

## Zehra Gurcakan Transcript

Interviewer:

What is your full name?

Zehra:

My full name is Zehra Ferda Gurcakan.

Interviewer:

What year were you born?

Zehra:

1968.

Interviewer:

Where were you born?

Zehra:

Hackney.

Interviewer:

What did your parents do for a living?

Zehra:

Right, so my mother, she was a housewife at first, and then she got a job in Tesco's. And she used to work in the homeware department there. And my dad's always been a train guard.

Interviewer:

Please tell us why you decided to work for Royal Mail?

Zehra:

I just had a baby and I needed money. I was quite desperate for money, and I saw this job advertised in my local paper. And I thought, "I'll go for it. Looks like good money, part time hours. I can give my baby to my mom or my sister," because they would be home by that time, because it was an afternoon job. And I applied for it. Went through a test and an interview, and I got the job.

Interviewer:

What did your family members think about your decision to work at the Royal Mail?

Zehra:

My mom was all right. My dad was all right with it. My husband at the time, he wasn't too happy because he's very, he likes to have... The women where he comes from all stay at home and look after children, because he actually came from north Cypress. So all of his family, they all stay at home and look after children, and the men work. So he wasn't too happy. But we needed the money, so that was that, really.

Interviewer:

Tell us how you started working for Royal Mail.

Zehra:

How much? How-

Interviewer:

How you started working-

Zehra:

How so? Okay, so I started there part time. It was originally quarter past four to quarter past eight. And then within six months they, it was Monday to Saturday, and then within six months of being there it started changing and we didn't have to work Saturdays anymore. So they spread the hours on, the time on Saturday, during the rest of the week. So then I started working from, it's about 3:40 to quarter past eight.

Interviewer:

Describe the training that you did. Describe the training you did.

Zehra:

Oh, training? Oh, no training. No training. It was just basically, "You're working here. This lady's been here for six months, and she'll show you what to do." So there's no training there at the time for what I was doing, because I was part time.

Interviewer:

What was your first job that you did at the Royal Mail?

Zehra:

First job. Okay, so it was ever so exciting. It wasn't, really. It was working on something called the facing table. It's where all the mail bags were tipped. So you collect the mail, it all goes in a gray sack, or a beige sack back then, because it was all made out of cloth, and some of them had fleas in them. They were horrible.

Tipped that onto the table. And then you had to separate the first class letters, put them on the conveyor belt, they went down the end and got stamped. Second class letters, air mail letters got separate. There's trays down the bottom, slots that you put them in. And then parcels, they used to go on the top conveyor, and they used to get wheeled in the opposite direction where people would stamp them by hand.

Interviewer:

Tell us how you felt on your first day at work.

Zehra:

How I felt? Oh, a bit lost. A bit lost, because I went into the front counter, and the guy said, "You go that way." So I came out and went that way, and it's like, "Oh, are you sure this is where I'm meant to go?"

He looked like, because everyone was, there's so many people there. Everyone was working, busy, and I'm thinking, "Well, who do I talk to? Who do I say, 'I start here today'? Where am I going?" So I was completely lost the first day.

Interviewer:

Describe your work in those days, those early days.

Zehra:

It was boring, because I didn't really know anyone. I kept asking my friend, well, she's my friend now, Sally. She's the one who showed me what to do on the first day. But it was initially boring, and very soon the girls would come and say, "Come and do this now." They'd take me off the facing table, or else you'd be on the facing table for the whole time, and it was really, really boring. And we'd do other things. They call out bag tying at certain times of day, because all the packet bags had to be taken off the drop bag for tins and be tied up with labels and then sent onto a lorry. So we just kept trying to escape from the facing table. It was really, really boring.

Interviewer:

What was the atmosphere like at your work through those early days?

Zehra:

It was really busy, loud, lots of people shouting, a lot of talking, radio used to be on really loud, a lot of banter. But the actual work was boring, to begin with.

Interviewer:

What kind of people were you working with?

Zehra:

Well, on the facing table there was all different people, really. Some of the staff were just in between shifts, because they were going to do a collection, so they're there for a little bit, and then the manager would tell them to go somewhere else. Or they'd be there for half an hour to do sorting out the letters before they went on the next job.

We had some other people who were agency people. They used to come in in the summer and at Christmas, and they were there. But it was a lot of us. It was a few of us part-timers and there were some ladies there as well with children, because it was after school work.

Interviewer:

How diverse was your workplace when you started?

Zehra:

Sorry. Say that again?

Interviewer:

How diverse was your workplace when you started?

Zehra:

Oh, there wasn't a lot of women there. There wasn't a lot of women, because it was full of men. There wasn't too many women. There was maybe about 10 of us there. There was a few people from ethnic minorities as well. I think there was more people from ethnic minorities than there was women.

Interviewer:

What sort of equipment did you use in your work?

Zehra:

All right. Originally, not a lot of equipment. But then I was, this is when it got a bit more exciting, they put me on the other side where you had to stamp the letters through the machine. You had to run them through the machine. So I was doing that sometimes, running through them to cancel out the stamps.

It's all done by machine now. But then, back in those days, you just ran it through the machine. And that was good, apart from the times it got jammed, which was all the time. You run it through the machine, you think, "No, that's fine," and then it's jammed again, so you had to call for someone to help you, and always pulling out the letters, because they're always getting stuck.

And there was another machine that I was using to put the postage on, the second class postage, for another machine. It was business post. And I used to do that as well.

Interviewer:

Describe your uniform. Describe your uniform.

Zehra:

Okay. Well, the uniform I'm wearing now is a shirt, a pair of trousers. The shoes are unisex. There's also a polo shirt that I wear, but that's unisex. This is a ladies' shirt. They don't have this for men. The men's shirts are blue, but they wear gray trousers. But when I first started I didn't have uniform. I just had a dust jacket. That's all I had.

Interviewer:

Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

Zehra:

You're very, very quiet.

Interviewer:

Tell us about the skills you needed for your job. Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

Speaker 3:

Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

Zehra:

Oh, sorry. I kept hearing sales. Skills. Right. Facing table, you don't really need much skills for that, but as time progressed and I was doing other things on the afternoon shift, you had to learn the sorting. There

was something called the matrix, which is what you started off on, and that would be the London sorting. So it'd be the N1s, N2s, Palmers Green, Winchmore Hill, all those post codes, all different London post codes being separate.

And then after that there was outward sorting. So you had North Road, South Road, and this was letter sorting. And you had to sort things in areas, like Waltham Cross, which was one of our local places, and Potters Bar, and then Birmingham and Glasgow and Scotland. And then after that I was on packet sorting, which was very similar to that. And then as time progressed there was other sorting, inward sorting, which is sorting the Enfield work, because that is where I'm from. So it's like sorting the Enfield work into areas.

Interviewer:

Describe a typical day at work.

Zehra:

Okay. So what, now, or back in those days?

Speaker 3:

Back in the day.

Interviewer:

Back in the day.

Zehra:

Back in those days. Yep, okay. So I'll come in, hang my coat up, go on the facing table, and then it would be the call out for maybe about an hour, call out for bag ties. I'd go and do a bit of bag tying, and then I'll go in the packet sorting. And since sometimes they would tell me to go on to the letter sorting as well or the matrix sorting.

Interviewer:

What were your favorite things about your work?

Zehra:

The time I was there, the hours of working, and the money, obviously. And also, I made some good friends there. It was a nice little group in the end.

Interviewer:

What were the difficult things about your work?

Zehra:

Oh, okay. The most difficult thing about my work was, because there wasn't too many women there, I kept getting the men asking me naughty questions. As in, I would like say to you, "Are you wearing tights, or are you wearing socks today?" Things like that. Which is very, very inappropriate. So that's not good. So that was the most annoying thing. But that doesn't happen anymore, which is a good thing, because they would be in a lot of trouble. And they might get a black eye.

Interviewer:

Can you tell us about any discrimination you experienced.

Zehra:

Well yeah, I think I've just covered that really. Yeah, there was a lot of sexual discrimination really. Not so much in race, but more sexual discrimination, because there were so few of us. There were so few women there. And it was very much like working in, I don't know, it's like the men's changing room, really. That's what it was like. It was like working in men's changing room. And you heard about all their, all the things that they got up to the night before, and how much beer they drank, and what they were doing.

Interviewer:

Tell us a story that stands out from your working life.

Zehra:

Oh, stands out from my working life. There are so many, but now I can't think of any. Okay. Story. Let me think of one. Good. Okay. So. Like there was some of us ladies working, and there was this Scottish lady who was working with us. She was very tough. She was a very tough lady. She was very petite as well. And she came back from holiday one year and we all said, "We're going to make up a little story here." And what we told her was, "You need to go to the mail center in that lorry."

So we basically packed her off in a cage and put in the back of a lorry, and she was about to go in that, and they were about to shut the doors where we have to quickly tell her, "No, no, no. Stop, stop." Because they were going to send her off in the lorry. And she did actually believe us. I don't know why she believed me. Maybe I've got one of those faces where everyone believes me when I say...

And the other time was when I said to someone. "Oh, have you seen Mrs. [Moyan 00:14:25]?" She was another lady I was working with. "Yeah, no, no. She's left. She's left the business." She hasn't left the business. She's been visiting her family in India for about six weeks, but I told everyone she left. I [inaudible 00:14:37] that.

Interviewer:

What are some naughty things that people did at work?

Zehra:

Sorry. Say that again?

Interviewer:

What were some naughty things that people did at work?

Zehra:

The worst?

Interviewer:

What were some of the naughty things that people did at work?

Zehra:

Oh, that was probably me. I was probably the naughty girl at work. I was always making things up. So, yeah. So you might have a pile of letters balanced there, and I'd go, [inaudible 00:15:02], and knock them all on the floor. So I was basically the naughty girl at work. Always get up to no good.

Interviewer:

Talk us briefly through the different jobs you did while working at Royal Mail.

Zehra:

Okay. So I've done the boring basic facing table, packet sorting, matrix, letter sorting, outward sorting. And then I did inward and outward sorting, and then I did the afternoon, putting the meter work into trays. That's what we was doing in the end. And then after that I was on delivery. So I was doing delivery as well.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your favorite job.

Zehra:

I think delivery. I liked going on the bicycle. That was my favorite. Yeah, that was my favorite. It was a bit, when I first applied for the job, they said, "Can you ride a bicycle?" And I said, "Yes." And I had the bicycle for about two minutes and I didn't really know what to do with it. So when I eventually went onto full time, it was like, "Here's your bicycle. Off you go." And I'm thinking, "Oh, I don't know how to ride a bicycle." So I had to go take it to the park and learn how to ride in one afternoon. Remember what to do, one afternoon.

Interviewer:

How did you progress?

Speaker 3:

So could you talk us through your typical day when you was on deliveries.

Zehra:

Okay. So you get your work ready. So you have to prepare your work on your frame and then bundle it up. Well, before you bundle it up, you have to read directions. Then bundle it up, put it all in a bag. And the bicycle I had had the basket in the front of your bag, and then I had the panniers on the back of it as well. So I used to fill that with work. And then I used to cycle up to my deliver point and deliver, I used to deliver out of the bundles from the back first and then pack up the bike when the bundles were finished at the back, and then take the bag off and then go around and deliver the bag of work. And then the driver used to bring more work to me. And I used to have, I think about five bags of work to do, in total.

Interviewer:

How did you progress in Royal Mail?

Zehra:

So, I started off part time. I did that for about 17 and a half years. And then my children were older, so I had to get some more money, because it was getting boring as well. All the work had been taken away, so it was very, very boring again. So every time I get bored I need to do something else at work, so I went full time. Plus the money as well. That's when I had to start riding a bicycle. And that was good.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your relationships with your colleagues.

Zehra:

They're good. They're good. It was good at the beginning because, as I said, in the end it was just five girls, ladies, working in the end. And then when I went full time it was different, again, because even though I'd worked there over 17 years, a lot of the people didn't do any overtime, so they never knew who I was, so they thought I was a new person. But I wasn't. I'd already done 17 years. So it was different dynamics again, because I was like a big fish in a little pond. And then when I went to full time, I was a little fish in a big pond. That's what it felt like, because there's loads of people there. Loads of people. But not as many people as there was originally, because originally there was over 300 staff there when I first started. And by the time I went to full time, I think we'd gone down to about 200 or 250 by then. So it was still busy, but it had gone down.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your experiences of joining clubs at work.

Zehra:

Joining clubs at work? Okay. So we did have a sports and social club, which was really, really good. It paid for days out. So I remember going with my girls to [Thorpe 00:19:38] Park. They used to collect you in the coach, or you used to meet up in the coach, and we used to go to seaside trips. I think we went to Great Yarmouth as well. And then we had a gym upstairs, so we had some gym equipment. And there was also Christmas parties. So I used to take my girls to the Christmas parties there as well. They were pretty good.

I know every year they used to pay out for really good presents for the children. So they always used to get a nice present. And one year I was Santa's helper. I'd forgotten about this. One year I was Santa's helper. So I had to be with Santa, giving out the presents at the club.

Interviewer:

Tell us about any other opportunities to socialize.

Zehra:

Any other opportunities-

Interviewer:

To socialize.

Zehra:

Oh, socialize. Okay. So we did have the club, but the club's now gone. There is a lot of... There's not a lot, really. Not a lot. I think we did have a Christmas party at the pub, because I'm not a great drinker. People would deny that. People think I drink all the time, but I don't, really. I just pretend to drink a lot. I don't, really. Because what happens is, I usually mix my drinks when they're not looking, and then go dancing. So when I'm dancing, I'm not drinking. But we used to go to the pub around the corner, and Christmas parties. That's gone, really. There's nothing like that really anymore, because of COVID as well.

Interviewer:

What made you join the union?

Zehra:

Okay. So it was, again, I wasn't a member of the union originally. Nobody even said anything about me joining the union when I first started Royal Mail. Which is, I find a bit surprising, because they usually do. And I don't remember anyone saying to me to join the union. And it wasn't, ooh, maybe I was there about 10 years before I actually did join the union, because things were changing at work, and I felt like I had to join the union just to give myself a bit more protection. So I did.

And then I became full time and the union did help me get a full time job there. And then they helped me again to get my duty, because I didn't know that I could sign for duty. Because on the late shift we didn't have any duties to sign for. We just all did the same job. So they directed me in the right place and said, "Sign for that duty." Which is what I did, which is, I'm really grateful for, because it was a really good duty in the end, even though I didn't know what it was.

And then I became the safety rep, and that was around 2013, I think, I became the safety rep for Enfield. Because the previous safety rep, he didn't want to do it anymore, so I applied, and I got the job.

Interviewer:

Why is the union important for postal workers?

Zehra:

Okay. So the union is really important because they basically negotiate for you so you don't have to. Okay. They're a bigger voice. When you get together, the union talks for you. If you're just there on your own, you're just a single voice, but the union is a bigger voice, okay? And they're good at looking after your welfare. So if you think, "Oh, no, that's fine. I can do that," the union will say, "No, you can't." They'll say, "Actually, if you go down that route, then they can change that," whatever you're doing, "later on."

So the union is quite forward thinking and they will assess things and make sure they put in the small print that, even though you're changing something, you can only change it so far, because they're always looking out for your best interests. And in the union you're just stronger. You're just stronger.

Interviewer:

What part did the union play in your life? What part did the union play in your life?

Zehra:

Okay. So originally not a lot. But then after, it did quite a bit. It did, because I did become the safety rep, and I have more awareness of union matters now. So it's a big part of my working life now.

Interviewer:

Tell us about any strikes or disputes you were involved with.

Zehra:

Okay. So the first one I was in, I wasn't part of the union. I was a naughty girl. I wasn't part of the union. And we went out on strike for about a week. And then after a week, we had enough, and we went back to work. But I don't think anybody, until now, knows that, and everyone's going to know about this now. But no, originally I wasn't part of the union, so I went back to work. And nobody actually said anything to me. There wasn't any of this name calling, which I think they get called a blackleg or something, or worse, but nobody ever said that to me. And I think just about everybody from that time has left my office now. So I've never done that since. I just, if it's a strike, I go on strike. Because you have to be, you have to all stick together. If you don't stick together, it doesn't work. Okay?

Interviewer:

What was your memorable moment at the post office?

Zehra:

Memorable moment. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. The memorable... Oh, okay. Right. My most memorable time at the post office was when I fell off my bike. No, I didn't fall off my bike. No, this wasn't falling off my bike. It was just slipping on the ice when it was snowing.

I was out on delivery. It had been snowing the day before. And I remember seeing somebody putting water over their car to melt all the ice off, the snow off. And then I was walking down that way again the day after, and it was snowed over again, and I stepped on that bit where they'd poured the water. And it was really slippery. And I slipped and I fell backwards. Luckily, I didn't hurt myself really badly. I didn't hit my head or anything, because my bag was across my body, and I landed on my back.

But I just remember, every time there was a conference call, my name would be on that conference call, I was like famous. It was, "How is she now?" "No. She's all right. She's back at work." It was like, every conference call they had for about a week, because I had to report people that had had accidents, my name was on that conference call.

Interviewer:

What was your most challenging moment at the post office?

Zehra:

Riding the bicycle, because my delivery was about a mile away. I think it was about a mile away, or a bit more than a mile away. And I remember come out of my office and then you're on the main road. And I remember just pushing the bike along, crossing the road, pushing it along a bit more until I got to a quiet road, and then getting on it, and then cycling. But it took me ages to get there on my bicycle at first. I mean, afterwards, after a few weeks I was really, really fast on it, and I was all right. I'd be out on the main road and no worries at all. But at first it was a struggle, a big struggle. I was really scared as well on that main road.

Interviewer:

Over your working life, what were the main changes at work?

Zehra:

Okay. So I was part time on the afternoon shift, so there was a lot of people on that shift. Morning shift, late shift, afternoon shift. There's always about 350 people there the whole time. Go on holiday. I come back. "We're not doing Saturdays anymore." Okay. "You're coming in earlier." I go on holiday the next year. "Okay, all the work's gone now, so you don't have much work to do anymore. Do you want to take redundancy?" "No, thank you. I don't." So every time I went on holiday and came back, something had changed at work. And the work was just shrinking, because it was all getting done by machines.

So that's what it was, basically. Everything's getting done by machine now. The letters are sorted by machine. The packets are sorted by machine. So there's less actually physical handling of mail and packets now than there was before. But that's how it is. That's how the job is now.

Interviewer:

In what ways do you think the job has improved?

Zehra:

The fact that we don't have to do so much sorting. We thought it was a really silly idea at first. They had the letters coming in, they call it in sequence, so it's all in order of your delivery route, and it's just really easy to fight off. But I think that was the thing that made it really easy. I'm used to that now. That's really easy.

Interviewer:

In what ways has it got worse?

Zehra:

So in the way it's got worse is more parcels now. So if you're just delivering letters, it's an easy job. It's what I keep telling the managers. If you're just doing parcels, that's an easy job, because I've done that as well with my trolley. Because at one point, Saturdays was just parcel delivery. So, that's easy. But when you put them together it's more difficult, because you're juggling letters, parcels, a PDA now as well, which you have to scan everything with. I think the scanning, even though it's easy to scan everything, it's remembering to scan things and doing the right procedure.

Interviewer:

What would you think if your child wanted to work for Royal Mail?

Zehra:

I'd say, "Yeah, that's fine." I don't think she can manage it. But I think, yes, that's fine. Because she's not very good at walking. But that would be my youngest daughter. My oldest daughter, I don't think she would even think twice about working for Royal Mail, because she's in a different line of work completely. But the youngest one, if she wanted to work for Royal Mail, I'd say, "Okay." But she wouldn't.

Interviewer:

If you were the boss of Royal Mail, what changes would you make?

Zehra:

What deals?

Interviewer:

If you were the boss of Royal Mail, what changes-

Zehra:

Oh, what changes would I make? That's interesting. That's a really interesting question. Because there's a lot of changes, but then again I keep thinking, if you was to change one thing, then you'd have to change something else. There's always a balance when you do changes. And I would think more flexible working hours, I think would be better. More flexibility. And maybe more holiday. Definitely more holiday.

Interviewer:

Looking back over your working life, what has working for Royal Mail meant to you?

Zehra:

Oh, so it's always there. It's always there. It does take over your life because of the hours as well. Because when you get up early for work, you have to go to bed early. So there's not really much room for going out and visiting people, especially if they don't get up early and go to bed early, because a lot of my family stay up late. I've got a lot of aunties and uncles, and we're Turkish, so there's a lot of barbecues out in the evening. But I can't go to anything like that really. I've got to go home after a certain time. So it's, yeah, Royal Mail does sort of take over your life if you're there long enough. Definitely.

Speaker 3:

Before you ask the next question, I've got a few things I want to ask, if you don't mind. So when you was out on deliveries, what was your favorite thing about that?

Zehra:

Oh, meeting the customers. Definitely meeting the customers. Meeting the customers. That was it. It was, yeah, getting to know my customers. The area I was delivering, people didn't like delivering there. No, they would say don't like delivering there. And in the evening, it's not one of those places you want to walk down. But during the day, because everybody that lives there, and you speak to the parents, the naughty children would leave me alone. Because I know some of the children on the estate, because it was a bit of a council estate, would go and hassle other people that lived around there, but because I knew their parents, they'd leave me alone.

I had trainees as well who I'd split. I'd say, "You know what you're doing now. Go and do that side of the road." They'd meet me at the end of the road and they'd say, "Oh, so-and-so said, 'Do you want to do some business?'" I'd think, "I hope you said no." They said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I said no." So there's always someone trying to do something dodgy. I don't know if it's drugs or stealing milk. I don't

know. But it was a case of, I'd have to watch out for my trainees, make sure they weren't caught up with anyone.

And very often, there will be a burnt out van that had been stolen as well. It's quite sad as well, one time there was this young guy who lived in one of the houses in the estate and he was shot near the playground where this, I think it was something to do with drugs too. They basically chased him round. He was in a cab. And they chased him in the cab. And he got out of the cab, because it was a dead end, and they shot him near the park end.

Another time, this other young lad, he was in a gang from Tottenham. He sort of like hooked up with them, and I think he didn't want to be with them anymore. And they put a bomb through his letterbox. So they had to move overnight, really, the whole family had to move. So yes, the people were lovely during the day. But all sorts of things happened in the evening, and in the night, which wasn't a very nice place to go to.

Speaker 3:

So, generally what are the difficulties about going out on deliveries?

Zehra:

The difficulties. Trying to get your job finished. That was it. Trying to get your job finished. And trying to, yeah, trying to get your job finished, really, and also a bit of translating. Because there's this one man who, I never told anyone, that was Turkish there. And then they sort of worked it out, and there's this one guy who kept saying, "Can you translate yourself for me? Can you translate this other lady for me? Can you call someone?" So then I'd be behind in my work. Because I'd always be trying to finish my work so I could go home. Because it's always somebody wanting something. If someone knows you can translate for them, or even a little bit, or there will be an old lady who wants a bit of help carrying her shopping to the door, you're going to help them. There's not much time for that now. They had a bit more time back then. But everything is on a time scale now, so it is just trying to get your work done.

Speaker 3:

Can you tell us about the, sort of your risk assessment walks that you do now.

Zehra:

Okay. So now, it's actually meant to be done by a manager. Originally this was meant to be done by a manager. But I'm the safety rep now, so they've given it to me to do. And I do something called WRAP. It's a walk risk assessment platform. And so I will talk to you, for example, if you're a postwoman, I'll say to you, "Can you tell me all the dangers on your walk? Do you have any dogs, or the mail, when you put it through the door, is there anyone there who maybe has mental health issues that you are afraid to deliver to? Any wonky pavements that you might trip over?" And you tell me, and I put it all on the computer, and then I print it out.

Some of the hazards we can sort out. We can send the letter to the customer to say about the dog, "Keep your dog inside." Buy a box and put it on the door, so we don't have to put our fingers through the door. Not that you put your fingers through the door. We use a posting pick now so your fingers are not bitten off by the dog, and so your letters aren't eaten by the dog as well. If there's, for example, someone who is [inaudible 00:38:59] you, they've got mental health issues, and you don't feel safe delivering there. So then we send the manager out, and he does a risk assessment. Okay? So you don't, maybe not deliver there anymore, and they have a different arrangement. Maybe that person has

to come and pick up the mail. And things like that. And then it's in the folder on your frame so that anybody else who goes on your frame to do your walk can look at the folder and see all the dangers on your walk.

Speaker 3:

What effects did privatization have on your job?

Zehra:

Oh, well, this is it. There's not much time now. Everything is cutbacks. It's all cutbacks now. So as before, it was a set time you worked every day. So you would have started at, originally I used to start at 5:00 in the morning when I went full time, and it would be 1:30 finish. Well now, we're starting at 12 minutes past 6:00. And it's a different finish time every day. So it's like, managing every minute you're working. And they don't always get it right, so you're always rushing.

You used to know what you was doing before. You can go in now and you're meant to be doing one thing, but no, they want you to do something else today. So then you're behind on something else that you're meant to be doing. It's always, they come in and tell you, "No, you're doing that." "No, you're doing that." "No, you're doing that one now." "You're doing that job." "No, you're doing the letters." "No, you're doing the packets." So you don't really know what you're doing a lot of the time, and I think that's a lot to do with privatization. Even elastic bands. Even elastic bands, it's a case of, so we've had a lot of elastic bands for this month. We have to wait. So elastic bands are locked up now. They're like gold. That is our version of gold. Elastic bands.

Speaker 3:

I think I've got one more. Yes. Can you tell us about the Spice Girls. Tell us about the Spice Girls.

Zehra:

Oh my god. Okay, so this was a long time ago now. So in the end, so there was just five of us ladies working on the afternoon shift. Because there was five of us, they started calling us the Spice Girls. And I was Baby Spice because I was the youngest. My friend, Mrs. Moyan, she was Asian, and she was Scary Spice. And we had little Anne. I think we used to call her Sporty Spice because she was always in tracksuits. It's quite funny, really, because she was always in a tracksuit. And then we had Posh Spice. I've forgotten the other one. Posh Spice, and Scary Spice, and Ginger Spice. That's right. Ginger Spice.

I can't even remember the names anymore. But there was always a debate between Ginger Spice, who was Ginger Spice and who was Posh Spice, because neither of them had ginger hair, but one of them had to be Posh and the other one had to be Ginger. And I think what we did in the end, I think we called Joan Posh Spice, and then we called Sally Ginger Spice, because she was more like Ginger Spice, and Joan was a bit more posh.

Speaker 3:

Okay.

Interviewer:

Thanks very much for answering our questions. Is there any you would like to talk about that we have not covered?

Zehra:

No. I don't know. I think, no. All I'm going to say is, we used to have someone dress up as Postman Pat, and they used to go to the schools. And it was quite funny, really, because the most common name, I was thinking about this earlier, the most common name for the postmen in my office was actually Pat. There was a lot of Pats in the office back then. And we did used to have one guy that used to dress up as Postman Pat, and he used to go to schools and visit the schools.