I say, that first few months of changeover was just incredible. But it did enable us to think what posts we wanted and needed and we brought in a development worker and eventually, and different things. So yeah, I was involved in a lot of that, a lot of the management transition stuff but otherwise, one of the people I supervised directly right from the start was the person who run the play in hospitals. Now, it won't exist anymore. It stopped a long time ago but there are official play in hospital organisations now but the YW was one of the first to try and do that. So we provided play corners in hospital waiting rooms for children so that they could be kept happy while their parents or their siblings were on hospital appointments. So I found that a very positive project, working on that. Also, one of the big things that happened while I was there was the decision to renew the building at Loch End. I don't know what's happened to it now, but there was a building at Loch End which had outlived its predicted life. Oops, are you okay with wasps?

Interviewer 1: We can pause and take a break.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: For us, although it was another building. So Lochend had an old building and we got an offer from Port of Leith Housing who offered to buy the property which was on quite a good corner and had more land than the building was on. They offered to buy the property and knock down the old building, build flats for themselves with the ground floor as a community centre, a brand new community centre and they gave us a million pound for the property and we gave them a million pound for the community centre. So it didn't really cost us anything but we've got this brand new community centre which is why, as I say, I wonder what's happened to it now or who's running it if the Y isn't because that was quite a big deal for us you know we had never done anything of that kind of size before. The organisation only had a turnover of about half a million so to be doing a million pound property deal was quite a thing, and so yes that was one of the big projects when I was there. As I say this is a bit of a struggle to remember some of the detail of some of the other things that were going on but there were quite a number of things just ways of involving young women and more and more and doing different things and giving them opportunities but quite often though it was hard to see in some ways through everything we were doing what was the specific value of being a member of the organisation because the services we offered at local level were open to the whole community and that's fair enough but beyond that we used to say well the opportunities that were offered to young women who became interested and became members were often more on the international side they got to travel you know to do different projects and conferences and things overseas and they got a much wider view of the world and a bigger idea. In fact one of the other names that I was going to ask you so you can take is Julie Dixon who's here in Kirkcaldy, she's an area manager for the council now another youth and community worker and Julie was one of the young women from the Kirkcaldy YWCA who came through that kind of structure. She was on the Scottish and British council because we also sent delegates from Scotland down to the British council at that time we were very much part of it, we weren't as separate as I think it is now, again I was involved in that separation of the powers from GB but Julie's one of those young women, as I say, who did benefit from that and contributed a lot that she was on the British council and she went to world council meetings, she was at the one in Egypt with Helen and I and she was actually doing some work with young women there and working on a project and talking about Maggie our member of staff development she went out as well to, to talk about some of the development work that we'd been doing. So, I think Julie ended up as vice president of the world council eventually I'm not sure she's involved anymore but well she's not so young anymore it was quite strange for me to meet up with one or two of these folk like Julie and Dona at the hundred year thing because they're now probably older than I was when I last saw them, that's how time that's how time works and I'm an awful lot older as my young mentee reminds me I'm very old.

Interviewer : Well my grandma says that age is just in the mind.

Interviewer: Well I absolutely think so and I'm still 18 basically [laughing].

Interviewer: You're mentioning a lot of like spaces in buildings was there like a physical space where most of the activity happened at ?

Interviewee: Oh well there was there, yes, all the buildings had like larger and smaller rooms they had halls that you could do things in like the Edinburgh Y that I mentioned with the rock concerts or folk concerts and exercise classes and stuff and the dancing in Kirkcaldy so there were physical spaces there. Kirkcaldy also had some kind of like classrooms because originally like way back in my aunt's time it was a hostel as well because the YW did do hostels in Scotland, you maybe have some of that from your, your older information, um, that had all gone by the time I came and they'd separated the hostels off into a different organisation and which is a good thing I would definitely not have been wanting to manage hostels as well as community buildings but Kirkcaldy, actually, their hostel was physically integral to the building it's still there it's now run by the local ,well there's a company taking over the Y building and the old picture house and they're trying to create like a new community picture thing, so yes the building's still there but we had to give it up after I'd left it was still there when I was working up to the end of 2000 but again they couldn't really afford to run the building so there were spaces that were physical spaces and what they had I was going to say they had classrooms because the girls were taught cooking and stuff like that as part of it and that... It's interesting because I suppose later on we didn't teach cooking as such but that there was stuff about health and you know healthy living healthy eating that kind of thing but we were moving more into the campaigning stuff too so I'm trying to think there was something about um, I can definitely remember something about bras [laughing], it was an advert that used to be on television it was something about the girls and we turned it around a bit and it was you know something about the girls, Donna would probably remember it but I can't quite remember it but yeah we used stuff like that.

Interviewer: What was the transition like when changing from like physical spaces in like supporting and like helping with like with running activities to like campaigning?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How did that transition happen?

Interviewee: It was slow and possibly difficult. We introduced a staff member at the national level who would lead on that kind of stuff so it was kind of part of media and outreach and doing sort of campaigning stuff as well and then we'd have the development worker as well, so it kind of came about, A by the vision I mean I'm a great vision person so I could kind of see where I want things to go, and hence also the strategy, so it was kind of just seeing kind of what the transition would be. I kind of had in mind the organisation I wanted. I said this to somebody at the some of my ex-colleagues at the hundred years thing you know instead of the one I was working for [laughing] I think the organisation that the Y has now is more like the one I wanted and so we kind of set about doing that but you know we agreed through council and committees that we would do certain things and we would have certain staff posts and so I think and this is where it wasn't universally welcome but we started leading more from the national level to make some of these changes so we saw gaps we could fill we employed staff that could do it and then they worked with the local committees, well not the committees so much but the local staff, you know, it started to become much more driven and that was absolutely anathema to the way that the volunteers and members and the committees had seen things run before they were very much that it was run by the members but that wasn't... Without the support that they

needed, that wasn't a recipe for running a good organisation basically and so we tried to provide the support to the local staff who then you know supported the local committees and we did too I mean we visited local committees we talked to them about different things and we started having national conferences and when the local staff were ultimately employed... Some of this was actually driven as I said back by law because we had to make up our mind at one point whether financially each unit was going to continue to be independent or it was gonna be one organisation accounting wise and once we decided that we were gonna have one accounting unit for the whole of Scotland that made a huge change in terms of how things were then going to be managed because there had to be you know some accountability and responsibility in a way that they hadn't really had before and luckily the bookkeeper who left the week I started we actually replaced her with a trained accountant, she was only part-time but she did a huge amount of work on consolidating accounts into the one big account so that did make a difference to the things were running it enabled us then I think to, to work with people with ideas about maybe building up this part of the programme but letting that other bit go and as I say that caused some difficulty when we started to say well actually we don't want programmes for over 60s or even over 40s if you like in the local buildings we want them to be focused on, on young women and in that age group I think it was 13 to 30 we talked about at the time 16 to 26 sounds more reasonable, and the other thing we decided was that we wanted to focus on young women because it had become... These centres had become like any local council community centre basically and they were by and large being funded by the local councils and I thought this is not a recipe for the future because when the councils were starting to cut back on money we were obviously gonna get cut back on with their budgets and whatnot and so we needed to...The Y didn't have a concept of itself as a charity I found that they often raised funds for other charities and nobody seemed to think of raising funds for ourselves you know because they just didn't think of themselves as a charity and they had probably been quite a rich organisation at one time but they no longer were and there was a fundraiser had been appointed when I first started but he had different ideas about, about running kind of big, big flashy projects and again that wasn't where we were at we kind of retrenched into more like trust fundraising because we didn't have a name that was well enough known to, to do big, big public projects. So, a lot of the change was driven by, by the, the finances from the, the government changes from the, the, the Scottish Charity Commission... Was one of the words I was looking for earlier, and um and just the, the idea that we would go back to our basics and that was young women that we would we would focus on a narrower audience and so then there was much more consultation and much more idea um from the young women themselves about or from staff sort of seeing what they needed to, to actually, um, trying to, to do things that would help them and that that led us to, to campaigning for opportunities . It also enabled us to get more money because we were much clearer then about who we were and what we did, we actually, apart from the, the cash that I got from the, um, Scottish government for computers we, we got some other bits of cash that um they actually liked our strategic plan, you know, it was done and we were trying now much more to fill a place that wasn't filled by anybody else the YMCA, um, took girls in they worked with girls.

Interviewer 1: So when this transition was happening towards campaigning, what was in the agenda to campaign for at the time?

Interviewee: Oh dear, well I think we picked up first of all on a campaign that we didn't start, that was the violence against women, I've got a feeling we still do that in the 12 days and so yeah got involved in some things along those lines, the shoe campaign and stuff like that. I honestly, I can't remember the details, that's problematic, as I say I'm sure there's others who would remember better than me but I think it was just about opportunities for young women, you know young women on committees and councils and stuff like that, those kind of positions by and large were in places where young women were represented even if it was about them. So there was stuff about violence against women, there was stuff about opportunities for young women and we did some stuff in the guise of shows, I seem to remember going to something that was put on at the [unclear] and some of the young women were involved in that and putting their ideas over through drama and dance and stuff like that. So I'm sorry that's not a great answer but it was just starting to move slowly into that and I guess because I wasn't directly involved by that stage I was much more concerned about the constitution over the financial, that there were others who were more directly involved than I was at the time. I think young women with young mothers, I think that was one of the other things, there was stuff going around about sexual campaigns and sex education in schools and stuff like that, so I think we did again get into that. Fife for instance has, I think it still has, the highest number of teenage mothers in Europe so that was an issue that I seem to remember was relevant at the time, so sex education in fact I've got quite a long letter printed in the Scotsman about that in relation to the kind of laws that they were looking at. Some people had been, they were either trying to take it out of schools or the church was objecting to it going into schools and yes I seem to remember, I've probably got a cutting somewhere, writing roughly about what we were doing, it was more about self-esteem, that it wasn't, the outcome of not teaching self-education and not funding programmes that was going to help young women to build up their self-esteem was going to be the, I can't say no and I can't use sexual, I can't use contraception, what do you think the result's going to be? So there was stuff around that, that I know we were kind of involved in.

Interviewer 1: Is there anything you particularly remember as being a particularly exciting initiative that was happening at the time?

Interviewee: That kind of escapes me at the moment.

Interviewer 1: The answer can be no, I was just asking if there was anything that you personally remember of being like it was really exciting being part of this campaign or I was really happy that I was part of it.

Interviewee: Well I was happy that we were part of that kind of thing particularly because as I say we were trying to pick up on young women from difficult backgrounds, maybe, and definitely young women who had low self-esteem and lack of confidence and I'm quite convinced that a lot of that lay behind the problem of teenage births and all the statistics at the time around the fact that when you have children that young it's a generational thing that they're likely to have children that young and it's likely to stop a woman's education and all the opportunities that she can have so that was quite a big thing I think that I was really pleased that we had some toehold in that kind of campaign. So I think that's a lot of what we were doing actually, self-esteem does come to me as something quite considerable

that we were involved in and it certainly made a difference for a few of the women that we worked with, you know the ones that you saw coming through the structures and being involved and being able to speak out about things that they would never have had the opportunity or the confidence to do in the past.

Interviewer 1: And were any of these campaigns or initiatives sort of like a response to what was going on either socially or politically at the time?

Interviewee: I think quite a lot of that was the violence against women was becoming more public at that time and the whole kind of teenage parenthood sex education thing was also in the campaign and I think it was about that time you had clause 28 and stuff like that going at that time too, so, we were like trying to say well if people aren't given the knowledge and the tools how can they see themselves and feel good about themselves, or if they don't feel good about themselves how's that going to affect their life more than anything? As I say something simple you know we were aware that, um, that sometimes a pregnancy arose just from not being able to say no, it was as simple as that and we knew what that came from as I say the kind of confidence, self-esteem and lack of education, poverty, all these things tied in together.

Interviewer 2: You've mentioned some opportunities within the role to go overseas for both yourself and the members, I was wondering did it feel quite like a global movement?

Interviewee: It did, I think that was one of the big things that happened when people got that opportunity I mean I had travelled a lot already, I'd worked overseas but some of the young women in particular who might have been chosen to go forward as a representative from Scotland had maybe not been out of their own home area, I mean in Scotland never mind out the country and suddenly you saw that this little organisation, this little building that was based in wherever, was part of something much, much bigger and they made friends too, maybe through workshops and different things at these council meetings which lasted about a week or ten days, you know, it wasn't just like an afternoon and a lot of the young people made friends there that continued friendships through, in fact the Scottish YWCA had a very close relationship with the Palestinian YWCA so, you know, there was another thing internationally that we were able to campaign on or keep in the public eye in some way or another and that was very meaningful to me personally because when I worked for Christian Aid I had visited the West Bank and Gaza and Israel and that became a focus of my interest and I made friends through that, I still have contact with a couple of women through that so, yes I think they saw the thing as a global movement then and not just a local thing and it was a much more exciting thing because actually in some countries the Y is quite a big thing, in ours it might be fairly small and hidden but in some countries it's actually a very big visible movement, in the United States and Canada that's the case I think and some of the other countries like Palestine, Pakistan, India, I mean I met the head of the Y in Pakistan when I lived there as well, in fact [laughing], I had a, my Urdu teacher as it happened was over in this country on an invite through our president at the time but through another, through a church connection and he sort of went oh you know you're director of the YW, a very important woman sort of thing, an' I said, oh, not so much really [laughing] but you know in Pakistan it was and the kind of things that they got involved in there was stuff like sewing, stitching, teaching them arts and crafts that they could make a

living from so that it, it was a very different thing, it was quite a big thing and people were quite excited about it when you went to a conference like that, sorry that went on and on.

Interviewer 1: No, no, no, absolutely not, this is exactly what we want to get, and where were the conferences structured around, was there a specific theme for the conferences?

Interviewee: Yes, there's a national council, national, international, what do you call it, World YWCA based in Switzerland and the world president who at that time I think it was, this came to my head the other day, might have been her name, might have been Musimbi, she was from Kenya, she was appointed just about the middle of my term and she was a very kind of exciting person, very clear thinking but yes, the committee, the world committee usually came up with a theme and the conference would be based around that theme, but don't ask me what the themes were [laughing], at even the conferences I went to, I don't remember, but we would do workshops and have discussions, there would be opportunities for sharing for what was happening in each in their own country, presentations and that sort of thing. I mean there were about 600 women on average at these conferences so they were held in big conference centres and then there would be breakout rooms, some of your breakouts would have a hundred or more people in them, so they're quite big and you would also, it went to different countries each year, I'm not sure how they selected that but there was some way of doing that and so that's how I was in Korea, South Korea in 1995, is that? It says it there somewhere [coughing] and 1999 in Egypt and so it would go down and part of the programme would be visiting something, you know, of the culture and history of the country as well, so I remember in South Korea there were all buses, dozens of buses, taking us to what had been the Olympic Centre there to see that and we also went to visit some of the buildings you'll see in the photographs there, the historic, and we went to the President's Palace to meet the President's wife, so that's how, again the YW was a big thing in Korea, South Korea and, so big that you got to meet the President's wife and in Egypt they went to the pyramids, I didn't actually go to that because I'd been before, [laughing] says you casually, I'd been in Egypt for Christian Aid and I'd already been so I had a day off, that's maybe how I didn't get sick, I already was sick unfortunately by that time, I had the ME so I was trying to conserve my energy but, but yes we would take part in local cultural things, go into town for a meal or whatever and have presentations which I'm sure you'll see in some of the photographs, I had no idea, that's one part of the world I hadn't been to was South Korea and I had no idea, things like the colourful dresses that they wear there and just the kinda dancing they did it was fabulous.

Interviewer 1: Let's think about how can redirect into where we want to go to [laughing].

Interviewer 2: I was really caught up then [laughing].

Interviewer 1: We don't have that many questions to talk about the global side of it but that's really interesting actually, like what sort of, yeah, what the... I wonder if it was quite similar the experiences that women were sharing or if it was quite varied depending on where they came from?

Interviewee: Probably a bit of both but I think one of the big things was the similarities that you know, you'd get somebody in Africa, somebody in Canada, somebody in Asia and somebody in Scotland and they would find that there were commonalities in the

experiences that they were having and that was what made for a great sense of bonding, a sense of excitement and how, you know, anybody who had been to one of these national conferences would come home with a kind of renewed sense of energy for what they wanted to do here and sometimes that was what happened. There would be a programme that might be picked up on for different things, what the young women were doing or even how things were structured. I took part in a workshop, I can't remember the exact detail or name of it but it ended up talking about some of the restructuring we'd been doing in the organisation and there was a clamour at the end of it for my notes and stuff and we tried to send stuff out to various countries who were interested in looking at that. So, some of the problems and some of the excitements and projects were similar even though there would be other very different experiences depending on where they came from. You had things, oh I don't know if they're there actually, I don't see them, I must have left them upstairs. I had a, when I was looking at stuff last night, I found a couple of cards from Japan and the women there for instance were very concerned about peace. The constitution in Japan since the Second World War, you know they didn't, it forbade rearmament and I think there was some stuff within law or within the situation. The women were very much, that was one of their concerns was about peace and rearmament. The women in South Korea, and again I hadn't known about this, what they called comfort women and the Japanese army had used Korean women as sex slaves basically and so that was something that they were, they were looking for reparations I'm not sure they've ever got them yet, but South Korea were looking for reparations for women who had been used in that way and I'm talking about thousands of women, thousands of South Korean women were used in that way. It happened in Europe as well but, er, so you know, different things of interest for different, different countries and then we also had talks and conversations about things like sexuality and that caused, you know, different views throughout the world, very strong on that So that was always interesting, but a bit delicate er, trying to... Because we tried to reach common positions and make statements as a world organisation on what we believed, but as I say, some countries felt stronger than others It was always interesting, you know, it was always interesting, it was always trying to move forward I think generally in the vein of openness and welcome and what not but as I say, countries, cultures, different experience, different religions made that very interesting at the time [laughing] and as I say, even here we were having the problem with the likes of Clause 28 and I think it was the Catholic Church in particular of course was objecting to the sex education in schools whether it included homosexuality or not, they weren't keen on anything[laughing].

Interviewer 1: And how did that work with being a Christian organisation? How did that play a part in it?

Interviewee: Well, certainly in this country and now knowing that the Scotland's more or less dropped the C, we were very, I would say, open and forward looking kind of a liberal, progressive, better word, Christianity and a lot of our members of course weren't Christians which is why they made the transition in the end because our members came in through going to the gym or going to the drama class or whatever you know, they hadn't come in because we were a Christian organisation particularly but again, when you got to the international level it made a difference because in some countries the Church in a more hardline way played a bigger part and had a stronger opinion on stuff like that but it wasn't really an issue here in Britain at all as I remember. In fact, it did become more and more

difficult. My job, part of my job description which is a whole other story in itself [laughing] part of that was to kind of maintain the Christian ethos of the organisation that I am a Christian, I work for the Church and work for Christian Aid and what not but how do you do that? That became harder and harder when we no longer required people on committees or on the staff to be Christian you know, so we had to rethink that and we did do a bit of discussion on that we did open some kind of consultation about what it meant to be a Christian or what the spiritual aspect meant and I think at one point I kind of defined it as being the deepest part of yourself or something like that that you get in touch with it wasn't quite like that but we were moving away from what would be any kind of fundamental doctrinal view of Christianity much more into what it means what do you do if you're a Christian, you know, what's the action that you take and that meant more and more that we were open to everybody and anybody because we weren't going to draw boundaries we weren't only going to serve Christian girls or something like that not that it ever had the why particularly I mean I don't know how much you know the origins but the Y started one of the things they did was at the time of young women moving to the cities for work they picked them up at railway stations rather than have them picked up by pimps, you know, so there was never any kind of guardrail on who we were willing to help. So, so, I would say it wasn't a huge issue it wasn't a huge issue here except as I say given what my job was supposed to be how do you kind of keep it as what does the Christian mean and actually I remember I had drawn together a group of people to look at marketing and stuff and one of them was the husband of a staff member, Tom B, and he was the one he wasn't a Christian himself or he wouldn't call himself that but he said that's actually what's distinctive about you, you know [laughing] so how do you distinguish yourself from all the other youth organisations and that's actually one of the distinctive things but we never kind of ran with it really in some ways I wish that we had but what we ran with and fair enough it was the young women and you know there still was nobody else really focussing purely on that at the time on supporting young women so that was important and maybe more important than having the C in the name as long as there was something of the Christian nature underlying the work that we were doing. I'm not sure that senior staff subsequent to me, you know, called themselves Christians or not I can't really speak to that but I've got a feeling they didn't particularly so it changed over time what does it mean to be a Christian? How long have you got? [laughing].

Interviewer 1: That's actually a really interesting way to think about it what would you define yourself as being a Christian.

Interviewer 2: Do you want to say a little bit more about the job description. It's a story we'd love to hear so...

Interviewee: Yeah, I wish I'd kept a copy I think I threw out a lot of that stuff a while ago I think the first job description that I had really didn't describe the job that I was being employed to do at all things like I was responsible for financial management and then allowed to spend a hundred pounds, you know, which as I say was less than what I had in credit cash so there was stuff like that and actually it ended up I don't know how many years later within 2-3 years probably that myself and the president with help from down south rewriting the job description. One of the best things the Y ever did for me and that must have been about 1994-95 was as part of my training I persuaded them to let me do the

Open University module on managing voluntary organisations it taught me and helped me about being structured about a framework for what we needed to do in terms of boundaries and finances and staff and all the rest of it and what my job might be. I remember one of the I'm just getting support also because I was meeting other people in similar positions from other organisations one of whom became a friend she was shocked at what my salary was to begin with because it was so much lower and she worked for a tiny organisation so that was one thing they were expecting somebody who was ultimately named Scottish Director but actually on quite a low salary comparatively and so it was good to meet and talk with other people and that ended up in us rewriting the job description and making it much more in line with what I was actually doing or needed to be doing, what they needed me to be doing. Yes, I was gonna say, one of the assignments we had was to do a kind of spidergram of all our contacts and those we were accountable to you know the type of thing I'm talking about and the tutor [laughing] more or less on the edge of the page just wrote wow [laughing] because at the time there were so few limits on what I was supposed to be doing and so few other people in jobs that ultimately we filled and I delegated things to them but initially there just wasn't the staff to delegate to so I was responsible to and for, you know, every sort of committee and project and person and responsible to umpteen committees, and in theory the president was meant to be my supervisor, my boss but that didn't always work out because of their lack of experience of someone in that position and eventually actually what they did was, first of all well that course helped me and from that course I got contacts and the Y allowed me to have an external supervisor a professional supervisor so I went to somebody out with the organisation every six weeks or so and then they actually brought somebody in and she sat on the council a woman called Anne Black who was a retired senior social worker and so, whereas the president was technically my boss on paper it was agreed that I would have someone who was a professional supervisor that I could go to and get some support and that was very very helpful and I think it was through some of these things, that we, as I say, that they rewrote the job description and for it then to focus on finance, on strategy on vision and, you know, all these sort of things that someone in a senior position should be focussing on. I was also lucky that just about the time I started they also had a new executive director at the British level and Jill Tishler was a whizz kid, she kind of altered the laws and very clear thinking so that was very useful for me and for a while I went down to join the senior management team down there for their team meetings and she and I also would meet as our predecessors had done we'd meet in York for a coffee or a lunch or something halfway, a couple of times a year and just catch up on what was happening in different parts of the organisation, staff to staff as opposed to we both attended the British Council but that was a different kind of milieu, venue, or whatever. So yes, the job description was interesting to begin with but it did improve it didn't get any easier but it improved actually I suppose it did get easier because once we started looking at where we were going and what the structures were and the staff that we needed then as I say there were staff for me to delegate to on the various things it wasn't just bookkeeper and typist and brought in a depute and Donna was very good too she in fact oversaw the building at Lochend and that, so. Yeah, it helped me, unfortunately it was a bit too late for me because after that first two years I got the ME which I'm still convinced was caused by stress in the situation there and it never cleared up, never went away, 30 years later.

Interviewer 2: Could you say more about the relationship with the British part of the organisation?

Interviewee: Yes, it was both fraught and helpful [laughing]. I mean we were entirely part of the British YWCA which of course was the original YWCA throughout the world, um, although I'm not sure there weren't some units in Scotland prior to that but certainly very early on and that was when the focus had been on hostels primarily and we were away from that by the time I started so yes, it was helpful for me to be able to meet the senior staff down there, because I was very much on my own up here especially to begin with and they, once Jill got moving had a good team of senior staff there. Their interests weren't the same as ours in that they were still managing hostels and had a lot of buildings, even, I mean, far more than we did so that wasn't really a thing but there were themes and projects and all the international stuff actually came through them so when we went to the world conferences we were actually going as part of the British delegation Scotland didn't have its own delegation and then we started to talk more and more about a separation and that was of course at the time when we were, talk of the Scottish Parliament, in fact the Scottish Parliament was set up during that period I can't remember when it first came so yes, there was talk then about separation and how we were going to do that and when I say it was fraught there was some fraught stuff because some of the British people took exception to Scotland having a mind of their own [laughing] if I can put it that way, especially to staff having a mind of their own, so, er, you know, there were some areas of disagreement as well and about how resources were allocated but really we weren't being funded by them we were really doing our own funding and what not so we were both together and apart and I don't know actually because it was after I left that they finalised the structures both at Scottish and British level and I don't know at the moment what the relationship is but we talked about, um, oh, what's the word, er, federation being kind of federated that we would still be the YWCA of Great Britain would still exist but it would be like a federation of the Scottish Y and the English Y I'm not sure what was in Wales, if anything, um, I'm not sure if that's what ended up or not but it was something that was certainly on the go before I left and I took part in discussions about that and I think it was necessary in a way that we had to separate... I was certainly for the kind of federated thing rather than breaking away completely but as I say I don't know quite what they ended up what the relationship is now.

Interviewer 2: In terms of funding where were you looking to get the money from was it partnering with different organisations, or?

Interviewee: We got a grant from the Scottish Government that was one thing and we at local level were very much funded by local authorities because we were kind of doing their work in terms of community centres Fife was famous for that, I don't think Fife council owned any community centres, they paid voluntary organisations to run them, you know to do that work for them I think they paid the salary of a member of staff here and that happened in some other places too. In fact, Susan England at the Roundabout, in Edinburgh, the international one I mentioned she was employed by Lothian Region or Edinburgh Council rather than by us that's where relationships with staff got tricky because who was paying them who was managing them was all a bit fuzzy at the start so we had local authority, we had government funding local and national and, um, we had trust funds people would leave us legacies and, um, funds, people who had died having had a lifetime

of contact with the YWCA so both locally and nationally, again, there were... So some of the local units were quite a bit richer than others and at national level we had a lot of funds but some of them were ring-fenced like when the Edinburgh YWCA folded and their building was sold it would have got quite a bit of money and that was supposedly ring-fenced for work in Edinburgh actually one of the things we did... And Glasgow was the same Glasgow had funds of their own so a lot of the funds were historical there were legacies, there were funds for buildings that had been sold previously and that was part of the problem we actually were quite rich in these kinds of funds but very poor in terms of day-to-day running money that really was the problem and we survived for a long time on untying some of those funds and using them for project work in different ways but ultimately that was going to run out which was why we employed a fundraiser and started working more trying to get funding from trusts which is usually for more specific projects but by that time we were doing more projects ... Early on it was hard to get that because we actually weren't doing particular projects we were just tumbling along but as we started to do more projects and campaigns we were able to unearth more trust funding so I think that was the main thing I'm trying to think, I'm sure we had three income streams we were aiming at one was the trust funds, one was trying to fundraise from members, um, as I say, that was something I hadn't even thought about and I can't remember I'm sure there was a third one maybe it was local government or government funding, we kind of, we ended up working at it I seem to remember it was three areas that we narrowed down on, that we would get our money from, but there wasn't enough for the plans that we had and the dilemma we were in about local people having control over buildings who weren't willing to let go of the plan wasn't going to work unless we did that change over fully to doing project and campaign work rather than running buildings and that of course is eventually what's happened, it happened, I presume by necessity rather than anything else which is sad when it has to come to that, you know, but people were very resistant at the time to us making that kind of suggestion. There was some lack of trust, some of the local people thought this was just Edinburgh, Edinburgh wanting all our money kind of thing [laughing]. It was about having the vision for where you could go instead of where you actually were which was working on a model that wasn't sustainable even though it had done good work in the past and still did some, there was a need there to look at different ways of doing things and as I say I'm so delighted because that's one way or another is where we've ended up a lot more young women involved in the management that was part of what I was involved in at the start about changing over the council and the trustees and they involved more young women and I think that its, yeah, it's moved in that direction so it has been won by the members as far as I can see members are young women not older women and they are working on campaigns and different projects which is fantastic.

Interviewer 1: You're mentioning older women, were there any men involved in the organisation at all?

Interviewee: There were some, a few, um, I know there was some... I keep talking about Kirkcaldy but I suppose that's because since I moved to Fife it's what I'm familiar with but because some of the organisations worked, sorry, offered services that were as I say country dance or drama there were men involved in that so they were eligible to be on the local committee. There weren't many men on the national committee although at one point Colin McPhail from Glenrothes was, but you see Glenrothes was, still is I think, a joint YMYW

there were about 5 of those Glenrothes, Cumbernauld, Penicuik, there was more than that but they were joint organisations, so, so any men that were involved in the YM were legitimately able to be on our national council as well as on the local body but there really weren't, there weren't that many and I don't know when they made changes whether they put a stop to that or not, I can't remember but basically if you were going to focus on young women as your clientele, then you were going to have young women as the people who would come through the structures to be in the lead as it were so I think that would be a natural progression probably.

Interviewer 1: What was your relationship in general with other members of the organisation?

Interviewee: Some of them hated me [laughing]. Some of them loved me. I'm not entirely clear what you mean by that [laughing]. You know it was dependant on who they were. I was accountable to council so in a sense they were my bosses but we worked together and we worked quite closely, I worked fairly closely with all the presidents that I had and there must have been 3 or 4 during the time I was there, because they changed every 3 years but not all of them served the full 3 years and then there were the trustees who were separate from council at that time that was what I meant to say we did have men on the...See that's the interesting thing...We had men on the trustees board who looked after our finances and what not, you know, the higher up you got the more you got men involved but that was useful too I mean Douglas I've forgotten Douglas' last name I don't know if he's still alive but he'd been the chair of the trustees for a long time and I think at some point we had some involvement he was a friend of Fred at the Royal Bank of Scotland, say no more, and we had another friend from the Royal Bank of Scotland who I think had been responsible for property he was a character but he was on the board of trustees and I've forgotten his name Mark from Adam & Co the bank had been brought in because one of the women on the board knew him, she banked with Adam & Co which is a private investment bank but he actually taught me most of what I know about investing because he very sensibly was saying why are your investments there for growth you don't need future growth you need money now and he encouraged the trustees to move over because that was the other way we got money we did have investment and he persuaded them to move them into income paying rather than future growth and taught me a lot of what I know about investing, so yes there was men involved in some of the levels but mostly the higher you got, at the ground level there were men benefiting from the services depending on what we were offering at the time. So my relationship varied depending, you know, this big spidery thing depending on who you were where you were sometimes I had closer relationships than others with local people and even national I suppose I worked very closely with the national executive and the national councils and committees cos, I did all the paperwork, agenda setting I didn't write the minutes I had a staff member do that. I was told by one of the staff that my predecessor used to write the minutes before she went into the meeting [laughing]. I never tried that I was never that sure I was going to win an argument.

Interviewer 1: That's an interesting approach [laughing]. Right, so we were thinking of asking you a little bit of like what impact you feel like being part of the organisation or having this job had on you as a person?

Interviewee: Okay, yeah. Well, it stretched me and grew me, that's for sure. I had, actually hadn't been in a management role before and suddenly I was in a senior management role, so it certainly was a stretch, but I loved that, too. Most days, you know, work was something that I could see... I would go in every day and there would be challenges and I would enjoy most of them, some of them not so much. As I say, there were times when it stretched me beyond what I was really capable of, like trying to do five jobs and what not, but yes, it was good for me and, it was also good just to have that focus and contact with young women. That wasn't the area I had been working in directly for some time, and so, it you know, it drew my interest back into that and gave me some more understanding of what the issues and problems were and challenges, but also how the organisation and the opportunities could help people to develop and that's always a wonderful thing to see, is when you see people growing through different experiences. So it had that on me. I suppose I can't get away from the overall fact that I got an M.E. while I was there and therefore it completely transformed my life. You could say ruined it and I don't think, as I say, I think to some extent there was definitely an interplay between the stress I had at work and the development of that, but that's also down to how I handled that. You know, how you handle stress is as much a part of it as the stress that is put on you and it also meant that I didn't feel that I did the best job that I could as time went on. I had times when I was off work and times when I went part-time. It was actually my husband that encouraged me. He was a human resources manager in the civil service and it was he that suggested I talk to them about going back part-time after I'd been off sick. So they were very good in that they did allow me these different ways of working until it came to the point. The problem was that every time I tried to go back to full-time work it just made me ill again. Yeah it's a shame but it's very hard to talk about it without talking about my illness as well which I really experienced for at least five out of the eight years that I was there, I would say but it was also exciting, I suppose, to be part of the change. Maybe more so when I look back. That's why it was great to attend the event last year because when we were in the middle of it a lot of it seemed like a fairly hard slog but when I look back then and see what's been achieved... Actually, the week I started I was still travelling back and forward from Lanarkshire at that time on a train so one day on the way home I got a notebook out and I wrote down all the things that I thought needed doing. I still had that notebook when I left and it was great to see them crossed off, the majority of those and to see the developments in the organisation. There were more young women being involved in committees and stuff. So it affected me, it helped my growth in terms of what we were doing. There were times when I would catch myself doing about ten things at once and some part of my brain... Maybe not quite, but I would be talking to the manager about playing hospitals one minute I'd be talking to the accountant about finances the next minute I'd have some other members of staff wanting me to sign this or look at that I'd have committee papers to prepare and all of these different things and some part of my brain would stop and say, wow, how are you doing all this? It's such a switch, but I'm somebody who enjoys variety anyway so I did actually enjoy some of that, doing different things and yes, when I look back at that from the ME perspective, my husband always quotes the story I told him that there was one day I was in a shop buying a newspaper or something and I couldn't count out the change in my purse. So I had gone from that to that, so that was quite a transition that wasn't very helpful particularly. But yes, I think it affected me. I would of course, if I hadn't been ill, have liked to have gone on to another organisation and done a similar sort of job or maybe even something different but that just wasn't possible by the time I left. I really wasn't fit for full-time work, which was

sad and I didn't keep up a lot of contacts with people in the organisation. Helen Hood, who was my first president, I did and I do more or less just through Facebook now. Interestingly, since I moved to Fife, I've met some people in Kirkcaldy because there's another couple of names that came to mind. I don't know if they would be of interest, but Lynn Redpath and Diane, whose name escapes me, I've met both of them here in Kirkcaldy and they were both on British Council so we travelled up and down to London together. So that's been quite nice in kinda retrospect, to bump into people like that and to have that shared history there and I mentioned already Julie Dixon, she's in Kirkcaldy too. So yeah, I've met people that I'm still in touch with, which is nice. Some I'm not in touch with, but I'm interested in how their lives are going. One of our staff members went on to train for the ministry and she's retired now, she's the same age as me. So it was an interesting time. [laughing].

Interviewer 1: See like, looking back in retrospect, are there any particular initiatives or any particular moments that, maybe not in the moment, but now you think that was really exciting or what were your favourite parts of your time at the Y?

Interviewee: I think, well one of the things is the looking back that I've mentioned about being able to see from last year's celebration just how things have changed and knowing that I, we at that time were instrumental in that change, in fact probably drove it through. So that actually felt great, I was really pleased that I'd been invited to that, cause I don't have a lot of contact with the Y now and therefore I could see what had happened and to have been part of that transition and to see the way things moved, I think that is, that's just fantastic. That's what I was there for basically, was to, I've joked about my job having been to take the organisation from the 18th century into the 21st century [laughing] and there's an element of truth in that and so yes, I'm really proud to have been part of that team that was the transition team at that time for doing that.

Interviewer 1: And do you have any particular memories or memories that stick out or you have a favourite memory of the time that you spent at the Y?

Interviewee: I think putting it together, as I say, we started having national conferences and that was something that I did like. When we brought people together, when we got to meet local people, I mean I met local people as I went round and maybe worked with committees or got to know them and saw the staff, but some of these conferences, they were a mixture of the volunteers on the management committees and I'm not meaning to put down the fact that some of these ladies were older, some of them had given years and years of service and were really still committed. So it was great to see that, some of that mixture of older women and younger women when they came to these conferences and the things that they did together and just getting to know them a bit and see that working out, yeah, I enjoyed that kind of thing but I think for me, I'm a people person in some ways but I'm also a systems and organisations kind of person [laughing]. So actually making the changes and the transitions, and when we had wins like getting money that was unexpected, I think it was one year that we got money out of the Scottish Government and hardly any of the other organisations got it, but they kind of liked what we were doing at that point and how we presented it. So that was always a big moment to have something like that.

Interviewer 1: Nice, and do you think you learned any transferable skills from that time?

Interviewee: Yes, lots. The whole management experience, given that I had done so little before, but when it came to strategising, looking at systems, organisations, dealing with finances, as I said to you earlier, I'm not great at maths but actually I did win the respect of a treasurer for being able to see something. I can read a balance sheet, I might not be able to prepare one but I can read one. So I've learned that and that was where I would pick up things like if money wasn't safe, if it was mostly coming from the one source, which was beyond our control. In fact I think I did have a fight with the Director of Education in Lothian about some of that stuff but yes, all those skills. As I say, had I been going on to do another similar job, I would have felt much more confident in what I was doing at the time and having learned those sorts of things and I brought with me skills that I had learned and used when I was with Christian Aid and other organisations and I took things away with me. I mean I never worked at that level again but I did do, as I say, tutoring and talks. I worked for the WEA, the Workers Education Association, as a local tutor and was able to do talks about the YWCA. So I was actually still promoting it. That's what some of these slides and photos are for and promoting some of the things that we did, as well as talking about my time with Christian Aid and abroad and whatnot. I've been very lucky. I've actually had a very interesting life. It sometimes seems a bit quiet and dull these days but, it's, you know, I've done a lot, I've seen a lot and I've had some good people round about me that I've carried friendships forward from different parts of my life.

Interviewer 2: It's been fascinating to hear you talk. I feel like we could both sit here for hours. [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: Definitely. Definitely.

Interviewer 2: How do you feel now with your relationship to the organisation as it stands and what it's doing?

Interviewee: Well, as I say, I actually don't have a relationship particularly until last year. I suspect it was Helen that put my name in the frame to go to that event last year and then I think from that, Samira maybe picked my name up and got in touch about this project and I thought, well, why not? I've looked off and on, you know, on Facebook and whatnot to get some information about who the organisation is or in tweets and things. Not that I'm on Twitter now. I came off it when Mr Musk got involved but at the time that I left, I didn't feel particularly good about the organisation just because I was in a very bad place physically and mentally and so I didn't keep my membership and that's why I didn't hear about it for a number of years but then, as I say, I kept bumping into people in Kirkcaldy that I knew through the Y and that was good and I took, you know, gradually more of an interest in where they are now. So, although I don't have much of a direct relationship, I feel very supportive and as I say, I felt very proud of them last year in just realising where they are now and what they're doing and I think they're still doing good work in terms of trying to help develop, support, train young women into a better life, basically.

Interviewer 1: Another one of the interesting questions that I thought would be a good idea to ask you is whether, when you joined the Y, it was specifically a feminist organisation? Like, did it consider itself a feminist organisation?

Interviewee: That's a very good question. I'm not entirely sure how to answer it. I think, by and large... Some people certainly were more feminist than others. That's the best I could say, I suppose. I was going to say, by and large, it maybe did consider itself, in some ways, to be a feminist organisation. In some ways, it wasn't. I think that was one of the things that kind of challenged me when I did first join it, that although individuals were, that wasn't necessarily where everybody was at. It certainly became that as time went past. You know, different people got involved, it became that but I'm not just sure when it started but I think, as I say, some people were, and some people probably saw it as that, and some people didn't want to see it as that. Sorry, I can't do much about that. So, yeah, a mixed story there.

Interviewer 1: In your opinion, in your expertise, it can be also your personal opinion, what makes a feminist organisation a feminist organisation?

Interviewee: Well, as somebody who probably is not the best person to ask that question, because I'm not entirely sure myself, but I would just say that, you know, supporting women and women's rights, and looking at the facts and figures in terms of women in society, and how they're represented, and how they're treated, and that kind of stuff, that would certainly be where I'm coming from. I wouldn't say I'm a radical feminist in any way, but I would definitely say that I'm a feminist, and that there is so much catching up that's necessary, and so much of the patriarchal society that's just not a place for a woman at all. So, yes, that would kind of be my answer.

Interviewer 1: That makes sense. I think I would agree to that answer personally.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer 1: But, you know, there's as many types of feminism and as many feminists as people that are involved.

Interviewee: Well, that's right, yes.

Interviewer 2: I guess now there's this space, if there was anything else that you, coming into this, had wanted to talk about that we haven't covered in our questions, and there doesn't need to be.

Interviewee: No, no, I've done pretty well. Before I get a sore throat, which is usually what happens when I talk too much. No, I think that's about it. As I say, I don't know what the plan is, but there's a few names I've given you that you might find interesting. There was something I was thinking about last night in terms of going back, but no, no, that's... No, I think we've covered a lot. Have you got much about the actual older history?

Interviewer 2: I think that's something that is a kind of project that Samar's working on, going into the archives and trying to piece together. There was a book published, which they found, which I think the organisation wasn't aware of as it was standing.

Interviewee: Okay, I think I had a copy of that book at one time, I'm not sure if I still do. Yes because actually that was one of the other things I had to do, you know, in terms of going

out and publicising and trying to get funding and stuff, I had been used to, in my previous job with Christian Aid, going out and doing public talks. So I did put together something about the Y and the history and the current situation and what not to kind of go around and did some of that, not an awful lot of it, but did a bit of that. There was so little marketing and publicity initially. I suppose they were living on their laurels a wee bit at that point, and then newer, younger people came in and moved it forward a bit and some of those you can talk to. I'm just, because I've not been in touch, I don't know how many of the older ones are still around. I know Sheila Moyes, who I keep calling my predecessor, although there was somebody briefly in between us. She just died last year, I think. I was at a memorial service for her. She would be an interesting person, but it's too late and I don't know how many of that generation are left at all to get that. No, thank you, thank you for your time.

Interviewer 1: No, thank you for your time. Thank you for your time.