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- * Details: from Ellen Casey to Annette Kuhn
- * Notes: This transcription has rendered the original text as written, including some spelling and grammatical errors. Letter is part of continued contact with Ellen Casey and arrived enclosed with an essay of memories (EC-95-182PW001)

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13/10/2000

As you will see, enclosed is a typeset copy done yrs ago concerning my first job and what I experienced. For a forty hour week my wage then in old money was six shillings and eightpence (today roughly 34p). Later, when I became experienced machinist my wage increased to ten shillings (50p).

At that time the raincoat trade was only seasonable and would slacken off, sometimes a few orders for costume and mantles would be available to help out the situation.

When I reached sixteen I decided to look around for jobs with better rates of pay hoping it would help to increase my spending money. I did find a job that had a big order for making children's navy gaberdines. The wage was a little better but the firm was too strict: we weren't allowed to speak or move away from the machine, when necessary we had to ask permission. After a while I moved on. This would be then 1937. I found work that suited me fine: it was a happy go lucky place, I will always remember that firm called Weinbergs [referring to J. Weinberg & Sons]. Working hard didn't stop us from all singing together the latest songs from the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movies. Suddenly the making of raincoats ceased Weinbergs received orders that could be described as war work. Still only late 1937 the new work making anti gas suits was a little upsetting at the thoughts of war. By this time, lots of Jewish refugees were arriving from Germany to escape the Nazis, our firm had room to employ a dozen or more.

1940 I had to leave Weinbergs the Government decided I should move on to more essential war work. I was then sent to a firm that produced shell cases that were being sent overseas. I had the job of making them waterproof by spraying them over with a special type of rubberized paint. This was a job I really hated.

Eventually in 1944 I got my release and I went back on the sewing machine making demob suits and raincoats ready for the soldiers coming home.

My next job 1956 was entirely new it was sewing together babies carrycots ready for them to be boxed up. Only being a small firm the work was pretty regular. I remember an order for one special carrycot which caused a great amount of fuss, the inside was padded with blue satin lining the hood and apron was trimmed with mink. Rumour got round the carrycot was ordered by Diana Dors the actress. When different designs were being tried I noticed they always involved me.

Sometime in 1970 British Airways wanted a carrycot easy to produce, it also had to be of thin blue fireproof plastic with the B.A. name stamped at one end, also quick to assemble. I think they were only to be used the once. I remember making six different samples. As a result one was chosen, from this B.A. ordered a couple of hundred each time when required.

By the time I reached the age of sixty I retired from Clowes – in 1980. I had worked sewing carry cots for twenty four years and decided that was enough.

Whatever I have written, you will have noticed I do tend to wonder [sic] on because I love to share my memories.

Ellen