

Interviewer: Could you just start off by telling me where you lived during the time of the troubles?

Dorothy: Dhu Varren Parade, between the Woodvale and the Springfield Road. I've lived there fifty-six years and that would have been... well the trouble didn't really start then; it was a couple of years later when the children started to get up a bit.

Interviewer: When did you first move into the house then?

Dorothy: 1957.

Interviewer: What were your impressions when you first moved into the house?

Dorothy: When I first moved into that house the Springfield Road was lovely; there were plenty of shops in it, a post office in it and it was always a lovely place with the trees and all. It was a lovely place – you could walk anywhere then. You weren't afraid to walk because at that time Protestants and Catholics lived on the Springfield Road and Woodvale. But when the troubles started, while I was never afraid to walk on it, I would have been more fearful of men walking on it or your children. My children went to Springfield Road School but when they got older they probably wouldn't have went onto the road when the troubles started. I always found that the people on both sides were always nice and everybody talked to each other. Also I think when they took that co-op away there at the corner and the post office away it separated people because people would have met at the post office and people would have met in the co-op and everybody talked. They went because of the troubles because the post office was getting robbed all the time. One by one the shops just went and that is when everybody started getting isolated. People who were catholic would have went mostly to the Falls Road and the lower Springfield Road whereas people on the other side would have went to the Woodvale side and on to the Shankill Road and I think they need to bring something like that back again.

Interviewer: So, you worked in the Blackstaff Mill?

Dorothy: Yes.

Interviewer: So you had to come over to the –

Dorothy: Yes, that's what I was saying – I was always on the Springfield Road.

Interviewer: In what period did you work in the mill?

Dorothy: 1975 to about 1989. They closed the mill down.

Interviewer: What was your job in the mill?

Dorothy: *Stitchin'*. Oh, I liked it there and I liked the people and when I went down the Springfield Road everybody would have said good morning to me. I never had any problem with it; through the troubles and all. Even with rubble on the ground, maybe there had been riots the night before but I never got any bother.

Interviewer: You said yesterday that you worked right through the UWC strike?

Dorothy: That's right. I worked through the strike because we needed the money. I'm just the type of person that nobody tells me what to do and my husband was the same – he went to work too. We both went to work and I think somebody said something in the strike* - a fellow that was in it. I wasn't worried about what they said. I was going to my work and a lot of people did – not just me. There was a lot of people who went to the Blackstaff at that time and they had to go through Blackmountain* estate and they all came to work. But nobody ever did anything to the house because of us going.

Interviewer: What were relationships like in the workplace itself?

Dorothy: Fine. We never had any problem in work; everybody just got on. We all had to work for a living so anybody's problems was everybody's problem [...] she was a shop steward at that time.

Interviewer: - In the Blackstaff mill?

Dorothy: Yes. So if there were any problems we would have brought them to her and she would have went to the boss and got them sorted out.

Interviewer: Can you remember any examples of what might have come-

Dorothy: Well, if we didn't get enough money and then they put us onto peacetime work... and we used to say to people, "now don't be going fast when their* in [...] motion men. [Laughter] Go a wee bit slower." And you find that with some person – I don't know if it was nerves or not – but they would have rushed* it and then the money would have taken off us – so much* we didn't like.

Interviewer: So you had common cause there really.

Dorothy: We always had common causes but nobody ever... in fact I remember one girl and she was a catholic. She was from Suffolk I think it was and she used to say to me, "Dorothy, I've sworn – I must put a penny in the box." You know, she respected it, she said, "I know you don't swear" and she did show respect. I used to laugh – I used to say, "I'm not worrying" but she said she had to put money in the box. There used to be a wee box and every time somebody swore they put money into it for charity. The respect was there-

Interviewer: And they respected you [...] protestant and religious so they knew how you lived your life.

Dorothy: Yes, and I knew how they lived theirs and I would have said, "It doesn't matter."

Interviewer: I remember you saying in the larger group – you said that women were coming in from the catholic side and telling you how their houses had been wrecked during the searches and it made you think, "no wonder they turned against the army."

Dorothy: Well, I was going down the road one day, for instance and there were young fellows on the road and they were walking up and the army stopped them and put them all against the wall. The fellows had nothing – they weren't doing anything. I could see the thing from both sides because my son was taken off the bus one morning on the Shankill because he was black-haired and he had a beard – he grew a beard at this time – and they thought he was Gerry Adams. It was half-six in the morning and he

was going to work and they took him off the bus and they took him to the station so I knew what it was like with my own. So it wasn't just one-sided. I could understand how these young fellows felt and how they did make them turn against the police, because it wasn't just the one side because my sons went through it too. If they stopped to talk at a corner they were lifted but it wasn't a one-sided thing; it was on both sides. So I could understand how the parents felt with their family.

Interviewer: You spoke a bit about the whole period of the troubles was a very wearing time for raising children.

Dorothy: It was a worrying time for everybody because, as I said, my child was taken off the bus and interrogated. When my children went out in the morning with all the shooting at that particular time and with people just being in the wrong place at the wrong time, you were worried 'till your children came home and if they went out at night you did not sleep. And that was everybody – you did not sleep until your child came in.

Interviewer: When were your children born?

Dorothy: Well, William was born in 1959 so when the troubles really took off he would have been in his teens.

Interviewer: Yes, so he was ten when... that was probably the worst age of the lot almost.

Dorothy: That was the worst time – the teenagers. Because you would have heard on the TV that night that somebody was shot. Especially there were two fellows stick out in my mind– I didn't know them – but I'm sure you remember them, they were 19 and 20 and they were students – they were Catholics and those two fellows were just walking through. They weren't doing anybody any harm. And it must have been devastating. It's not that long ago I think I saw it in the paper – the memory of them – and that's years and years ago. That must have been very hurtful.

Interviewer: Where were they killed?

Dorothy: I can't remember but I remember that they were both shot and they weren't doing anything. You know, I felt for the parents because when you have children of your own and they're out you knew what it was like. I remember William was late one night coming in and Billy went over to the police station because we had no phone at that time. He went over and got them to go out and look for him. About ten minutes later he walked in – I could have killed him [Laughter]. But it was worrying – it was a worrying time. Thankfully none of mine were hurt or injured in these troubles; it must have been awful for the people whose sons and daughters were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I have never been sectarian or anything like that because going through it and working with people and I think that's what's maybe wrong and maybe it is better that children are at school integrated so they can learn about the other side.

Interviewer: In terms of the children growing up, did they continue to live in the area as they grew into adulthood or did they move on elsewhere?

Dorothy: Well my William's still there but Alison, Samuel and Mark – they all live in Bangor. They wouldn't come back – they wouldn't come up to Belfast to live again and my William wouldn't live in Bangor.

Interviewer: When would the three have moved to Bangor?

Dorothy: After they all got married they moved to Bangor.

Interviewer: So did they find it quieter? Why would they have prepared it to the Woodvale?

Dorothy: I don't know. They just said whenever they got married that's where they were going and that they would not move back into Belfast. But there's trouble down there as well. But they are quite happy down there. But for myself, I wouldn't move down; I'm used to where I am.

Interviewer: What do you think of the area now compared with when you first moved into Dhu Varren?

Dorothy: Well, our street is quiet but apparently the next street... a fellow who just moved in beside me said, "It's lovely and quiet in this street but the other street was really rioting* - they're having parties and all at night time." So our street is still quiet. I've been fortunate that way.

Interviewer: You were a member of the congregation here then, all through the troubles. It was a difficult time for the church.

Dorothy: It was a difficult time with the fires*.

Interviewer: What are your memories of that?

Dorothy: Well, to be quite honest I still don't know who did it. Whether it was one side or the other, I don't think they ever found out who did it. It didn't make you hate the other side because, as I say, you didn't know who did it. To me, there's good and bad on both sides.

Interviewer: When was that about?

Dorothy: Oh, that was years ago.

Interviewer: I know, it's hard to locate these things isn't it?

Dorothy: When David Campton was here. He had just come and when it happened, two people next door – Mary and Paddy – they were Catholics and it was they who got the fire brigade out. They were very nice people because Paddy would often say, if I was bringing my children to school – and I didn't know him at that time – he would say, "Hold on, I'll give you a lift down to work." So I always found that people were nice no matter what side they were on.

Interviewer: I'm just conscious of the congregation... they increasingly got cut off from where most of the people lived.

Dorothy: A lot of people moved out. A lot of people moved to different areas because they didn't want to have their families growing up in it and getting caught in it.

Interviewer: Have you any particular memories of any events during the troubles or-

Dorothy: I remember I was in Bangor one day and we were down, the children were younger then and a bomb went off in Woolworths and Wellworths* got it that day. My husband, he said, "Right – we're going." And we went out right away. So, I don't think there was anybody hurt that day – I don't know what happened that day, but it did go off. It brought it to you – how close you can be to it. Thankfully we were alright because Billy, he's not one for waiting to see what happens. He just said, "Right, we're getting out of here." He said, "We're going home."

Interviewer: I remember you talking about the houses opposite Forthspring here getting built.

Dorothy: Those ones there?

Interviewer: Yes. And by that time I suppose the road must have been more divided.

Dorothy: Well, it was, because protestants were asked if they wanted the houses there but nobody would live there and you could see why.

Interviewer: So by that stage, the road was pretty much catholic then.

Dorothy: A lot of people moved out, the Protestants moved out and Catholics moved in.

Interviewer: Can you remember at any particular point where it suddenly became more difficult to get onto the Springfield Road because when you worked right up 'till 1989 and when you were still going to work can you remember what the wall was like then or barricades?

Dorothy: I'm just one of those people – it never annoyed me.

Interviewer: But how did you actually walk to work-

Dorothy: I would have walked down and into Lanark way and walked down that way.

Interviewer: Well, Lanark way didn't open 'till-

Dorothy: Well it wasn't Lanark Way but it was Merkland Street or something like that, but I would have walked down that way. When the children were at school, I would have left them up the Springfield and walked straight down – nobody ever said anything and I never felt intimidated.

Interviewer: But when you worked through Merkland Street, was there a barricade at the end or-

Dorothy: I can't remember to be quite honest with you.

Interviewer: There may have been a barrier to stop cars coming back and forth but not pedestrians.

Dorothy: I remember one morning I was coming down and this man was in the car and he was going down and he said to me, "Do you know where the Royal is?" to which I replied, "Aye, I'll hop in" [...] "You what?" [Laughter] To show him and he said, "You could have been anybody." He left me to the Blackstaff and I said, "Look, see that set of... the second set" [...] He was going to the Royal but he was all dressed and all. He could've been a doctor for all I know and I said, "That's the Royal" [...] some people were now... a lot of people wouldn't even go into town when the troubles started because they were really afraid. Everybody's different and they wouldn't have gone into town in case a bomb went off. I just took the attitude: you get on with it.

Interviewer: So, what did you do with yourself when the Mill closed then?

Dorothy: I came out of work, I stopped working for a while and then I was employed stitching the jackets for policemen for a while.

Interviewer: And how did that work out?

Dorothy: Well, it was back to the 20th century: it was just one big room – I didn't like it at all. If you wanted to go to the toilet you had to ask for the key like you were in school. It was terrible. Then my daughter was over on Donegal Road working and she said, "Mommy, they looking for people over here." And I said, "aye, well stuff that I'm going" it was making jumpers and cardigans for Dunnes Stores. So I went over there, next. The forewoman in the place – I forget what you call it; we made the police vests in the place anyway – she said to me, as I met her about two months afterwards, "Do you see when you left, everybody else left" to which I replied, "No wonder; the wages were disgraceful and you weren't allowed to lift your head." That girl said to me, "You know, we have never laughed 'till we came in here" I replied, "Why?" and they would have kept their heads down all day but I did some things. She said to me one day – I had to make the tea and all in front of everybody – she said to me, "Dorothy, it's you turn to make the tea" and I never thought and I put all the teabags into the urn instead of the kettle and all the girls started laughing. Edith said, "What is she doing now?" [Laughter]

Interviewer: Was there a union in there?

Dorothy: No, there was no union.

Interviewer: Was there a union in the Donegal Road when you got there?

Dorothy: No; the only place in which I worked was the Blackstaff.

Interviewer: What was the name of the union in the Blackstaff?

Dorothy: I don't know; probably a factory or a garments union. May Blood – she took all to do with that. She was used to doing things like that but she was always bossy anyway, even before she went there. When she was younger she was always bossy because my sister was a friend of hers and still is and I said, "She's a bossy bitch; I'm not going with her." But when I was ill, when I passed out in work, it was she who took me up to the doctors – she was really good. My sister said to me, "You don't like her

because she's bossy because you're a bit bossy yourself" which made me think, "That could be true."
[Laughter]

Interviewer: And then you became involved in Forthspring when it started.

Dorothy: I don't know how many years ago that was.

Interviewer: Well it started in 1997, so that's 16 years ago now. So, what prompted you to do that? Because not everybody in the congregation felt it was a great idea.

Dorothy: Well, actually I used to go to the Curragh first and it had meetings on a Wednesday morning with Sister Noreen and it went from there.

Interviewer: What got you started in the Curragh?

Dorothy: Somebody asked me to go, on a Wednesday morning and I thought, "Ach well, sure I'll go." I wasn't working now and I said I'd go round and it just went from there. Noreen was very nice. It snowballed just from that.

Interviewer: Have you always enjoyed that?

Dorothy: Yes. They would have gone out to places for the day and I'm an outdoor person, I love being outdoors. Then we went to Scotland and we got in touch with Dublin and we would have gone down to Dublin and they would have come up to visit us. It just snowballed from there.

Interviewer: Now, for most of us, we hope that the bulk of the troubles are over-

Dorothy: I would not actually say that.

Interviewer: You still have concerns?

Dorothy: Well, especially in July and August for the parades and the flags and all that. I still think you're going to have trouble during those months.

Interviewer: Do you personally feel uneasy during that time.

Dorothy: It doesn't bother me because I've never let myself or my family get involved with things like that because they went up to the Springfield School and I've always taught them that everybody's the same. My son, he works downtown and there's a fellow who is Egyptian and he said to me, "Flippin' foreigners. You see these Egyptians and all" you see, he was very arrogant there for a while and I said, "William: just take him as he is." So he comes in the other day and says, "You know, mummy, he brought me a pen back – he was over in Egypt visiting his family and he brought me a pen and a notebook back and he also brought me cigarettes." I replied to him, "Didn't I tell you that there was good in everybody; but you couldn't see it because you just had this thing against foreigners taking over jobs." I've never taught my children to be sectarian or racist or anything like that.

Interviewer: And what would your hopes for the future be, for this place and for your children?

Dorothy: I just hope and pray that things will never go back to the time when people have to lose their children through sectarian violence but saying that, they fight amongst each other anyway as a fellow my grandson knows was on the Shankill and he happened to say something and all these fellows beat him up – he was 28 – and he ended up in hospital there. If they're in clubs on their own side even and they've had too much to drink and they come out with something wrong, they're getting beat up – and that was only about two weeks ago and I think he had to get stitches in his eye and stitches in his head. As people say, that's doing it to your own.